

**CHRISTIAN FEDERATION OF MALAYSIA
(PERSEKUTUAN KRISTIAN MALAYSIA)**

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CFM MEMORANDUM TO THE NATIONAL UNITY CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL

The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) expresses its heart-felt thanks to the Chairman Tan Sri Samsuddin Osman and the esteemed members of the NUCC for the opportunity to hear our concerns on the issue of national unity in Malaysia on 3rd June 2014.

Bishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing, as the immediate past-Chairman of CFM leading the CFM delegation on 3rd June 2014, voiced his concern that Malaysia is heading for a major disaster if we do not build on our unity as a nation or if we allowed extreme voices of disunity to rend our nation apart. We need measures to curb hate speech and violence as such incidents cannot be tolerated. In the context of our Christian sacred Scriptures, we need to uphold the person and that is what human rights is all about. No one should be forced or coerced by another person or a group. Although Christians are very angry over the ban on the Allah word and the Alkitab and other actions taken by state religious authorities, we, however, remain calm as we want to come together with others to do good.

Here below are our thoughts, concerns and recommendations we would like the NUCC to consider as spoken at the 3rd June meeting and also as highlighted here below :

- 1.1 **RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM**, especially, at its highest levels. Up until the present, despite escalating actions, threats and rhetoric, nothing has been done to stop it. Even one of the highest religious bodies in our nation, JAKIM, has used its Friday sermons (khutbah) to incite hatred and even action against Christians.
- 1.2 There appears to be no policy or official statements firmly addressing extremists to stop them. More importantly, there are sufficient laws in our country to deal with such extremism, but they are being applied selectively, if at all.
- 1.3 CFM urges swift, strong and fair action to stop such extremism which is often presented in the guise of "defending Islam" which is not under attack.
- 2.1 **USING THE WORD 'ALLAH'**. A quick, fair and viable solution is needed as 64% of Malaysian Christians have no other language in common except Bahasa Malaysia, and have used "Allah" peacefully for centuries. We ask for a return to the status quo.
- 2.2 In legal terms, we hold that our position is covered under the ambit of the Federal Constitution, we hope it will be deliberated by the Federal Court, and hence we will not argue the legalities further here.
- 2.3 In terms of CONTEXT relevant to the issue, we wish to point out that Sarawak is a Christian majority state. Yet in forbearance and for the sake of national unity, Christians

have never demanded, let alone made known, what appears to be political tradition – that the majority will hold the Chief Minister position in a state.

- 2.4 However, for the sake of national unity, a viable solution cannot include exceptions for Sabah and Sarawak. It has to be a Federal solution, and one that is binding upon the entire nation.
- 2.5 As we are one nation, this consistency is imperative because there are tens of thousands of Sabahan and Sarawakian Christians who reside in Peninsular Malaysia, and churches in Peninsular Malaysia are where they worship in Bahasa Malaysia and get their spiritual guidance from.
- 2.6 We also wish to point out that the word “Allah” being exclusive to Muslims is the Malaysian exception to the norm in the Muslim world. The ban is indefensible in Islam, as is also borne out by the following: Not a single Muslim country has come out in support of this ban, nor any distinguished scholar of Islam anywhere in the world, nor the Muslim media in any Muslim majority nation. In fact, there is ample proof of the opposite, where Muslims elsewhere are incredulous about such a ban.

3.1 ISLAMIC LAW AND AUTHORITIES IMPACTING CHRISTIANS ADVERSELY.

- 3.2 We note with concern that some of the state religious authorities and functionaries have disrupted the peaceful functioning of our religious right to manage our own affairs as stated in the Federal Constitution in Article 11 (3) (a) seemingly using the anti-propagation state law as provided for under Article 11 (4) of the Federal Constitution.
- 3.3 We would like these authorities to be certain of their powers under such state enactments and not take for themselves powers which they do not have and so adversely impact not only Christians but also people of other faiths as well as those in Islam.

4.1 RUKUNEGARA

- 4.2 There should be **concrete programmes to elucidate what the Rukunegara principles mean** and to have our young people in schools, universities and NS camps concretise it for themselves in their God-given creative genius. In short, let us not just pay lip service to the Rukunegara but to ensure that it is meaningful for all Malaysians.
- 4.3 The **BTN syllabus** for civil servants, judges, legislators etc ought to adhere to the principles of the Rukunegara and the Federal Constitution bearing in mind the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious social environment of Malaysia.

5.1 ICONS OF NATIONAL UNITY

- 5.2 We would like to propose that the government recognises the contributions of all Malaysians who have been **living exemplars of national unity** in Malaysia.
- 5.3 We should first give the award to the **sports men and women**, past and present, who have drawn Malaysians together in support of the nation.

- 5.4 We should also **recognise good neighbours** who acted for others and not for themselves.
- 5.5 **Unity as a culture** needs to be inculcated through these icons of unity. Let us promote unity in the schools, colleges and universities.

6.1 EDUCATION POLICY

- 6.2 There should not be religious objectives in our education policy. We note that there is so much of Islamic civilisation content in the syllabus in the Form 4 and Form 5 History subject. There should be appropriate space for other civilisations in the syllabus.
- 6.2 We recommend that there should be a **Pupil's Own Religion classes** like the Pupil's Own Language classes as before. Perhaps it would be good to even allow students to take religion classes of another religion other than his or her own. Thus, we build respect for each other.
- 6.3 **Tadika Islam** have been set up by Kemas in many places and this has created polarisation especially in the Christian-majority areas of Sabah and Sarawak. This should stop.
- 6.4 **Ustaz and ustazah** teaching subjects other than Islam are sent to schools where the majority are Christians in Sabah and Sarawak. These are seen as missionary endeavours by the Christian communities and should not continue.
- 7.1 **The NUCC** as a body should have legislative powers to promote national unity and to curb instances of disunity.

8.1 MALAYSIA AS A MULTI-ETHNIC, MULTI-CULTURAL and MULTI-RELIGIOUS SOCIETY ought to be recognised and celebrated.

- 8.2 We should teach respect for others and to be respectful of each other in our individual lives, families, communities, schools, companies, social organisations, political parties, NGOs, media, etc.
- 8.3 **Our Government cannot be seen to allow for voices of divide and rule to break up our nation.** It cannot give opportunity to racists and religious extremists to spew forth their hate speeches and actions. It must stand firmly against such and espouse its moderate stance in every instance.
- 9.1 **A NATIONAL PLATFORM FOR INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE AND ENGAGEMENT** that is sincere and meaningful to all is much needed.
- 9.2 Perhaps something like the **Singapore Inter-Religious Council** should be studied and and its benefits (if any) discerned for Malaysia.
- 9.1 Encourage **Christian and Muslim religious students** in Christian seminaries and in Islamic faculties to meet, dialogue and engage in nation-building. One such example is the annual visit of students and faculty of the Seminari Theologi Malaysia (STM) in Seremban with the students and faculty of the Islamic Studies Department of UKM.

10.1 **EACH RELIGION SHOULD MANAGE ITS OWN AFFAIRS** as is provided for under the Federal Constitution in Article 11 (3) (a) (b) (c). No religion wants another religion to control their own affairs. Let each religion police itself.

10.1 If Christians cross the line, then the Government should refer to CFM so that we can rectify the situation.

CFM and the church in Malaysia pray for the chairman and the members of the NUCC as they have the difficult task of producing a unity blueprint for the nation.

May Almighty God grant the NUCC His wisdom, strength and courage to bring forth and prosper a united Malaysia.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Eu Hong Seng', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Dr. Eu Hong Seng,
Chairman and the Executive Committee,
The Christian Federation of Malaysia.