

Conversion bill anti-national reconciliation, says MCA
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MCA has slammed the "stealthy" tabling of the amendment in the Federal Territories Islamic law related to child conversion, as "shocking" as it impinges on the rights of non-Muslims.

"I am shocked to learn that the government is tabling the Administration of the Religion of Islam (Federal Territories) Bill as it contains controversial provisions that affects the constitutional and religious rights of the non-Muslim.

"The tabling of the Bill is tantamount to introducing the laws by stealth, and it's a terrible disservice to the much talked-about national reconciliation," said MCA vice president Gan Ping Sieu in a press statement yesterday.

The amendment seeks to loosen the interpretation of the term "parent" to allow that either one is enough to convert a minor.

Gan also cited the cabinet decision earlier that the consent of both parents were required in the conversion of minors.

"The provision (in the Bill) has run contrary to the collective cabinet decision on 22 April 2009.

"This will seriously and irredeemably affect the religious harmony and national unity of our country," he said.

Yesterday, Malaysian Bar Council president Christopher Leong also argued that the amendment was "unconstitutional" as the federal constitution provides that such words in contention refer to the plural.

Leong cited Article 160 and the eleventh schedule of the federal constitution, that expressly provides that all words appearing in the federal constitution which are stated in one gender also include the other gender, and all words in the singular also include the plural.

Gan said MCA's stand on the Bill was clear and "remains unchanged", and the party was prepared to pursue the matter with BN.

"MCA's stand is clear: any provisions contrary to the earlier cabinet decision must

be removed from the Bill.

"Though MCA is not in the cabinet, we will pursue the matter through the BN mechanism," he said,

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