

'Christian threat' seminar to strengthen Islamic faith, says Johor education authority

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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, March 29 — This weekend's seminar on the "threat of Christianisation" is to strengthen Islamic faith and not threaten other religions, said the Johor Education Department.

Department director Mohd Nor Abdul Ghani said the seminar was being organised by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (JAKIM) with the help of his department and the Johor Mufti Department "for Muslims teachers to strengthen their faith".

File photo of Muslims praying during Friday prayers on the steps of the National Mosque in Kuala Lumpur. — Reuters pic

"This programme is for Muslim teachers and there is no question of threat towards other religions," he said when contacted by The Malaysian Insider yesterday.

"It is for teachers to strengthen their faith and to teach the same to Muslim students," he added.

Mohd Nor explained that "sometimes, there is a threat to convert Muslims to Christians".

He said there was "no compromise" as "if someone is Muslim, he will be Muslim until he dies".

"This programme is by JAKIM with the help (of the Education Department) and the Johor Mufti Department for teachers, specifically in Islamic teaching," he reiterated.

"It is to strengthen Islamic education. The title is 'threat towards Islam', not to other religions."

It was reported yesterday that religious teachers from national schools in Johor will attend an officially sanctioned seminar this Saturday focusing on the "threat of Christianisation". The seminar has sparked outrage among Christians.

The seminar is 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?).

Two religious teachers from 55 national schools across Johor are required to attend.

Christians form 9.2 per cent of Malaysia's 28.3 million population.

In recent years, the Christian and Muslim religious communities have been engaged in a tug of war over the word "Allah", with Muslims 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 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.

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

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