

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

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**SUHAKAM CALLS FOR RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT FOLLOWING REMARKS
INVOLVING CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS FIGURES**

KUALA LUMPUR (17 SEPTEMBER 2026) - The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) expresses concern over recent remarks made at a political gathering in which Christian religious figures and a passage from the Bible were used as part of a sexually suggestive joke.

Regardless of whether the remarks were intended as humour, religious figures, sacred texts and religious practices should not be sexualised, distorted or used for political entertainment. Such remarks can cause deep hurt to the religious community concerned and undermine mutual trust in Malaysia's multi-religious society. Malaysia's diversity demands equal respect for all faiths. There should be no double standard when it comes to religious sensitivities: those who expect their own beliefs and traditions to be respected must extend the same respect to those of others.

Freedom of expression is a fundamental right guaranteed under Article 10 of the Federal Constitution. Its exercise, however, carries responsibilities, particularly when addressing religion and other matters that may affect relations among communities. Political leaders and public figures, given the reach and influence of their words, bear a particular responsibility to avoid remarks that demean religious beliefs or figures, marginalise communities, or risk provoking hostility.

SUHAKAM takes note of the apology issued in relation to the remarks. In matters involving religious sensitivities, an apology should be clear, sincere and unconditional, and acknowledge the hurt caused. A meaningful apology should go beyond responding to public criticism and demonstrate a genuine commitment to learn from the incident, avoid its recurrence and rebuild trust.

SUHAKAM urges all parties to respond calmly and responsibly. Any assessment by the authorities must be conducted independently, impartially and in accordance with the law, with due regard to the full context of the remarks. Any restriction on freedom of expression must meet the principles of legality, necessity and proportionality, while enforcement must be consistent and non-selective. Public concern should likewise be expressed through lawful and peaceful means. Political leaders, commentators and social media users should refrain from amplifying the incident in ways that could fuel hostility, collective blame or further division.

Malaysia's religious harmony must never be taken for granted. The experience of Sabah and Sarawak, in particular, demonstrates that people of different faiths and backgrounds can live together peacefully when relationships are grounded in mutual respect, equality and genuine acceptance of one another.

SUHAKAM reiterates that religion must never be exploited for political amusement or advantage. Respect for religious figures, sacred texts, beliefs and adherents of every faith is fundamental to protecting human dignity and preserving Malaysia's peace, harmony and unity.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
17 September 2026**