

'Christian threat' seminar with new name will cause suspicion, says interfaith group
The Malaysian Insider
March 31, 2012
By Ida Lim

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 — The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) insists today's seminar for religious schoolteachers will create suspicion despite removing the "threat of Christianisation" from its theme.

Rev Dr Thomas Philips, vice president of the interfaith group, said today "these kind of seminars will cause disharmony and create more suspicion and misunderstanding among the people."

"What kind of atmosphere are they (the teachers) creating for the minds of young children?" he told The Malaysian Insider, referring to the 300 teachers reported to be attending the seminar.

On Thursday, Johor state executive councillor Datuk Maulizan Bujang said that the seminar's title has been amended and will now omit specific mention of the "Christian threat".

However, the Johor Mufti Department said that the title-amended seminar will go on with no change to its contents.

"It is sad to note that they are going ahead with it," said MCCBCHST honorary deputy treasurer-general Reverend Dr Hermen Shastri, when asked about the organisers' cosmetic change to the "Christian threat" seminar.

The seminar was initially themed "Pemantapan Aqidah, Bahaya Liberalisme dan Pluralism Serta Ancaman Kristianisasi Terhadap Umat Islam. Apa Peranan Guru?" (Strengthening the Faith, the Dangers of Liberalism and Pluralism and the Threat of Christianity towards Muslims. What is the Role of Teachers?).

News of the seminar's theme earlier this week drew swift condemnation from non-Muslims, who expressed shock and dismay over the characterisation of Christians in the title.

Chrisanne Chin, Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) Youth Moderator, had asked "why is there a perceived threat? Do they have to create this sense of fear?"

The Cabinet's interfaith panel head Datuk Azman Amin Hassan said the "provocatively-titled" seminar flies in the face of the government's school-level interfaith harmony week launched last month by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

He added that while "it is fine to improve your faith", such seminars "will cause the [non-Muslim] community to feel uncomfortable."

The MCCBCHST had demanded the government to explain why official sanction was given to

the “highly inflammatory” seminar.

Muslim groups, however, have insisted the seminar is necessary to beat back the alleged threat of proselytism, which they repeatedly profess to be real despite the absence of firm evidence.

The Muslim Organisations in Defence of Islam (PEMBELA) yesterday insisted the seminar and its theme were part of Muslim rights that were “enshrined in the Federal Constitution”.

Malay rights group Perkasa previously said it would consider the seminar’s organisers “cowardly Muslims” if they gave in to pressure to cancel the event.

Christians form 9.2 per cent of Malaysia’s 28.3 million-strong population.

In recent years, the Christian and Muslim religious communities have been engaged in a tug-of-war over the word “Allah”, with the latter group arguing that its use should be exclusive to them on the grounds that Islam is monotheistic and the word “Allah” denotes the Muslim god.

Christians, however, have argued that “Allah” is an Arabic word that has been used by those of other religious beliefs, including the Jews, in reference to God in many other parts of the world, notably in Arab nations and Indonesia.

Conservative Muslim groups have also accused Christians of attempting to convert Malays, resulting in heightened tension between followers of the two religions.

The Malaysian Insider

Copyright © 2012 The Malaysian Insider

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/christian-threat-seminar-with-new-name-will-cause-suspicion-says-interfaith-group/>