

ANWAR CLARIFIES ISSUE

PM: USE OF 'ALLAH' ONLY IN SARAWAK

Govt withdrew appeal due to contradiction between 1986 cabinet decision and Home Ministry's administrative order in the same year

MEOR RIDUWAN MEOR AHMAD
AND DAWN CHAN
MELAKA
news@nst.com.my

THE use of the word "Allah" by Christians for the publication of religious materials for educational purposes is only limited to Sarawak, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said that the matter had already been addressed by Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail yesterday.

He reiterated the government's stance that it remained commit-

ted to defend and protect the interests of Islam, the Malays, and the institution of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, particularly on the use of the word Allah in accordance with Article 11(1) and Article 11(4) of the Constitution.

"Sarawak, we understand, is not bound by the decision of the states. It cannot be applied in Melaka, Penang and Selangor... it cannot.

"This (the use of the word Allah)



Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim

is specific for Sarawak, which we have lost in the initial case because in Sarawak, it was decided by the state as such," he said at a Hari Raya Aidilfitri Madani celebration organised by Pertubuhan Prihatin Anak Melaka and police in Tanjung Minyak here.

The government had withdrawn its appeal on the High Court's ruling that allowed non-Muslims to use the word Allah and three other words for teaching purposes. The other words are *kaabah*, *solat* and *baitullah*.

On March 21, 2021, Court of Appeal Judge Datuk Nor Bee Ariffin, sitting as a High Court judge, made the ruling

after a 13-year legal battle between the government and Jill Ireland, a Christian woman from Sarawak.

Nor Bee described the Home Ministry's directive to prohibit the use of the four words by non-Muslims 35 years ago as "illegal" and "irrational".

She said the government directive was issued beyond the aim of the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA).

The government was criticised for withdrawing the appeal.

In **Putrajaya**, Saifuddin said the government withdrew its appeal following the discovery of a contradiction between a 1986 cabinet decision and the Home Ministry's administrative order issued in the same year.

He said the contradiction was discovered by the ministry during the appeal application after the March 21 decision by Nor Bee.

"The Kuala Lumpur High Court's decision was made based on a civil and administrative approach, which is the issue related to the seizure of publication ma-

terials at that time.

"And it was not from the theology aspect or anything that involved the use of the word Allah.

"Therefore, the function of the court itself was inappropriate in deciding affairs related specifically to religious matters.

"Therefore, in the March 21 judgment, it was clear the judge had made a decision based on administrative approach and did not touch on the use of Allah.

"In this case, the government's decision not to proceed with the appeal was done on a case-by-case basis, without jeopardising facts for any case that is in the courts," he said after the Immigration Department's Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration.

Saifuddin said the government's decision to withdraw the appeal now paved the way for the ministry to study and update a new and more holistic administrative order.



Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail at a press conference in Putrajaya yesterday. He says the government's decision to withdraw the appeal now paves the way for the Home Ministry to study and update a new and more holistic administrative order.
PIC BY MOHD FADLI HAMZAH