

# Prime Minister to meet religious council

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GENTING HIGHLANDS, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said today he was prepared to meet the Malaysian Consultative Council for Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (MCCBCHS) to discuss their joint-signature campaign against the imposition of Islamic laws.

"I will meet them soon. The date has not been fixed but they must stop their campaign which will only create racial and religious tension," the Prime Minister said.

Asked if he felt that he should make it a condition

for the council to stop the campaign before meeting their leaders, he said:

"It is up to them (to stop the campaign or not before meeting him). But if they are sincere and have good intentions to resolve this issue, they should stop their campaign."

The Prime Minister said that it was important that all parties concerned did not discuss this issue openly as whatever was said by anyone would not be acceptable to the followers of the various religions.

He reiterated his reminder that followers of

the various religions had nothing to fear as the laws of the country guaranteed their freedom of religion.

"If you look around you in Kuala Lumpur, you will not only see mosques but the various shrines of worship of the other religions.

"In some countries, the Muslims do not enjoy such privileges but here all the races have the freedom to practise their religions."

He was replying to questions from newsmen after a closed-door dialogue with top civil servants at the Awana Golf and Country Resort.

Last Saturday, the council said it had no opposition to the imposition of Islamic laws on Muslims but expressed fear if this were to be extended to non-Muslims.

(Dr Mahathir had denied that non-Muslims had been forced into conversion to Islam).

In a statement, issued by Rev Dr Paul Tan Chee Ing and Rev Dr Kim Beng, they said that the council wished to see the Prime Minister to discuss this issue.

It also said that an announcement would be

made later on whether it would continue or cancel the signature campaign.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister has given the approval for Gerakan to set up the meeting between him and the MCCBCHS.

Gerakan vice-president Datuk Alex Lee said tonight that Dr Mahathir had asked party president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik to fix the meeting.

"Datuk Seri Dr Lim will leave the country soon and will only return on April 10. The meeting will be held when he returns," Datuk Lee said.