

# Berita NECF

## Editorial

# Allah for All

**T**here should be no copyright in language. Languages evolve over time as they are used to communicate and express ideas. A language is a language because speakers understand one another. Languages and words are universal property and should not be monopolized by any one religion or ethnic group.

Therefore it is surprising that the Malaysian Government, in particular the Ministry of Internal Security, imposes a ban on the use of the words “Allah”, “Baitullah”, “Kaaba” and “Solat” by non-Muslims. In Arabic countries where Muslims and Christians mingle freely, such as Egypt, these and other words which some may think originated from Islam are used freely by all. “Allah” just means God, simple as that. No one is “confused”.

But people do get confused in Malaysia, apparently. This issue is a long-standing one. It started in April 1986 when the Ministry of Home Affairs issued a letter to Christian leaders announcing the ban of 16 Bahasa words, which the Ministry felt were sensitive to Muslims. The ban was made on the basis that the words could cause confusion among Muslims and Christians. The ban was

subsequently lifted from 8 of the words, but remained on the 4 mentioned earlier.

Some of us will also remember the three-week ban in April 2003 on the *Bup Kudus*, the Iban Bible for containing the term “Allah Taala” despite the Ibans having used the term for more than 150 years since the first missionaries arrived. It was lifted after Christian leaders met with the Prime Minister. And there were the stories of books and CDs being seized for containing the word “Allah” which affected mainly the SIB churches. Last Aug 15, three boxes of educational materials for Christian children were detained by custom officers at the LCCT in Sepang during a transit stop en route from Surabaya, Indonesia to Kota Kinabalu.

More recently, the publisher of the Catholic weekly bulletin *Herald* was asked to remove its Bahasa Malaysia section or risk losing its publication permit. The permit has been renewed but the Deputy Internal Security Minister insisted that the publication would still not be allowed to use the word Allah to refer to God (NST, 31-12-07).

In order to put an end to the constant harassment, SIB Sabah has filed a suit against the Internal Security Ministry and

the Government. SIB is asking the court to quash the Minister’s decision not to allow the church to import four titles of Sunday materials from Indonesia as well as withholding delivery of another two titles under the Printing Presses & Publications Act 1984. It is also asking the court to compel the Minister to return the consignment of materials which it claims was “unlawfully detained”.

“These publications are meant for the religious education of our children,” SIB Sabah President Jerry Dusing said in his statement in support of the suit.

Pr Dusing contended that from the earliest days of the SIB, its Bahasa Malaysia congregations

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## Chairman's Message

# Back to Basics

As we begin a new year, I am reminded of what the prophet Jeremiah said to the people of God, "Thus says the LORD: 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; ...'" (Jer. 6:16a, NKJV)

The Church, caught up in the culture of change, has become sophisticated, "purpose driven", "relevant", contemporary and consequently, has forgotten the clear blueprint of the Bible. She is distracted by materialism, slow to make disciples, and much of the time, so in awe of the CEO leadership style, that the Church is guided more by surveys and management gurus than prophetic insights, prayer and the Word of God

We need to go back to the basics, and I would suggest four basics for 2008.

Firstly, the Word of the LORD. Seminars abound but the study of books of the Bible seems to be no longer in vogue. After we graduate from Bible and Sunday schools, we are fed a smattering of Scriptures to the neglect of a systematic study of the Word itself.

We now have more workers who have not read the whole Bible and few actually have an annual Bible reading plan. A new generation is emerging that does not meditate on the Word. Today it's not uncommon to find youths who know who Jackie Chan is but not the biblical heroes like Joel and Josiah.

It is the perfect law of the Lord that converts the soul (Ps. 19:7a). Many lives are not changed for lack of His Word in them. Today's seminars and conferences are need-based and too often fail to stress on both the effectual working of the Word and the Lordship of Christ.

Disciple Making – the recent *My Hope* emphasis is probably one of the best things that has happened in our Malaysian churches. On

the other hand, we discovered few are passionate about winning souls, much less making disciples. For too long we have ignored the obvious, that the number of believers is not synonymous with the number of disciples, and it won't be long before we have a scenario of "more fat than muscles".

This is partly due to the reckless focus on grooming leaders, rather than identifying leaders from the available pool of disciples. We seem so caught up with the "sausage production approach" of making leaders – we fool ourselves when we think we can make "a million leaders" in our "green houses". This is simply not God's way of making leaders.

Disciple making is a non-negotiable basic and cannot be hurried.

Thirdly, we need to come back to Prayer. There are many well-attended prayer seminars and conferences but with hindsight, it's proving to be more hype than substance as we note that the prayer meeting attendance in local churches is still a dismal number. The average prayer meeting attendance in most churches is not more than 10 per cent of the membership. Some churches have dispensed with prayer meetings altogether. We must honestly acknowledge and evaluate the sad spiritual condition of the non-praying Church.

How can we begin to achieve anything significant if the Church is



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

prayer-less?

Lastly, Servanthood. Emphasis is given to training, mentoring, and making leaders, but not servants. The problem is further compounded by the many “mature” leaders who have erroneously “matured and move on” from servanthood onto predominantly leadership roles. There are simply too many advisors, supervisors, “upper echelon leaders” who discuss and dole out the responsibilities, rather

than continue to serve His Body. The leader is often glorified whilst the servant, at best, is “merely appreciated”. Servanthood will never go out of fashion – it’s nothing but good old Christ-like character that God wants us to nurture till we stand before Him in glory.

The Word, Disciple Making, Prayer and Servanthood – these are some of the “old paths, where the good way is”. We do well to build

on these four foundations if we want to be on solid footing in 2008 and beyond. It’s time for the Church to take stock and get back to basics.

The attitude of the Old Testament Church was lamentable – “... they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jer. 6:16b, NKJV). We cannot afford to make the same mistake.

Have a blessed new year! May He be pleased with His Church in our nation.

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comprising mainly native bumiputras from the various tribal groups of Sabah have been using Bahasa Malaysia in their worship and religious instruction and education. They have been freely using the Al-Kitab, the Bahasa Malaysia/Indonesia translation of the Holy Bible where the word ‘Allah’ appears for ‘God’.

“The Christian usage of ‘Allah’ predates Islam. ‘Allah’ is the name of God in the old Arabic Bible as well as in the modern Arabic Bible. Christians in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and other places in Asia, Africa and elsewhere where the languages are in contact with Arabic have been using the word “Allah” to refer to God,” he said.

“In Bahasa Malaysia, the word ‘Allah’ has been used continuously in the printed edition of the Matthew’s Gospel in Malay in 1629, in the first complete Malay Bible in 1733 until today in the Al-Kitab.”

The word ‘Allah’ was used in the Malay language even before 1629, according to Kairos Research Director Dr Ng Kam Weng. “The earliest Christian writing in Malay, Kitab salat as-sawai (Christian prayers), was

printed in Arabic in 1514. Christian catechisms in Malay were published around 1545,” he said. (“Different faiths, same language”, *The Sun*, 31-12-07).

Even political analyst Prof. Farish A. Noor agrees. “For a start, the word ‘Allah’ predates the revelation to the Prophet Muhammad and goes way back to the pre-Islamic era. Christians had been using the word long before there were any Muslims, in fact. Furthermore the word is Arabic, and is thus common to all the peoples, cultures and societies where Arabic – in all its dialects – is spoken, and is understood by millions of Arabic speakers to mean God, and little else. One could also add that as ‘Allah’ is an Arabic word it therefore has more to do with the development and evolution of Arabic language and culture, and less to do with Islam. It is hard to understand how any religion can have a language to call its own, for languages emerge from a societal context and not a belief system.” (*The Other Malaysia*, 25-12-07)

Besides the issue of language, there is perhaps the more important issue of freedom of religion. The freedom of religion enshrined in Article 11 of the Federal Constitution includes the right to have access to, and the use of, scriptures and printed material in Bahasa Malaysia, our national language.

To have scriptures and publications in a language of one’s choice is fundamental human rights. Also relevant are Article 3 [the provision

making Islam the religion of the federation and the guarantee that all religions may be practised in peace and harmony throughout Malaysia], Article 8 [equality before the law and non-discrimination on grounds of religion], Article 12 [rights in respect of religion] and Article 149 [legislation against subversion, acts prejudicial to public order, etc.] of the Federal Constitution. For our sake and the sake of our children, it is imperative that we defend our freedom.

IN January, the Internal Security Minister ordered the release of the educational books for Christian children. Meanwhile the Government, through its federal counsels, has requested for a postponement of the court hearing. They have asked for the date to be deferred to May or June, claiming that more time is needed to file its written response. This is the third journey of the SIB suit hearing.

The first date, set last Dec 20, was put off to Jan 16 when the presiding judge heard that there was a possibility of an out-of-court settlement.

On the 16th however, yet another date – Jan 29 – was fixed after Judge Datuk Wan Afrah Wan Ibrahim met with SIB Church counsels Datuk D.P. Naban, Lim Heng Seng and Bobby Chew, and senior federal counsels representing the Government. The judge allowed SIB to submit its written submission, and gave one week for the Government to hand in its submission.

**For a deeper reading into this issue, refer to Kairos Research Centre’s booklet, published in conjunction with its public forum “Religious Liberty Under Threat”. The booklet contains two articles – “No One Religion Can Monopolise or Copyright the Term ‘Allah’ ” and “The Semantics of the Word ‘Allah’ ”.**

**Hard copies of the booklet can be obtained from Kairos. Alternatively, log on to [www.kairos-malaysia.org](http://www.kairos-malaysia.org) or Kairos Research Director Dr Ng Kam Weng’s website <http://krisispraxis.ath.cx>**

# A CHRISTIAN SOCIAL VISION FOR NATION BUILDING

by Ng Kam Weng, Ph.D  
Research Director, Kairos Research Centre

## **A Christian Philosophy for the Common Good**

“The Church must exercise prophetic witness towards wider society and to government,” exclaimed the young man as he urged his friends to join a candlelight vigil in front of the High Court to express their concerns over a recent High Court judgment that was seen to be in conflict with fundamental liberties.

I can sense the earnestness of this young man and other young people like him who are willing to fight for social justice. They challenge the older generation not to remain indifferent out of cynicism towards the authorities who enforce unjust policies that make life difficult for the common people. These two groups demonstrate two opposing tendencies among Christians on how to relate to wider society. Some Christians retreat into their spiritual ghetto so that authorities will leave them in peace. In effect, these Christians compromise their ideals of justice and end up supporting the status quo.

Other Christians exploit the gospel as a tool for social activism, if not as an ideological weapon, to condemn anyone who does not share their views for being *de facto*, on the side of the oppressors. It was not too long ago when some radical theologians reduced the saving work of Christ to mean nothing more than political liberation. In this case, anger and self-righteousness led to a

distortion of the gospel. Given these competing approaches, the urgent question that Christians need to answer is: In what way is the church to present a prophetic witness to the authorities?

Sober realism should alert Christians to the tendency of the State to become an embodiment of the collective egoism of dominant tribes in a nation. Such states will not take kindly to any criticism from minority groups and idealistic social activists, especially when political contestation becomes intense. The State will certainly hit hard at social activists, agitating for political equality and social-economic justice, with its arsenal of police power that ranges from intimidation to arrests and imprisonment.

If Christian social engagement were merely one of following cues from wider society, albeit cues from recognised experts, it may be wondered why the Church needs to get involved in the name of Christ. Furthermore, without sustenance from a deep Christian spirituality, it is doubtful if Christians can sustain a long-term witness in the face of threats and intimidation. As such, Christian social engagement needs a biblically-informed and well-thought out social vision that includes concrete benchmarks of social justice and democracy. Christian engagement that is based on informed moral

convictions will persevere in the face of adversity.

One fundamental category that has helped Christians devise a comprehensive framework for political engagement is the concept of ‘Covenant’. Michael Walzer correctly captures the social character of the covenant: “The covenant, then, represented a social commitment to obey God’s law, based upon a presumed internal receptivity and consent. It was a self-imposed law, but the self-imposition was a social act and subject to social enforcement in God’s name” (Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of The Saints*, pp. 56-57).

## **Covenant balances freedom and community solidarity**

Covenant emphasises that freedom is not exercised in a vacuum, but within a definite social order. To live in a community is to be open to being influenced by others and to influence others. Furthermore, social order is not seen as inhibiting freedom. It merely establishes the conditions upon which freedom can be exercised positively without undermining social order itself.

## **Covenant allows for diversity in unity**

Social conflicts arise when different

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communities fail to practice tolerance and mutual acceptance that recognizes differences. All too often, social integration is based on terms set by the dominant community because it is assumed that unity requires homogeneity. On the contrary, covenant politics instead, accepts plurality within unity as a given reality in the contemporary world even though plurality is set within a wider framework of transcendent values.

between the State and society. The State is not the whole of society, but is one important actor of society. Other institutions – notably the family, the Church, educational, economic and cultural enterprises – are at least equally important actors in the society. They do not exist or act by sufferance of the State. Rather, these spheres have their own peculiar sovereignty which must be respected by the State (John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public*

The State must be reminded that its duty is to promote a social condition conducive to the common good. It is the duty of the State to restrain evil, combat violence, theft and fraud. In this regard, the rampant spread of crime in Malaysian society in recent times testifies to the dismal failure of the Government in discharging its duty. If we may dare say, the Malaysian state appears guilty when measured against Augustine's pronouncement

**The State must respect the pluralistic nature of modern society with its mingling of diverse cultures and religions. Any attempt to impose a uniform public morality can only result in injustice to minority groups.**

### **Covenant politics fosters moral realism**

A sense of moral realism is necessary to forestall any attempt by the ruling authorities to gain unchecked power. Here, Christianity has the obvious advantage of having a profound sense of human fallenness. Reinhold Niebuhr declares that "Man made in God's image makes democracy possible. Man as fallen makes democracy necessary." That is to say, because human beings are created in the image of God, he possesses the capacity to practice democracy. Conversely, because of his fallenness and capacity to do evil, democracy becomes a necessity. The corollary is the necessity that the power of government be limited and kept in place.

Richard Neuhaus echoes similar concerns in his argument for a limited government.

Democratic government is limited government. It is limited in the claims it makes and in the power it seeks to exercise. Democratic government understands itself to be accountable to values and truth which transcend any regime or party.... In addition, limited government means a clear distinction

between the State and society. The State is not the whole of society, but is one important actor of society. Other institutions – notably the family, the Church, educational, economic and cultural enterprises – are at least equally important actors in the society. They do not exist or act by sufferance of the State. Rather, these spheres have their own peculiar sovereignty which must be respected by the State (John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public*

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of the disastrous consequences of State intervention into other social institutions, whether it is economic collapse in the case of Marxism or religious persecution in the case of many authoritarian religions a few centuries ago.

When the State respects the integrity of different social institutions of society, the most fundamental outcome will be a government that accepts limits in the regulation of religious life. That is to say, government must limit its power to the secular sphere and not assume a religious mantle. Is it not the case that a faith that is coerced is a false faith? In the event that a state demands religious allegiance does it not turn itself into an idol since it has demanded an ultimate loyalty that is due to God alone? Indeed, the State must go further than tolerate diversity of political opinion and religious belief among its citizens. It should find ways to institutionalise diversity and even dissent against itself that includes the possibility of transfer of political power through peaceful democratic means.

We affirm the clarion call from Bonhoeffer when he insisted that the individual's duty to obey the state is presumed until the state directly compels him to offend against the divine commandment, that is to say, until the state openly denies its divine commission to enforce social justice and protect the freedom and dignity of the individual, and forcefully suppresses the gospel. At this point, Christians must choose to disobey for conscience sake and in obedience to the Great Commission.

### **Responsible Action: Going beyond Good Intentions**

Christian social engagement aims at building a covenant nation based on justice and religious liberty for all. It may include the following agenda:

1. Educating Christians on the rights and responsibility of citizenship.
2. Promoting civil society through NGOs and voluntary societies.
3. Supporting particular political candidates.
4. Sustaining the prophetic witness of the Church against the arrogance of power by embodying submission to the kingdom of God.
5. Affirming the moral right to civil disobedience as loyal citizens.

Christian social-political engagement must be propelled by a holistic vision of society. In arriving at such a vision, I offer some of the affirmations formulated at the Consultation on Church and State and Nation Building (Hong Kong, 1988) that offer invaluable help:

1. The preservation, promotion and defence by the state of the right to life for every person.
2. A political constitution which sets limits to the scope of political action so that the basic rights of the people—such as freedom of speech, religion, thought and assembly—are not infringed and are upheld by an independent judiciary.
3. Equal protection for all under the law.
4. Access to enjoy the benefits of one's own labour.
5. The right of people to decide who shall govern them, and to be able to hold such a government accountable with regard to its competency and honesty.
6. The biblical testimony clearly expresses the spirit of democracy. Israel as a people is regarded as a covenantal partner with God, not just as his subjects. God ceded to Israel the choice of its own forms of government (1 Samuel 8). It was even given freedom to renew or not to renew the covenant with

God (Joshua 24).

It should be stressed that Christian social engagement aims at promoting ideals and evaluating social policies both theologically and morally, rather than pushing particular party ideologies. For example, Christians do not reject PAS just to support UMNO; instead, Christians reject the imposition of shariah law on common society that is essentially pluralistic. In other words, Christian social engagement is constructive in seeking to defend the national constitution and democratic institutions.

On the one hand, it should be stressed that the primary social responsibility of the church is to be itself, that is, to be a people who have been formed by a story that provides them with the skills for negotiating the dangers of this earthly existence, trusting in God's promise of redemption. Calvin wrote that the task of the church is to nurture peaceable behaviour characterised by a willingness to avoid retaliation. However, Calvin added, "This equity and moderation, however, will not prevent them, with entire friendship for their enemies, from using the aid of the magistrate for the preservation of their goods, or, from zeal for the public interest" (Institutes of Christian Religion, IV: 20).

Again, Charles West gives us a pertinent challenge, "The Church must project Christ's Lordship into the

It must do so in a secular way, recognising the involvement of every religious project in the mixed motives and misused powers of human life, the need of correction, and the limits of political coercion in the establishment of true humanity. The life of the community of faith with Christ himself should keep things in proper perspective."

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This article first appeared in the September 2007 edition of the Kairos magazine. Reprinted with permission.

## SIB Court Case

THE case has been mentioned in the Editorial. Besides seeking the return of the material seized by customs, SIB Sabah is also asking the court for the following declarations:

- That it is the constitutional right and the legitimate expectation of the Church and its members to use the term “Allah” as a translation of the word “God” in the Bahasa Malaysia or Bahasa Indonesia Bible and other Christian publications.
- That SIB and its members are guaranteed equality of all persons before the law and are protected from discrimination against citizens, in particular in the exercise of powers under the Printing Presses & Publications Act 1984.
- That subsidiary legislation made by order published in the Gazette under Section 22 of the Internal Security Act 1960 pertaining to the prohibition of the Al-Kitab is “unconstitutional and in violation of Article 3 [the provision making Islam the religion of the federation and the guarantee that all religions may be practised in peace and harmony throughout Malaysia], Article 8 [equality before the law and non-discrimination on grounds of religion], Article 11 [freedom of religion], Article 12 [rights in respect of religion] and Article 149 [legislation against subversion, acts prejudicial to public order, etc.] of the Federal Constitution”.
- That in categorising the matter of the use of the word “Allah” as a security issue and in effecting the prohibition, the Federal Government has infringed Articles 74, 76 and 80 of the Constitution by transgressing into a matter which is not within the powers of the Federal Government.
- That under Article 11 and Article 12 of the Federal Constitution, it is the

constitutional right of the church to import such publications to instruct their children in their religion in the exercise of their religious freedom.

- That the federal government and a Minister of the Federal government are obliged to meet and to fulfill the legitimate expectations of the SIB and its members with regard to the protection of their religious rights, including the freedom to practice their religion without unlawful or unconstitutional interference. The Report of the Commission of Enquiry, North Borneo and Sarawak, 1962, (commonly referred to as the Cobbold Commission) noted the reservations of the non-Muslim communities of the two territories to the provision making Islam the religion of the Federation. The views of the two members from the Federation of Malaya which prevailed over the British members contain the assurance that: “Taking these points fully into consideration, we are agreed that Islam should be the national religion for the Federation. We are satisfied that the proposal in no way jeopardises freedom of religion in the Federation, which in effect would be secular.”

Please pray for divine wisdom as Christian lawyers handle and argue the case. Pray for justice and freedom to prevail in Malaysia.

## General Election

THE country’s 12th General Election will be held soon. Pray for a clean and fair election and for God’s sovereignty over our nation by installing the Government of His choice. This is the ideal time for the people to voice their grievances; let’s pray the elected Government would seriously heed the grievances made by the people and take concrete plans to solve the issues, not just engage in rhetorics. Persevere in prayer despite (or because of) the circumstances. God

## Clarification

**We have received complaints that the write-up titled “Street Demos” in the last issue (under “Current Concerns for Your Prayers”) was biased against those involved in the rallies. We apologise for this as the report was not intended to make any such notion. NECF Malaysia respects the right to assemble peacefully, and believes that the Government should seriously look into any grievances presented by its citizens.**

is still on the throne and His ears are inclined to His children who cry out

## Judiciary

OUR judiciary has suffered a massive blow to its integrity with the ongoing infamous ‘Lingam’ Royal Commission. Not only that, our country’s image has taken a battering worldwide.

As Malaysians read in disgust about the underhand dealings and the muck that have been exposed, we must acknowledge the Government for allowing the inquiry in the first place, no matter what the agenda the Government had for giving the go-ahead.

The exposes have been said to be just the tip of the iceberg. We therefore need to cry out to God for mercy. Pray for God’s light to penetrate the darkness of the corrupted courts and bring to light the evil that has been committed in the closets. Pray for His judgement to fall on those who have in any way perverted justice for their selfish gains.

Praise God for the few in the judiciary who remain fearless, selfless and righteous in discharging their duties. Pray for them to be strengthened in their resolve to mete justice. Finally, pray for ourselves, as children of Mighty Judge, that we will not just pray, but take actions whenever the opportunities arise.

# Releasing A Praying Generation

The NECF Malaysia National Children's Prayer Network has had a busy 2007 with many successful programmes organised to launch Christian children into the realms of more passionate and intimate intercession.

The year's efforts culminated in the "Releasing A Praying Generation" training seminars held last November in Penang, Alor Star, Petaling Jaya and Johor Baru.

The speaker/facilitator was Jane Mackie, the founder and national coordinator of the Australia Children's Prayer Network.

Hundreds of children, parents and children ministry workers who attended the one-day sessions were spurred by Mackie's experiences and testimonies of what God is doing

and how He is using children all around the world for His purposes.

While the children learned to look beyond their personal needs to the needs of the world around them, the adults were heavily reminded of their responsibility to train the next generation to rise in prayer.

Together, they learned to wait upon and hear from God, participated in prayer activities in groups and finally, prayed for the nation. Visions were aplenty as they entered into deep intercession.

As a result, the children participants now have a keener sense of prayer and are more passionate about praying for their pastors, churches, schools and friends. The youths and adults, on the other hand, are inspired by the children's spontaneous acceptance of their role as intercessors and their 'childlike' faith in their prayers.

Though the level of participation from the churches is not up to expectation, nevertheless, the organisers believe this heralds the release of the praying generation.

the release of the praying generation.



A Nation

The Malaysia National Prayer Network (MNP) has been finally established after years of mobilisation and consultation with churches and prayer leaders in the country.

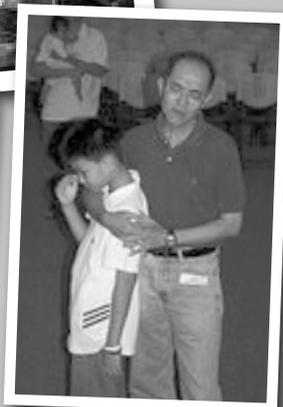
MNP has a simple two-prong objective: pray for the revival of the Church of Malaysia and for transformation of the nation.

The national network, which links regional and local prayer networks, will be officially launched on March 19 at St Paul's Church in Petaling Jaya, after a seven-hour intercession beginning 10.00a.m.

Rev. Dr Hwa Yung (Bishop – The Methodist Church in Malaysia) and Rev. Wong Kim Kong (NECF Malaysia Secretary- General) are the advisors of the MNP committee while Rev. Ann Low (NECF Executive Secretary – Prayer) and Rev. Lee Tak Vui (Basel churches) are the convenors.

The other members of the committee are:

- Pr Daniel Raut (representing SIB and BM-speaking churches);
- Rev. Wong Kong Hoo (Chinese-speaking churches);



# in Prayer



- M.S.Maniam (Tamil-speaking churches);
- Canon Eddie Ong (Anglican churches);
- Rev. Teo Kwee Keng (Assemblies of God churches);
- Dr Chan Ah Kee (Evangelical Free churches);
- Rev. Lee Tak Vui (Basel churches);
- Dr Andrew Chong (North and Independent churches); and
- Dr Chan Geok Oon (Methodist churches).

The MNPN was finally birthed following last December's momentous National Prayer Leaders' Consultation attended by some 40 leaders from mainline and independent churches.

Compelled by the current situation in the country, the participants unanimously agreed to undertake the following initiatives:

1. Mobilise all Christians to pray daily at noon;
2. Hold an annual National Prayer

Consultation for heads of churches and key prayer leaders;

3. Encourage all churches to promote greater visibility of the prayer ministry by getting every believer to be part of a prayer group - be it in church, office, school or neighbourhood - in addition to their home fellowship commitment;
4. Create pastors' prayer Fellowships from all churches of each town/city for regular prayer gatherings for their towns/cities and for the nation;
5. Encourage all churches to hold regular corporate prayer meetings and to persevere in prayer; and
6. Mobilise prayer channels to communicate specific and urgent national issues that may arise from time to time.

## NECF PRAYER HAPPENINGS IN 2008!

Prayer Initiative	Date	Venue	Focus
Pastors' Prayer Shield	Jan-Dec (ongoing)	All local churches	Praying for pastors & elders
Love Malaysia 2008 (refer to poster on the next page)	Jan-Dec	Website/ e-mail/ sms House of Prayer (NECF)	Prayers & Acts of Random Kindness (ARK) Focus on one state per month
Global Day of Prayer (GDOP)	May 1-11	14 states	Pentecost/ revival
Children in Prayer (CiP, Malaysia)	May 29-31	Penang	Raising children in prayer
National Prayer Consultation	June	Kuantan	Networking
Launch of 40-day Fast & Prayer	July	14 states	Pray for Malaysia
Start of 40-day Fast & Prayer	July 22-Aug 30	14 states	Pray for Malaysia
National Children's Prayer Conference	Aug 18-19	Petaling Jaya	Children & missions
BM Prayer Conference	Aug 28-30	Petaling Jaya	Raising prayer networks
National Prayer Rally	Aug 30	Kuala Lumpur	Blessing the nation
SEA Prayer Consultation	Sept 9-12	Kuala Lumpur	Pray for SEA nations
Ministers' Appreciation Month	October	14 states	Remember our ministers
Prayer for the Persecuted Church	November	14 states	Remember our suffering brethren
Thanksgiving Tea Celebrations	Nov 30	Petaling Jaya	Give thanks/ glory to God

# Hands Off our Bibles

## CFM Press Statement

**T**he Christian Federation of Malaysia registers its protest in the strongest terms, at the action of a Custom Officer at LCCT, who confiscated 32 English Bibles belonging to a Christian, who was bringing it from Manila for use in her church.

The reason given by the Custom Officer is that since it is the Bible, it needs to be cleared by the Internal Security Ministry's Control Division of Publications and Al-Quran Texts. Since when have English Bibles become a "security issue" in our country?

Why is it that the said Control Division is amassing such rights to itself that allow Muslim civil bureaucrats to decide for Christians what religious material they can read, or bring into the country?

We have received many complaints from Christians being told to hand over religious books to custom officers at various checkpoints in the country.

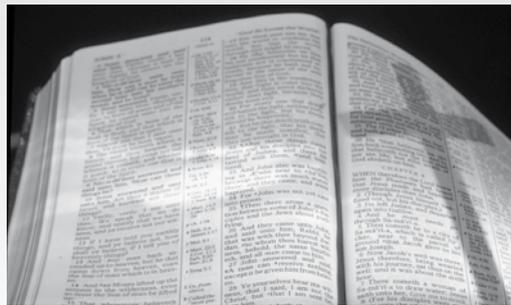
Now they even want our Bibles!

The Bible is our holy and sacred book. We will not comply with any directive from the Government or its agencies that infringe on our right to use our sacred book and other Christian literature.

We appreciate that Deputy Minister of Internal Security YB Dato' Fu Ah Kiow has taken action to have the Bibles returned to the person concerned, explaining that the Customs officer had no such authority to seize the Bibles.

But in view of the fact that this is not an isolated case, we call upon YB Dato' Fu to come up with a directive restraining all government agencies from future harassment especially by Internal Security enforcement officers.

In the run-up to the National Elections, it is important for churches to be convinced that the policy of the Barisan Nasional guarantees religious freedom and would not tolerate any actions that undermine the religious rights of all citizens of Malaysia.



### Reason for our "silence"

Time and again, NECF Malaysia has been questioned on its "visible silence" on crucial issues affecting, not only Malaysian Christians, but also the general population. In the past, NECF Malaysia actively issued timely press statements voicing its stand on issues, many of which were published in the local media.

However, at a meeting with its partners in the Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) two years ago, it was unanimously agreed by all three component parties that only CFM would issue press statements on major issues that affect the practice of our Christian faith so as to present a united Christian voice in Malaysia. Examples are the recent 'Allah' and 'Bible' issue (above) where CFM took the lead on behalf of the Christian community. NECF has respected the agreement (and will continue to do so) while working behind the scene to help resolve the issues.

### Women's Conference

*The NECF Malaysia Women's Commission is jointly organising a three-day conference with Aglow International, a US-based inter-denominational women's organisation with representation in over 170 countries.*

*The conference will be held at Royal Bintang Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, beginning April 9.*

*Women from 16 countries in Asia will be coming together to share what God is doing among the women in their countries. This is the first time the conference, themed "One Voice" will be held in Malaysia.*

*For more information, please contact Linda Manickavasagam at 012-6840645 / 06-8500127 or e-mail her at [linda@add\\_venture.com](mailto:linda@add_venture.com)  
To know more about Aglow International, log on to [www.aglow.org](http://www.aglow.org)*

# Before you cast your VOTE

## Tips for thought for the coming general election

JUST before the 1989 general election, Christian Federation Malaysia issued a lengthy letter to Christians to remind them of their responsibility to vote. The wise counsel given in the letter remain relevant today, and with election scheduled round the corner, we thought it fitting to re-print parts of it to reiterate the call to Christians to exercise their responsibility to vote wisely.

Emotions are running high these days, and while we cannot be divorced from our emotions that are influenced by the current situation and issues, it would be wise to balance emotion with discrimination and wisdom.

Dear Christian,

First of all, we want to assure you that this letter has not been written to dictate or influence you to favour any particular party or candidate. The Christian Federation of Malaysia is firmly committed to staying out of partisan politics. **YOUR CHOICE OF A CANDIDATE AND YOUR DECISION TO SUPPORT ANY PARTY MUST BE YOURS ALONE.** The purpose of this letter is just to consider with you, from a Christian viewpoint, some of the issues that are likely to be raised during the campaign leading up to the election.

### WHY VOTE?

The least we can do to ensure that the 'authority' we are to serve and pray for is a good government, is to help vote such a one into power. We owe it to ourselves and our fellow citizens to go to the polls. However, it is not enough to merely cast our votes; we have to do so with discrimination.

### HOW TO VOTE

In a democracy, it is the people who rule through their elected representatives who, in turn, are generally members of political parties. At election time, these parties issue manifestos in which they declare how they will run the country if they are elected to form the government.

As electors, we will need to examine carefully the manifestos of these parties as well as their 'track record' before deciding how we should vote. As we know, the party that, in the estimation of the electorate, is able to 'deliver the goods' will get to form the government. However, candidates representing small parties or even standing as independents may merit consideration if they are of outstanding ability, integrity and courage.

They could form part of an effective opposition. An important point that must be borne in mind is that our decision to support a particular party must be based on its policies and programme viewed as a whole rather than its stand on a single issue (unless we are so convinced that its importance outweighs every other consideration!).

### ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

In order to appreciate in any depth the conditions under which human beings should live a full and meaningful life in civilised society, we need to know something about their nature and general make-up.

The Biblical view of the human race is a 'high' one. The first man and woman were made in the 'image' of God; they were invested with dignity and authority by Him. He delegated

to them the task of ruling the world. A careful reading of Gen. 1 & 2 will show that humans are physical, spiritual, rational, moral aesthetic, social and sexual beings. All these characteristics go to make up their humanness.

Therefore, in any organised society, the conditions to live and express themselves as free human beings must be guaranteed.

We, as Christians, who believe in the 'high' destiny of the human race must be particularly sensitive to attempts, however well meaning, from any quarter to exploit or manipulate people or deny or curtail their freedom to function humanly.

It is therefore the duty of every sincere Christian to vote wisely in the hope that the government elected will, among other things, secure and safeguard the human rights of all its citizens as well as ensure conditions conducive for them to live contentedly and responsibly.

The following are some pertinent questions that should be put to the contesting parties and candidates.

1. What programme does the party have for ensuring the physical well-being of all citizens,

*Continued on page 12...*

# Plea to Pastors to Promote BK

By Kua Kun Han

Nothing transforms the mind and heart of teenagers as powerfully as a close encounter with the gospel of Jesus Christ and the acts of the Holy Spirit. Studying the books of Luke and Acts is an exercise that can form a God-motivated social conscience for national good.

Less than 1000 candidates sat for SPM Bible Knowledge last December. They were the first batch using the Good News Version of Luke and Acts. The exam paper was definitely do-able; in fact, a pleasant surprise to my students who commented, "Easier than the trial paper."

In January and February each year, Christian students and their parents hunt for teachers. Those who can't find a suitable class give up the idea of taking the subject.

When a rare parent says to me, "I can teach my son?"

I always answer, "You surely can. You'll enjoy using these books. Why not volunteer to teach him and other students in your church?" The mother usually hesitates. She becomes unsure. Will her church leaders welcome such an idea?

The two study guides to Luke and Acts, produced by Issachar, are well-written, packed with footnotes, exercises, summaries, extra notes and answers. A book of past years' exam questions and trial exam marking schemes is also available.

The Scripture Union website [www.su.org.my](http://www.su.org.my) carries info about BK quizzes and receives enquiries through [info@su.org.my](mailto:info@su.org.my)

Teachers' Christian Fellowship (TCF) sells VCDs for training teachers and the book with past

*Continued on page 13...*



*Continued from page 11...*

- particularly with regard to eradicating poverty, providing employment opportunities and housing facilities and ensuring fair prices for essential commodities?
2. Does it have a sound and effective programme for the intellectual development of the younger generation? Is there provision for equal opportunities for all to attain the highest level of instruction/training for which they are capable?
  3. Will it guarantee to uphold the Constitution and refrain from amending it without first obtaining a direct mandate from the electorate (either by making the amendments an election issue or the subject of a national referendum)?
  4. Is it committed to establishing an honest government by providing

stringent measures to stamp out all forms of corruption and mal-administration?

5. Will it ensure that the independence and integrity of the judiciary is upheld?
6. What is its stand on the freedom of association of people? What is its past record and/or future commitment to upholding this important right of citizens to relate to one another socially, politically, professionally and religiously without undue interference or control by the authorities?
7. What does it have to say about the right of access to information through the free dissemination of news? Does it guarantee the freedom of the news media? Is it prepared to amend any sections of the printing and press laws that are repressive? (As intellectual and rational beings, it is vital

that people have all the available facts in order to make decision on issues that are of concern to them.)

## CONCLUSION

We reiterate that the sole purpose of this letter is to help Christians view some of the issues that are relevant for a good, clean and efficient government from a Biblical perspective. God, through His Word, has made direct pronouncements or implied certain courses of action in regard to some of them.

As citizens of a free democratic country, your vote is your own to dispose of as you please. As Christians, you are only stewards of that vote. You owe it to God, your neighbour and yourselves as faithful stewards to cast your vote responsibly to ensure good government so that the nation may enjoy freedom, peace, stability and prosperity under God.

May your conscience, directed by God's Word, enable you to make a wise decision. God bless you.

...Continued from page 12

years' exam papers and also class start-up information. Malaysian Christian Schools' Council (MCSC) and Pustaka SUFES also sell and ship the study guides.

Our youths need not commute across town to some faraway BK class if every church sets up a class for its own students. A few churches especially Catholic churches run classes on Saturdays and Sundays.

Our teens need the in-depth study of Luke and Acts for reasons we cannot afford to sideline anymore. In 15 to 20 years, these Jesus-loving, Word-centered young men and women will be in government and corporate positions of influence. They will bless the churches with their courage to witness and to lead.

Will churches do their indispensable part by encouraging their youths to take the SPM BK paper? Will churches conduct BK classes to teach them God's invaluable Word? Will churches help promote SPM Bible Knowledge for Malaysia's sake?

For more information, please contact: TCF 03-563 75623; SU 03-778 29592; and MCSC 03-795 65310.

### Religious Liberty

How does Malaysia fare in upholding religious liberty for its citizens? Most of us can correctly guess from the way the authorities have been managing the court cases and the spate of incidents that have been happening throughout the country. But for a deeper understanding of the issue at stake, look out for the NECF Malaysia Religious Liberty Commission's book to be released soon. The book is a compilation of papers written by among others, prominent lawyers, researchers, social activists and a pastor. The book is compulsory reading for all who care about the practice of their personal beliefs and convictions.

## NECF Malaysia welcomes 26 churches and one para-church organisation as Ordinary Members:

**Faith Gospel Centre Bhd.**, pastored by Elijah Maniam  
**Victorious Living Bhd.**, pastored by Rev. Dr. Philip Jayabalan  
**KL Bread of Life**, pastored by Elisha Khoo Teik Huat  
**Young Kwang Full Gospel Church**, pastored by Rev. Lee Shin Young  
**The Foursquare Gospel Church**, Kota Permai, pastored by Rajan a/l Gopalan  
**Excel Community Centre**, pastored by Rev. Chang Kin Seng  
**Gethsemane Revival Assembly**, pastored by Harun a/l Mosas  
**CGM Sawit Gospel Mission**, pastored by Wong Wei Yen  
**Trumpets Christian Church**, pastored by Se Kee Choi  
**Glory Christian Centre**, pastored by Philip Wee Chin Hooi  
**Shekinah Community Centre**, Gunung Rapat, pastored by David Tan Seng Kian  
**Eaglepoint Damansara**, pastored by Shawn Kong Nai Yee  
**Eaglepoint Penang**, pastored by Jonathan Lim Geok Ping  
**Faithful City Church**, pastored by Mayakrishnan a/l Govindan  
**ECF Holyword Church**, Kangkar Pulai, pastored by Voo Yong Huat  
**Sidang Injil Borneo**, Mines, pastored by Alizan Leonardo  
**Praise Evangelical Assembly**, Seremban, pastored by Josephine a/p Sammuvel  
**RLM Fellowship**, pastored by Edmund Smith  
**Butterworth Baptist Church**, pastored by Rev. Wong Siew Nam  
**City Harvest Church**, Penang, pastored by Saras Bany  
**City Harvest Church**, Kuching, pastored by George Ting Ming Hing  
**Kayangan Praise Centre**, pastored by Rev. Lim Wai Ming  
**The Redeemed Christian Church of God**, pastored by George Nwaruh N.  
**Jesus My Rock Church**, pastored by Steven Francis Dass  
**Word of Faith Revival Fellowship**, Johor Bahru, pastored by Joseph Thanarajan  
**His Sanctuary Sg. Klau**, headed by Elder Moo Fatt  
**Jeevan Frontiers (M) Bhd.**, headed by Ms. Gan Ee Peng

## NECF also welcomes 16 persons as Associate Members:

**Rev. Joshua Lim Keng Hean** of North Star Community Centre  
**Michael Lee Choon Hei** of Glad Tidings Assembly, Klang  
**Rev. Selvam a/l Benjamin** of Full Gospel Church International  
**Phoon Beng Soon** of Gospel Hall, Kuala Lumpur  
**Dr. Yap Wei Aun**  
**Michael Ng Kok Hong** of Redeemed Christian Church of God  
**Lee Kam Loong** of Bandar Sunway Gospel Centre  
**Dr. David Fung Yin Kee** of Basel Christian Church of Malaysia  
**Doh Mee Yuen** of Damansara Utama Methodist Church  
**Damian Yeo Shen Li** of Latter Rain Church, Melaka  
**Vivian Chan Thoon Yeok** of Cornerstone Baptist Church  
**Rev. Andrew Phang See Yin** of Christ Church, Penang  
**Pr. Philip de Hart** of Presbyterian Church in America  
**Randall Chee Choon Lim** of Vineyard Outreach  
**Tan Hong Lu** of White Fields Assembly, Seremban  
**Paraidathathu Thomas a/l P. G. Thomas** of St. Thomas Mar Thoma Church

# State Spot

Although Penang is the second smallest state after Perlis, it has the highest population density in Malaysia.

In 1786, Penang became the first British outpost in the then Malaya and Southeast Asia (SEA). The first newspaper – the Prince of Wales Island Gazette – was published here in 1805. The present legal system is said to have its origin in the 1807 Charter of Justice introduced by Francis Light. The oldest bank in the country – Standard Chartered Bank – opened its doors in 1875. Chung Hwa Confusion School, founded in 1904, marked the first immigrant school in Malaya. The oldest Chinese newspaper, Kwong Wah Daily which is still in circulation today, was founded in 1910 by Dr Sun Yat-Sen in Penang.

In 1957, George Town became the first town to be granted a city status by Her majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon says that the state sets its goals on becoming a developed state by 2010. The state's per capita income is currently ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> after Kuala Lumpur (NST, 24/10/07).

## HISTORY IN BRIEF

In 1786, the Sultan of Kedah offered Penang to the British East India Company in exchange for protection from Siam and Burma. On 11 Aug, Captain Francis Light arrived and renamed it Prince of Wales Island. Light, who was only interested in securing a safe port for trading purposes, reneged on the deal. The Sultan tried to retake Penang but failed. A treaty was signed in 1791 and Penang was handed over to the British for an annual honorarium of 6,000 Spanish dollars. There was however no guarantee of protection.

Seberang Perai (Province Wellesley) was added to Penang in 1800.

In 1805, British Residency was established

## Penang



Penang, 'Pearl of the Orient'

**Capital:** Georgetown

**(Royal Capital):** Arau

**Governor:** Tun Dato' Seri Haji Abdul Rahman Haji Abbas

**Chief Minister:** Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon

with the arrival of Stamford Raffles as the Deputy Secretary to the Governor of Penang. In 1826, Penang, along with Melaka and Singapore became part of the Straits Settlements under British administration in India until 1867 when the direct British colonial rule began.

Penang island was declared a free port (until 1969) to attract traders. The colonial state thrived economically and drew people from different cultures, making it extremely cosmopolitan.

Penang became part of the Malayan Union in 1946 and a state of the Federation of Malaya in 1948.

Gerakan – an opposition party before joining Barisan Nasional in early 1970s – has been in control of Penang since the 1969 general elections. The position of chief minister is the only one in the country held by a Chinese since independence.

## Religious Freedom & Extremism

Penang does not have provisions on the procedure and punishment for apostasy. It has not enacted the Control and Restriction Bill to prevent other faiths from spreading their beliefs among Muslims. Nonetheless, the state religious authorities are no less zealous than their counterparts in other states.

In Feb 2007, an elderly couple and their 10 children in Nibong Tebal were in a

dilemma over their religious status because of their Muslim names. The couple, married for more than 40 years but did not register their marriage, claimed that they had been practising Hindus since birth. Eventually, the case was resolved with the couple returning to Islamic faith and the children remaining Hindus. "The council has built a house for them in Kebun Baru and they are living separately from their children," said the religious council chairman Shabudin Yahaya.

Siti Fatimah Tan (Tan Ean Huang), a Chinese woman who married an Iranian Muslim in 2004 (who subsequently left her), wants the state Islamic Religious Council to declare that she is no longer a Muslim. She also wants the Syariah court to change the religious status on her identity card from Muslim to Buddhist. Her case is still pending.

In October, there was a legal battle in relation to an insurance payout. A Hindu woman, whose son died, claims to be the rightful beneficiary. Koperasi Angkatan Tentera however doubted if she was still "the beneficiary to the deceased's estate under Syariah law" since the deceased had embraced Islam. The payout was handed to Amanah Raya Bhd. The woman's lawyer argues that Syariah law has no jurisdiction over the matter because insurance was purchased before the conversion. A court ruling has yet to be made at the time of this report.

In November, 45 people, including the wife of the banned Al-Arqam movement's former leader Ashaari Muhammad, were brought before the Syariah Court. They were charged with various religious offences (Star Online) for practising deviant teaching. A court decision has yet to be made.

The first recorded case of deviationism in Malaysia was the Taslim, founded in the 19th century in Seberang Perai, by Ahmad Matahari.

Some reports from the past years in relation to religious overzealousness:

- In 2003, teachers and students in several mission schools were forced to recite Islamic prayers every morning, according to a state opposition leader.
- In 2006, the netball team of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Abdullah Munshi was ordered by the principal to quit a tournament because some students removed their tudung during the match.
- In May 2006, Muslim mobs broke up a forum being held on Penang Island to discuss religious pluralism and constitutional protection for minority religious rights.

## Racial Tension & Inter-Religious Conflicts

Numerous religious sites express the religiosity of the people in Penang. For the most part relationship among the different people groups has been harmonious. Nevertheless, the state recorded the highest number of cases involving conflicts in 2006, ranging from social and interpersonal disputes to religious matters. The underlying tension and the lack of trust for one another are a reality.

A minor accident between two motorcyclists during the New Year's Eve sparked off a serious row between two groups in front of a temple in Kampung Manis, Perai. Rumours of racial tension were subsequently spread until the police had to issue a stern warning against it (NST, 3/1/08)

In 2006, the call by the Penang Chinese Chamber of Commerce – to put an end to the 30% bumiputera quota in housing and commercial projects – was labeled a racial statement. The Penang Umno Youth cautioned the chamber not to “play with fire,” accusing it of going against the Government's efforts to raise the economic standard of the Malays. The socio-economic status of Malays was a hot issue as several Umno leaders claimed that the state administration under Tan Sri Dr Koh was marginalising the community. There were calls to rotate the post of chief minister among the BN component parties.

In the same year, the Chinese community was angered by the demolition of Tou Mo Kong Taoist Temple in Bukit Mertajam.

The state Deputy Chief Minister and a local Umno Youth leader were implicated. Subsequently, a new mechanism to handle cases involving places of worships was introduced, denying local authorities the power to act on its own.

In retrospect, the above events are not surprising as many past and recent incidents tell us that the subject of race and religion is touchy and vulnerable to political manipulation.

The infamous 1957 Chingay riot (rising from the minor clashes between small groups of Chinese and Malays) shut down Penang for days. The British almost did not grant Malaya independence for fear of major bloodshed if they were to retreat.

When the Straits dollar devalued in 1967, an economic boycott was called. The strike turned violent and subsequently assumed racial overtones with politicians expressing grievances and some calling for more violence. Penang was on a 24-hour curfew.

In May 1969, another communal violence erupted when the ruling Alliance Party suffered a major setback in the general elections, losing Penang to Gerakan (then opposition) and Kelantan to PAS with Perak and Selangor on the verge of falling into the opposition's hands. Despite holding a two-third majority, Gerakan decided to share its state power with the Alliance in February 1972 in return for federal support.

In March 1998, Malay Muslims and Indian Hindus in Kampung Rawa engaged in street brawls, following a dispute over the construction of a temple. The police had to use tear-gas to break up the fights.

Most recently, the state government came under criticism when it proposed to shift Poh Tey Secondary Girls School from its present location. The move was seen as denying the Chinese community education opportunity.

## Other interesting historical facts

- The first Anglican church in SEA: St. George's Church, established in 1816,
- The first and oldest English School in SEA: Penang Free School, founded by Reverend Sparke Hutchings in 1816.
- The oldest girls' school in SEA: the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus, established by a French Sisters' Mission in 1852.

- The first Freemason lodge in Malaysia was established in Penang: Lodge Neptune, of which Francis Light was a member, closed down a few years later. The lodge Royal Prince of Wales, established in 1875, still remains.
- One of the oldest Chinese temples in Penang: the Kuan Yin Teng or the Goddess of Mercy Temple was built in 1800 by early immigrant settlers from China.
- The largest Buddhist temple in SEA: the Temple of Supreme Bliss, popularly known as Kek Lok Si.
- The first Sikh temple was set up in 1881.
- First international Chinese school is expected to be set up (Star, 10/9/07)

## Pray:

1. The people of the 'Pearl of the Orient' may experience spiritual breakthrough and know the true God.
2. State government and local councils:
  - a) Consist of men and women of integrity and character;
  - b) Are prudent and wise in managing state funds;
  - c) Are effective and competent in implementing policies; and
  - d) Prioritise public interests.
3. For the police to be wise and bold in combatting rising crime.
4. Against the spirits of religious extremism.
5. Against those who incite racial and religious hatred for political gain: “Let the lying lips be mute, which speak arrogantly against the righteous with pride and contempt” (Ps 31:18).
6. That the authorities and public uphold religious freedom and respect individual rights to choose and practise his faith.
7. For local churches, pray:
  - a) they return to their First Love and the Word of God;
  - b) they have unity in vision, are fervent in prayer, committed to networking, willing to share resources, humble in serving one another;
  - c) against the sense of self-sufficiency, materialism and inward-looking mindset;
  - d) for Kingdom agenda and mentality over individual church agenda;
  - e) for wisdom and boldness in evangelism;
  - f) for youths to have passion and fire for Christ; for the older generation to be good role models to the youths; and
  - g) effective marketplace ministries and youth outreaches.

**Let's pray for PAKISTAN which has been in turmoil for a long time, especially after the assassination of Benazir Bhutto. Here's a chronology of recent major political events in Pakistan:**

**March 9, 2007** - President Pervez Musharraf suspends Supreme Court Justice Iftikhar Chaudhry over allegations of misconduct. Lawyers rally around the top judge and Musharraf's popularity plummets.

**July 10** - Musharraf orders troops to storm the Red Mosque in Islamabad to crush a Taliban-style movement there. At least 105 people are killed. Militant attacks and suicide bombings follow.

**July 20** - Supreme Court reinstates Chief Justice Chaudhry, dealing a blow to Musharraf's authority.

**July 27** - Musharraf meets former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in Abu Dhabi for inconclusive talks on how to move the country towards a civilian-led democracy. Bhutto demands that Musharraf step down as army chief.

**Sept 10** - Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is arrested at Islamabad airport on his arrival from exile, despite the Supreme Court clearing his return. He is deported to Saudi Arabia.

**Oct 2** - Musharraf's government announces it will drop graft charges against Bhutto, clearing the way for her return.

**Oct 6** - Musharraf wins a presidential vote by legislators. Supreme Court holds off confirming legality of vote.

**Oct 19** - Suicide bomber tries to assassinate Bhutto in Karachi as she returns from eight years of exile. At least 139 people are killed in one of the country's deadliest attacks.

**Nov 2** - Supreme Court reconvenes to decide if Musharraf was eligible to stand for re-election while remaining as army chief.

**Nov 3** - Musharraf imposes emergency rule, detaining thousands



of opposition politicians and lawyers.

**Nov 11** - Musharraf says election will be held by January 8.

**Nov 13** - Bhutto is placed under house arrest for a week in Lahore, hours before a planned march against emergency rule. Bhutto says Musharraf must quit as president.

**Nov 14** - Sharif says he is ready to work with Bhutto.

**Nov 15** - Musharraf appoints Senate Chairman Mohammad Mian Soomro to head a caretaker government to oversee elections.

**Nov 25** - Sharif returns from exile.

**Nov 28** - A tearful Musharraf hands over command of the army to General Ashfaq Kayani.

**Nov 29** - Musharraf is sworn in as a civilian leader.

**Nov 30** - Bhutto publishes her manifesto for the January election, keeping open the option of boycotting the vote.

**Dec 9** - Sharif says he will take part in January 8 election.

**Dec 15** - Musharraf lifts state of emergency and restores the constitution.

**Dec 27** - Bhutto is assassinated in a gun and bomb attack after a rally in Rawalpindi. At least 16 people die in all.

**Dec 28** - Benazir Bhutto is buried in her home province of Sindh in the south.

**Dec 30** - Benazir Bhutto's party names her son and husband to succeed the slain opposition leader but doubts grew about whether a Jan. 8 poll aiming to transform Pakistan from military rule would go ahead.

## Prayer points:

- |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| 1. Freedom and democracy to prevail. Elections to be held soon. | 2. To solve problems by peaceful means, not violence. | 3. Against Muslim extremists and terrorists using Pakistan as a base of operation. | 4. The Church to be strong in persecution, and to be the light in a dark place. |
|---|---|--|---|