

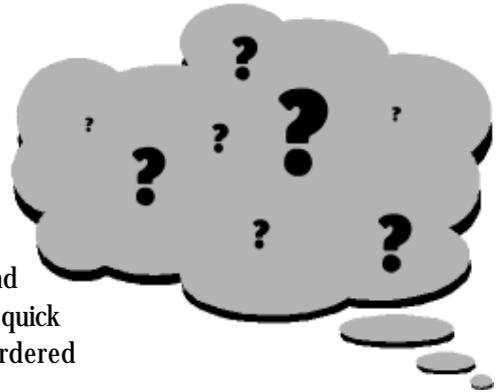
## EDITORIAL

### “The world has a memory of only 100 days.”

On Aug 31, 1983, the Russians shot down a Korean Airlines commercial flight that had veered off-course into Soviet airspace. All 269 souls on-board perished. The Russians refused to explain what really happened. When asked why, they replied

condominium-cum-office block under construction at Jalan Sri Hartamas, Kuala Lumpur.

More recently, the Ulu Klang landslide claimed four lives and swept away several longhouses. In quick response, the Government ordered



## How long is our memory?

that the world had a memory of only 100 days. Within 100 days, they said, something else would happen and everyone's attention would be turned to the latest issue. And they were right.

Does this sound familiar? A lot of things have been happening in our nation. Each time disaster strikes, there is strong reaction. For example, the nation was stunned when corporate figure Dr. Liew Boon-Horng was killed when a two-tonne iron mould fell on his car from a



probes and passed new laws. Whether they are doing enough is not the issue here. What is important is the public's, and especially the Christians', attitude towards these events. Do we just vent our anger and disappointment in the heat of the moment and then let the issue pass into obscurity? How long is our memory?

Christians are called to make a difference. We are not just citizens of Malaysia. We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3:20), called to be salt of the earth and light of our Father's world.

But in the midst of so many issues and controversies, where do we begin? Lately, the controversies over the “crooked bridge”, APs, Proton, the “indecent” definition, and many others

have dominated the news. How do we see through all these and make an impact in our nation?

### Discern the times

*(Jesus said to the crowd: “When you see a cloud rising in the west, immediately you say, ‘It’s going to rain,’ and it does. And when the south wind blows, you say, ‘It’s going to be hot,’ and it is. Hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky. How is it that you don’t know how to interpret this present time?” (Luke 12:54–56)*

Where is our nation heading? What are the signs pointing to? There are many issues out there, but not all of them are equally important.

The religious liberty issue is a crucial one with long-term implications. One high-profile case is the Lina Joy court case. Lina, a Christian convert from Islam, had applied to have the word “Islam” deleted from her identity card. The National Registration Department refused to allow the application and wanted her to produce a declaration from the Syariah Court that she was no longer a Muslim

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From The Chairman

Rev. Eu Hong Seng



# Let's begin with holiness

I thank the Lord for the honour and privilege to serve in NECF Malaysia as Chairman. I am also very thankful for the foundation laid by my predecessors, Mr David Boler and Rev. Datuk Prince Guneratnam during their tenure as Chairman, for we cannot begin to be effective in nation building without a solid foundation.

Today, we are living in very challenging and transitional times, both for this nation and for the Church – for it is the end-time hour.

On one hand, it has been a season of growth for the Church where we have seen more and more Christian leaders emerging and churches being planted. At the same time, disasters loom over the world and conflicts erupt worldwide with ever-increasing frequency.

Locally, we brace ourselves for bigger and more unsettled times ahead with the Lina Joy court case, the constitutional crisis spilling forth and where the Government of the day is being “unusually questioned” by the former premier.

But we have been called for such a time as this, and the challenge is to move forward – to grow, to advance, to be a light unto this nation.

And how may we achieve that?

In the morning of the BGM itself on May 20, God spoke to me in my quiet time from 1 Peter 1:16, “**because it is written, “Be Holy, for I am holy.”**”

I sense that the first order of the day is **holiness**.

Our fullest experience of God will only come when our lives are holy and our hearts are pure.

The enemies of holiness are just too many. We see the rise in uncleanness in many forms, such as ‘acceptable

absenteeism’ from honouring God on Sundays, ‘itching ears’, proliferation of ‘other gospels’ and the increasing availability of pornographic materials.

There is a rise of the same spirit of laxity, compromise and unholiness of Nadab and Abihu in their service to God, which got them killed in God’s presence in Leviticus 10.

All these forms of uncleanness will chip away our effectiveness and testimony.

There is so much to do, and the danger is to rush out to do it without due regard to the Lord’s yardstick of holiness. At the end of the day, we may look like ‘heroes’, but would we be holy?

Without holiness, there will be very little fruit in everything we do.

Without holiness, suspicion and disunity will creep in.

Without holiness, God will not release His resources. When there is lack, we do not have a financial problem; we have a spiritual problem.

JC Ryle said, “Holiness is written on everything in heaven...”.

My prayer is that this would be true of everything NECF does. My encouragement to all members is that we serve and sacrifice in such a manner as to be found by Him without spot or blemish, as admonished by Apostle Peter.

I look forward to working together with all members of NECF towards achieving greater unity in the Lord’s church and growth for our Lord’s kingdom in this nation.

Excited about the future,

(which was impossible to obtain).

Lina took her case to the High Court and lost. She appealed and the case was recently heard by the Federal Court on June 28 and 29 and July 3. The judgement is pending. Will Lina finally get her wish? Think of the precedent that the judges' decision will set for the 26 million citizens in this country.

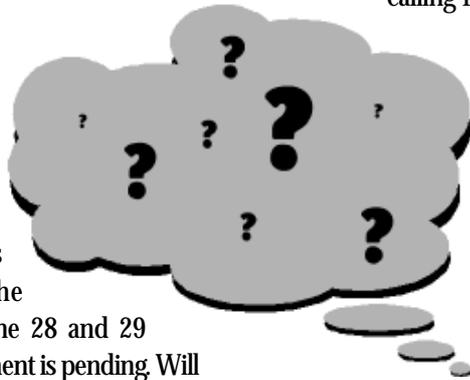
Lina Joy is not the only one fighting for her religious rights. Have we forgotten S. Shamala or S. Kalamal (wife of the late M. Moorthy)? Can we remember their specific grievances? When a meeting of the Article 11 Forum held at a hotel in Penang was disrupted by an angry mob, did we just shake our heads and forget the incident? How long is our memory?

The religious liberty issue is not the only one that is important. There are others and we need to learn to, in Jesus' words, "interpret this present time".

### **Decide the course**

One of the most important things in life is to know what we want to achieve, and to know it as specifically as possible. It is essential that we seek the Lord on His

calling for our lives.



Some of us are called to preach the Gospel. That is a high calling. Some of us may be called to address socio-political issues. That is an equally high calling.

Whatever we are called to, we need to persevere in it.

William Wilberforce decided at a young age that God had called him to fight for the rights and liberties of the slaves. In 1788, as a British member of parliament, he introduced his first anti-slave trade motion in the House of Commons.

The motion was defeated. Wilberforce did not give up but brought up the matter every year for the next 18 years until the slave trade was finally abolished in 1806. He did not stop there but pursued his campaign against slavery itself. Finally, just four days before his death on July 29, 1833, the bill for the abolition of all slavery in British territories was passed. Eight hundred thousand slaves were set free.

Wilberforce remembered the slaves for 46 years. He made a difference. How long is our memory, and what difference

will we make?

### **Define the boundaries**

It is said that before someone can do things, there must be things he or she will not do. Many people started out with good intentions and noble goals, yet they failed miserably in the end. One key factor was the lack of clear boundaries. While the end goal is important, it does not justify any and every means to achieve it.

The Bible teaches us to obey the Government and the authorities (Rom. 13:1, 1 Pet. 2:13, Tit. 3:1). That does not mean we cannot oppose unjust government policies. But if and when we do oppose any government policy, our actions must not be seen as defiance. Instead, we are to maintain objectivity no matter how emotionally charged the atmosphere is. We are to help others remain calm, instead of inciting their emotions to support our cause. And we should never get personal, as personal attacks lead nowhere.

Knowing precisely what we are advocating prevents us from getting sidetracked.

So, how long is our memory? Are we mirrors that merely reflect light when the metal is hot, or are we candles that give light through the giving of ourselves? May the Lord speak to each one of us regarding His calling for our lives. ■



Contrary to accusations from certain quarters, the group was not set up to undermine the special position of Islam as enshrined in Article 3(1) of the Federal Constitution. Neither was it to challenge the Syariah as family and personal laws of those professing Islam pertaining to items listed in the 9<sup>th</sup> Schedule of List II of the same Constitution.

Its purpose was simply to reaffirm the supremacy of the Federal Constitution (Article 4) and to reiterate the fundamental right of all Malaysian citizens to equality before the law (Article 8), and therefore, all have access to legal remedy.

*Article 11* also calls for restoration of judiciary to its original position in the Constitution as was the case before 1988. That means vesting the judicial power of the Federation into the civil high courts.

*Article 11* has thus far held two forums, one in Petaling Jaya and another in Malacca, to educate Malaysians on their rights. Forum speakers discussed the

accused the organiser of challenging the Syariah and protested the formation of the Interfaith Commission, which was completely unrelated to the forum.

Malaysians are concerned about the strong influence of Islam, advocated by certain quarters, that has been encroaching into our daily lives for some years now.

This influence is evident in, for example, the civil courts' refusal to exercise their jurisdiction on cases relating to freedom of religion and Islam Hadhari's role in the Government's Ninth Malaysia Plan.

(Page 9 of the 9MP states: "Islam Hadhari was introduced in 2004 as a comprehensive and universal development framework for the nation. The framework was formulated as an approach that enjoins progress and advancement as an imperative for the people, while being rooted in the universal values and injunctions of Islam".)

The Islamic trend is also expressed in the religiosity of the local authorities, and the civil service departments' unconscious acceptance of Malaysia as an Islamic state due to the constant proclamation of Malaysia as one.

Some have argued that since the

*ARTICLE 11* is a coalition of NGOs, which was formed after the High Court's judgement on the S. Shamala case in 2004. In the highly-publicised case, Shamala failed to nullify her two children's conversion to Islam, which was secretly done without her consent by her husband who had earlier converted to Islam.

The civil court had reasoned it had no jurisdiction over the case as the children were already Muslims and the correctness or otherwise of their conversion was a matter for the Syariah Court.

Shamala's case brought home the point that the constitutional role of the civil High Court as the protector of the rights of the ordinary citizen was fast becoming illusory.

The implications of this case became a rallying force that drew together concerned NGOs and members of civil society, thus giving birth to *Article 11*.

Currently, *Article 11* comprises 13 non-governmental organisations representing women's concerns, human rights, lawyers and various religious groups including the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism (of which NECF Malaysia is a member of through Christian Federation of Malaysia). Sisters in Islam and the Women's Aid Organisation are the group's joint secretariats.

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Former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas... remarked that the religion of Islam in Article 3 was meant only for the purpose of rituals and ceremonies, and it was never intended to extend the application of Syariah to the sphere of public law.

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parameter of citizens' legal and constitutional rights as well as the dilemma created by the dual-legal system (civil and syariah) involving cases such as Shamala's children's custody, the death of M. Moorthy, and Lina Joy's application to delete the word 'Islam' from her identity card.

Entitled 'Federal Constitution: A Protection for All', the two forums were held peacefully. However, the coalition was not so fortunate when it held the forum in Penang on May 14 when a crowd of 500 angry protestors demonstrated outside the venue. They

Federal Constitution recognises Islam as the official religion, therefore Syariah should be the underlying principle of all civil laws.

This may have led the Attorney-General's Chambers to set up an in-house Syariah unit whose functions are to "take steps toward the realisation of a set of laws and specific body that will be responsible for the harmonisation of civil law and syarak (the laws of Islam)" (Source: Attorney General's website: [www.agc.gov.my](http://www.agc.gov.my))

Many believe that this increasing

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# Vote for continuity

ALL council members of NECF Malaysia of the previous term have been re-elected uncontested at the recent NECF biennial general election with a new exco line-up and a new council member – Rev. Simon Chandran. The council will serve a two-year term with immediate effect.

The following are the new exco members:

- Chairman** : Rev. Eu Hong Seng (FGT, Petaling Jaya)  
**Vice-Chairman** : Elder Kong Yeng Phooi (PJ Gospel Hall, Petaling Jaya)  
**Hon. Secretary** : Mr Samuel Ang (PJEFC)  
**Hon. Treasurer** : Dr Khoo Kay Hup (Full Gospel Assembly, Kuala Lumpur)

Nine members (out of 12 who contested) were elected into the council. They are:

- Rev. Justin Wan (*SIB Sarawak*)
- Rev. Dexter Low (*Latter Rain Church*)
- Rev. Ng Kok Kee (*Assemblies of God, Malaysia*)
- Rev. Foo Moy Ping (*Jubilee Initiatives Malaysia*)
- Rev. Lim Soon Hock (*Georgetown Baptist Church, Penang*)
- Rev. Simon Chandran (*Emmanuel Christian Assembly, Taiping*)
- Pr Tay Wah Seng (*The Vineyard, Johore*)
- Elder Chua Keng Seng (*Logos Presbyterian Church, Petaling Jaya*)
- Mrs Grace Hee (*New Life Restoration Centre, Petaling Jaya*)

In his chairman's address at the start of the meeting, Rev. Datuk Prince Guneratnam expressed gratitude to God for guiding him during his 12-year tenure as chairman, and thanked the council members, NECF staff and all NECF members for their partnership in the ministry.

Following his address, the meeting recorded its appreciation to Rev. Guneratnam for his years of service. He continues his service in NECF as advisor.

## Three Tasks

The newly-elected council immediately got off to work after the BGM. At its first meeting four days thereafter, the council listed three major tasks to tackle in a 10-year plan.

The three tasks are: a transition plan to groom new leaders for the NECF council leadership; a 10-year Nation-Building Policy; and a "touch-base programme" with the NECF members. "We need to identify and train younger national leaders to take our place in the council," Rev. Eu said in reference to the first task.

As for the nation-building policy, he said the council will be studying the possibility of formulating a policy that will enable NECF to be proactively involved in shaping the nation.

"We need to communicate that we are not just into soul winning. We need a social vision - to eradicate poverty, build schools and hospitals; simply put, touching the nation through meeting needs," Rev. Eu explained.

On touching base with the members, he said the council members plan to travel to the various regions to meet with members.

Rev. Eu has been a member of the NECF Council since its formation 25 years ago and has been the vice-chairman for the last 12 years. The senior pastor of Full Gospel Tabernacle, Petaling Jaya, observed that over the years, the Church has come to a place of oneness, unity and respect.

"The evangelical churches are in a place of maturity. The time for nation building is ripe. My predecessors, Mr David Boler and Datuk Prince Guneratnam, have laid a good foundation for nation building" he said.

However, there will be no real unity and power for ministry if churches do not remain holy, he cautioned. "Without holiness we cannot begin to do anything significant for God because His presence won't be with us. We have to ensure our lifestyles reflect Christ so that when people see us, they see Christ," he stressed. ■

• FROM PREVIOUS PAGE: AYE TO ARTICLE 11

pressure to follow religious laws is the result of political parties striving to prove their Islamic credentials.

Former Lord President Tun Salleh Abas, in ruling the case of Che Omar bin Che Soh v. Public Prosecutor (1988) after reviewing Malaysia's constitutional history, remarked that the religion of Islam in Article 3 was meant only for the purpose of rituals and ceremonies, and it was never intended to extend the application of Syariah to the sphere of public law.

"If it had been otherwise, there would have been another provision in the

Constitution which would have the effect that any law contrary to the junction of Islam would be void," he said.

In other words, the Federal Constitution was never intended to raise Islamic law above civil law.

No doubt, "Islam is the religion of the Federation" as stated (Article 3), but it is not the basic law of the land. However, recognising that Malaysia, as a hybrid state, is neither strictly secular nor 'un-islamic', it can be best described as a Muslim country because the majority of our citizens are Muslims.

The coalition has initiated a signature campaign to reaffirm the supremacy of

the Federal Constitution (FC). To date, it has collected over 20,000 signatures, which have been submitted to the Prime Minister.

The ongoing petition draws urgent attention to fears that constitutional rights are steadily being undermined by executive and legislative decisions.

The petition reminds parliamentarians, cabinet ministers and judges to honour their oath of office in defending the FC, to reaffirm the country's secular nature and to ensure judicial independence.

The petition is online at [www.petitiononline.com/constsup/petition.html](http://www.petitiononline.com/constsup/petition.html) ■

☞ Dr Jeyaganesh commenced a SC proceeding against Shamala for custody of the children. Shamala did not attend the SC on the basis that she being a non-Muslim was not bound by the SC jurisdiction. The SC issued a warrant of arrest against Shamala. Shamala made an application in the HC for an order that the warrant of arrest issued by the SC is not binding on her as she is a non-Muslim. The HC allowed Shamala's application.

### **Dr Jeyaganesh is appealing against this decision.**

☞ Shamala filed an application for custody of the children. The HC granted her joint custody of the children with a caveat that the children should not be taught to eat pork and should not practice the Hindu faith. If this caveat is breached, she will lose custody of the children. Dr Jeyaganesh is appealing against this decision as he feels that he should be given sole custody since the children are Muslim.

**Shamala has filed a cross appeal against this decision** on the basis that as a mother with children below seven, she is entitled custody of the children.

☞ Shamala filed an application for custody of the children in the HC. Dr Jeyaganesh's counsel raised a preliminary objection stating that since the defendant (Dr Jeyaganesh) had converted and the children were converted, therefore the Civil Courts have no jurisdiction to hear this matter. However, the HC dismissed the preliminary objection and heard Shamala's application for custody.

### **Dr Jeyaganesh is appealing against this decision.**

### **CONCLUSION:**

The cruxes of the appeals are:-

- whether one parent can unilaterally convert the children of the marriage to Islam without the knowledge and consent of the other parent.
- whether a non-Muslim parent, whose children have been converted to Islam, may file a suit in the Civil Court challenging the conversion of the children. Do the Civil Courts have the jurisdiction to hear this matter?
- whether a Syariah Court can issue a warrant of arrest against a non-Muslim for non-attendance at the Syariah Court.

## NECF Foundation Update

THE NECF Foundation is a welfare ministry that provides financial aid to full-time workers attached to local churches and Christian organisations.

Since NECF Malaysia launched the ministry two years ago, the foundation has approved over RM170,000 in donation and interest-free loans.

The foundation has also established a panel of professionals who provide their services to full-time workers free of charge or at special rates. NECF is continually on the lookout for professionals to join the panel.

Last year, the foundation initiated a group insurance scheme underwritten by Great Eastern (GE). The scheme is targeted at full-time workers, but to fulfil the minimum number for the scheme to take off, the foundation extended the scheme to Christians who are attending NECF member churches.

NECF is given a two percent-rebate of all premiums collected and the money is used to help full-time workers who cannot afford to pay the full premium.

### **Financial Aid Given**

Since May 2004, 15 people have received financial assistance from the foundation.

Of the total, four are still getting aid subject to annual review. Total amount approved for disbursement is over RM170,000.

Breakdown of the aid given:

- Interest-free education loan – 9 recipients (RM104,300);
- Medical (donation) – 4 recipients (RM19,500); and
- Welfare (donation) – 2 recipients (RM16,875).

### **PANEL OF PROFESSIONALS**

#### **MEDICAL SERVICES**

#### **MELAKA**

- **Dr Au Mun Kit** (Eye Surgeon)  
Hospital Pantai Ayer Keroh  
Free consultation for three patients per month
- **Dr Lim Boon Aik** (Cardiologist/  
Physician)  
Mahkota Medical Centre  
Free consultation, medicine from clinic at cost
- **Dr Lau Yoke Phan** (Female  
Paediatrician)  
Lau Child Specialist Clinic  
Free consultation
- **Dr Ding Choo Chang** (General  
Surgery)

Dong's Surgical Specialist Clinic  
Mahkota Medical Centre  
Free consultation.

#### **IPOH**

- **Dr Teoh Soong Kee** (O & G)  
Ipoh Specialist Centre / Perak  
Community Specialist Hospital Ipoh  
Free consultation
- **Dr Yoong Fook Ngian** (ENT)  
Suite 8, Ipoh Specialist Centre  
Free consultation for two patients per month.
- **Dr Lam Fook Shin** (Consultant Eye  
Surgeon)  
Ipoh Specialist Centre  
Free consultation for ten patients per month
- **Dr C. S. Koh** (Cardiologist/  
Physician)  
Suite 8, Perak Community Specialist  
Hospital  
Free consultation
- **Dr Ting Cheh Sing** (General Surgery)  
(1) Suite 10, Ipoh Specialist Centre,  
(2) 19-21, Jalan Kampar, Ipoh  
Free consultation
- **Dr Adeline Tan Ai Lin** (Paediatrician)  
Kilnik Kanak Kanak David  
Ipoh Specialist Centre  
Free consultation

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## Sunway Scholarships via Malaysian Care

MANY young people from poor communities lack the academic qualification to secure jobs that will provide them a better life. Even those who have the opportunity to further their education are unable to for lack of funds.

Sunway University College is offering a rare opportunity to the poor community through a scholarship programme, which includes full tuition fees, hostel accommodation and book vouchers.

Each year, the college gives out eight scholarships to students – aged 18 to 25 years who have completed the SPM/STPM examinations – recommended by Malaysian Care.

The courses that are offered through this scholarship are IT, Telecommunications & Multimedia, Hospitality, Tourism & Retail Management, Professional Accounting Program (CAT) and Professional Business Programs.

Interested candidates should contact Esther Alfred of Malaysian CARE at 03-90582102 ext.108; or e-mail [mail@malaysiancare.org](mailto:mail@malaysiancare.org); or check out its website [www.mcare.org.my](http://www.mcare.org.my)

## Spiritual Healthcheck

THE NECF Research Commission has initiated a survey to identify variables in spiritual development that contribute significantly to spiritual formation.

Churches that participate in the “Christian Spiritual Formation” survey – by getting their members to fill in the questionnaires – will be able to gauge the level of spiritual maturity of their congregation. Hence, the survey will greatly benefit the leaders in long-range planning.

The survey is one of the projects under the commission’s two-year study on “The Spiritual Healthcheck of the State of the Church in Malaysia” (the theme of the study).

Specifically, the survey data collected will help provide prescriptive information for effective counselling of their members by:

- Identifying the spiritual style of

individual members and the predominant spiritual typology of the congregation;

- Identifying strengths and opportunities;

- Suggesting ways to care for the unmet spiritual needs of members, such as counselling and coping methods in adverse circumstances;

- Helping members to reflect on their theological understanding of spiritual growth and maintain necessary psychological adjustments in stressful events; and

- Helping members to understand one another as unique individuals, and contribute to the group’s well-being.

Samples of the questionnaires together with reply forms have been sent out to NECF members. The response has been encouraging, with some churches asking for several hundreds of questionnaires for their members.

## Survey on *kampung* churches

THE Chinese Commission has sent out questionnaires to about 500 churches in the rural areas (defined as places without town councils) throughout Malaysia in its first survey on *kampung*(village) churches.

The survey hopes to identify the needs – material or otherwise – of village churches, to help the commission in its

long-term plan to empower village churches with training and practical help.

The survey will cover the nation including Sabah and Sarawak but for this year, the commission will focus their efforts on empowering village churches in the peninsular east coast – Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu.

• FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

### LEGAL SERVICES

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C.C. Chun & Co. Advocates & Solicitors

• **Dato’ Daniel Tay**

Tay Ibrahim & Partners

#### NECF-GREAT EASTERN INSURANCE SCHEME

No. of cases in force to date: 1,165

Cases under processing: 22

Subsidised cases: SIB Sarawak – 244

SIB Sabah – 52

To date GE has paid out one claim of RM50,000 and processing two claims.

Testimony

### “When there seemed no way, God made a way – through the NECF Foundation”

After completing my Diploma in Computer Science, I was desperately scouring for a loan to complete my degree. Thanks to a loan from the NECF Foundation, I completed my Bachelor’s degree at the University of Nottingham (local campus) within a year. I am currently working as a software engineer in a Sydney-based IT company.

I was not born into a rich family, but I have a family who loves and serves God, especially a dad who has been serving Him for about 30 years. I have never doubted God who has been abundantly amazing me and supplying me with all my needs. God will always make a way, even when there seems no way.

And once again, thank you NECF Foundation for fulfilling His will on me. – *By Lian Yuen Chi, 22, Setapak Baptist Church*  
(Yuen Chi’s father is the pastor of the church..)

# What's Up Youths?

MTV has far more influence on our youths than we think. It is now the planet's biggest television network, reaching 379 million households in 140 territories globally through 38 locally-programmed channels.

Not surprisingly, MTV music videos have numb our teens to violence, alcohol, drugs and other social ills as a result of their characteristic quick cuts, multiple messages, deafening audio, high-impact visuals, frenetic bursts and random transitions. Additionally, the videos' proliferation of sexual imageries has influenced teens to adopt a more permissive attitude towards promiscuity and premarital sex.

Wilson Wong, associate pastor of ACTS church, drove home the above points in his presentation on MTV's influence on youths at the Regional Youth Workers' Consultation (North) held in Penang in May.

Although his sharing is not a new revelation, it reminded the 15 youth workers and leaders from 10 churches about the dangers of overexposure to MTV.

NECF Malaysia's Patrick Cheng picked up on the subject of media influence in his talk on the gaming culture.

**Regional  
Youth Workers'  
Consultation  
(North)**

He shared about the current most popular computer game craze among youths – the D.o.t.A. game from the Warcraft III series, which portrays the battle among four races – Humans, Orcs, Night Eves and Undead.

This cybercafe game involves heavy usage of magic, role-playing as demons, raising the dead and casting spells. While witchcraft elements in computer games are not new, WarCraft III's greatest strength and attraction are its movie-quality cinematic, which pulls the players right into the classic Orc-versus-Human battles popularised by the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

With over 500 different campaigns offering players many hours of fun, suspense and thrill, the overtly occultic strategy game can numb the players to the demonic realm of witchcraft, necromancy and spells, Patrick warned.

"While church leaders can warn its members of the above dangers, we see the importance of engaging parents to help their children apply the Word of God daily in their choice of entertainment, be it songs, games or shows. By doing so, they will be able to internalise the reality of God in their lives," said the NECF Executive Secretary (Leadership

Development).

Following his sharing was a talk by Dr Herbert Tan on "Leadership Development of Youth". The family consultant of Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ emphasised the importance of the home as the primary place for character and leadership training. He also gave a 5Es model for intentional development of youth leaders in the church – Equipping, Exposure, Experience, Environment and Evaluation.

Parents need to understand the youth culture, and teach and model to their children a life of godliness. On the church front, they need to examine the church structures and methodology as to whether they are relevant to ministry to youths.

One of the highlights of the consultation was the Inter-Generational forum held on the last evening and attended by youths and parents.

Dr Tan, who chaired the forum, pointed out that the gap between parents and youths today is not a generation gap but a cultural gap. The present generation of youths has a culture of their own that is sometimes totally alien to their parents. He then set the tone for the night by sharing some principles on cross-cultural communication to help both parties bridge this gap. The next regional youth consultation will be held at Johor Baru from \_\_\_\_\_.

## Regional Prayer Network Formed

PASTORS and church leaders from the northern peninsula have agreed to form a regional network focussing on building relationship and prayer. The "Northern Region Network" is the result of a two-day regional prayer consultation in May organised by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission.

Some 40 pastors and leaders participated in this consultation – the first of several to follow around the country – that was held in preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Prayer Consultation to be held next year. The delegates were from Kangar, Alor Star, Sungei Petani, Kulim, Baling, Seberang Perai and Penang.

Six coordinators have been appointed to represent each city, town and area. Their task is to follow up and facilitate the implementation of the said objectives.

The coordinators are: Susan (Kangar); Pr Samuel Low (Sungei Petani); Pr Silas (Kulim); Pr Suguna Raj (Seberang Perai); and Pr Leonard (Alor Star and coordinator for the Northern Region Network).

At the consultation, two major issues that delegates discussed and prayed over were the lack of pastors in vernacular churches, and struggling pastors especially those ministering in Tamil churches and Tamil communities in the estates. The consultation ended with a combined-churches prayer gathering in Sungei Petani.



# All Ready for Fasting Season after Prayer Camp

“When you see a small church struggling or facing problems, you should grieve because that’s your flesh hurting.” – Rev. Daniel Ho



CHURCHES must remember that they are *already* one body comprising many different parts, rather than separate entities forming one body.

“Since we are already one body, we should live likewise; sadly, we live as if we are fragmented parts, simply because we don’t have the mindset of ‘one body,’” lamented Rev. Daniel Ho.

He was speaking at the recent Chinese prayer camp held in conjunction with the annual NECF 40-day National Fast and Prayer. “When you see a small church struggling or facing problems, you should grieve because that’s your flesh hurting. You can’t ignore it because it’s like when one tooth hurts, the whole body suffers too,” reiterated Rev. Ho, Dean of the Los Angeles Agape Renewal Centre, a training centre for pastors and leaders ministering in Chinese churches.

The more able churches should care for the weaker and needier parts of the body, he urged.

Over 100 pastors and leaders from some 35 Chinese churches attended the three-day camp, which was a move away from tradition as it was held before the start of the nationwide 40-day national fast and prayer in conjunction with the Merdeka Day celebrations.

NECF Malaysia Chinese Commission, the camp organiser, had hoped that holding the camp before the fasting season would rouse the participants to reach out and influence others to join the intercession. The commission’s executive secretary Ngeh Hoong Eng believed the camp had achieved its objective, partly

## Significant Spiritual Impact

MALAYSIAN Christians joined over 200 million brethren worldwide in the Global Day of Prayer (GDOP) on June 4, and what an experience it was!

Elder Dr Tan Nget Hong observed, “It was a tremendous event with a very significant spiritual impact on our nation”. Some 1200 people from 50 churches in the Klang Valley attended the prayer gathering at Heritage Centre, Petaling Jaya. There were also GDOP gatherings in Penang, Sibul, Sitiawan and Sungai Petani.

Dr Tan reported: “Many church pastors and prayer leaders called us and said ‘we want to be part of this!’ This helps to speed the momentum of a growing united prayer movement in the Klang Valley, and I believe, a prelude to revival.”

The GDOP gathering was an eye-opener to many participants as they experienced the unity and passion among the brethren in praying for the world. The hall was filled with many young people and children praying fearlessly and unreservedly.

One participant, Sonny Geh, was mesmerised by the passion of the

participants during the worship session. “They were very vocal and full of action, like a crowd of spectators excitedly cheering their favourite football team. This is exactly how the saints will be cheering when Jesus returns, and I don’t want to be left out.”

But the passionate worship was only the prelude to the intercession. Sonny added, “As one of the pastors prayed in Tamil, the Lord convicted me and I had to repent of all the nasty things I had said of and unsavoury jokes I had cracked about the other races. I also vowed not to talk along racist lines as far as a particular race is concerned. Imagine doing so when I’m committed to praying for their salvation. What hypocrisy! Thank God He makes all things beautiful, in His time.”

Another participant said she was moved at the sight of children worshipping God so joyfully.

Spurred by the fervour of this year’s GDOP gathering, planning for next year’s event is already underway. “Next year, we hope to see 10000 people from 200 churches gathered at a stadium on May 27. We also hope to have the GDOP gathering in 40 cities throughout Malaysia,” enthused Elder Dr Tan.

“In fact, next year is our nation’s year of Jubilee (50th Merdeka year) and I believe something special in the spiritual realm is going to happen but God’s people must persevere in praying and seeking His face,” he urged.



Part of the crowd at PJFEC, Heritage Centre, Petaling Jaya.

through Rev. Ho’s stirring messages on “Transforming the nation through your life”, but mainly through the move of the Holy Spirit.

“Many participants commented that this was truly a prayer camp because we spent a lot of time interceding for the nation,” Hoong Eng said.

She reported too that as a result of the intimate fellowship experienced at the camp, participants from Petaling Jaya churches have agreed to start a pastors’ fellowship for Petaling Jaya.

They will meet monthly to pray and discuss what they can do together to serve the community. ■

# Is the Malaysian Church in Christ?

By Rev. Khoo Boo Wah, M.Th.

**T**he past 20 years have seen remarkable development in the Malaysian Church.

This is evident in:

- The increased number of Christians (though we remain a minority) from some 6% in 1980 to 9.21% in 2000;
- The establishment of mega churches in many cities;
- A better understanding among Christians of the scriptural image of the Church as the people of God;
- The blurring of the demarcation line between the clergy and the laity; and
- The increasing emphasis and active participation of Christian leaders in the various aspects of church life, especially in missions and services to the poor and needy.

look at these fundamental questions with much soul searching and consideration on the neglected areas of Christian living and thinking.

## **Being in Christ**

Indeed, Christian life begins with God's initiative. It is, first and foremost, the gift of God. A Christian is a person who links to Jesus by faith, appropriating the work accomplished on the Cross on his behalf, allowing Him to make His home in his heart, and be seen to have a life-changing relationship with God.

The Apostle Paul has made it clear in 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" His encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus blinded him temporarily, crucified him permanently, and destroyed his vain attempts to find acceptance with God

united to Him in a bond, which nothing in this world can possibly sever. He is united to Him as the body to the head. Again, Paul declares his self-sufficiency, is really Christ-sufficiency.

Being in Christ, however, is not a business of static being. It is a matter of becoming a new creature. Firstly, we allow God to change our old nature through discipleship, for example getting rid of old ways and old habits of self-indulgence, self-reliance and self-sufficiency.

Secondly, we allow ourselves to be renewed of our minds, that is, rethinking the great truths on which we are called; getting out of the old rut of prejudice, preconception and lazy acceptance of half-truths; delving more deeply into scriptural truths; and growing more sincere in our thinking and speaking

Transformation is not achieved in a sudden flash of emotional uplift. It is the continuous revolution, which can never be stopped or suppressed.

Christians are called to display our Life-giver, Saviour and Lord, and not ourselves. Therefore, we depend on a power that is not our own.

Yet, is the Malaysian Church today alive?

It is generally agreed that local churches in Malaysia have exhibited actions that are cause for concern. Among them are: the attitude of the many second or third generation Christians who have narrowed their Christian experience to a Sunday-morning affair; self-satisfaction with one's Christian life within the four walls of the church; over-emphasis of emotional needs; prosperity gospel; and seeking personal prophecy.

What, then, is Christian life all about? Have we married our theological belief and devotion with the spirit of this age? The above concerns require a fresh re-

through his own righteous zeal.

Paul's saying and his experience are important in our understanding of who a Christian is. Salvation does not come through self-improvement, external physical act, moral action, or by altering one's current state of affairs. One contributes nothing to his salvation except his sin. Jesus Christ is the only one who makes the difference.

'In Christ' is the only designated realm where the new life can be found. No expression could more admirably sum up the condition into which the Christian is brought as soon as he believes in Christ.

Not only does a believer have Christ in him, he is also in Christ. He is intimately

As new creations, we are being transformed more and more into Christlikeness, not in appearance, of course, but in character.

## **Remaining in Christ**

Nonetheless, transformation is not achieved in a sudden flash of emotional uplift. It is the continuous revolution, which can never be stopped or suppressed. It is always new because any encounter with the risen Christ will turn men and women around in a new direction to live the new life under the new Master. It is a glad and willful surrender of the control of our lives to

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# Adoption – Doing It Right

In the previous issue, **VICKY NG** related the story of Patrick and Ai Ni who adopted baby Cherie through a “go-between” lady. Years later, they were embroiled in legal complications for failing to legally adopt her. In this article, Vicky – a practising lawyer, deaconess and Vice-Chairman of Interserve Malaysia – outlines the proper procedure to legal adoption under the Adoption Act, 1952, applicable in West Malaysia. She says, “Let’s do adoption legally because it is imperative to obey the laws of the country and for the sake of our conscience and for the welfare of the child.”



**U**nder the Act, the only person or body that can make any arrangements for adoption of a child is the Department of Social Welfare. The other non-governmental agency that has made arrangements for adoption is the Assunta Hospital's *Sister's Project* that has been active since 1966. This organisation is affiliated to the Social Welfare Department.

In practice, however, the Department

of Social Welfare does not prevent any organisation or individuals from making arrangements for adoption of a child.

Who can adopt? The Applicant:

(1) has attained the age of 25 and is at least 21 years older than the child;

(2) has attained the age of 21 and is a relative of the child; or

(3) is the mother or father of the child.

The Applicant (potential adoptive parents) and the child must be ordinary

residents in West Malaysia.

The Act prohibits West Malaysians from adopting children who are not ordinarily residents in West Malaysia. “Ordinary resident” means that the residence is not casual and uncertain and of a sufficient duration and continuity to satisfy the requirement of ordinary residence.

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• FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

God's rule.

Without Christ, even if we have the correct doctrines, we do not live under the dominion of Christ or have the truth or His revealed will. Without Christ, we may persist in doing things our ways, and may eventually create our own gods to give meaning and purpose to our lives.

William Whiting Borden, a young missionary to China, once wrote, “In every man's heart there is a throne and a cross. If Christ is on the throne, self is on the cross, and if self, even a little bit, is on the throne, Jesus is on the cross in that man's heart.”

‘Remaining in Christ’ means making an effort to develop our life in Christ. Salvation is a gift but we have to work it out with fear and trembling.

The challenge for us, as people in Christ, is to become in daily reality what we already are in the eyes of God. While we desire to demonstrate a life of devotion to God, we stumble into sin and utterly fail from time to time in our Christian walk. There is no ‘quick fix’, for the battle lasts through a lifetime.

However, we can remain in Christ and be faithful to Him when we observe

a daily personal sort of devotion and actively share in the life of the Christian community. By the former, it does not mean the following of any prescribed sort of practice because people differ.

What is meant is that each of us, in his own way, must first centre our attention on God, what He has done in Christ and what He will do for us.

Secondly, we need to be regularly present at the Sunday worship when God's people gather together, and actively share in the life of the Christian community of which we are members.

These are the modes by which we may effectively come to deepen our faith and build a kind of inner security which all ‘the changes and chances’ of life cannot seriously disturb.

## Displaying Christ

Finally, not only we are saved from sin, we are also saved to do something. Loving God this way is not a simple matter for many of us. Yet, the Christian life is life in the Spirit. The New Testament clearly envisions the Christian life as simultaneously one of dying and one of living – dying more and more unto sin and living more and more unto

righteousness.

The knowledge of God is not an experience to be savoured in solitariness; it is something to be shared. Christianity without mission is a denial of its very nature.

What are the qualities that must be found in those who would stay in God's presence? The answer is found in our daily duties to our fellow men, clearly expressed in Proverbs and Psalms.

It is not about lofty emotions or experiences of spiritual rapture, but the integrity in life, righteousness in actions, and sincerity in speech. Our communion with God must be lived out in those deeds that make up our daily living.

The Christian life is not confined to church on Sundays, but a daily commitment to Christ in all areas of life.

Christians are called to display our Life-giver, Saviour and Lord, and not ourselves. Therefore, we depend on a power that is not our own.

The issue rests not on whether we are worthy, but on the fact that He who calls us to this new life in Christ is a faithful God. He calls, He equips. Christians, unworthy as we are, need to wait upon Him always. ■

### Consent

Before an adoption order is made the courts must be satisfied that the consent of every person who is the parent or guardian or a person liable to contribute to the support of the child is obtained.

Consent may be dispensed with under certain conditions – the usual ones being, when the parent or guardian of the child has abandoned, neglected or persistently ill-treated the child; or where the person whose consent is required cannot be found or is incapable of giving his consent; or where his consent is unreasonably withheld.

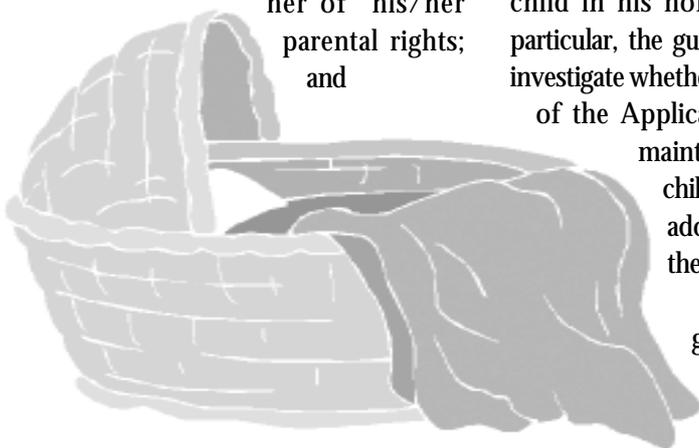
In the case of children born out of wedlock, a letter of consent by the natural mother of the child is often deemed sufficient by the courts where the father of the child cannot be traced.

It is expedient that once the child is a candidate for adoption, consent should be obtained immediately from the natural parent/s and the child handed over to the Applicants for continuous care and possession.

Because of the strong emotional bonds between the natural mother and the child, it is also advisable that the whereabouts of the child be hidden from the natural mother and no further contacts be forged thereafter.

Before an adoption order is made the court must primarily be satisfied that:

- 1) consent has been obtained from every person whose consent is necessary (except where consent has been dispensed with) and that the person understands the nature and effect of the adoption order which will permanently deprive him or her of his/her parental rights; and



- 2) it will be for the welfare of the child.

### Adoption Procedure

1) The Applicants file an Adoption Petition either in the High Court or Sessions Court of Malaya. The Petition is supported by an affidavit sworn by the Applicants to affirm the truthfulness of the statements made in the Petition to adopt.

The Letter of Consent from the natural parent/s or guardian is also filed in court. In practice, an Application to dispense with the attendance in court by the natural parents/guardian is filed simultaneously so that they are spared the trauma of coming to court.

2) The Petition has to be served on all relevant parties including the Social Welfare Department.

3) The court fixes a hearing date where the Applicants, the child and the Social Welfare officer have to be present.

4) At the first court attendance, if the court is satisfied that an Adoption Order be made in favour of the Applicants, the court shall initially make an Interim Order and appoint the Social Welfare officer as the guardian ad litem of the child.

It is the duty of the guardian ad litem to investigate as fully as possible all the circumstances of the child and the Applicants and all other matters relevant to the proposed adoption in order to safeguard the interests of the child before the court.

The guardian ad litem will visit the Applicants to interview them and see the child in his home environment. In particular, the guardian ad litem has to investigate whether the means and status of the Applicants are sufficient to maintain and bring up the child suitably and that the adoption is desirable for the welfare of the child.

The report of the guardian ad litem is confidential and crucial to the court to



assist the court to arrive at its decision.

When a guardian ad litem is appointed by the court, the court will then fix a hearing date for the Petition. This is normally three months from the date of the first court attendance by all parties so as to allow the guardian ad litem time to complete his investigations.

5) At the second court attendance, which is the hearing date of the Petition, in the presence of all parties concerned, the court would consider the report of the guardian ad litem – who would have interviewed the Applicants directly (if necessary) and seen the child – and based on all these factors, make a decision for a Final Order for adoption.

6) After the Final Order is granted, the court will then write to the National Registration Department authorising them to issue the birth certificate for the child pursuant to the order by the court.

It must be stressed that our Adoption Act has been amended so that the birth certificate of the child does not carry the word “adopted” like in the past. Instead, the duly issued birth certificate is similar to that of a natural born child.

The adoptive father and mother of the child appear on the birth certificate as the child’s natural parents and the child’s name is as given by the adoptive parents.

Therefore Applicants should not worry that the grown-up child may discover the adoption from the birth certificate.

7) An Adoption Order once made operates to transfer all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities of the natural parent/guardian to the adopter as if the child was born to the adopter in lawful wedlock. This further means that the adopted child has the right to inheritance of properties as that of the natural-born child of the adopter.

The whole process of adoption until getting the birth certificate takes about five to six months, provided all the above-mentioned conditions are satisfied. ■

# COMING UP

## National Prayer Conference (English)

- ❖ **Date:** August 24–26
- ❖ **Place:** Full Gospel Church, Johor Baru

This year's National Prayer Conference and rally will move stage from the Klang Valley to Johor Baru to benefit our brethren in south Peninsular Malaysia.

The theme is "Transforming the

## Children's Prayer Conference & Rally

- ❖ **Date:** August 21–22
- ❖ **Place:** PJEFC, Heritage Centre, Petaling Jaya

THE 2<sup>nd</sup> national Children's Prayer Conference will be held during the school holiday for children aged five to 12.

The NECF Prayer Commission, the organiser, is also encouraging Sunday School and Children Ministry's teachers to sit in the sessions to learn from the speaker who will help the children to discern God's voice and know His purposes based on Jeremiah 1:5.

The teachers will need to register as participants. All teaching sessions will be conducted by Pr Sam Phun who has over 22 years of experience working with children in churches and schools.

The conference will end with a children's prayer rally. The registration fee of RM25 includes meals, materials and a special doorgift.

## RLM Concert 2006

- ❖ **Date:** August 5 (Saturday)
- ❖ **Place:** 3K Sports Complex & Inn, Subang Jaya

Real Love Ministry is holding a fundraising concert featuring Juwita Suwito, its ministry director Edmund

Nation Through the Local Church".

Speakers is Bishop Efraim Tendero, national director of the Philippines Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC).

PCEC is a network of 20,000 churches within 65 denominations and 150 para-church organisations in the country.

## BM Leaders Conference

- ❖ **Place:** Sarikei, Sarawak
- ❖ **Date:** Oct 16–18

Speakers: Rev. Dr Bambang Widjaya and Dr Herbert Tan  
Contact: Pr Peter Mutang (013-8140028); Pr Robin Ato (013-8140028)

- ❖ **Place:** Ranau, Sabah
- ❖ **Date:** Oct 23–25

Speakers: Rev. Dr Bambang Widjaya and Rev. Wong Kim Kong  
Contact: Elder George Mikil – (013-8608285)

THE NECF Malaysia BM Commission is organising the above conferences with the theme "Leader: Skill, Character, Vision and Management".

The conferences will focus on leadership skills, character, vision and management of church ministry in the present times. The conference are jointly organised with the Ranau Council of Churches and Pusat SIB Sarawak.

Smith and its own dance group. The concert is themed "Real Love Brings Real Life" and will be graced by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili.

To get the tickets, priced from RM40 to RM80, e-mail [rlm@streamyx.com](mailto:rlm@streamyx.com) or call Helga at 012-2122847.

## Make a Date with Doulos

Pasir Gudang, Johore: Aug 4–15  
Kuantan: Aug 18–27

The world's oldest ocean passenger ship is currently docked at Port Klang until July 31.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> NECF Tamil Conference

- ❖ **Date:** August 22–23
- ❖ **Place:** FGT, Wisma Eagles, Subang Jaya, Selangor

This conference aims to motivate and challenge pastors and church leaders to build healthy and strong churches that last.



The NECF Malaysia Tamil Commission urges all involved in building Tamil congregations to come and discover how they can overcome weaknesses and explore dynamic church growth principles.

The speakers are Rev. Eu Hong Seng (NECF Chairman); Rev. P.S. Rajamoni (Acting General Superintendent of The South India Assemblies of God) and Rev. David Mohan who pastors one of the largest churches in India with a 15,000-people congregation.

Registration fee is RM20 per person (subsidised) and it includes conference materials, lunch and tea. Contact NECF for registration or information.

There will also be night rallies from 8.00pm at the same venue. Rev. Mohan will speak on both nights. His messages will be interpreted in English.

Merdeka Prayer Rally venues  
See page 15

THIS year's *Lighting Up Our Nation* programme, held in conjunction with Merdeka Day, will focus on praying for our own nation. Berita NECF will highlight in each issue a state for intercession. In the last issue, we focussed on Pahang and here, we look at Johor, a state made famous by the now-defunct "crooked bridge" project. We hope that the information provided through "State Spot" will stir up more passionate intercession.



"exposing a Muslim to Christian literature, gospel music or even an evangelistic car bumper sticker". Section 133 of the Johor Islamic Family Law Enactment 1990 provides apostasy as a punishable offence.

In 1992, Johor mandated that all building applications, including applications to construct churches, be approved by seven state agencies, including the Islamic department.

In December 2005, the state authorities demolished a church of the Orang Asli in Kampung Orang Laut Masai settlement on grounds that the church was built illegally on state land.

**Orang Asli (OA)**

In 1997, the OA community received a morale booster in the case of *Adong bin Kuwan v Kerajaan Negeri Johor & Anor* when the High Court declared that the OA of Sg. Linggiu had common law rights besides their rights under the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954 over their ancestral lands, rights that are protected by the Federal Constitution.

Nevertheless, development plans along the coast overlooking the Tebrau Straits have often forced the relocation of OA communities. They continue to face land issues, and many remain poor and uneducated because of their reluctance to change their lifestyle and inability to face modern challenges.

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**STATISTICS (MALAYSIA  
STATISTICS DEPARTMENT, 2005)**

**Population:** 3,101,200 (est.)  
**Ethnic groups:** Malay 52.76%, Chinese 32.36%, Other Bumiputera 1.26%, Indian 6.6%, Others 0.62%, Non-citizens 6.4%  
**Religious Breakdown (2000):**  
 Islam 58.8%, Buddhism 28.7, Tribal 0.2%, Christianity 2.2%, Hinduism 5.9%, Taoism/Confucianism 3.2%, Others 0.2%, No Religion 0.4%, Unknown 0.4%  
**Incidence of poverty (2004):** 2%, Hardcore 0.3%

during his premiership, in an effort to root out extremist teaching.

In 2004, there were already 537 religious schools directly administered and fully funded by the state government. The state religious department also regulates and supervises the remaining 23 'private' religious schools (Sekolah Agama Rakyat), assisting them with annual financial grants. For many Johoreans, Islamic education is a matter of course to complement the national education stream.

Muar became the birthplace of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) in 1951 when the ulama (Muslim scholars) met to discuss and exchange views on the promotion of religion with a concentration on education.

Although relationships among the people of different religious background are generally harmonious, Islamic consciousness is evidenced by a great demand for religious education as well as the rigorous enforcement of religious principles in many aspects of people's lives, including those of other faiths. For example, in Johor Baru, written consent of Muslim neighbours must be obtained before renewal or new dog licences can be issued.

In their effort to rein in the deviant group 'Sky Kingdom' and its teachings, the religious department has been closely monitoring two villages in Kluang and Mersing. The authorities are also keeping an eye on any possible Shi'ite activity.

In 1991, the state passed the *Control and Restriction of the Propagation of Non-Islamic Religions Bill*. The law provides that for Christians to be fined up to \$4,000 or imprisoned for up to four years for

Johor has gained much attention as a result of the controversies arising from the now-defunct 'crooked' bridge project.

Johor is the birthplace of Malay nationalism, which led to the formation of United Malay National Association (UMNO) in 1946.

It was the first state, and currently the only state in Malaysia, that has its own military force called Johor Military Force or 'Timbalan Setia Negeri', a private army of the Sultan of Johor. Since independence, Johor has been a bastion for UMNO.

**Islamisation and religious freedom**

Johor was the first Malay state to organise Islam on a bureaucratic basis. The Jabatan Agama Islam Negeri Johor (Johor Islamic Department) was established under the state constitution, enabling the state government to have direct control over religious activities.

A section headed by the Inspector and Registrar of Religious Schools took charge of religious education. The Johor Islamic education system should be a model to be emulated by other states, said Tun Dr Mahathir Mohammad

To enable social and economic development for the OA, state Local Government and Health Committee chairman Datuk Halimah Sadique reportedly said that they would be relocated under a new resettlement exercise (*NST, Dec 21, 2005*).

**Terrorism**

Wan Min Wat Mat, currently detained under the Internal Security Act, admitted to having been involved in the Bali bombing. He was head of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) chapter in Johor and was said to have carried out secret military training in the jungles of Gunung Ledang and Gunung Belumut from 1994 to 1998.

He was also said to have set up Luqmanul Hakiem in Ulu Tiram in 1998 (closed down by the government in 2001). The school was financed by JI Imam Samudra, Mukhlis and Indonesia's JI leader Abu Bakar Ba'asyir are all said to have taught there. Of the 10 Malaysians recorded on the al-Qaeda associates and members list, four — Mohd Nasir, Amran, Nordin, Yazid — were born in Johor.

**Other issues**

Syndicates specialising in selling luxury cars and corrupt practice in the timber industry are frequently reported.

According to the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices released early this year, human trafficking is a problem in Johor, which also has been recording high number of reported incest and rape cases since 2000.

In March at the Dewan Rakyat, the state capital was labelled as "sin city" and "crime city" by a Johor MP. It is believed that security in Johor Bahu has reached a worrying trend, and the Singapore media has reported the city as unsafe for tourists.

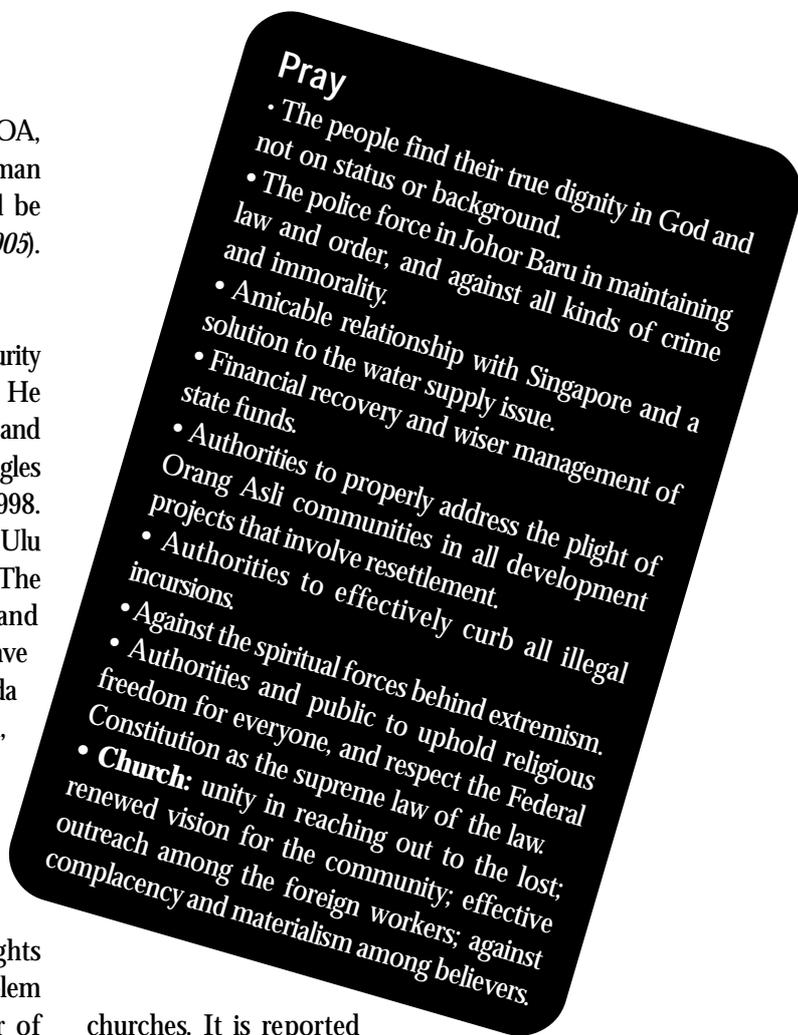
The eastern coast between Kota Tinggi, Penggerang and Mersing is one of the major entry points for illegal Indonesian migrants. Many of them have contributed to social problems in the communities.

Johor's supply of water to Singapore, which revolves around price and how it is calculated, remains one of the outstanding issues in the bilateral relationship between Malaysia and Singapore.

**The Church**

Presbyterianism grew through Chinese churches in Johor.. The Johor Baru Holy Light Church, founded in 1886 by a missionary of the Presbyterian Church of England, is the oldest Protestant church in Johor. There are more than 150 churches in the state capital and unity among the churches is evidenced in the strong pastors' fellowships. The largest congregation in a single locality has about 2000 members.

Recent years have seen consistent and steady growth, particularly in the Chinese-speaking



churches. It is reported that 80% of Chinese Johoreans attend Chinese schools, at least at the primary level. There is a huge pool of foreign workers coming mainly from Vietnam, Indonesia, Burma and Bangladesh. Ministry to the Vietnamese workers appears to be the strongest.

Few churches are active in social ministry while many are dynamic in short-term mission involvement, both abroad and local. Church leaders believe that Johor churches could be more vibrant and zealous in evangelism. ■

**MERDEKA PRAYER RALLIES**

<u>TOWN/CITY</u>	<u>VENUE</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CONTACT</u>
Alor Star	Full Gospel Church	29	Pr Kuilan (04-7341636)
Penang	Dome, Komtar	31	Dr Andrew Chong (04-6425709)
K. Terengganu	Lifeline Assembly	30	Pr Koshy Thomas (09-6170830)
Kuantan	Grace Charismatic	30	Rev. Richard Ong (09-5177127)
Rawang	Diakonia Church	30	Pr David Tan (03-60918150)
Klang Valley	PJFEC, Heritage Centre	30	Dr Tan Nget Hong (012-3817856)
Seremban	Agape Church	25	Rev. Voon Yuen Woh (06-7653777)
Kluang	Prime City Hotel	29	Rev. Sunther (019-7267634)
Johor Baru	Full Gospel Church	27	Pr Tay Wah Seng (016-7384904)
Kuching	Tadika Rhema	30	Pr Ned (082-339188)
Sibu	Logos Methodist	31	Rev. Kong Chong Ling (084-339188)
Labuan	The Church of Our Holy Saviour	28	Pr Calvin Chong (016-8170087)
Tawau	Dewan Catholic	30	Pr Flora Chong (089-772212)

# FOR YOUR Prayers



## INDONESIA

ON May 27, an earthquake measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale struck Yogyakarta, killing over 5,100 people, injuring thousands and displacing more than 130,000. A spokesman of United Nation Children's Fund reported that 40% of the homeless are under 18 years. Close to 35,000 homes and buildings have been turned into rubble.

Although the region is Muslim-majority, Christians were not spared from the affliction. Barnabas Fund reported that there are up to 40,000 Christians living in Bantul and up to 180,000 Christians in Klaten, two badly-hit areas.

Praise God for the quick response to the victims. Pray that the suffering Indonesians will see His love through His people who are ministering in the affected areas. Pray for victims and those who have lost their loved ones, that they will receive physical and emotional healing, restoration of lives and homes.

Pray for effective teamwork among relief agencies, efficient delivery of relief services to the victims and good stewardship and proper managing of relief fund. Pray for wisdom and righteousness for the Indonesian authorities in rebuilding the afflicted areas and restoring the lives of victims.

For our Christian brethren who are afflicted, pray: that they do not lose heart in times of difficulties and remain steadfast in God's faithfulness; the light of God will continue to shine through them; and they will find favour with the Indonesian authorities in obtaining permit to rebuild their churches. ■

## ZIMBABWE

A year ago, the Robert Mugabe regime razed some 300,000 homes in a campaign called Operation Murambitsvina (clean out filth). Churches

providing advocacy, food, shelter and medical care for the victims found themselves in conflict with the government and security forces.

The churches decided to hold an anniversary prayer event on May 20, with a prayer procession and simultaneous prayer vigils to remember the victims of Operation Murambitsvina and pray for the nation.

However the police detained and interrogated several pastors and ordered them to cancel the prayer event. The more the churches stand for justice and righteousness the more they are repressed as potential enemies of the state. Furthermore the issue of church engagement in social justice and political issues is splitting and polarising the Church in Zimbabwe.

Please pray that the Zimbabwean churches will be united in putting the gospel into action. (Ephesians 6:12) ■

## INDIA

ON May 19, the Governor of Rajasthan refused to sign into law the state's proposed anti-conversion bill, saying it violated religious freedom. She sent the legislation back to the Assembly.

Praise God for such independent political and moral courage. Pray for God's blessing and comfort upon the persecuted Church in Rajasthan and that He will frustrate the ways of the wicked! (Psalm 146:9) ■

## SOMALIA

IN early June, Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, fell to an alliance of Islamic militias after they had fought for four months against an alliance of warlords.

The 'Islamic Courts Union' (ICU) Shura Council will act as a parliament in all areas the ICU controls. Its head, Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, is designated a

terrorist by both the US and the UN.

Aweys has vowed to enact Syariah across Somalia. Already, he has ruled that Muslims who miss prayers will be regarded as infidels and killed. Three Christian men were recently shot dead, while some children of Christian Somali refugees in Kenya have been kidnapped by Muslim relatives and taken to Islamic institutions in Somalia for 'rehabilitation'.

The situation in Somalia is dangerous and desperate. Pray for: God to intervene there for the sake of his Kingdom and glory; God to speed the rescue of the children who have been kidnapped from their Christian Somali refugee parents.

Pray for: the Holy Spirit to mercifully save many Somali people through dreams, visions, gospel radio, Somali-language Christian literature and the personal witness of believers; God's servants to have access to bring the good news to those desperate for peace and calm; God to raise up wise, strong leaders for Somalia in law, medicine, agriculture, education, government, peace-making and every other field, especially in the Church. ■

## NEPAL

ON May 18, Nepal was proclaimed a secular state. The previously Hindu kingdom went through 19 days of protests in April seeking a return to a democratic system first instituted in 1990. The country has been in a state of emergency since 2004. As Nepal is now a secular state, pray that the widespread discrimination and persecution of low castes and non-Hinuds will now end.

Pray that God will strengthen Nepal's leaders to stand against Hindu nationalists, restrain its Hindu masses, and bless its young growing Church for the Kingdom and glory of God. ■

# Current Concerns for your prayers

## Lina Joy, Shamala, conversion cases

On July 17, the Court of Appeal put on hold hearing of all cases pertaining to religious conversion until the Federal Court delivers judgment in the Lina Joy's case. Court of Appeal judge Datuk Mokhtar Sidin made the ruling when hearing appeals by Dr M. Jeyaganesh and a counter appeal by his wife, S. Shamala (see pg 3).

Mokhtar said the court wanted to wait for the Federal Court's decision in Joy's case because the apex court's judgement might annul his court's findings.

The Federal Court has heard Joy's case and the three judges are now deliberating their decisions, which will have great repercussion for generations to come.

Therefore, let us humbly and urgently ask Him to intervene at this crucial juncture of our nation's history, so that truth, righteousness and godliness will prevail in our land. Please pray:

- For the judges that they will: remember their judicial motto "Berkhidmat untuk Keadilan"; uphold the supremacy of the Federal Constitution; have an open mind in interpreting the law; and deliver judgement without fear or favour;
- Against the spiritual forces (Eph. 6:12) behind those who seek to hijack 'religion' for their own gain and sow discord within the community;
- For the Prime Minister to act justly to defuse all attempts to incite religious sentiments and hatred;
- God will be sovereign over whatever decision meted out by the Federal Court, and that righteousness and freedom, peace and harmony, and the overall wellbeing of the nation will prevail; and
- For God's peace for Joy and Shamala and all others in their predicament. ■

## Moorthy Case

In September, the Court of Appeal will make a decision whether the civil or Syariah courts has the jurisdiction to

determine the religious status of an individual. If the appellate court agrees that civil courts have the jurisdiction, it would then send the "M. Moorthy case" back to the High Court for the merits of the case to be heard.

On Dec 28 last year, the Appellate and Special Powers High Court had ruled that it would not disturb the declaration that Moorthy was a Muslim because the matter was under the jurisdiction of the Syariah Court.

On Jan 24, the late Moorthy's wife, S. Kalammal filed a petition of appeal against the High Court decision.

Again, the Court's decision in September has far-reaching consequences for the present and future generations. Please pray for the judges that they will remember their duty to the country's pluralistic society.

Pray that God will give them strength to resist pressure from certain quarters as they deliberate their judgement.

The dual-legal system is already in place in Malaysia. Pray for clarification of the courts' role; for our leaders, judges, lawmakers and law enforcers to uphold the principle of justice for everyone; and for rational and moderate religious and civil groups to work together for public interests and justice. ■

## 9MP Projects

The Government has announced RM15 billion worth of projects to be tendered under the first batch of the 9<sup>th</sup> Malaysia Plan. The Government has adopted a new Project and Programme Management methodology to ensure the 880 projects are completed on schedule, and to ensure good practices and processes in planning and implementing the projects.

The projects include 450 schools, transport systems, government buildings, water supply projects, building and upgrading roads, and clinics.

Pray that the tendering process will be fair and totally free of corruption and

the projects will be awarded to responsible, principled and honest contractors. Pray too against all corruption in the construction process. ■

## Anti-terrorist watch

Several small groups attempted some years ago to mount a violent struggle to overthrow the government and install their version of an Islamic country, revealed Deputy Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Musa Hassan (*The Star*, May 19). "The majority are religious students who went to Pakistan to study Islam but instead were taught that the government was not Islamic and they had to overthrow it by violence," he said.

"They were trained by the Taliban during the Afghan war and returned to Malaysia to carry out their violence." The clandestine groups were nabbed in time by the police.

To empower the police to be even more effective, the Government is amending the Criminal Procedure Code (CPC) to allow them to intercept communication involving terrorism suspects. The CPC (Amendment) Bill will also empower the police to arrest without a warrant anyone suspected of being involved in a terrorist act.

Continue to lift up in prayer those responsible for the security of our nation. Pray for them to be vigilant and may God give them the right leads. ■

## Incentives for OA conversion

AS part of its efforts to convert more Orang Asli (OA) to Islam, the Kelantan Government is offering RM10,000 to its missionaries (male or female) who marry Orang Asli men or women. Other incentives offered include free housing, a monthly allowance of RM1,000 and a four-wheel-drive vehicle.

They were also expected to settle down in Orang Asli communities in Jeli and Gua Musang to spread Islamic teachings and act as spiritual figures. The

# Current Concerns for your prayers

incentives were introduced after the establishment of the Orang Asli Dakwah Unit in May to focus on converting OA.

Pray for the OA community that God will reveal Himself to them and His light will penetrate their hearts so that they will know the true, living God. Pray too for their welfare, that they will be economically blessed so that they will become self-reliant.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) has criticised the Kelantan government's monetary incentives to convert OA, saying that utilising state resources in this manner is an abuse of power and violation of the basic right, especially the freedom of thought, conscience and religion by monetary inducement.

It advised the state to use the resources to help empower the poorest community through economic activities which will enhance their income, improve educational opportunities and develop their human potential to ensure them a better quality of life. Pray along this line.

## Hardy NS volunteers

National Service camps are currently running and we need to uphold our volunteers who are conducting the weekly Christian classes throughout the country.

Praise God for the dedicated and passionate volunteers, some who have to travel long distance, through jungles and in poor road condition, to get to their classes.

Several camps have low numbers of Christian trainees, yet this has not deterred the volunteers. For example, the Sg Bakap camp in Penang has only one Christian trainee while the Pagoh camp in Johor has four; yet the volunteers have agreed to take on the classes. For their faithfulness, God has led non-Christians to attend their classes and some have become Christians through them.

Pray for the volunteers to be sensitive to the spiritual and emotional needs of

the trainees attending their classes, and that they will be able to communicate with them.

Pray that God will use them mightily to impact the trainees. Pray for the safety of volunteers who have to travel in rough conditions to get to the classes. ■

## Human Rights Poser

On May 9, the UN General Assembly elected Malaysia to the 47-member UN Human Rights Council, a move that was seen as ironic to some and inconceivable to others for many known reasons.

In recent years, the country's human rights performance seemed to have improved, judging by the media's increased boldness in criticising government policies and officials, exposing government corruption, and covering contentious debates at the Dewan Rakyat.

Yet, serious human rights issues continue to plague Malaysians. Among them are:

- the increased constraints on those who want to leave Islam for other religions;
- ethnic discrimination (eg preferential programmes designed to boost economic position of bumiputras while Orang Asli continue to be the poorest group, OA land ownership issues, etc.);
- gender discrimination (Muslim women in particular); and
- denial of fair public trials (M. Moorthy, S. Shamala, Ayah Pin's followers, etc.)

Human rights groups have opposed Malaysia's selection into the council because of the government's failure "to ink a raft of international human rights treaties" (*malaysiakini*, May 10).

To date, Malaysia has ratified two out of the 12 international UN human rights treaties – the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, the predicament of the Muslim women in this country has given the impression that the government is not

honouring its ratification of the former convention.

Amnesty International responded to Malaysia's election by urging Malaysia to ratify UN conventions on torture and civil rights, scrap restrictive laws (eg ISA) and protect migrants and refugees, before it can sit in judgment on other countries.

The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders wrote an open letter to our PM to express its concern on the disruption of the "Federal Constitution – Protection for All Public Forum" in Penang.

Pray that Malaysia's entry to the council will improve citizens' human rights as it will now come under international scrutiny and pressure to live up to the expected human rights standard. ■

## Rising divorce rate

An increasing number of Malaysians are opting for divorce when problems crop up in their marriage (*NST*, May 18). In 2004, about 150,060 couples uttered the marital vow. In the same year, 19,800 divorce cases were recorded, an increase of 4,561 cases compared with 2000.

Statistics from the National Population and Family Development Board show that the divorce rate is highest among Muslims. One reason for the rising trend is that the current generation places more importance on self and is more open to the concept of divorce. Another is the demise of the extended family, especially in urban areas.

A solid marriage provides a firm foundation for a thriving, harmonious family life. Pray for churches to provide strong leadership in the area of marital counselling, not only for their own members for their communities.

Pray for comfort and healing for those suffering, especially the children, from the effects of divorces. Pray for organisations, such as Focus on the Family, that work to uphold strong family values, that they will have more than enough resources to carry out their tasks. ■