

Group: PM consented to BM Bibles
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The Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) claims that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's promise that there would be no ban on the Bahasa Malaysia version of the Bible had been ignored by the authorities.

CFM, the umbrella body for almost all Christian groups in the country, said the premier decided last year that the scriptures would be allowed to be distributed freely, at least in Sabah and Sarawak.

This was communicated to CFM leaders by several cabinet members and their aides in December 2009, according to CFM's chairperson Bishop Ng Moon Hing.

Ng said that following the impoundment of another consignment of 5,000 copies of the scriptures last year, Najib was informed of the matter.

"When told about the continued impoundment of these 5,000 Bibles at a high-tea event last Christmas, (the premier) expressed surprise that the order to release the same held in Port Klang had not been implemented.

"However, nothing has been done by the authorities to ensure their release," said Ng.

In all, Ng said that 30,000 copies remain impounded at Port Klang and the Port of Kuching. The Bible, in its Bahasa Malaysia form, is called Perjanjian Baru, Mazmur dan Amsal (New Testament, Psalms and Proverbs).

Unconstitutional move

He said that since March 2009, all shipments of the scripture into Malaysia had been impounded. Prior to this, there were isolated incidents of the same.

"Each time, tedious steps had to be taken to secure their release. It would appear as if the authorities are waging a continuous, surreptitious and systematic programme against Christians in Malaysia to deny them access to the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia.

"Malaysian Christians, many of whom have grown up with Bahasa Malaysia as their principal medium of communication as a result of the government's education policies, must have access to Bibles in Bahasa Malaysia in order to read, comprehend and practice their faith," he said.

Ng argued that since religious freedom is a constitutionally guaranteed fundamental liberty, this stipulation would be rendered meaningless if adherents to a religion were denied access to their religious text in their mother language.

"It is an affront to them that they are being deprived of their sacred scriptures. Many are wondering why their scriptures are considered a threat to national security.

"All these actions in relation to the impoundment of the Bibles continue to hurt the Malaysian Christian community," he said.

Blatant disregard of PM's order

Ng urged the federal government to act immediately and release all the withheld Bibles and also resolve other issues raised by the CFM since its inception in 1985.

"We would ask how the government's transformation programme can be successfully implemented if civil servants can blatantly refuse to obey the prime minister's order?"

"Is the government powerless to act against these 'little Napoleons' who substitute their own interests and agenda in place of the prime minister's directives?" asked Ng.

Yesterday, the Home Ministry denied claims by the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship, a component of the CFM, that 5,000 copies of the Bible in Bahasa Malaysia were "detained and confiscated".

According to a report by Bernama, the scriptures were instead "refused entry" for "not fulfilling the ministry's requirements".

There was no elaboration on what were the ministry's requirements.

It was reported in 2009 that 15,000 copies of the scriptures were impounded by the home ministry. The Sidang Injil Borneo, which is the biggest church in Sarawak and Sabah, has taken the matter to court.

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