

A bi-monthly  
publication of the  
National Evangelical  
Christian Fellowship  
of Malaysia

# Berita NECF



Editorial

## Marks of a leader who leads

It has been over a month since that watershed day in our history when voters vented their frustration against the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition and handed the opposition Barisan Rakyat (now Pakatan Rakyat) alliance its biggest victory in history. Political analysts have expressed doubt that Malaysia could ever see a repeat of this 12<sup>th</sup> general election.

Prior to polling day, for two dizzying weeks of campaigning period, Malaysians from all walks of life and ages thronged the many *ceramahs* (public talks) to listen to the candidates' persuasions. The *ceramahs* by the opposition alliance of DAP, PKR and PAS were particularly popular, and many elderly folks among the multitudes commented that they had never in their long life experienced such an emotionally-charged election.

The opposition's mantra of denying BN a two-third majority in parliament was religiously chanted everywhere. Yet, few actually believed it was achievable. As an example, five Malaysiakini journalists vowed to shave their heads bald if it happened. As the results started pouring in, they began to make appointments with

their barbers.

On March 8, Malaysian voters yielded to the opposition's mantra. More than that, they presented the opposition five states, of which three (Penang, Perak and Selangor) are considered golden geese. In doing that, they pounded Umno and trounced its partners – MCA, MIC and Gerakan.

Everyone has a roll of reasons for the grand defeat – from the *keris* to Khairy, the Lingam video to Pak Lah's leadership. Other well-worn reasons bandied about are:

- Corrupt government leaders who milked the country's coffers;
- Inflation that has burdened the masses;
- The grave crime situation;
- The disdainful, supercilious, racist Umno leaders who gleefully hurled inflammatory remarks at the other races;
- The sexist Umno leaders who passed derogatory remarks on women;
- The palpable religious tension as a result of body-snatching episodes, temple and church destructions and religious court cases;
- The judiciary rot;
- The inept and corrupt police;

- Hindraf's charges of discrimination against the Indians;
  - Bersih's demands for clean and fair elections;
  - The 'Anwar factor';
  - The mainstream media's repulsive propaganda of BN during the campaigning period...
- And the list goes on...

### REFLECTION – 4Cs Lessons for Christian leaders

The saying that this election is a wake-up call to BN has been too clichéd a phrase. Yet, it is so. But it is a wake-up call not just to the

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## Chairman's Message

# My Wish List



By Rev. Eu Hong Seng

The recent general election has indeed been a surprise to practically all.

Many were taken aback by the unprecedented win (and loss) and the slaying of political giants by unknowns. The relatively peaceful transition and opposition's decision to withhold provocative celebrations show responsibility and maturity on the part of the leaders and rakyat.

Indeed it's heartening to note that democracy is alive in Malaysia.

Now that it is over, I have a wish list.

Firstly, it's that the Church would continue to be hopeful. The psalmists have continually encouraged the people of the Book to "hope".<sup>1</sup> Stay put to make a difference. Hope in God. Do not fear, don't run. Hope in God. Don't just look at the system but look to God, the author of our hope. He has once again proven Himself to be faithful. He alone is our future. There is always hope.

Secondly, be proactive – the recent general election saw more Christians politically aware and enthusiastic in wanting to examine the manifestos of the different political parties, even going to ceramahs to hear what the political candidates had to say. I think the number and intensity of Christians that made such efforts are admirable.

It was also the first time that NECF Malaysia engaged in dialogues with MCA (led by Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting), DAP (led by Secretary-General Lim Guan Eng) and de facto PKR leader Anwar Ibrahim to impartially hear them. Because we are non-partisan, remember...

Now that the election is over, I pray that we would not forget to hold the new MPs and state assemblymen accountable to their pledges, to tell them we will not stand for more of the same. We would like them to deliver their promises. And we are in no mood for nonsense.

In this election, we see the races closing ranks especially in the urban areas. On leaving our different polling stations, my wife and I were encouraged by Malays with thumbs-up signs of "rocket, rocket." I do not think the results were a vote against the establishment, individual candidates or against a particular race, but a vote against arrogance, corruption and religious insensitivities.

Unity is rearing its "beautiful" head – be discerning. For the first time, many can believe and see the possibility of the ever-elusive "Bangsa Malaysia." If ever there is political will to usher in this new Malaysian identity, it is now.

Let us also be vigilant. Prior to the elections, there was a round-the-clock prayer initiative, testimony to our belief that our prayers for the nation are fundamental and imperative.

Now that the election is over, it is really just the beginning of much that needs to be done. The seed of corruption is still there, the ACA is still not as strong and independent as it should be, the judiciary fiasco is still unresolved and worse still, the Church

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# DON'T Pray Urgently, Pray Passionately, Pray Continually stop now

Praise God for the smooth, event-free (almost) election. Surely, it was the divine hand of God that kept the nation from tipping into turmoil. Often, it seemed as if the nation was rocking on the edge of mayhem as election results trickled in after polling closed.

When it became apparent that the opposition Barisan Rakyat (comprising DAP, PKR and PAS) was making heady wins, the police promptly and wisely ordered a ban on all victory celebrations. Opposition leaders also issued “zero celebrations” orders to their members, out of respect to the shocked candidates who had lost. Praise God for keeping the peace and calm that we had prayed for way before polling day.

We congratulate all the candidates who have won and pledge our continued prayers and support as they commit to serve their constituents humbly, sacrificially and with integrity, fairness and deep concern for their welfare.

Our hearts go out to the deserving candidates who lost at the polls, and for them, we also offer our continued prayers that they will continue to serve the rakyat, alongside the appointed representatives

Malaysia’s 12<sup>th</sup> general election has been a historical event, marking the maturity of voters and celebrating the power of the ballot. Evangelical Christians in Malaysia look forward to a new era of inter-racial respect, religious freedom, respect for places of worship and integrity in governance.

We look forward to a nation free from corruption, communal hatred, political intimidation, judicial rot and many other ills that have plagued the system. It is therefore imperative that we continue to pray and seek the peace of our nation, to “pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace.” (Jeremiah 29:7b).

Let us pray for our “kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. (1 Tim 2: 2)

*Continued from page 2...*

is ill-reputed to rest prematurely. We must continue to pray that God would transform this nation into one that would be the envy of many.

Lastly, let us be bold. During the times of Acts, the Church was warned “not to speak at all.”<sup>2</sup> Today, the Church has to be cajoled, even begged, to be unafraid and speak up. It’s time we make our voices heard and say, “We

want a clean, just, righteous, sincere and transparent government.”

And as we, the Church, “do what is right, love mercy, walk humbly”<sup>3</sup> before our God, I have no doubt we would be back on track.

In the December 2007 issue of Berita NECF, I said, “many fail to see that our God wants to be merciful to our nation. This is my hope.”

Today, we see this come true in Malaysia!

## PRAY

- 1** FOR good and effective governance of the Federal Government and all states. Wisdom to be upon the PM and his cabinet, and also wisdom and favour for the new state governments of Penang, Selangor, Perak and Kedah;
- 2** FOR harmonious working relations among the Barisan Rakyat parties –PKR, DAP and PAS – and for harmonious and productive relations in all aspects between the Federal Government and the five states under opposition rule;
- 3** FOR the judiciary and for the de facto Minister of Law, Zaid Ibrahim. May God be with him and use him to restore the integrity and independence of the judiciary. Pray for justice and righteousness to reign in this nation;
- 4** FOR the candidates who have won that they will remain humble and work diligently to fulfill their promises to the rakyat;
- 5** FOR those who failed to win that they will be gracious in their loss, they will continue to serve the rakyat and play an effective “check and balance” role;
- 6** AGAINST those who are out to stir dissension and create strife and unrest;
- 7** FOR all to refrain from spreading messages, such as SMS and e-mails, that may cause racial and religious misunderstandings; and
- 8** FOR the elected members of parliament (MPs) that they will uphold the law-making institution, and live up to the rakyat’s expectation as role models of integrity, courage, fairness and selflessness.

### Footnote

<sup>1</sup> Psalm 38:15 (NKJV) “For in You, O Lord, I hope; You will hear, O Lord my God.” Psalm 42: 5 “Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him; the help of My countenance and my God.”

<sup>2</sup> Acts 4:18

<sup>3</sup> Micah 6:8 NLT

*Continued from page 2...*

vanquished but to all in leadership position to never take things for granted.

There are many things we Christian leaders can learn from March 8. We propose just four – the four Cs.

### **Care and Concern**

At the end of the day, all the reasons for BN's failure can be summarised thus – they failed to listen to the voice of the people, they were insensitive to the people and thus, they failed to meet their needs. In short, BN demonstrated a lack of genuine concern for the people.

As spiritual leaders over our flocks, we must incline our ears to our people, always listening out to the bleating of our lambs. Because pastoral care and concern is paramount to the feeling of wellbeing among our members, we must always be sensitive to their needs, and take relevant and effective measures to meet them as best as we can. Failure to do so will cause them to turn away.

One of the ways we can provide relevant pastoral care to our members is to develop the sense of kinship, or 'family-ness' – among them – the 'WE' rather than the 'I' mindset – where each member is regarded as a priesthood of all believers. For this, we need to help build spiritually-strong individual Christians who can look beyond their own individual needs to the larger body of Christ and the community.

Good leaders need to be personally engaged with the grassroots. We must never get to the stage where we are 'inaccessible, unaccountable, infallible and immutable'. When we become inaccessible to our sheep, we become unaccountable to anyone. We will then think we are infallible and immutable in that we become so puffed up and hardened that we are unable to change.

### **Competency**

The BN leadership has been seen to

be largely inefficient and ineffective. They were leaders but they were not leading. There were many words but no work – mere rhetoric. Their incompetence resulted in their inability to execute effective policies to efficiently implement projects. Instead, they wasted untold sums of taxpayers' money, arousing deep resentment among the masses, which was acutely expressed on March 8.

Just as competency is vital to the good health of a country's administration, it is also crucial to the health of any ministry or congregation. Spiritual leadership is more than preaching and talking.

The Church must radiate vibrancy and life to the community and this can only come about if it has competent, capable leaders who are able to lead effectively and efficiently.

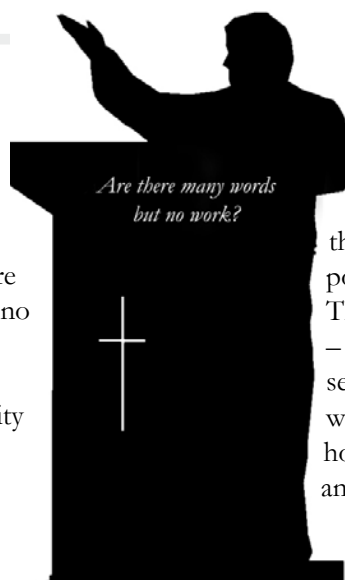
What are competent leaders like? Firstly, they are knowledgeable of current issues and they know how to interpret them evangelistically, strategically and prophetically.

Secondly, they have deep knowledge and understanding of God's holy Word and they are thus able to present apologetic responses to the many questions from their members.

And thirdly, they know how to work with people and utilise resources to the fullest. In short, competent spiritual leaders are adequately and appropriately equipped to deal with the issues and challenges confronting the congregation.

### **Character**

Many BN leaders were reviled by the people because of integrity issue. They were perceived to be corrupt and immoral, and a number of them were



known to be so. It was far too obvious to the masses that these leaders held their positions for personal gains. They were in it for the 3Gs – gold, girl and glory. The seduction of materialism and wealth has derailed many an honest leader from his calling and focus.

The temptation of sexual immorality is so insidious that many good leaders

have unconsciously succumbed to its irresistible lure.

Meanwhile, the pull of power has drawn many leaders into a state of self-preservation for the purpose of controlling their members. Spiritual leaders must always be conscious of these trappings and guard themselves against the 3Gs at all costs, even with their very own lives.

### **Commitment**

This election has shown that Malaysians have come of age. They have become politically conscious of their influence and right to determine their leaders. They know now they have the ability to make a change. And they expect their leaders to be committed to their service, or else they will exercise their right to remove them.

Our sheep need shepherds who are devoted to their mission, committed to their task and sacrificial in their service. Are we, spiritual leaders, meeting our flocks' expectation? Are we "abandoned" to our service to the Lord and to our flocks? If we are not, then we must be ready for "change" – either we change or we are changed (replaced).

### **Conclusion**

Concern for our flock. Competency in our capabilities. Character of heart. Commitment to our ministry – may these be engrained in our hearts and minds as we watch over our flock.



Over 200 pastors and church leaders from around 40 churches in the Klang Valley, had an animated dialogue with the Democratic Action Party (DAP) on Feb 27, just 10 days before the 12<sup>th</sup> general election. The dialogue was jointly organised by NECF Malaysia and Oriental Hearts and Minds Institute to allow DAP to present their election manifesto to the evangelical Christian community and for the latter to seek answers to their questions.

Led by party secretary-general and current Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng, the DAP team comprised party economic adviser Tony Pua, Teresa Kok, Hannah Yeoh and Dr Cheah Wing Yin.

Lim kicked off the forum with a half-hour talk on what DAP would do to make a difference in the political atmosphere in the country. He highlighted core election issues such as inflation that has particularly affected the poor; the grave crime situation; corruption; and the ineffectiveness of the authorities in dealing with the many issues plaguing the country.

During the question and answer time, a member of the floor asked what reforms DAP would put in place if it came into power, especially in its strategy to revitalise economic growth. DAP economic adviser and current

## Pre-Election DAP Dialogue



*From left (current position): Subang Jaya state assemblyman Hannah Yeoh; Damansara Utama state assemblyman Dr Cheah Wing Yin; Seputeh MP and Kinrara state assemblyman cum Selangor state senior exco member Teresa Kok; Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng; NECF secretary-general Rev. Wong Kim Kong; OHMSI Executive Director Dr K.J. John; and Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua.*

Petaling Jaya Utara MP Tony Pua replied they had an alternative budget and would adopt a more viable economic policy.

In November last year, NECF organised a similar dialogue with MCA, which was attended by over 100 pastors and Christian leaders.

At the end of the dialogue, NECF presented a memorandum to MCA, which expressed the evangelical Christians' concerns over several issues. The memorandum also pledged its commitment to nation building. (*See Berita NECF, November–December issue.*)

## Come to the largest prayer meeting in the world

**GDOP**



The largest prayer meeting in the world will happen on May 11 Pentecost Sunday when Christians from nations across the globe will gather to pray “that the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord” (Habbakuk 2:14).

To date, 180 of the 220 nations in the world have signed up to participate in the annual Global Day of Prayer (GDOP). Malaysia is one of the privileged nations which will “Pray Toward A Greater Pentecost” in accordance to this year’s theme.

The GDOP in Malaysia, organised by the NECF Malaysia Prayer

Commission, will be held at Wisma Eagles in Subang Jaya at 7.00p.m.

Prior to May 11, there will be a 10-day round-the-clock prayer, beginning on Ascension Day to commemorate the period between Jesus’ ascension to heaven and Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came.

Following the May 11 GDOP, churches throughout the world are to actively and visibly “go out” to bless the community for a 90-day period.

Visit [www.globaldayofprayer.com](http://www.globaldayofprayer.com) for exciting news on a Bible Marathon, a challenge to read the Bible cover to cover during the 90 Days.

# HOPE

# ALIVE

The 2007 nationwide Celebration of Hope Malaysia (COHM), which culminated with the \*Matthew and Friends (MAF) programme at Christmastime last year, yielded an interesting peek into the state of evangelistic fervour among Malaysian evangelical churches.

Over 2,000 churches underwent the COHM training for the MAF programme, but barely half actually participated in the end (see right table).

Of the 1,526 churches that signed up to participate, only 58 per cent actually ran the programme in the end.

Equally appalling is the figure for individual Christians who signed up to host the MAF programme. Less than 40 percent actually opened their doors came Christmastime

Elisha Satvinder, COHM Director of Mobilisation, said the situation accurately reflected Malaysian Christians "romanticised" attitude towards evangelism. He lamented the "plenty of talk and not much action" attitude of many Christians, but was nevertheless encouraged by those who did participate. Still, much needs to be done to make evangelism a lifestyle for all Malaysian Christians, he said.

\*Matthew and Friends (MAF) was a programme held near Christmastime where Christians invite their friends to their homes for a meal followed by a film show of

the gospel and concluded with a short discussion and altar call. The programme took the name from the gospel story of Matthew the tax collector who invited his friends to his home to listen to Jesus immediately after he became Jesus' disciple.

MAF was a programme of COHM, which was endorsed by most churches and denominational leaders. NECF Malaysia was the official partner organisation. Fully funded by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, COHM took a year to mobilise and train Christians to host MAF.

## Churches

No. of churches which signed up to participate: 1,526

Actual no. of churches which participated: 887

## MAF homes

No. of MAF homes which signed up to participate: 15,447

Actual no. of MAF homes which participated: 6,167

## Individuals

No. of people invited to MAF events: 43,525

No. of decisions for Christ (as reported by participating churches): 9,792

No. of rededications (as reported by participating churches): 7,007

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**Welcome  
Home  
Good  
And  
Faithful  
Servant**



Benny, a young man in his 20s from Kota Kinabalu, had been a heart patient for a few years. When he first heard about the COHM project, he was challenged to be an MAF host. Although his health was failing, he managed to invite a number of his friends to watch the programme and gave a heart-rending testimony at the end. He said it was a privilege to be able to share God's message of salvation to his friends. Shortly after hosting the MAF programme, Benny went home to the Lord on Jan. 2, surely to the Lord's greeting "Well done, good and faithful servant".

## **Foreign students surrender their lives**

*Tang and his wife from Kuala Lumpur invited seven foreign students to their MAF programme. Before showing the evangelistic film, they had refreshment and talked about life. Even before the film was shown, three of them had already accepted Christ. After the movie, the remaining four gave their lives to Jesus.*

## Crab Catcher's tale

A Tamil church in Klang, held several COHM gatherings in December, which saw people set free from demon possession and others confessing Christ. In its first gathering at a crab catcher's village, 40 people attended the gathering and several gave their lives to Jesus. A few were delivered from Satan's bondages. The church also held a gathering at a squatter area and out of the 40 people who attended, three families are now attending the church. Meetings were also held at the red light zone, said the church pastor, Samuel. "This region is famous for prostitution and gay activities. Almost 20 people joined us for the meetings and we have almost five of them coming to church," he reported.



## Commanding the clouds

"Go! I command you the name of Jesus to immediately go away." And with that, the dark ominous clouds dissipated, the rain stopped and the wind blew, said Rev. Loh of a Chinese church in Kluang. The incident took place in Machap (Johor) where Rev. Loh and his team were holding the open air COHM evangelistic gathering. They had just finished setting up the sound system when the sky suddenly turned dark and it started to drizzle.

"I believe this is God's meeting and that He is in control of every situation," Rev. Loh said. About 65 people turned up for the meeting. Approximately 30 of them were Vietnamese and Mongolians, and at the end, 11 people accepted Christ. The church held another gathering at the compound of an apartment near the church. This attracted 153 people with 12 people accepting Christ.

On a smaller scale, 11 homes ran the MAF programme. Over 500 church members were involved and altogether, 60 guests prayed to receive Christ. All these are encouraging, but perhaps the most encouraging bit for Rev. Loh is a Chinese New Year card he received from a young girl who accepted Christ at one of the gatherings. She wrote that although she seldom went to church, she would continue to believe in Jesus and never let Him go.

## Neighbour's suicide

Dolly from Kuala Lumpur was shocked when her neighbour committed suicide. Realising there were many depressed people like this neighbour, Dolly decided to host MAF. As a result, two of her neighbours accepted the Lord.



## Captive audience

This evangelist in Sabah boarded a ferry with a portable DVD player. During the one-hour boat ride, he had a captive audience who watched the video show on his DVD player. After the show, he went to every passenger and shared the message of the programme.

## No barrier too big for the gospel

The COHM team faced big challenges in Sarawak, such as accessibility to some rural churches, reported Jasbir Singh, the COHM Regional Coordinator for Sarawak. Some places don't even have power supply and in many homes, there were no DVD or VCD players, which means that they couldn't screen the films. In December, Sibul was heavily flooded and many churches had to postpone their gatherings. But despite all the challenges, about 2,000 people accepted Christ and 1,500 rededicated their lives.

Fired up by the COHM programme, the church has decided to visit the 5,000 plus families in the region. "We have been regularly visiting them and giving away the COHM literatures," he said.



## Restoring shine to the Cabinet

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi has ordered all cabinet ministers and deputy ministers to publicly declare their assets twice every five years. He has enlisted the help of the ACA to draw up the procedures for the cabinet members to execute the process – one of the several measures he is taking to make the cabinet accountable to the public and to stem corruption among the ministers. He said corruption must be avoided completely and that he was “dead serious” in his war against corruption and also reminded the elected reps to “behave” so that the people will respect them.

Ever since Datuk Badawi became the PM, he has continuously promised to fight corruption in the system. However, the corruption battle has failed miserably because of the PM’s apparent lack of action.

Let us not give up praying for the PM. Pray that, this time around, he will be even more resolved in his commitment as he continues with his efforts to fight corruption. Pray for God’s fear to be upon each and every cabinet minister.

## Khalwat proposal for non-Muslims

A seminar on Syariah Law review has proposed, among other things, to sentence non-Muslims found committing khalwat (close proximity) with Muslims. The proposal was made at the two-day seminar organised by the Islamic Institute of Understanding Malaysia (Ikim) and the Syariah Judiciary Department Malaysia.

Syariah Court of Appeal Judge Datuk Mohd Asri Abdullah said the seminar had proposed that the non-Muslim offenders would be sentenced in the civil courts and the Muslim offenders in the syariah court so as to be fair to both parties.

However, Ikim DG Dr Syed Ali Tawfik Al-Attas has refuted there was such a proposal. He said that non-

Muslims cannot fundamentally be charged under any provision in Islamic law by virtue of the fact that they do not profess the religion of Islam.

Although this matter has been put to rest, continue to pray against any attempts by Islamic extremist to impose Islamise ways on non-Muslims. Pray for more Muslim leaders who have nation-building mindset to speak up.

## Mainstream media malady

The mainstream media’s (MSM) biased reporting during the election campaign period was so glaring that many were put off by the daily pro-BN news. This continued even after election and distressed over the unfair, inaccurate reports and apparent attempts by the MSM to cast the opposition parties in a negative light, some NGOs have called for a boycott of certain newspapers.

An example of an unfair report is a March 16 report in The Star saying that PAS was confident of setting up an Islamic form of government at the federal level soon. The alarming report was immediately shot down the next day by PAS Vice-President Datuk Husam Musa who said, “I mentioned that we are hopeful of taking 30 more parliamentary seats to win power and not about forming an Islamic Government.”

The majority of the MSM are owned by BN or have BN-related interests. Their publication permits are renewable every year and as such, they often have to toe the government line or risk losing their permit. This requirement has been effective in silencing critical voices and controlling any attempt for editorial independence.

The Government seems to have realised that arm-twisting the MSM no longer works in its favour as the public has become more mature and more discerning. Pray for the MSM to realise this too and take courage to publish balanced and factual reports.

## Parliament Poser

As the ultimate legislative body in Malaysia, the parliament is responsible for passing, amending and repealing law. Members of parliament represent their constituents and are permitted to speak on any subject without censure outside. In reality, they are not allowed to speak to the voters who put them in office. Past experience has shown that whenever any ruling party MP votes against her conscience and appears to side with the opposition, a censure motion is taken against him/her. For example, when Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was Law Minister in 2006, the then de facto Law Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid government-appointed senators that it is their duty to support their party. Blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin charged the Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen to be responsible. In reality they are Wakil Parti.

Pray for our 222 members of parliament to be responsible. May they learn from the experience of the past and serve their constituents selflessly. Pray too for

Pray that they will be responsible and fair to both the ruling and opposition parties, and not attempt to discredit any party. Pray too that the MSM will play its role in nation-building, helping to foster unity rather than inciting communal disharmony and civil unrest.

## Religious freedom pledge

At the swearing-in of the Selangor executive committee, Selangor Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah pledged he would uphold freedom of religion for all Selangor citizens. Although he is the head of Islam in the state, he said he realised that Selangor was multiracial and multi-religious and, therefore, he would maintain religious freedom.

He also reminded Muslims to respect other religions. “People of different races are under my rule and I will be an umbrella to protect them and for them to take shelter,” he said. Praise God for such a ruler and we pray that he the other states’ rulers will emulate him.

Meanwhile, Perak Mentri Besar Mohammade Nizar Jamaluddin has publicly stated that he stood for religious freedom (*The Star*, 4 April). “The very basic teaching that was instilled in me is that there is no compulsion in religion, religious beliefs



the Parliament...  
...acts of...  
...constituents...  
...fear of...  
...to represent...  
...ences have...  
...es with his or...  
...position on certain issues, disciplinary action...  
...debating on the controversial Islamic Family...  
...Datuk Nazri Aziz reminded BN MPs and...  
...obligation to vote according to the wishes of...  
...ekily commented once, "The Malay term for...  
...en is Wakil Rakyat (Peoples' Representative).  
...at have the interest of the entire nation at...  
...his election to not take things for granted and...  
...any corrupt self-seeking MP to be exposed.



and in everyday life including the way one eats, the way one dresses and the way one has his own family."

Trying to allay fears, the Perak PAS secretary added, "For Muslims, they must adhere to the teachings of Islam...But those who don't accept the Islamic teachings have the complete freedom as allowed by their own religion."

Pray that the MB will honour his promises to his rakyat to uphold religious freedom. Continue to pray for our king, sultans and all in authority to not only have this mindset, but to have the courage to exercise fairness and concern for all their subjects. As we pray, believe that "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." (Proverb 21:1)

Pray too for the PM who has said in one of his post-election statements that ensuring a fair number of places of worship for Malaysians of all religions was one of his main priorities. Pray that he would be strong to keep to his pledge to be fair and he would not be cowed by external pressure to act otherwise.

## Help for the poor

The Government has pledged to alleviate the burdens faced by the

lower-income group. The PM has announced several measures to help the needy, and among them are:

- Mitigating the impact of rising world prices on lower-income house-holds, and limiting wastage and losses caused by subsidies;
- Reviewing the implementation of economic plans to ensure the benefits touch the lives of those who needed them the most; and
- Continuing to work towards reducing income gaps between and within ethnic groups while ensuring fairness for all Malaysians.

Pray about the implementation of the policies, as often the policies are good but the execution process is flawed by inept and corrupt officials.

## Return Power to Judges

Former Lord president Tun Salleh Abas has called for a return of judicial authority to the courts. He noted that in 1988, Article 121 of the Federal Constitution had been amended so that this power, originally vested in the high courts, is now restricted to "such jurisdiction and powers as may be conferred by or under federal law".

He added that ouster clauses in legislation such as the Printing Presses and Publications Act and the Police Act provide that "any decision of the minister shall be final and cannot be questioned by the court".

Tun Salleh's recommendation is of great significance as it is critical to the check and balance mechanism between the executive and the judiciary. He also called for a restoration of judicial powers and asked that the appointment and promotion of judges be made more transparent.

It cannot be denied that the reputation of our judges is at its lowest point. Chief Justice Datuk Abdul Hamid Mohamad has pleaded passionately with his colleagues to "resurrect the honour of the

judiciary".

Continue to labour in prayer against the judicial rot in the country. Pray for the judges to be courageous to stand up for the oath they pledged when they took office, and for a renewed and transformed mindset within the judicial community. Pray that the people, through the NGOs and social activist groups, will continue to press the Government to make the necessary changes to restore the integrity of the judiciary.

## Police Reform for Safer Streets

Change is also taking place within the police force which is ready for the Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC) Bill should it be passed in Parliament. Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan said the police was waiting for the Parliament to discuss the matter.

The police force is also undergoing a re-branding exercise. Musa remarked however, that things would only change if the officers changed their mindset. They need to be more committed to their work and draw closer to the public.

The serious crime rate, especially in the urban areas, has caused sleepless nights for the public. Women and children are the ones who have suffered most. And with the erosion of neighbourliness, it is much easier for criminals to do their rounds.

Tan Sri Musa believed that to reduce the crime rate, the public and the police must cooperate closely, apart from the police visibly increasing their presence. He pledged to continue to work hard with the public to carry out community-based crime-prevention projects.

Praise God for the police's willingness to submit to the much-debated IPCMC, should it be passed by the Parliament. Pray for the IGP and our police as they make serious effort to improve. May God grant them strength.

# Talking About Terengganu

If there is one thing the year-long 2007 *Love Terengganu* initiative managed to achieve, it is to challenge the Terengganu churches to rise in prayer for their own state. At the very least, it heightened awareness and commitment to prayer and intercession for the Air Jerneh Presbyterian Church (AJPC), said the church's pastor Koshy Thomas.

"One pastor plans to devote one sermon a month to teaching his congregation about prayer," he reported.

Pr Koshy observed the Terengganu churches had been strengthened and much encouraged by the presence of the prayer teams who had travelled from all over Malaysia throughout the year.

The teams were in the state most of the weekends and they covered all seven districts – Kuala Terengganu, Besut, Ulu Terengganu, Marang, Dungun, Setiu and Kemaman – where they met the brethren in this north-eastern peninsular state to pray with them. Altogether, five churches took turns to host the teams – AJPC, Lifeline AOG, Baptist Church, New Life Fellowship Centre and Elim Harvest Assembly.

The prayer initiative was coordinated by Pr Koshy and Dr C. Cheryan, Chairman of Kuala Terengganu Pastors and Elders Fellowship.

Not content with praying within the church walls, the teams were outside in the public places for on-site prayer.

Pr Sunther and his church members drove over 300 kilometres

from Johore and ended up at the Kuala Terengganu river mouth for a blessed time of worship and intercession. The Terengganu brethren were moved by the love expressed by the team from

Gereja Peace, Kluang. But the team members felt they were even more blessed. Explained Pr Sunther: "My team members received breakthrough in their own prayer lives. We are also able to establish relationship and networking with you all (Terengganu Christians). It was a wonderful place for our young people to be trained."

Lucrece Loo from SSMC, Petaling Jaya, and her team joined local intercessors for a prayer drive around Kuala Terengganu in April. They ended up on the beach where they had holy communion and a time of worship and intercession for Terengganu. Following that, they visited the sick in the hospital. One of the patient's elderly mother heard the gospel from them and accepted Christ.

For Pr David Goh from Banner of Love, Petaling Jaya, his team had been going to Terengganu for the last 10 years and with each passing year, they increasingly believe that revival would break forth from the east coast. "The spiritual climate today compared with those days is so different. There is a sense of liberation and openness." He added that his church would continue to send prayer teams to Terengganu.

But what do the Terengganu Christians think? Have the many visits lifted the spiritual climate of the state, besides stirring the churches to be more prayerful? Pr Koshy believe so, albeit slightly. "One significant indicator of this is that several churches in Kuala Terengganu have reported an increased number of conversions in 2007 although the total number is still small. Former members of the churches here, who have moved down to the Klang Valley and

other areas, have commented that the spiritual atmosphere over this town and state has changed during their *balik kampung* visits," he said.

However, he noted that this change was God's grace and had been ongoing over the years as the believers here faithfully intercede for the state. The work by NECF in recent years to publicise the spiritual needs of the East Coast states as well as to mobilise prayer had been a catalyst in helping to bring about this change.

One lady believed there would be more breakthroughs in 2008 and beyond. "More lives will see the Light of Christ, not only in Terengganu but also in the nation," declared the faith-strengthened Yeow Choo Beh from AJPC.

She also reported that for the first time, her church held a Christmas evangelistic gathering last year at a hotel and, again, for the first time, there were more "pre-Christians" (meaning non-Christians) than Christians in the gathering. The success of the evangelistic rally was partly due to the Love Terengganu prayer initiative, she believed.



On evangelism, Pr

Koshy added: "All the *Love Terengganu* teams challenged us to take the Gospel to all people. Difficult indeed but not impossible and we need to find creative ways of doing just that."

The teams also encouraged them to grow in the area of holiness and humility before God.

"The initiative has reminded us again that God is immensely faithful, indescribably holy and passionately desires all men to be saved. Our response is simply to trust and obey," Pr Koshy concluded.

# Tribe Vibe & Youth Work

By Rev. Dr Herbert Tan

In its Sept. 14, 2007 edition, The Star reported a research done by BBDO Asia and Proximity Malaysia (leading players in marketing and advertising) on urban youths that “having a best friend is now deemed as an “uncool” thing among youth... (who now) prefer to hang out with a core peer group.”

Under the research, entitled “Project After Sunset”, a research team followed a group of six youths for six consecutive days to study their clique dynamics. The team found out that the youths’ night life was ruled by “Tribe Vibe” and unanimity in decision making. This study was important enough to be referred to again in The Star on Sept. 15 and 19, 2007.

I had thought that the study would be mainly reflective of urban youths but my last experience in working with 18 youths in a six-week mentoring and learning experience in January and February indicated that the “Tribe Vibe” phenomenon may not be merely an urban thing. What I experienced was like encountering a new culture of youth altogether, compared with the last five years of a similar programme

The elements of the “Tribe Vibe” phenomenon include: unanimity (agreeing to do things together); sacrifice of individual needs/wants in preference for group needs/wants; being cautious with assertiveness

or shying away from standing out in the group; and peer group identity being more important than individual identity.

These are both positive and negative implications for youth work.

If the “Tribe Vibe” phenomenon is catching on with our youths, then it contributes positively to community building as it forces youths to learn to work as a team. It also provides a positive peer pressure, assuming the core values of the youth group is something positive. “Tribe Vibe” also lends itself naturally in enhancing the “one another” (common phrase in the New Testament) ministry.

On the other hand, “Tribe Vibe” may negatively affect a youth by contributing to personal psychological stress especially in those who have to frequently sacrifice their preferences for others’.

Leadership development of youth may also be compromised due to fear or misunderstanding associated with being assertive, and procrastinated decision-making due to a general laid-back culture, which is a result of shying away from being assertive.

Also, the fear of offending a fellow tribe mate may result in the inability to deal with difficult personalities within the group.

What actually is “Tribe Vibe”? Is it an expression

of a desire for family ideals superimposed on a peer group context?

To what extent will “Tribe Vibe” affect the development of youth work, particularly the development

of youth leaders? How do youth workers effectively connect with youths belonging to the “Tribe Vibe”

generation? How do we apply the incarnational approach to this group without sacrificing the necessity to provide direction in youth work, especially in the more assertive prophetic aspects of youth work and mentoring youth?

These are questions we need to reflect and research to enable us to more effectively connect with another culture, perhaps another generation.

**If the “Tribe Vibe” phenomenon is catching on**

**with our youths, then it contributes positively**

**to community building as it forces youths to**

**learn to work as a team.**

Rev. Dr Herbert Tan serves as the FamilyLife Consultant with Malaysian Campus Crusade for Christ. Besides being a consultant and trainer on youth ministries, he also conducts training for families and youth leaders throughout the country.



## Bahasa Events

### Youth Camp – Miri (May)

THE NECF Malaysia BM Commission and the BM churches in Miri, Sarawak, will jointly hold a youth camp from May 23 to 25 for teens and college students.

Themed “Change Starts With Me”, the camp aims to challenge youths to be the agents of change through their conduct, values and commitment to the Lord.

The speakers for the camp are Rev. Dr Herbert Tan and Elder Alfred Tais. Herbert is the Leadership Development Consultant of Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ as well as the Family Consultant of FamilyLife Malaysia. Alfred is NECF Executive Secretary (BM Commission).

For more information, please contact Pr Jarai Salo at 019-8883775.

### Leadership Conference – Sabah (May)

FROM May 26 to 29, the NECF Commission will jointly hold a leadership conference with Sabah Sipitang Council of Churches at SIB Kaban Sipitang. The speakers Rev. Dr Bambang Widjaja and his wife from Bandung, Indonesia, and Alfred Tais.

Rev. Dr Bambang is currently pursuing his doctorate in leadership in the US. He is the former Chairman of the Indonesian Evangelical Fellowship. He will be speaking on the role and tasks of effective leaders. Mrs Bambang, who is lecturing at the Bandung Seminary, will speak on the role of women leaders in the ministry, while Alfred will share on the challenges faced by leaders and current issues in the country.

Conference fee is RM30 per person (without food and accommodation). For more information, please contact the local organisers as follows:

- Elder George Mikil (Coordinator): 013-8608285
- Pr Agung Sakai (Chairman): 019-8441444
- Pr Samin Alip (Committee): 019-8011141
- Pdt Daniel Thai (Committee): 016-8403317

### Merdeka Prayer Conference (August)

THE national prayer conference this year will be held from August 21 to 23 in Kuala Lumpur. The conference aims to inspire the Bahasa churches to intercede for the nation, praying particularly for the unreached people group in each state.

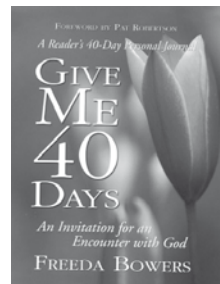
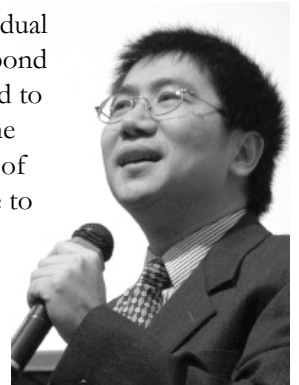
The conference speaker is Bapak Daniel Panji from Jakarta. He is the National Coordinator for the prayer network in Indonesia. Conference fee of RM50 per person covers meals and materials. For further information, please contact Alfred at the NECF office (03-77278227) or e-mail [bahasa@necf.org.my](mailto:bahasa@necf.org.my)

## Chinese Prayer Camp (July)

RENEWED and passionate individual Christians, coupled with a strong bond among churches will ultimately lead to national transformation – this is the message the Chinese Commission of NECF Malaysia wants to hit home to participants at their annual prayer camp this year.

And to bring this message home is Dr Eddie Ma, senior pastor of Hong Kong Shaukiwan Baptist Church, and NECF Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong. The camp, to be held from July 6 to 9 at Genting Highlands, is a prelude to the nationwide 40-day Merdeka Fast and Pray which will begin on July 22.

The registration fee of RM290 (triple-sharing room) and RM310 (twin-sharing room) includes board, meals and materials. Deadline for registration is May 31. More details in the next issue.



## English Merdeka National Prayer Conference (August)

THIS year's English National Prayer Conference will be held from Aug 27–29 and culminate with the National Prayer Rally on Aug 30 evening. The events will all take place at SIB Kuala Lumpur.

SIB KL senior pastor Dr Chew Weng Chee has agreed to co-speak at the conference with Freeda Bowers, author of “Give me 40 days”, a daily devotional prayer guide.

Together with her husband, Freeda co-founded and helped build WACX-TV, one of the most influential television stations in the Southeast United States. WACX-TV reaches to over three million residents and the millions who visit the world-famous central Florida attractions.

Freedais dedicated to teaching and equipping people in the power of prayer. She has ministered in South America, the Ukraine, China Israel and other nations.

## How to really transform the nation

The NECF Malaysia Research Commission is currently studying the theme “Transform Nation Agenda (TNA)”, specifically in the following areas: personal life, family life, church life, community, marketplace, governance and global.

The study aims to challenge church leaders and stimulate their thoughts on the issues concerning the role of the Malaysian Church in transforming the nation, as well as brainstorm practical creative measures and recommend strategies for “transformation” through the local church.

All papers written will eventually be published in Forum VI and may be used as reference/position papers for a potential leadership conference.

## Evangelism Thrust for NECF BGM

Evangelism will be the thrust of NECF Malaysia’s 11<sup>th</sup> BGM (biennial general meeting) this May.

This is in line with the recent political change which seems to have heralded a season of openness for evangelism, commented NECF secretary-general Rev. Wong Kim Kong.

He said the Church of Malaysia must seize this window of opportunity to share the gospel as far as possible. There are many ministries in Malaysia which are specialised in equipping churches to do the work of evangelism.

NECF will therefore invite these agencies to share about their work during the BGM on May 24 at the NECF office. The agencies will also be allotted booth space to display and publicise their ministries.

## Insurance benefit for deceased Sarawakian pastor’s family

The family of a Sarawakian pastor, who recently died in a car accident, received RM62,000, thanks to an insurance policy he took three years ago through NECF Malaysia.

The pastor, Jacob Talan who was attached to an SIB church in Sarawak, was travelling with some friends in a four-wheel drive in the interiors of Ulu Baram in Sarawak when their car went out of control and plunged into a deep ravine. Pr Jacob had taken up the Great Eastern Group Multiple Insurance Scheme Investment Linked with Critical Illness offered through the NECF Malaysia-Great Eastern partnership. The scheme covers injuries or death due to accidents and medical ailments for RM30 or RM50 per month.

Pr Jacob had bought a policy for a RM30,000 coverage,



Pr Jacob Talan’s widow, Winifred, receiving the cheque from SIB Sarawak President Rev. Justin Wan. Sharing this moment are: (from right) Rev. Peter Mutang (SIB Sarawak Vice-President), Rev. Robin Ato (SIB Sarawak Secretary-General) and Pr Michael Lee (SIB Sarawak Treasurer).

but because the death was due to an accident, the payout doubled. Pr Jacob joined the scheme when it was launched in Sept 2005 and had, to the time of his death, paid a total of RM840 premium.

NECF is given a two percent rebate of all premiums GE collects. The rebate goes to a fund that helps needy full-time workers, who participate in the scheme, to pay their premiums.

Since the scheme was launched, GE has paid out one claim of RM50,000 from a policyholder who passed away as a result of liver cancer. Besides this, GE has also paid out seven other claims totalling over RM180,000.

Christians who attend churches which are members of NECF may participate in the scheme.

## NECF MALAYSIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

### ORDINARY MEMBERS

Trinity Bible Church, Penang, *pastored by Albert Mah Seng Kiong*; Disciple Truth Church, Johor, *pastored by Elder Lim Teng Kuang*; Word of Life Church, Johor Baru, *pastored by Edwin Koh Boon Leng*; SIB Kemaman, *pastored by Sigar Pangiran*; Faith Covenant Church, Klang, *pastored by Steven Kau Yuen Fook*; and The Redeemed Christian Church of God, Bandar Sri Damansara, *pastored by Ephraim A. Andrew*.

### ASOCIATE MEMBERS

Khoo Seok Huan; Dolly Yeap Gaik See; Khoo Heng Suan; and Tham Sing Kheong.



## DEPARTMENT OF STATISTICS MALAYSIA (2005)

**Population:** 1,505,600 (est.)

**Ethnic groups:** Malay 92.50%, Chinese 3.5%, Other Bumiputera 0.82%, Indian 0.26%, Others 0.97%, Non-citizen 1.95%

**Religious Breakdown (2001):** Islam 94.5%, Buddhism 4.4%, Tribal Animism 0.5%, Christianity 0.2%, Hinduism 0.2%, Taoism/Confucianism 0.1%

**Incidence of poverty (2004):** 10.6%  
(Hardcore poor: 1.3%)

In Malaysia, a progressive and modern Islamic democracy is at work. Yet, this north-eastern peninsular state is still greatly influenced by the conservative PAS (the opposition Islamic Party of Malaysia). The party obtained a landslide victory in the recent 12<sup>th</sup> General Election to win 38 out of the 45 state seats and nine out of the 14 parliamentary seats. When asked to comment on the shocking win, PAS spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat replied, “Terkejut”. This much revered man in Kelantan had in October 2005, declared Kota Baru, the state capital and royal seat, an Islamic City.

### Politics

Kelantan was the first place in Malaya to be occupied by the Japanese who invaded on December 8, 1941. During the Japanese occupation, Kelantan came again under the control of Siam, but after the defeat of Japan in August 1945, Kelantan reverted to British rule.

In 1959, two years after independence from Britain, PAS began to rule Kelantan and it lasted for 18 years before Barisan Nasional took over in March 1978. PAS regained this deeply conservative Malay heartland in October 1990 and has since been the ruling party.

### Islamisation

In response to royal encouragement and an expansion of Islamic education, the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw religious bureaucracies developing in Kelantan. Achievements were measured by standards that acclaimed Islamic learning and scholarship. There were few signs of economic development.

For years, PAS has attempted to

impose a strict interpretation of Islamic Law on Kelantan. Efforts to enforce Muslim precepts and eliminate un-Islamic practices have been accorded continuing priority. Legal administration has been brought more closely under the supervision of syariah courts. Compliance with outward forms of Islam, such as mosque attendance, was made obligatory, while emphasis was placed on dress code and observance of fasting month.

Between last January and May, more than 80 women were fined for not wearing headscarves at work (*NST*, Jun 24, 05). Certain social rules have been successfully imposed, for example single-sex queues in supermarkets; separate public benches for men and women; and limited entertainment centres to forbid indecent behaviour.

One of the most controversial steps PAS has taken is to outlaw traditional arts in 1991, such as Wayang Kulit, Makyong, Dikir Barat, and Main Puteri. In attempting to weaken the effects of such prohibition, performers have

discovered new ways to resolve cultural dilemmas, that is producing versions without traditional references to Hindu dewa dewi and traditional Malay hantu.

Performances by women are allowed only for female audience in an enclosed area. PAS maintains that these steps are essential to promote Islam and put an end to immoral behaviour among the Muslim population.

In its efforts to push the dakwah movement among the Orang Asli community, the State Islamic Development offers RM10,000 to Muslim missionaries who marry OA women.

Other incentives include free housing, monthly allowance of RM1,000 and a four-wheel-drive vehicle. A special unit has recently been set up to focus on converting the OA (*NST*, Jun 27, 06). It was reported that 2,094 OA converted to Islam in 2005.

### Terrorism

Kelantan had earlier been implicated as a training ground for separatists who were responsible for the unrest in southern Thailand. Nevertheless such claim was firmly refuted by the Malaysian government. The unrest Muslim-dominated Narathiwat shares its southern borders with Kelantan.

### Religious Freedom & Rights

In November 1993, Kelantan State Legislative Assembly passed the Hudud Enactment which demanded death penalty for apostasy, but



this was blocked by the Federal government on constitutional grounds. Nonetheless, the 1994 Kelantan Council of Religion of Islam and Malay Custom Enactment rules that a Muslim who intends to or attempts to convert out of Islam is subject to be detained in the Islamic rehabilitation centre for a term not more than 36 months for rehabilitation purpose.

In January 2005, the state government, proposed a dress code for non-Muslim women in supermarkets. Women's groups opposed the measure, arguing that it was an infringement of gender rights. The same month, 307 couples were fined for indecent acts including holding hands, kissing, and hugging in public.

### Social Problem

Although Kelantan is endowed with resources and the potential to produce more food for its people and the rest of the country, Kelantan is one of the poorest states in the country. A UN official said that people in Kelantan faced a level of poverty more associated with the poorest African countries (*NST, Sept 2005*).

In 2004, Kelantan recorded the highest crime rate nationwide, according to the then Deputy Internal Security Minister Chia Kwang Chye (*NST, Mar 20, 05*). In the first half of that year, there were 2,431 reported or known crime cases, out of which, 16% were committed by juvenile (*Crime Investigation Department, Sept 23, 05*). Crimes such as incest, rape and murder are on the rise.

Drug abuse in Kelantan is heading towards a critical level with every district described as a black area and children as young as 13 becoming addicts, according to the National Drug Agency (*Star Online, Apr 2005*). It boasts the highest number of cigarette smokers and divorce rate in the country.

Certain areas in Kelantan are prone

to flood during the monsoon season. Last November, the districts of Tanah Merah, Kuala Krai and Kota Bahru were badly afflicted.

### Others

Kelantan's domination by empires such as Srivijaya, Majapahit, Angkor and later Siam has exposed the state to various Hindu and Buddhist influences that can be seen in certain spiritual and cultural practices. The Kelantanese are known for their potent charms and spells. Some are known to even consult Siamese monks and witchdoctors to obtain supernatural powers. The usage of amulets and talismans is widespread among certain groups.

Religion has been a tool for many to safeguard their own personal interests.

### The Church

Churches are few and are confined to urban areas with a high proportion of Chinese, such as Kota Bharu. There is a serious lack of leadership and church growth has been slow. Some churches do not have full-time pastors and depend on full-time workers from outside Kelantan.

The turnover rate for full-time workers is said to be quite high. The outflow of young people can be a source of discouragement.



### PRAY

- State government: integrity and wisdom, to put public interests above personal political gain.
- Church: Spiritual renewal. For boldness, courage, wisdom and God-given strategies to reach out to the lost.
- Unity and teamwork among denominations.
- More full-time pastors and workers in Pasir Mas, Tumpat, Pasir Puteh, Bachok, Machang, Tanah Merah, Jeli.
- Alertness on the Malaysian police guarding the Malaysia-Thai border.
- Orang Asli Community: social wellbeing, education, religious freedom.

There is generally a lack of passion for the lost, and a need for local leaders to be trained and empowered not only to lead their congregations but also in evangelism.

As a whole, the Church is lacking of manpower and resources. Much effort is also needed for unity among different denominations. Certain parts of Kelantan, especially the rural areas are totally devoid of any Christian witness.

**KAZAKHSTAN** There is growing intolerance of Protestant Christians, some Muslim groups and other religious bodies. President Nazarbayev has spoken against missionary activities and is considering tightening existing religion law to curb what he regards as “religious extremism”. There will most likely be more persecution of religious bodies that are not approved by the government, including many Protestant churches.

Prayer for the situation in the country is urgently needed. Thank God for the tremendous growth of the Kazakhstan Church after the collapse of the Communist regime and for the growing unity of the churches. Pray for continued religious freedom and that the anticipated changes in the Law on Religion will not cause more restriction on worship, evangelism, discipleship and social work done by the churches. Pray that the authorities will have wisdom and understanding and may distinguish between the positive effects of missionary activities and actual religious extremism.

**ARAB LEAGUE** The Arab Information Ministers met in Cairo in February and adopted a charter to control satellite TV content. Qatar and Lebanon were the only Arab states that did not sign. The charter requires that satellite broadcasting not offend the leaders or national and religious symbols in the Arab world, and not damage social harmony, national unity, public order or traditional values. It must conform to the religious and ethical values of Arab society, taking into account its religions, prophets, sects and symbols, as well as protect Arab identity from the harmful effects of globalisation. Most Arab-language Christian satellite content is broadcast into the Arab world from outside. However, most of the Christian content is produced in Arab countries. Please pray for wisdom for those

involved in producing Christian films, that they will know how to continue their ministry without getting entangled in the new requirements.

**CHINA** China’s ruling Communist Party has long been planning to use the Beijing Olympics to market China to the world. In Chinese folklore, the number 8 is the luckiest number and its character rhymes with the Chinese character for wealth. So the games are scheduled to open on 8-8-08 at 8.08pm. While China struggles to contain internal strife and deflect criticism, our prayer for China is not for luck or wealth, but that God in his generous and gracious mercy and providence will make 2008 the year the Chinese government awakens to the reality of the Church being not one of its problems but integral to the solution. In solidarity with the Chinese Church, religious liberty groups have jointly called for global concerted prayer for China leading up to the Olympics, that 2008 might be a year of great spiritual blessing for the Chinese Church and for China.

Pray for God to use the Beijing Olympics for his purposes; for the Church in China to be filled with the Spirit of grace and love to advance Christian unity and sacrificial love for their country, and be blessed with divine wisdom and courage to advance powerful, godly witness and servant-leadership; that all who have been unjustly imprisoned for their beliefs and peaceful expressions will be released.

**SRI LANKA** Ethnic and religious tensions have grown again in Sri Lanka over the past two years as hostilities between Tamil separatists and the Sinhalese-dominated government have escalated. The Church bridges the Tamil-Sinhalese divide and is therefore targeted by extremist militants from both sides. The war, which officially

resumed in mid-January 2008, gives Buddhist nationalists a perfect opportunity to attack the Church under the cover of the prevailing chaos, and even blame the Tamil separatists.

Christians have been the targets of several appalling violent attacks in recent weeks. In Ampara on Feb 17, Pr Neil Edirisinghe, 37, was fatally shot in a contract killing, while his wife Shiromi, 31, was critically wounded.

Please pray for peace and reconciliation in Sri Lanka. Pray that He will raise up Sri Lankan voices for justice, rights, equality and peace, at every level – local, district and national – in the Church, media and politics. Pray His ever-present Holy Spirit will bring healing and peace to Shiromi Edirisinghe and all other believers who are now bearing on their bodies the marks of Jesus (Gal. 6:17). Pray God will work amidst this suffering, sanctifying the Sri Lankan Church, cultivating prayerfulness, strengthening faith and building community.

**IRAQ** Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho, 65, of the Chaldean Church in Mosul was kidnapped by Islamic terrorists after an Easter celebration in Mosul’s Holy Spirit Cathedral. His three companions/bodyguards were murdered during the ambush. Archbishop Rahho’s body was found on March 13, buried in a shallow grave. According to the kidnappers, Archbishop Rahho was very sick and he died the day he was kidnapped (Feb. 29). This was a very deliberate and symbolic attack and while the terrorists might think they have removed the church’s head, they have not. May the Holy Spirit fix the eyes of all Mosul’s Christians on the Church’s true head – the risen, living Christ (Ephesians 4:15,16). Pray that God will raise up new leaders, great faith and fresh hope among Iraq’s besieged Christian remnant.