

## **Perkasa-CPHM moves to jointly consult hailed**

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**Terence Netto**

Catholic Bishop Dr Paul Tan Chee Ing hailed as a “ripple of hope” the move by Perkasa and a Christian NGO to consult each other first before issuing statements on religious issues that periodically flare in the public arena.

“This move is a ripple of hope and should be seen in the same light as that fatwa in Perlis where custody of children caught in-between when married couples divorce or become estranged is a question to be determined by ability of the single parent to care for them rather than by the promptings of supremacist Islam,” observed the head of the Catholic Church in the Johor-Malacca diocese.

“These are ripples of hope and crossing each other from several centres of innovation and goodwill, they can build a current that can transform our recent history of religious discord,” he opined.

“Christians believe that works arising from the nobler impulses of the human spirit are works of peace and are in conformity with the biblical saying, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for theirs is the kingdom of God.' True believers of peace and justice welcome these initiatives,” he elaborated.

Leaders of Malay rights NGO, Perkasa, and Christians for Peace and Harmony Malaysia (CPHM) met in Kuala Lumpur yesterday for a discussion that issued in a joint determination that both organisations would consult each other first before issuing statements on religious issues that periodically spark cinders in the public arena.

“Although CPHM is not a recognised component member of the Christian Federation of Malaysia nor a body recognised by all Christians, I see this effort of working together between Perkasa and CPHM as the beginnings of the development of a pluralistic personality so necessary for peace and understanding in our multi-racial and multi-religious society,” said Bishop Paul.

'Averse to pluralism'

The Jesuit-trained prelate said he was aware that some religious confessions are averse to pluralism for its connotations of laxity and permissiveness.

But he said that what he was referring to was an attitude of mind that comes by way of a certain humility, a certain hesitance to judge others too quickly, and a certain generous watchfulness for possible errors in one's own perceptions.

“I feel it is something of that kind that led the MP for Parit Buntar to undertake his initiative to dialogue with Christians in the north - in Penang and northern Perak,” he expatiated.

Bishop Paul was referring to the parliamentarian and current initiator of Gerakan Harapan Baru (Movement of New Hope) Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa's (photo) leadership of a group of PAS members to dialogue with Christians in the north-west of the peninsula.

“When he initiated this some five years ago, it seemed a forlorn and isolated gesture but I see a link between that ripple of hope he sent out and the ones we see emerging now in Perlis and especially in the cooperation between Perkasa and CPHM,” theorised the bishop.

“These are all gestures that say we cannot live in religious and cultural silos exempt from interaction with neighbours and passers-by. No person is an island entire of self,” mused the bishop.

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