

MIC prefers no conversion for children below 18

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Joining critics of the recently tabled amendment to the Islamic law on conversion of minors, the MIC has asked for the Bill to be adjusted to ban the conversion of children under the age of 18.

MIC president G Palanivel said he had raised issues surrounding the proposed amendment to Section 107(b) of the Administration of Islam (Federal Territories) Bill 2013 at last week's cabinet meeting.

"(If) any child (is) below 18 years, a single parent cannot convert him or her. It will become a problem," he told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

He said this when asked about MIC's position on the Bill, which gives the right to a parent who has converted to Islam to convert his or her underaged children.

"We will suggest that we need a slight amendment, that there should be no conversion for those under 18 years. No problem for those above 18 years."

NONEAccording to him, Minister in Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom (left), who is in charge of Islamic affairs, has stated his willingness to study the issue.

"He also wants this to be discussed," claimed Palanivel.

The controversial bill was tabled last week, during the sitting of the new Parliament.

Jamil Khir said all MPs would be briefed before the bill moves into its second reading.

The controversial amendment to the Federal Territories Islamic law, which seeks to give just one parent the right to convert a minor to Islam, has been criticised widely, even by Umno's partners in the ruling coalition.

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

Other parties such as interfaith body Malaysian Consultative Council on Buddhism,

Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST), the Malaysian Gurdwara 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 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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