

NEW STRAITS TIMES

DATE: 20/1/2010

Resolve 'Allah' issue by mediation, says Pairin

KOTA KINABALU: The best way to resolve the conflict over the use of "Allah" is through consultation or mediation, said Parti Bersatu Sabah president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan.

He said as the case was already in court and the prospect of the plaintiffs withdrawing the suit was slim, PBS wanted to see proper consultations among the parties to reach an amicable solution.

He also expressed regret that the conflict had gone to court in the first place but added that he understood the circumstances behind it.

Pairin said he sympathised with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak who had to make tough decisions in light of the sensitivity of the issue

and the conflicting demands and expectations of various groups.

Speaking at the swearing-in of elected and appointed PBS supreme council members on Monday, Pairin said it was a complex issue and any position taken by the government was bound to please some and displease others.

He also welcomed the statement by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mohd Nazri Abdul Aziz that non-Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak would be allowed to use "Allah" in their prayers, saying it was "acceptable and should be considered".

He said there had been suggestions that the controversy surrounding the use of "Allah" was a problem unique to

Peninsular Malaysia and not Sabah and Sarawak.

"If viewed from this angle, then the statement by Nazri offers a clue as to the possible solution to the problem," he said, adding that federal leaders should take note of the need for proper consultations with the relevant parties.

Pairin said he was concerned as the issue has been politicised, following statements by Pas and Parti Keadilan Rakyat that they accepted the use of "Allah" by Christians.

He also said it was best to speak less on the issue so as not to aggravate the situation.

He also advised PBS members not to read too much into what they see or read in the media.