

**Christians to continue using 'Allah' despite government appeal, says Dompok
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By Boo Su-Lyn**

KUALA LUMPUR, April 27 — Christians will not stop calling their God "Allah" even if the courts stop them from doing so in Muslim-majority Malaysia, says UPKO president Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, whose party is part of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition government.

The Sabah Christian and caretaker plantation industries and commodities minister dismissed Datuk Seri Najib Razak's support of a government appeal against the 2009 High Court ruling allowing the community to use the Arabic word "Allah" as that would affect the coalition's Christian vote in Sabah in the May 5 general election.

"Whatever the outcome of the appeal is, the fact is no government can enforce a prohibition of this nature," Dompok told The Malaysian Insider.

"So the Christians will continue to use it without any hindrance. I don't think any government at all, not even a PAS government in future, can stop Christians from using this," he added. Apart from Christians, Sikhs too use the term to describe God.

Najib told global news station Al Jazeera in an interview, to be aired today, that he supported the government appeal against the 2009 High Court ruling, saying that Muslims have a different concept of Allah than Christians.

An excerpt of the interview was obtained and reported by The Malaysian Insider yesterday.

The Court of Appeal has fixed May 30 for another case management on the government and Home Ministry's appeal against the 2009 High Court decision that the word "Allah" can be used by the Catholic weekly newspaper Herald.

Najib's administration, however, had issued a 10-point formula for east Malaysia before the 2011 Sarawak state election to resolve the blockade of shipments of Malay-language bibles that are primarily used by Bumiputera Christians.

In the 10-point resolution, the Cabinet, through its minister Datuk Seri Idris Jala, assured the large Bumiputera Christian population in Sabah and Sarawak that they were free to bring in and use their bibles in Malay as well as in indigenous languages.

The Christian community forms about a quarter of Sabah's population and almost half of Sarawak's population, where they mainly worship in Bahasa Malaysia church services and read Malay-language bibles.

Dompok pointed out that Sabah BN's Kadazandusun component parties PBS, UPKO and PBRS recently imported 5,000 copies of Indonesian bibles for the Christian community in the Borneo state.

"Even before Malaysia was formed, this word was already used. In the Iban language, there is no other word," he said.

"In Malaysia, we should be allowed to use the national language in its fullest and it is part of every Malaysian's human right to be allowed to use any language that it deems fit in its

worship," added the former Sabah chief minister.

Church leaders said yesterday that Najib's backing of the "Allah" ban contradicted his 10-point resolution for the Borneo states.

Christians comprise about nine per cent of the country's 28 million population.

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