

Christian leaders to meet Najib today over conversion issues, security law

Malaysian Insider

Jan 18, 2016

By Deborah Loh

Christian leaders from their national umbrella body will meet Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak today for a closed-door discussion on various issues of concern, including conversions and the National Security Council (NSC) Bill passed recently in Parliament.

This is according to a leaked email sent to members of the Christian Federation of Malaysia's (CFM) executive council, which was sighted by The Malaysian Insider.

Among those meeting the prime minister are CFM chairman Rev Eu Hong Seng, Rev Datuk Bolly Lapok, who is Archbishop of the Anglican Province of Southeast Asia, Bible Society of Malaysia president Bishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing and Catholic Bishop Sebastian Francis of Penang.

CFM comprises three national Christian bodies – Catholic Bishops Conference, Council of Churches Malaysia and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship.

Sources in CFM declined to confirm the email.

However, another source confirmed the meeting, saying it was a "periodic meeting" which the prime minister would hold with Christian leaders and other interest groups.

"It is just a periodic meeting that Christian leaders have with the PM," the source said.

Others also expressed concern that news of the meeting might draw negative reaction from other groups, given the racial and religious undercurrents which have flared up in multiracial Malaysia in recent years.

No media will be present at the meeting, according to the leaked email.

Among the items to be discussed are Putrajaya's policy on Christian pilgrimages to Israel, with which Malaysia has no diplomatic relations.

Malaysia, however, has in the past allowed Christian groups to travel there with permission.

Another topic listed is the case of Hindu kindergarten teacher M. Indira Gandhi, who recently lost her bid to quash the unilateral conversion to Islam of her three children by her Muslim ex-husband.

The issue of conversion to Islam also covers Christians in Sabah and Sarawak, where it is allegedly carried out in boarding schools.

The recently passed NSC Bill and rising cost of living were other items on the proposed agenda, according to the email.

Christians are a minority in Muslim-majority Malaysia, at under 10% of the population.

While interfaith ties in Malaysia have been largely peaceful, certain issues have flared up, causing distrust between religious groups in recent years.

These included the Christians' legal battle to use the word "Allah" for God, alleged conversions by both Muslims and Christians of each other, and disputes arising over child custody, deaths and burials in the case of those who converted to Islam without their families' knowledge. – January 18, 2016.

Copyright © 2015 Edge Insider Sdn Bhd

Source:

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/christian-leaders-to-meet-najib-today-over-conversion-issues-security-law>