

PM: 'Allah' ruling only in Sarawak

Christians there allowed to use the word plus three more in publications

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MELAKA: The Kuala Lumpur High Court's ruling in the Jill Ireland case regarding the use of the word "Allah" by Christians is only applicable to Christians in Sarawak, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He said the word will not be allowed to be used in other states and this has been explained by the Home Ministry.

"We must understand that this is specifically for Sarawak, as we understand that previously, Sarawak is not tied to decisions by the other states, and not applicable for Melaka, Penang and Selangor (in Peninsular Malaysia).

"The court had ruled (in favour of Sarawak) and we must understand that it is Sarawak's prerogative," he told reporters during a Hari Raya Aidilfitri gathering at

Tanjung Minyak here yesterday.

In Putrajaya, the Home Ministry's move to withdraw the appeal against the decision of the Kuala Lumpur High Court regarding the use of the word "Allah", among others, was due to a contradiction found between a Home Ministry administrative order and a Cabinet decision made in 1986, said Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

This was related to the confiscation of published materials at that time and not a theological issue involving the use of the words, he added.

"The decision of the Kuala Lumpur High Court was made using a civil and administrative legal approach, which is the issue related to the confiscation of publication materials at that time and not from a theological point of view or anything involving the use of the words.

"This is because the function of the court itself is not appropriate

to decide matters related to religion specifically," he said.

"Thus, in the judgment of the Kuala Lumpur High Court on March 10, 2021, it is clear that the judge made a decision based on an administrative approach and it was found to be consistent with the decision of the Federal Court in the case of the Titular Roman Catholic Archbishop of Kuala Lumpur vs the Home Minister in 2014," he told reporters at the Immigration Department Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration here yesterday.

Saifuddin Nasution said the government's decision not to proceed with the appeal was made on a case-by-case basis, without affecting the facts of each case that is currently in court.

He also said the ministry has refined and carefully examined the 2021 High Court decision and found that there was a contradiction in the administrative instructions which caused the decision to

favour Jill Ireland.

Therefore, his ministry is studying and updating a more comprehensive administrative directive to deal with the issue of using the words in publications.

"While the appeal application process was ongoing, the Home Ministry also carefully studied the decision of the Kuala Lumpur High Court in March 2021, which found a discrepancy between the decision made by the Cabinet on May 19, 1986, and an Administrative Directive issued by the ministry on Dec 5, 1986.

"Therefore, the ministry took steps to review and update a more comprehensive directive to address the issue of using the words 'Allah', 'Baitullah', 'Solat', and 'Kaabah' in order to be in line with the interests and benefits of the multiracial and multireligious community in Malaysia as well as more effective supervision and control of publications that violate the legal provisions in force,"

he added.

In another development, Umno information chief Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said Umno ministers will raise the matter on the use of the word "Allah" during the Cabinet meeting today.

She said a detailed study should be made in a manner that is fair to all parties and handled with care as it involves religious sensitivities.

In a statement, Azalina, who is minister in charge of law, said a comprehensive solution should be discussed and achieved, which includes a strong legal approach as well as non-judicial approaches.