

Pakatan leaders meet heads of various faiths

Malaysiakini.com

June 6, 2011

Pakatan Rakyat leaders tonight held a roundtable discussion with leaders from various faiths to address what the coalition perceives to be a rising clamour on religious issues.

"Recent developments show recurring issues raised by racist voices with narrow religious understanding.

(These people) try to peddle fear by making up things that do not exist," PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim told reporters prior to the closed-door meeting.

It is learnt that among the topics of discussion would be the allegation of a conspiracy by Christians to turn Malaysia into a Christian nation, as reported by Utusan Malaysia in its front page on May 7.

The meeting follows one involving Christian groups that Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak held soon after the 'Christian conspiracy' issue hit headlines.

It is believed that Najib will also meet with groups from other faiths in the next few months, as both BN and Pakatan move to consolidate support from the people on the thorny issue of religious tolerance.

Anwar said tonight's discussion, which is part of a series of sessions, including one previously attended by PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang and DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang, is also an attempt to present a true picture of the inclusiveness of Islam.

"The strength of Islam in this region lies in the inclusive, open and tolerant manner in which it is practised," he said.

Interfaith council MCCBHST chairperson Reverend Thomas Phillips said the dialogue session was meant to promote inter-religious understanding as well as to "air grievances".

Among others in attendance were representatives from the Malaysian Buddhist Association, Council of Churches Malaysia, Malaysian Gudwara Association, Taoist Federation of Malaysia and the Malaysian Civil Liberty Movement.

Representing PAS tonight was central working committee member Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud while DAP was represented by its Selangor chief Teresa Kok.