

ONE IN CHRIST

SABAH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

MAJLIS GEREJA-GEREJA SABAH.

沙巴教會協會

P. O. Box No. 444, 88856 Likas Post Office, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

22 May 2015

YB Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Joseph Kurup

Menteri di Jabatan Perdana Menteri

Aras 10 Blok E2

Kompleks E Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan

62502 Putrajaya

Dear YB Tan Sri,

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE FOR THE CARRIAGE OF ALKITAB AND BAHASA MALAYSIA CHRISTIAN MATERIALS.

Salam Sejahtera dan Salam 1Malaysia.

02. With reference to the above matter and our discussion on the 18th May, we would be most grateful if YB Tan Sri could take the following response for your urgent consideration.

03. It has always been viewed by us as God's Grace, that many Muslims and Christians have come to share 'Allah', the Arabic word for God, in our worship. Although we might have different understandings of the attributes of God and the teachings of His Prophets, it only means that we have different understanding in matters of faith and belief. Just because we have different opinions about the distance to the Sun or the Moon, for example, does not mean that the same celestial objects should cease to be called 'the Sun' or 'the Moon' by virtue of that difference in opinions. Therefore, it is still incomprehensible to us how, by using the term 'Allah' in Christian publications written in the national language ('BM') to refer to God, it would cause 'confusion' to any person – given that the publications are obviously by and for Christian.

04. As we have mentioned during our discussion, Sabah Council of Church could not agree to the draft proposal that the importation of Christian publications in BM or Bahasa Indonesia into Malaysia ('the Christian materials') would be subjected to regulations and processes in the form of a 'Standard Operating Procedures' issued by, surprisingly, the 'Quranic Text Division' of the Home Ministry ('the SOP'). The incredulity of this exercise is twofold:

- I. Why are the Christian materials subject to regulations and processes under the guise of a Standard Operation Procedure, and
- II. Why is the 'Quranic Text Division' prescribing regulations and processes in relations to Christian practices. Such an act would only be deemed as interfering with Christian religious rights and practices.

05. It is our unwavering view that Christians – like any other persons in Malaysia – have the unfettered constitutional freedom to worship, educate and manage the affairs of our own religion as we see fit. Indeed, for well over a century, Christians have done so in the whole of Malaysia without causing any disturbance to peace or public order, 'confusion', or disharmony. Therefore, it is totally unacceptable to us if the Christian materials are being subject to regulation of any kind, as if they are some sort of contraband or dangerous items. We therefore firmly object to, and hereby request that the federal government withdraws the propose draft SOP. Indeed, we view any misguided perception that there is any necessity to impose such attempts to regulate as a symptom of the federal government's failure to discharge its legal and moral duty to promote interfaith harmony and understanding.

06. We are also alarmed by the highly insensitive and bizzare intrusion of the 'Quranic Text Division' into Christian affairs and our right to manage our religion including the right to have scripture in any language we so desire. We view this as a gross bureaucratic overreach, which must be checked at the earliest opportunity. It is our conviction that the import of Christian materials is part and parcel of our unfettered constitutional right to religious freedom. Any restriction thereof – whether by way of any written law or the unaccountable bureaucratic act of an 'SOP' – would be both ultra vires or an abuse of power in law, as well as irrational and unjustified in fact. In our view the listing of titles of the Christian books/bibles being brought into the country as a means of declaration to facilitate checking by the relevant duty officer at port of entry should suffice without the need of a cubersome SOP which could be subjected to misinterpretation.

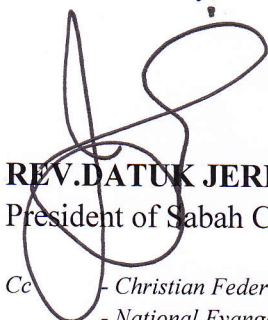
07. Malaysians have always practised mutual respect and tolerance. Therefore, we are confident that our Muslim brothers and sisters, who are by and large tolerant and understanding, would appreciate our sentiment, for it would have been equally intolerable if one day – for the sake of argument – the Quran were to be subject to some sort of regulation by a 'Christian Text Division'.

08. Therefore, the Christian community in Sabah of which YB Tan Sri is a part of, urges that YB Tan Sri do convey the above views of the Christian community in Sabah to the federal government and withdraw the draft SOP.

We take this opportunity to express our thanks to YB Tan Sri for this positive gesture of statesmanship in expressing the views of the Christian community of Sabah here.

May God's blessing be with you.

Yours Sincerely,



REV. DATUK JERRY DUSING
President of Sabah Council of Churches

Cc

- Christian Federation of Malaysia
- National Evangelical Christian Fellowship
- Council of Churches of Malaysia
- Catholics Bishops Conference of Malaysia
- Association of Churches in Sarawak
- MCCBCHST