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Najib's help sought in cabinet decision on unilateral child conversion

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KUALA LUMPUR: MIC has requested Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak to consider a cabinet decision in 2009 on unilateral conversion, which states that a child will remain in the religion at birth until the age of 18.

MIC president Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam said the unilateral conversion issue had yet to be resolved and was a major issue among the Hindu community.

"While the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 2017 (LRA) has been amended, that has yet to resolve the issue.

"This has caused dissatisfaction among Hindus and non-Muslims facing this problem," he said at the party's 71st general assembly here yesterday.

He said MIC had raised this matter in forums and expressed a commitment to find a harmonious solution.

"I ask for political support and

a political decision from the prime minister to consider the 2009 cabinet decision."

It was reported that the cabinet's decision in 2009 was that a child "must follow the religion practised at the time of marriage in the event that one of them opts to convert".

Later, Najib said the government was against forced conversion, adding that there was no such thing in Islam.

"However, the best way to do

this is to amend the constitution and we need a two-thirds majority to do this. Give us support so we can do more."

Parliament passed the amendments to LRA last month after heated debate.

It included the passing of Section 51, which mandates that the divorcing couple must have their marriage dissolved in a civil court, but not Clause 88A, which stated the religion of a child which is a product of the mar-

riage "shall remain as the religion of the parties to the marriage prior to the conversion".

Clause 88A also provides that the child can, after turning 18 and with the consent of both parents, convert to Islam.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said had said the clause would not solve the issue of unilateral conversion and more discussions were needed to find a solution.