

Pastoral Letter Post-Bersih 2.0 with MCCBCHST Statement

13 July 2011

Dear Pastor/ Elder/ Leader,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus!

Praise the Lord that His peace and sovereignty ruled over the rally on 9 July 2011. Other than the incidents of confrontation by the authorities and one regrettable death of an elderly man, Malaysian citizens who participated did so in a civil and orderly manner. As we read the many personal accounts of what transpired, we are encouraged to note that Malaysians have begun to bridge their racial differences to see each other as equals in experiencing the rally together.

As we move forward, NECF Malaysia upholds the call by the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) issued on 12 July 2011 for **Understanding, Compassion, Honesty and Respect** in continued engagement between the authorities and civil society:

Engage with Understanding, Compassion, Honesty and Respect

The Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism (MCCBCHST) calls upon all concerned Malaysian citizens to hold Thanksgiving Prayers in their respective places of worship for the relatively orderly "rally" held last Saturday. They may have broken the unjust and uncalled for ban but they did so in a peaceful manner to exercise their right of assembly as enshrined in our Constitution, the inviolate supreme law of our nation.

MCCBCHST is confident that the untoward events of 9th July 2011 could have been prevented if the authorities had dealt with the issues raised by Bersih from the outset at the negotiation table with **Understanding, Compassion, Honesty and Respect** as required in all our great religious teachings.

MCCBCHST re-iterates its strong support for every Malaysian's right to peaceful assembly as enshrined in our Federal Constitution under Article 10 (1) (b) and in Article 20 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and remind the authorities that freedom of opinion and expression too is provided for under Article 19 of the UDHR.

The most important lesson to be learnt from the 9th July 2011 event is that the authorities must transform their mindset and recognise that Malaysians today are much more learned, informed, matured and sophisticated beings than they are made out to be.

MCCBCHST fully endorses the statement by Persatuan Promosi Hak Asasi Malaysia (Proham):

“The core matter of the Bersih rally must be addressed namely to address the concerns in the election system and the call for a free and fair election. Proham calls for the government to establish an independent mechanism to review these concerns either through a Royal Commission or a Parliamentary Select Committee...”

MCCBCHST supports the call for the Federal Government to immediately sit with all concerned parties to find an appropriate, just and equitable solution.

We reiterate that all dialogue must be based on the principles of ***Understanding, Compassion, Honesty and Respect*** as required in all our great religious teachings.

In echoing this call, we urge churches to collectively pray for the following:

1. For God's sovereign hand to guide the on-going journey towards national transformation in electoral reform and against abuses of power and the law. Pray for continued dialogue and discussion between civil society and the authorities, and for genuine mutual respect and sincerity to guide this process.
2. Against exploitation of such efforts for political and communal ends. Pray against selfish lust for power and greed which blind many to the true reforms Malaysia needs.
3. That God may bring about transformation of individuals first, as part of nation-building, so that all citizens may desire Godly values such as compassion, mercy, justice and righteousness.
4. That the rights of all citizens as enshrined in the various provisions of the Federal Constitution as the Supreme Law of the land be upheld by those in authority. We pray for the authorities to interpret these provisions in the spirit of fairness and in accordance to standards upheld by matured democracies and the universal standards of human rights.
5. In the coming days as Malaysia heads for its next general election, for courage for the Church to be an effective witness in speaking boldly on principles, yet with wisdom to remain blameless before men.

We worship a God of the impossible and we know He cares for and loves every citizen of this country. May His will be done and may all glory and honour be given to Him.

Blessings,
Samuel Ang
Secretary-General
NECF Malaysia