

MCA leader tells party MPs to vote against conversion bill

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The MCA's seven MPs have been urged to break ranks with the BN and to vote against a move to amend the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Enactment to allow one parent to convert their minor children to Islam.

"I implore on all our seven MCA MPs to vote against this Bill," MCA central committee member Loh Seng Kok (on the left) said today.

"Better yet, I urge all the seven MCA legislators to corral the MPs from other political parties, irrespective of political coalition, to put forward a collective voice against this clearly one-sided (amendment)," Loh said in a press statement.

If need be, he said, he would also raise the issue with the MCA central committee to reaffirm the party's official stance against unilateral conversion of minor children by only one parent.

Echoing several other BN leaders who have voiced their opposition to the Bill, Loh said the amendment was unconstitutional as the federal constitution required both parents to consent to the conversion of a minor.

'Make 2009 cabinet decision into law'

He further pointed out that the cabinet in 2009 decided that if either spouse converted to Islam, the children of minor age should follow the parent's common religion at the time of marriage and he urged MPs to make this into law.

"I implore on the lawmakers to mandate this decision into a law, be it in the federal constitution, Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976, Child Act 2001 or the Guardianship of Infants Act 1961 (revised 1988).

"Separate incidents have shown that as the cabinet decision is not etched in law, one parent has rushed his or her minor children to religious authorities who duly converted them without informing the spouse - this goes in direct conflict with the cabinet decision," Loh said.

Critics of single-parent conversion have raised concerns that a spouse could deliberately convert to Islam, together with his or her minor child, in order to win custody of the child in the syariah court.

They argue that the syariah court would naturally recognise and favour the Muslim convert parent, leaving the other non-Muslim parent helpless in trying to win custody of the child.

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