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ASIA/MALAYSIA - More than 5,000 Bibles released by the government for the Christian communities of Borneo

Kota Kinabalu (Agenzia Fides) – Satisfaction on behalf of the Christian communities in the provinces of Sabah, Sarawak and the federal territory of the island of Labuan, part of Malaysia's island: as reported to Fides by local sources, the government gave permission to use Bibles in Bahasha Malaysia language that contain the word "Allah" to refer to God. The authorities have granted an exemption, as there is still an ongoing legal dispute initiated by the Catholic Church, which two years ago had claimed the use of the term "Allah", that the government wanted to ban. The legal process at first instance had ended in a verdict favorable to the Church, but the government appealed and, in the meantime, the court had suspended the use and circulation of these Bibles. Now in the provinces of Borneo, where there is a massive presence of Christians, local authorities have allowed the free circulation of the Bible, releasing, among other things, over 5,000 copies of the ancient version of the Bible in Malay language, called "Alkitab", which were blocked at customs in the ports of Klang and Kuching. The translation of the Bible "Alkitab" is 400 years old: thus for centuries the local Christians used the word "Allah" for God, "well before the formation of Malaysia, established in 1963", note sources of Fides. It was the Christian scholar Albert Corneliszn Ruyl to complete the translation of the Gospel of Matthew in Bahasha Malaysia language in 1612 and the first publication of the translation was in 1629, in a text which contained the Ten Commandments, prayers, psalms and hymns. (PA) (Agenzia Fides 26/6/2012)

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