

Muhyiddin backs interfaith programme for schools, says faith group
The Malaysian Insider
January 13 , 2012
By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 13 — The Cabinet's interfaith committee today won the backing of Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin for a nationwide campaign to promote better religious understanding in schools.

Muhyiddin gives his blessings to Cabinet committee initiative. — File pic
Tan Hoe Cheow — who heads the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) — said the panel met the deputy prime minister earlier today and briefed him about rolling out a programme next month to instil harmony and religious understanding in national schools.

"We are planning a series of events to promote awareness of harmony and understanding to mark the UN's Interfaith Week starting February 1 and wanted to get his endorsement to involve schoolchildren," Tan told The Malaysian Insider after the group's meeting in Putrajaya. "It's good to start them young."

Tan said Muhyiddin, who is also Education minister, responded favourably to the idea.

"He said the idea was very good," said Prematilaka KD Serisena, honorary secretary to the MCCBCHST, who was at the meeting. "He said OK, set up the committee and to involve the JKMPKA (the Committee to Promote Understanding and Harmony Among Religious Adherents), and that he will launch the programme in schools."

Tan, who represents the Taoist faith, was unable to provide details of the school activities.

"It's all very tentative," he said. "We are still discussing with Datuk Azman (Amin Hassan, director-general of the National Unity and Integration Department) and can only tell you later."

A government official confirmed to The Malaysian Insider that Azman was present at the closed-door meeting but said he could not disclose anything else.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak mooted the Cabinet's interfaith committee in 2009 to resolve interfaith disputes following a series of attacks against places of worship.

Tensions between Malaysia's Muslim-majority and non-Muslim minority have also affected the national school system, as seen in the uproar last month when the Education ministry did not consult the Catholic owners of the prestigious SMK Convent Bukit Nanas on the appointment of a new headmistress.

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