

# PM: 'Allah' issue should be discussed only behind closed doors

**SHAH ALAM:** The issue relating to the use of the word "Allah" by non-Muslims should not be discussed openly to the extent of causing confusion among Muslims, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

He also reiterated that the government's decision to withdraw its appeal in the court case over the use of the word "Allah" was made after seeking the views of the mufti and referring to the decrees of the Malay rulers.

He said the matter had been repeatedly explained, including in Parliament.

"Meaning that only the Muslims in Peninsular Malaysia can use

the word 'Allah' to avoid confusion and problems with other religions.

"So, non-Muslims in the peninsula are not allowed (to use the word). But for Sabah and Sarawak, there are some relaxations with restrictions (for non-Muslims to use it) so as not to cause confusion.

"The issue can be discussed and debated, but only behind closed doors. It should not be done openly and confuse the people.

"However, we are still being accused of betraying the people's trust," he said at the Muzakarah Ulama-Umara held in conjunction with the Selangor Turath Islami

Festival here yesterday, reported Bernama.

On Tuesday, Anwar said the proposal to improve the policies and regulations relating to the use of the word "Allah" by non-Muslims would be tabled at the meeting of the Conference of Rulers in July.

He said he had referred the matter to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, who had advised him that all decisions must be in line with the decision made by the Conference of Rulers.

He said the government would also refer to the National Council for Islamic Religious Affairs chaired by Sultan of Selangor

Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah.

On a separate matter, Anwar called on ulama in the country to be bold enough to express their disapproval or rebuke the government with the pure intention of seeking the highest good for the nation and Muslims in the country.

He said the government would always be ready to hear their views as recommended by two famous ulama, Prof Dr Ali Jum'ah and Habib Umar Hafidz, who emphasised that rebukes should be offered in a good and honourable manner.

In fact, Anwar said the methods of offering rebukes proposed by

the two ulama were not by insulting, slandering and punishing.

"As for leaders, the onus is on them to listen (to the disapproval and rebukes) and to give good replies," he said.

However, Anwar said there were things that might be mutually agreed upon but could not be implemented due to certain limitations or the level of public understanding in certain matters.

Prof AM, who is a former Grand Mufti of Egypt, and Habib Umar, founder of the Dar al-Mustafa Islamic seminary in Tarim, Yemen, were the distinguished guests at the muzakarah organised by the Selangor government.