

PM: Govt adhered to policies

'The term Allah can only be used by Muslims in peninsula'

By **WANI MUTHIAH**
wani@thestar.com.my

KLANG: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the Federal Government acknowledged and adhered to the existing policies that the term Allah can only be used by Muslims in the peninsula and conditionally by non-Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak.

Anwar said this in a statement following his audience with Selangor Ruler Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah, who is the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs (MKI) chairman, yesterday.

The audience was for Anwar to brief Sultan Sharafuddin on the government's withdrawal of its appeal at the Appeals Court over a High Court decision favouring Sarawakian Jill Ireland Lawrence Bill in her suit against the Home Minister and the government of Malaysia.

The matter was about the usage of the term Allah by a non-Muslim.

The Prime Minister said he had explained during the audience that the Federal Government respected the state laws and the

Malay Rulers' positions as heads of Islam in their respective states, as well as the role of the Conference of Rulers in determining matters related to Islam at the federal level.

"After the discussion, I respect the views of His Royal Highness, which are in line with the Cabinet's decision last May, that the issue regarding the usage of the term Allah, among non-Muslims in Sabah and Sarawak should be streamlined and clarified to MKI, which has the responsibility of advising the Conference of Rulers," said Anwar.

He added that Sultan Sharafuddin, in his capacity as MKI chairman, had agreed to bring the matter for discussion in the council in August before it is forwarded for consideration and scrutiny to the Council of Rulers in October.

"The government is also committed to streamlining the existing policies based on the decision of the Conference of Rulers that will be adopted as a final policy regarding the usage of the term Allah by non-Muslims in Malaysia."

Meanwhile, Sultan Sharafuddin, in a separate statement, wanted

the Federal Government to quickly resolve the matter of non-Muslims using the term Allah.

He said since the matter involved religious sensitivities, the government must promptly resolve it with wisdom and responsibility.

"As the chairman of MKI, I had also voiced my opinion, which His Majesty the Yang di-Pertuan Agong agrees with, that the matter should have been first brought to MKI for discussion in line with MKI's responsibility of advising the Malay Rulers on the administration of Islamic affairs at the federal level," said Sultan Sharafuddin.

The Ruler also called upon all parties to respect the provisions in the Federal Constitution that guaranteed the rights and powers of the Malay Rulers in matters related to Islam.

According to the Ruler, the matter must be solved carefully based on the Federal Constitution, which stipulates that Islam is the religion of the federation while recognising the rights of those belonging to other faiths to practise their religions peacefully.

"I also urge everyone not to politicise, raise or discuss the

issue of the usage of the term Allah by non-Muslims until the Conference of Rulers makes the final decision.

"This is to ensure that community harmony in Malaysia remains strong to preserve the nation's social and economic stability," said Sultan Sharafuddin.

The Ruler added that Anwar had agreed with his suggestion that the matter be brought to MKI in August this year before it is brought before the Conference of Rulers in October.

"I am certain it is important for MKI's views to be forwarded to the Council of Rulers for a final policy to be set regarding the usage of the term Allah by non-Muslims in Malaysia," said Sultan Sharafuddin.

The High Court held in favour of Ireland in 2021 over the seizure of eight CDs that had the word Allah in them.

In the case that dragged on for about 15 years, Ireland argued that the CDs were for her use only.

The previous government had appealed against the High Court decision favouring Ireland, but Anwar's government withdrew the appeal.