

MCA wants constitution amended after Jais raid
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MCA Youth has called for an amendment to the Federal Constitution after the Selangor Islamic Affairs Department (Jais) gatecrashed a Hindu wedding last Sunday and took away the bride on suspicion she is a Muslim.

MCA Youth legal bureau chief Eric Choo said the wedding incident at a Petaling Jaya temple was among a series of similar cases involving unilateral conversion of children by one parent.

"The MCA Youth Legal Bureau is of the opinion that this problem stems from Article 12(4) of the Federal Constitution, with Federal Court having previously held that any one of the parents may convert a child's religion unilaterally...

"... as well as the conflict of jurisdiction between the civil and syariah courts that result from Articles 121 and 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution.

"As such, it is important that this problem be resolved through making the necessary amendments to the Federal Constitution," Choo said in a statement today.

The bride, Zarina Abdullah Majid, said her father unilaterally converted her to Islam as a child without the family's knowledge but she has been a practising Hindu all her life.

Federal government must take the lead

Zarina said she had not been in contact with her father since her parents divorced 25 years ago and has been trying to reverse the conversion, but to no avail.

"It is thus high time for the federal government to take the lead by stepping in and resolving this problem once and for all, to stop it from further harming the inter-racial harmony that we have shared in this country for the past 57 years or so," Choo said.

The amendment, he said, would require having Article 12(4) of the Federal Constitution spell out clearly that the conversion of a child under 18 years of age to Islam must receive the mutual consent of both parents.

Article 121(1A) should be amended to clearly empower the civil court to resolve marriage disputes that are registered under civil law, he added.

