

## **DPM raises both expectation and fear, says bishop**

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**By Terence Netto**

Catholic Bishop Dr Paul Tan Chee Ing said he viewed the latest statement by Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin on a controversial amendment to a law on religious conversion of minors with "equal parts of expectation and trepidation."

"On the one hand, the DPM says the government is taking into account all views and, on the other hand, he says that amendments to the bill on the conversion of minors accord with a Federal Court ruling and with the equality of persons' provision in the constitution," said the head of the Catholic Church in the Melaka-Johor diocese.

NONEBishop Paul Tan (left) said he found Muhyiddin's disclosure that the proposed amendments to the Administration of Islam (Federal Territories) Bill 2013 had been thoroughly discussed in the cabinet to be "strange because of the objections to the amendments now emanating from BN component parties."

"If the government had been, as the DPM has assured, taking into account all views expressed by relevant parties, it could not have tabled the amendments for its first reading early last week in Parliament, given the tenor of the objections to it and the variety of the quarters from which they emanate," asserted the prelate.

"Nevertheless, I propose to take the DPM at his earnest word and look with expectation to his assurance that the views presently expressed by a variety of quarters will be taken into consideration before Parliament gets to grip on the proposed amendments," said the bishop.

Muhyiddin revealed that Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Jamil Khir Baharom, would make "relevant announcements" on the bill", as if to suggest that the announcements would be of an emollient nature.

But later yesterday, when Jamil himself addressed the issue, in remarks made at the end of a function at the Institute of Islamic Understanding (Ikim), he alternated between placation of the range of objections to the bill and indication that the amendments would proceed, after a briefing for all MPs, to its second reading.

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