

Conversion Bill seems set to proceed, MPs to be briefed

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Following an outcry over the tabling of the Bill to amend the Federal Territories Islamic law on child conversion, the government will brief all MPs before its second reading.

NONESpeaking to the media today, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom (left) today said, "We will take a look (at the Bill) as best we can and refer to all views.

"Then we will give a briefing to all members of parliament before the second reading of the Bill."

He was speaking at a press conference at Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia (IKIM) today.

The controversial tabling of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Act Amendment Bill 2013 that seeks to provide that permission from just one parent is enough to convert a minor to Islam has received widespread criticism, in particular from BN component parties.

MCA vice-president Gan Ping Sieu has slammed the tabling as having been done discreetly and without consultation with BN parties, and said the Bill impinged on the rights of non-Muslims.

MCA central committee member Loh Seng Kok on Saturday urged all its parliamentarians to vote against the Bill.

MIC national treasurer Jaspal Singh also complained that his party was not consulted over the tabling and want the Bill withdrawn until further discussion.

Clear decision

Critics reminded the government that the cabinet in 2009 made a clear decision that the conversion of minors require the consent of both parents.

Kedah Gerakan Youth meanwhile said today they will take the matter to court if the Bill is passed.

Earlier, the Malaysian Bar also pointed out that the Bill was unconstitutional, as the federal constitution has provisions that words such as 'parent' required to convert a child be referred to both parents, not one.

Other parties such as the interfaith body Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST), the Malaysian Gurdwaras Council and Catholic Bishop Paul Tan Chee Ing have also all blasted the Bill on various grounds.

Despite the chorus of indignation, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin today insisted that the proposed law to allow one parent to convert a minor was consistent with the federal constitution, and said Jamil Khir has been tasked to follow it up.

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