

Bumiputera Christians in East Malaysia willing to run foul of the law over "Allah" issue

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If the 1.6 million Bumiputera Christians in Sabah and Sarawak are not allowed to use the word "Allah" to refer to God, they would still do so, said two Christian church associations today.

In a joint statement, the Sabah Council of Churches and the Association of Churches Sarawak called on the powers-that-be not to allow religious bigotry, racism and extremism to be perpetuated and poison the nation.

The appeal comes just days before the Court of Appeal rules on Monday whether the Catholic weekly newspaper, the Herald, can use the word "Allah" in its Bahasa Malaysia section.

In the statement, the churches stated that Christians in Sabah and Sarawak, who make up two thirds of the Malaysian Christian community, worship in Bahasa Malaysia and have been referring to God as "Allah" for hundreds of years.

This was even before Malaysia was formed in 1963, where the foundation of its formation was on the basis that there would be no restrictions placed on other religions even though Islam was named the official religion of the country.

Describing it as a tragedy that this foundation was progressively being undermined and eroded, they cautioned that any attempt to hinder the use of the word Allah would instantly turn "native Bumiputeras into law-breakers in the very land where they are sons of the soil".

As such, they called on all quarters to practice mutual acceptance and honour each other's religious practices, beliefs, precepts and doctrines.

A ban on the usage of the word in the Herald, they pledged, will not stop the churches from using the word.

They said that the Bumiputera churches will continue to use the Bahasa Malaysia bible wherein the word "Allah" is contained, calling it fundamental to the profession and practice of the Christian faith.

Describing any move to ban the word as "unacceptable", the churches said, would amount to a serious breach of Malaysia's foundation on religion and religious freedom. – October 11, 2013.

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