

Scrap conversion bill totally, says Penang BN leader

MalaysiaKini.com

July 6, 2013

By Susan Loone

A Penang BN leader is not satisfied with merely withdrawing the controversial conversion bill, saying this is "insufficient" as the crux of the problem has yet to be resolved and would probably resurface if not snuffed out completely now.

penang bn press conference baljit singhState Gerakan legal and human rights state bureau chief Baljit Singh (left) said that rounds of consultation with all quarters are still necessary in order to put the matter to rest "once and for all".

"Merely withdrawing the bill is not going to solve the problem, the concerns are still around," he told Malaysiakini.

"What needs to be done is for all political divides to come together, discuss the bill, contribute to the arguments and amend the federal constitution to ensure that no child is converted without the consent of both parents," he added.

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin said the cabinet agreed to withdraw the much-criticised Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Amendment Bill 2013, which has been tabled for its first reading in Parliament.

The contentious part of the bill includes the unilateral permission of only one parent alone to convert a minor.

Earlier, the bill seemed to be headed for tabling in Parliament on June 26 but was whacked by many quarters, particularly those from the BN, including Baljit and Kedah Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang who planned to challenge the government in court if the law was passed.

The amendment refers to Section 107(b) of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories), which allows one parent to convert an underaged child to Islam.

Baljit expressed support for DAP national chairperson Karpal Singh's view that in the interest of humanity, such an amendment should secure the support of all members of Parliament on either side of the divide.

Karpal had echoed Baljit's view earlier that the vote must be taken according to "conscience".

Baljit reiterated that both sides of the political divide must remove their whips and allow their MPs to vote according to their conscience.

'Putting the cart before the horse'

"Input from all sides on the bill is necessary as the issue will affect all levels of society and communities," he said.

"It is time that we come together to resolve such crisis and in future, all bills should be discussed and all parties consulted before tabling in Parliament," he suggested.

"It is putting the cart before the horse to table the proposed law first and then argue over it," he added.

"Also, it can be rather embarrassing for the government to withdraw bills after so much criticisms when they have stated that it would be tabled in the highest decision-making body of the land," he stressed.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/234939>