

BERITA NECF

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE NATIONAL EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP OF MALAYSIA

http://www.necf.org.my/html/berita_f.htm

PP5872/13/2001

MARCH/APRIL 2001

PM Opens International Consultation on Globalisation

Transport Minister Officiates Closing Ceremony

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officiated the opening ceremony of the International Consultation on Globalisation on January 31 in the presence of over 800 invited guests comprising leaders of churches and para-church organisations, theologians and Christian politicians and businessmen (see page 6 for a summary of his address).

The presence of many prominent Christians was an indication of the deep concern Malaysian Christians have on this issue of globalisation.

Dr Mahathir, known worldwide as an outspoken lobbyist against the current process of globalisation, gave a rousing speech that stirred generous, spontaneous applause from the appreciative crowd.

Following the launch, the Prime Minister had supper for more than an hour with some 30 people including Minister for Transport Dato' Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and council members of both the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF) and NECF Malaysia. During supper, he gave an exclusive interview to Johan Candelin, Director of WEF Religious Liberty Commission (see page 5). The interview was subsequently disseminated in four languages to some 2,300 members of parliament in 64 countries.

The closing ceremony of the consultation on February 2 was officiated by Dr Ling in the presence of about 200 invited guests (see page 8). Dr Ling and guests adjourned for refreshment after the closing ceremony.



Dr Ling shaking hands with Sir Arnold K. Amet (Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea Supreme Court). On the right is Archbishop Datuk Yong Ping Chung (Archbishop of Diocese of the province of South-East Asia); left is Muki Taranupi (Minister for Agriculture and Livestock, Papua New Guinea).

*WEF International Director
Rev. Dr Jun Vencer
presenting a memento
to Dr Mahathir
after his
address.*



The three-day consultation was organised by WEF and sponsored by NECF Malaysia. A total of 77 participants from 16 countries attended the historic meeting.

Among the 25 participants from Malaysia were former Ambassador to USA and Deputy Minister of Trade Datuk Dr Lew Sip Hon; MP Dr Maximus Ongkili; East Malaysia Industrial Court Chairman Lim Heng Seng; MUI Bhd Executive Chairman Tan Sri Dr Khoo Kay Peng; Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers Association and member of the Malaysian National Economic Action Council Datuk Paul Low; former NECF Malaysia General Secretary and currently Pastor of DUMC Daniel Ho; Senior Pastor of Kuching FBC John Chin; and NECF Malaysia Executive Council members. (More reports on pages 2 to 9.)

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International Consultation on Globalisation**They said...****Rev. Dr Jun Vencer, WEF International Director**

“Like some of you, frankly, I don’t really understand this phenomenon (globalisation) which is a fact of our time. Like the wind, we can see and feel its impact in our lifestyle and society, but we cannot grasp what it really is.

But...if the Church has to be relevant and prophetic, it has to be able to define the problems of our times as the starting point. Only then will we be able to identify priorities for ministries and, more relevantly, move ahead.

If we are to accept the reality of globalisation, then we must also respond as a global church. Evangelicals, of all people, should be able to deal with this phenomenon because, theologically, our ecclesiology affirms that there is only ONE BODY.”

**Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam, NECF Malaysia Chairman**

“We cannot afford to let the world move into a supersonic jet and computerised age of IT while the church is left behind in the horse-and-cart or the bullock-cart age. We cannot bury our heads in the sand like an ostrich and believe all is well.

We hope, the call for this consultation will challenge us to be at the cutting edge and also to be a witness that we care and are concern about the future and the relevancy of the Gospel.”

**Rev. Wong Kim Kong, NECF Malaysia Secretary-General**

“It is imperative for us to present a clear Christian perspective on how the process of globalisation can be best used to bring maximum benefits to the globalised world.”

International Consultation on Globalisation

REVERSING “The Great Reversal”

*The consultation was historic for at least two reasons, according to Malaysian participant
DR LEONG TIEN FOCK.*

At one of the meetings, a participant expressed his gratitude to Rev. Dr Jun Vencer, WEF International Director, for taking up this issue of globalisation. Dr Vencer immediately replied, “O! ... we are very far behind.”

Since the very beginning, the Church has always impacted society. But towards the end of the 19th century, the evangelical Church lost interest in social, political and economic issues. This disengagement with society culminated, by 1920s, in what is now called “The Great Reversal.” This has adversely affected both evangelism and discipleship but in recent times, scattered evangelical groups and individuals have begun working towards a reversal of “The Great Reversal.”

This consultation, organised by the official representative of the evangelical Church, thus marks a milestone in the history of Christianity.

The event was also historic, at least for the Malaysian Church, when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad gave the keynote speech at the opening ceremony on January 31 night. This was the first time he spoke at an international Christian meeting.

The local media gave the impression that only 100 people were in the audience. The figure was only referring to participants of the consultation. Besides the 25 Malaysian participants, there were also more than 700 other Malaysian

Christians at the opening ceremony.

The impact of the consultation should be greatest on the Malaysian Church. Since some of the challenges of Malaysia’s Vision 2020 are already explicitly spiritual and moral in nature, the Malaysian Church



is uniquely placed to play a key role in reversing “The Great Reversal.”

Participants came from Europe, North America, the Caribbean, Africa, Central and South-East Asia and the South Pacific. They included members of parliament and ministers, judges and lawyers, media personnel and social scientists, theologians and corporate,

church and para-church leaders.

Issues discussed went beyond the socio-economic impact of globalisation to related matters such as Christians and politics, and the role of the media. Ultimately, the consultation sought to think through the Christian response to globalisation.

NECF Malaysia presented the paper *Engagement or Isolation? A Malaysian Christian Perspective on Globalisation*. As highlighted in the New Straits Times report (February 2, 2001), the paper stressed the value of human beings (“Economy exists for the people, not vice-versa”). It gives a Christian perspective by grounding it in Scriptures. It gives a uniquely Malaysian perspective by focusing on Malaysia’s experience of globalisation and its implications for religious freedom and the New Economic Policy.

The Christian response to globalisation, based on what was presented in the consultation, is outlined in the Kuala Lumpur 2001 Declaration (see page 9). It was read out at the closing ceremony in the presence of Minister for Transport Dato’ Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik. That was probably the first international Christian declaration of the new millennium. Dr Ling in his closing speech, in line with the Declaration, challenged the Church to play its role as salt of the earth and light of the world—a challenge to reverse “The Great Reversal.”

(Dr Leong helped to draft the Kuala Lumpur 2001 Declaration.) ■

C O M P E N D I U M

NECF Malaysia will publish a compendium of all the papers presented at the consultation; the Kuala Lumpur 2001 Declaration; and the Prime Minister’s and Transport Minister’s speeches at the opening and closing ceremonies respectively. It will also publish a separate booklet containing the Malaysian paper and the speeches. ■

International Consultation on Globalisation

Participants Give Thumbs-Up

Participants expressed satisfaction with the consultation and was impressed with the efficient running of events during the three days of intensive sessions. However, several participants commented that some of the papers were rather “academic”—not a helpful trait when brainstorming for workable solutions on a pressing issue like globalisation. Following are some comments from participants:

Dr Bruce J. Wellenger – *Director, Centre for Faith and Public Life, Evangelical Fellowship of Canada*

“Canada, because of its close proximity to the US, has always supported globalisation. I have heard and read about the weaknesses of globalisation but at the consultation, I heard first-hand, from discussions with other participants and from your Prime Minister’s speech, about the weaknesses. I do believe that the negative effects of globalisation will sooner or later reach Canada. I will go back and discuss this subject more thoroughly with our people.”

Sir Arnold K. Amet



Rev. Joel Edwards – *Executive Director, Evangelical Alliance, United Kingdom*

“The consultation is timely. I hope it is the beginning of a process by which the international heart, voice and activity of the evangelical church comes together to play its role on the global scene. The contents and input have been useful. However, I’m a little disappointed that we have not been able to get the best synergy from the skills and resources available at the consultation due to the lack of time.”

Sir Arnold K. Amet – *Chief Justice of Papua New Guinea Supreme Court*

“The planning was excellent and there was a good working spirit among the workers. This is a glowing testimony to you (Malaysian Christians) who are a minority here. The high level of knowledge and skills of the participants was impressive and I believe we were able to tap into each other’s skills and resources. I hope through the consultation, the church will know how to make our Gospel relevant in the new millennium in the face of globalisation.”

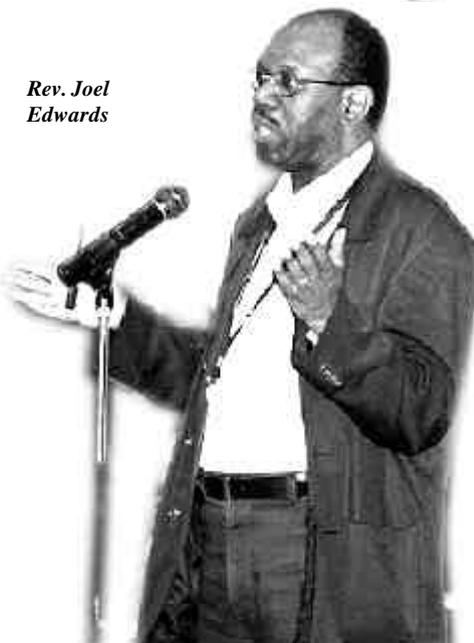
Dr Joseph Jones – *Professor of Justice Education, Taylor University, USA*

“The issues dealt with at the consultation have broadened my perspective of globalisation, especially since both the Western and Eastern Church views were presented. I realise that the Western Church view on globalisation has not necessarily been good. It tends to be very individualistic. The Eastern view is more corporate; it sees how globalisation affects the people as a whole. Likewise, the Church’s response should be corporate.”

Datuk Paul Low – *Vice-President, Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers Association and member of the Malaysian National Economic Action Council*

“It has been a good consultation and there is probably enough material for evangelicals to develop the vision and mission in response to the current state of affairs. Evangelicals should adopt a more active role in tackling the issues

Rev. Joel Edwards



arising from globalisation. Through the consultation, there’s a realisation that we cannot be reactive to world events and be fence-sitters. Instead, the Church should lead the way...to impact the attitudes of the secular world...be a true witness, salt and light.”

Mr Lorne Jackson – *President, Balanced Planning Financial Group, Canada*

“I was impressed with the religious freedom in your country...to have your Prime Minister attend a Christian event and allowing prayer to be said in his presence. In Canada, we will have trouble standing in front of our Prime Minister and pray the same way.” ■

Dr Bruce J. Wellenger



International Consultation on Globalisation

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW with PM

JOHAN CANDELIN, WEF Religious Liberty Commission Chairman, interviews Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on religious freedom in Malaysia and the region.

Your Excellency, we live today in a new situation in our world. Earlier conflicts were between states, but today many conflicts are within states. And in most cases, these conflicts are religious. Malaysia has a very good reputation in this regard. What is the secret of the good situation in your country?

It is because we recognise there is a problem. When you recognise that there is a problem, you then proceed to make the necessary adjustments. In Malaysia we have not only racial differences, but also those races are followers of different religions.

If you put pork on the table, the Muslims will not eat. But on the other hand, the Hindus will not eat beef and the Muslims like beef. But we compromise, so we are aware of each other's sensitivities. Apart from that, we live and work and play together; we celebrate each other's festivals together. Everyone joins in and we visit each other, and that helps to cement relationships. Mostly we are sensitive toward each other's differences.

How do you see the future in Asia when it comes to the co-existence between religions? In what direction is Asia going, and what should be done to keep national and regional harmony?

The most important thing is to help (people) respect the true interpretation of each religion, not only between people of different religions, but also among people of the same religion. (That's) because even among people of the same religion, there are various interpretations and some of them deviate very far from the true teachings. That is why among Muslims, for example, there is a tendency to make a lot of comments about so-called "fundamentalism." But we believe that if you stick to Islamic "fundamentals", you will do well.

When you describe people as fundamentalists, you are actually wrong, because these are not fundamentalists; they are people who have deviated from the teachings and have become extreme. So an understanding of these differences—in any religion there will be people who deviate from the (true) teachings and who are extreme. That really is not the real religion, even among Muslims, so we would like to see people not describe them as "Muslim terrorists" and things like that, because we have "terrorists" from any religion.

What are the three most important challenges in the future, both for Malaysia and for the region, and why do you see these three as so important?

First of course is the destabilisation of the countries due to sudden attacks on the economy. Secondly, there is the need for us to understand the rapid changes taking place and to make the necessary adjustments. Not just to accept, but also to contribute toward the interpretation of these changes that are taking place.

And thirdly, we still think that we should not identify enemies, because when you identify enemies of the future, they become your present enemies. So we feel that the better solution to the tension between countries is to meet and talk with people rather than to confront, or worse still, to apply sanctions.

There seems to be a growing need for dialogue between religions. With the good reputation of Malaysia, would you see a role for your country on the international scene in this regard?

I think we can play a role. In fact we are trying (to do so) at the

moment because of a lot of misunderstanding on the religion of Islam. We have an institute that specialises in explaining Islam to the non-Muslims as well as to the Muslims. This is because a lot of the common perception of Islam is wrong.

I think that if we can stop calling each other terrorists, and taking the extreme manifestation of these religions as the real religion, we will be able to get along better. Our experience in Malaysia is that we have to be tolerant with each other. Otherwise we are going to fight each other and we are not going to get anything out of it. ■

Johan Candelin



Datuk Seri
Dr Mahathir Mohamad



International Consultation on Globalisation

Globalisation must benefit everyone

Big nations should consider weaker countries



"Globalisation must serve us and not we humankind serve globalisation."

Globalisation must involve the whole world and not just those countries with developed or developing markets, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. Ironically, globalisation is presently concerned only with opening up existing markets and maximising profits.

"A globalisation which involves only a fraction of the world... that involves only capital flows and predatory assaults on the weak by the strong... that benefits the few and destroys many... is not globalisation. And a hurried grab at the spoils is not globalisation," he asserted.

He added that we could only become a global community if the international community developed the whole world, slowly at first but more rapidly later.

Globalisation must be thought of as sharing the world's wealth in raw material, capital, labour and technology. If the world was to be a global entity, then there should not be abject poverty in some parts and "obscene wealth" in other parts; all must be reasonably well off.

Globalisation and the free market should not mean capital flows only and even if it does, it should accept some form of regulation to avoid any economic turmoil. Malaysia will continue to oppose this current interpretation of globalisation, the Prime Minister maintained.

In his keynote address, Dr Mahathir said globalisation must be implemented at different pace in different countries to "equalise the forces." Those who are rich should change first while the others can

follow according to their capacities, pausing to make correction, learning from those who had changed earlier, he urged.

He also said that for globalisation to succeed, it must be planned carefully and the planning must involve everyone from every part of the globe.

"This is globalisation in the service of mankind. Globalisation must serve us and not we humankind serve globalisation," he added.

Dr Mahathir also called for a rethink on capitalism and its push for a total free market. The latest ideas by the capitalists to create a new heaven on earth through globalisation could well bring about the same misery that would force people to rebel against it, he advised.

"Can we be sure that globalisation will not go the way of other great ideas of the past? Half a century or maybe a century down the road, will we be still lauding and practicing absolute capitalism in a globalised world?"

Dr Mahathir believed the capitalist wanted the borders of independent countries brought down and a single policy and system for the whole world be adopted so that unregulated capital could move freely to make even more capital. He then suggested that the World Trade Organisation allowed a degree of regulation when the competition was not between equals.

"Certain practices must be allowed. There is no necessity to have only a few big companies. Let there be many companies, big and small. Let them compete with handicaps. If you can accept it in golf, why not in trade?" he quipped.

Dr Mahathir also expressed fears of increased social unrest should countries lose their independence as a result of globalisation. "Foreign owners are not interested in the social problems of countries... They want to maximise profits. So, when the local economy is controlled by foreigners, it is likely that social unrest will increase," he cautioned.

Like most developing countries, Malaysia has established programmes for wealth distribution in order to solve social problems. The programmes undoubtedly affect the productivity and efficiency of businesses but it helps to avoid racial tension and disruptive activities which can damage business even more, he explained. ■

International Consultation on Globalisation

AT THE OPENING CEREMONY



Dutiful wives observing their husbands on stage. From left, Datuk Siti Hasmah (Prime Minister's wife); Rev Datin Dr Petrina Guneratnam (NECF Malaysia Chairman's wife); Serene Wong (NECF Malaysia Secretary-General's wife); and Ann Vencer (WEF International Director's wife).



Dr Mahathir reaching out to Dato' Lee Oi Hian, Executive Chairman of KL Kepong Bhd.



Dr Mahathir shaking hands with Penny Tan, wife of Tan Koon Swan (right). On the left is Bishop Gideon Chang, Bishop of the Lutheran Church of Malaysia and Singapore.



A section of the crowd that turned up.

Awaiting the arrival of Dr Mahathir. From left: Dr Jun Vencer, Dr Ling Liong Sik and Mark Yeoh, President of YTL Hotels & Properties Sdn Bhd.

Rev. Wong welcoming elders of local brethren churches. (From left) David Boler, Ong Hock Chye, Ang Chui Pek and Kong Yeng Phooi (also NECF Hon. Secretary).



International Consultation on Globalisation

CLOSING CEREMONY

Emulate ideals of early church

For globalisation to benefit everyone, the world should emulate the ideals of the international oneness sought by the early Church, said Minister for Transport Dato' Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

Christians then pursued a global unity based on mutual respect, justice and equality for all people—qualities that have remained abiding principles in their spread of love and spiritual salvation among all humankind.

Earlier, Dr Ling said the early Church was probably the first to embrace a global belief system and perspective developed from a call by Jesus Christ to his followers to take the message of love to people throughout the world. Prior to the early Church, people saw themselves as tribes, peoples and states.

Over the years, Christians have carried their message of love to all

parts of the world as teachers, doctors and missionaries. Through this, they have inculcated a sense of worldwide fellowship and this is exemplified in the incident where Paul brought funds

collected in Corinth to assist the poor in Jerusalem, according to Dr Ling.

He further said that at the start of the third millennium today, the Church should continue to lead the way in creating a fair and just society, whether at national or global level. "For in your teaching, you have been called to be 'salt and light of the world'. Like salt, you are to preserve good values and as light, your good deeds must shine and illuminate a darkening world of distrust and conflict," he reminded.

As the world quickly becomes a borderless global economy, market forces are frantically driving capital and investments to search for new regions to make profits, rousing fears, particularly among the developing nations, of a widening gulf between the rich and the poor, Dr Ling said.

He called for the establishment of principles to protect the smaller and weaker nations from powerful multinational corporations. And echoing the Prime Minister, he urged for regulations on movement of massive capital and investment funds that could harm any nation's economy. ■



"...at the start of the third millennium today, the Church should continue to lead the way..."



Dr Ling thanking Rev. Datuk Guneratnam after receiving a memento from Dr Jun Vencer at the end of his address. On the far right is NECF Malaysia Vice-Chairman Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng.

Datuk Siti Saleha, sister of Dr Siti Hasmah, chatting with Dr Ling at the tea reception after the closing ceremony.



International Consultation on Globalisation

KUALA LUMPUR 2001 DECLARATION

We, 77 Christian leaders from 16 nations, have gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on January 31 to February 2, 2001 under the World Evangelical Fellowship to think through together a Christian response to globalisation.

Globalisation is a process that radically impacts both human life and the environment that supports it. God, who is sovereign over world history, has delegated to humanity the stewardship of His creation (Gen. 1:27–28) and has called the Church to be an agent of change in the world (Matt. 5:13–16).

We therefore affirm:

1) An Integrated Understanding of Life:

Globalisation affects the structures of power and influence in economics, politics and social life, culture and religious life. The Church must relate biblical truth to all aspects of life, including all the perspectives and practices affected by globalisation. We reject a global culture dominated by materialistic values. We

reject the prevalent dualistic view of life that separates the secular from the sacred and marginalises faith from public life. We must replace it with whole-life discipleship, the only form of biblical discipleship. The Church must seek to relate biblical truth to all aspects of life in perspective and practice.

2) A Critical Engagement with Globalisation:

God is active in the world, working out His sovereign purposes even in and through globalisation. Globalisation opens up many opportunities, especially through the dramatic changes in the technologies of communications and information. The Church should consider the opportunities opened up by globalisation and discern how these may be used for the glory of God and the fulfilment of the task of the Church.

3) Supporting Just Policies:

Globalisation offers unprecedented freedom and breaks down many barriers

to human activity. However, in its present materialistic and predatory form, it tends to disproportionately benefit the rich and the powerful. Globalisation promotes a “level playing field” with no barriers, but with vastly unequal competitors. The Church resists aspects of globalisation that exploit the poor and ruin the environment. The Church should support economic policies characterised by justice and oriented towards the well-being of all and which protect the welfare of the weak, the marginalised and poor.

We, participants of the International Consultation on Globalisation, by the grace of God and through the enablement of the Holy Spirit, declare our commitment to seek:

- a) The enhancement of human life according to biblical truths;
- b) The engagement of globalisation by the Church in the fulfilment of its mission in the world; and
- c) The equitable application of economic and fiscal policies for the benefit of all peoples.

To God be the glory. ■

AT THE CONSULTATION



From left: Dr Bernard Adeney (Lecturer at Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana, Yogyakarta, Indonesia) and Mark Albrecht (WEF Religious Liberty Commission)



Doug Balfour (General Director of Tear Fund) leading in prayer at one of the sessions.



From left: Tan Sri Dr Khoo Kay Peng (MUI Executive Chairman) and Dato' Lew Sip Hon (former ambassador to USA).

NECF Malaysia clarifies misconceptions

NECF Malaysia remains steadfast in its evangelical distinctiveness and will continue to pursue its evangelical objectives. In a February circular to its members, the fellowship maintained that NECF Malaysia “has not compromised on spiritual views based on the Bible.”

The circular was responding to a letter by a Christian brother that appeared in the “Letters” section of *New Straits Times* on February 16, 2001. The letter was intended to congratulate NECF Malaysia for sponsoring the recent WEF-organised International Consultation on Globalisation that received much media coverage. However, it contained two statements that were erroneous.

The first statement said that WEF and NECF Malaysia “are now willing to accept pluralism” because of their invitation to the Prime Minister (a

NECF now opening up

I REFER to the reports in your newspaper on the International Consultation on Globalisation entitled “Re-examining globalisation’s benefits” (NST, Feb 2), organised by the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) of Malaysia, under the sponsorship of the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF).

It is heartening to note that a formerly exclusive conservative Christian organisation like the WEF and its Malaysian associate NECF are opening up to get involved in such secular issues as globalisation.

Christians know that the NECF was set up for denunciations like the Baptist and Gospel Hall and

base pure fundamental Christian doctrines” and had refused to associate with the mainline denunciations because of their so-called liberal teaching.

Recently, another indication that the WEF and NECF are now willing to accept pluralism in religion is their invitation to Prime Minister Dato’ Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed, a Muslim, to open the consultation, and Transport Minister Dato’ Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik, a member of the liberal Methodist Church (a non-NECF church), to close it. Perhaps they are getting used to Malaysia.

It is obvious that the NECF has now become more open, accommodating and willing to compromise.

New Straits Times, Friday, February 16, 2001

Muslim) and Minister for Transport Dato’ Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik (a member of the “liberal Methodist Church”) to respectively open and close the Consultation.

NECF’s circular pointed out that both Dr Mahathir and Dr Ling were invited to the consultation based on their roles as national government leaders and not their

religious convictions. Furthermore, Dr Mahathir is well-versed on the subject of globalisation. Dr Ling, on the other hand, has played a facilitating role as a national government leader in matters affecting the Church in Malaysia.

In response to the second erroneous statement that “NECF has now become more open, accommodating and willing to compromise”, the circular upheld the authority of the Bible without compromise. In fact, the “very Christian content and push at the opening and closing ceremonies speak clearly of our evangelical commitment.”

NECF has to exercise great wisdom in working towards nation-building within a multi-ethnic and religious community while maintaining racial harmony without compromising on Christian imperatives, the circular said. ■

NEW CFM EXCO

Chairman

of the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship (NECF) Malaysia Rev. Dato’ Dr Prince Guneratnam was elected the Chairman of Christian Federation of Malaysia (CFM) at the recent Biennial CFM General Conference for a two-year term. He replaces Archbishop Dato’ Yong Ping Chung who has served in the capacity for the last two biennial terms.

CFM is the official representative of the Christian community in Malaysia to the government. It comprises the three Christian

component bodies—Roman Catholic Church in Malaysia (RCCM), Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) and NECF Malaysia.

CFM was established in 1985 to look after the interests of the Christian community as a whole with particular reference to religious freedom and rights as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

The new Chairman, in his maiden speech, said that for CFM to be beneficial and to fulfill its purpose, “we must live the gospel, growing in love, trust and faith towards God and each other.” CFM also needs to be seen and heard as an advocate of the gospel and a vehicle for cooperation and fellowship, he added.

The Exco also includes three principal secretaries. They are Rev. Wong Kim Kong (NECF Malaysia); Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri (CCM); and Bro. Augustine Julian (RCCM). ■

CFM EXCO 2001 – 2002

Chairman	: Rev. Dato’ Dr Prince Guneratnam
Vice-Chairmen	: Bishop Antony Selvanayagam (RCCM) Bishop Dato’ Voo Thien Fui (CCM) Rev. Dr Eu Hong Seng (NECF Vice-Chairman)
Honorary Secretary	: Bishop James Chan (RCCM)
Asst. Hon. Secretary	: Bishop Dato’ Dr Peter Chio (CCM)
Honorary Treasurer	: Rt. Rev. Tan Sri Dato’ Dr C.E. Lim (CCM)
Asst. Hon. Treasurer	: Mr Samuel Ang (NECF Hon. Treasurer)
Committee Members	: Mr Kong Yeng Phooi (NECF Hon. Secretary) Archbishop Dato’ Peter Chung (RCCM) Mrs Angeline B. Fernandez (RCCM) Bishop Julius Paul (CCM)

WEF 11th General Assembly

OPPORTUNITY TO HOST EVENT ONCE IN 200 YEARS

The honour of hosting the WEF 11th General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur has been described as “the opportunity of a lifetime” and may not occur again in Malaysia for at least the next 200 years.

NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong said it was a sheer miracle that Malaysia was selected to host this international Christian event when there were several other more developed countries bidding for that privilege.

Altogether, 108 nations worldwide belong to the WEF family and come May, over 600 evangelical leaders from all corners of the world will be making their way to Kuala Lumpur for the General Assembly, which is held every four years. The meeting is significant in that the participants are top evangelical leaders representing their countries.

The gathering this time aims to strategically prepare evangelicals to respond to the challenges of the third millennium. Each day during the General Assembly, participants will explore a different theme—Ecclesiology, Wholistic Ministry, Globalisation and Leadership Development. The sessions are interactive to allow individual nations the opportunity to respond creatively to Christ’s call.

Participants will also get to hear some world-renown speakers, among whom are George Verwer, founder of Operation Mobilisation and Dr Clive Calver, president of World Relief.

Malaysian church leaders and pastors are urged to participate in this historic event to be held from May 4 to 10. Admission to the day meetings held at J.W. Marriott Hotel is by registration only while the night meetings (free admission) at MCA Hall are open to the Christian public. For more information, e-mail enquiries@necf.org.my or call NECF Malaysia at 03-77278227 (tel.).

Note: The deadline for early-bird registration (fee of US\$150 or RM570) has been extended to April 15, 2001. Fee for registrations received thereafter is US\$200 or RM765.

Christian musicians network to form orchestra

Christian musicians, particularly in the Klang Valley, are coming together to form an orchestra, named Orkes Praise Malaysia (OPM).

The orchestra will function mainly as a worship orchestra to enhance the worship sessions at special gatherings and celebrations. It will double as a performing orchestra when required. OPM also aspires to be a training orchestra where musicians are given the opportunity to train and participate in a Christian orchestra setting.

For a start, Pr Chen Khin Wee a trained orchestra conductor will conduct

OPM while Ooi Eow Jin, formerly a musician with Orkes RTM and music coordinator with TV3, will act as the advisor.

Pr Ronnie Teoh, a member of the organising committee, said through the orchestra, they hope to harness the many talents available especially in the Klang Valley. The idea is to network the musicians and encourage them to use their musical skills for God's glory. "Many Christians, who have spent years and lots of money taking music lessons, have no music life once they have reached a certain proficiency and competency in their music

training," he lamented.

Musicians registered with OPM will periodically receive information about scheduled performances and dates of practices. They then decide which event they can participate in. For example, OPM is now preparing to perform at the World Evangelical Fellowship General Assembly in early May.

Those interested can arrange for an audition with Pauline Lim at 03-77294293 or 016-2080399. For more information on the orchestra, contact Pr Ronnie at 03-77856164 or 016-2076164. ■

PENANG CHRISTIANS UNITE IN PARADE

More than 8,000 Christians from at least 83 churches of various denominations in Penang took to the streets last December 16 in a mega Christmas parade in one of the biggest, most colourful procession ever organised by a Christian group.

Despite the scorching afternoon sun, thousands lined the streets of the little island to witness the offerings. The parade was officially launched by Penang State Executive Councillor Datuk Dr Toh Kin Woon, who represented Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon.

Following the launch, all 8,000 participants burst out in the song, 'Joy to the World', stirring the enthusiastic crowd to join them. The parade then began with the Parade Committee leading the dignitaries, among whom were Minister for Transport Dato' Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik and Jawi assemblyman Tan Cheng Liang.

The main attraction of the parade were four spectacular floats designed specially for the occasion. Among the floats was "The Manger" which depicted the nativity scene with live sheep and lamb on board. The floats were constructed and sponsored by various churches.

Other attractions were brass bands; "musical lorries" carrying choirs from various churches; a convoy of 50 trishaws carrying participants wearing traditional costumes of various nations; and hundreds of dancers who performed tambourine and cultural dances. Not to be left out were some 30 disabled participants from the Eden Handicap Centre who took the 4.5 kilometre-route in their wheelchairs and crutches.

Of course, no parade in Penang is complete without a display of majestic chingay flags. Six chingay teams showed off their

pro prowess in handling the six standards, of which four were specially commissioned for the parade. They bore the messages *Jesus the Light of the World*, *Joy to the World*, *His Banner Over Us is Love* and *Jesus Loves You*. Complementing the huge standards were 50 colourful banners from various churches.

The historic parade was the effort of the Penang Pastors' Fellowship, Penang Chinese Churches Caring Centre, Penang Tamil Pastors' Fellowship, Penang Council of Chinese Churches, Penang BM Churches, CCM and the Roman Catholic Church. ■

Hey, where are the trishaw riders?...a showcase of various traditional costumes.



Hold high the banners.



COMING UP ...

<i>Date</i>	<i>Event</i>	<i>Contact</i>
March 23	Prayer Shield Launch—Malacca	Ann Low
26	Seminar Undang-Undang with Lee Min Choon and Leonard Teoh	Alfred Tais
28	Prayer Shield Launch—Ipoh	Ann Low
30	Prayer Shield Launch—Seremban	Ann Low
April 13	Combined BM Churches Good Friday Service	Alfred Tais
18	Prayer Shield Launch—Penang	Ann Low
20	Prayer Shield Launch—Kedah/Perlis	Ann Low
21	Prayer Shield Launch—Seberang Prai/Kulim/Bukit Mertajam	Ann Low
26	Prayer Shield Launch—Dungun/Kemasik/Air Jerneh	Ann Low
May 4-10	WEF General Assembly	Pr Lai Moo Him
19	Prayer Shield Launch—Kuching	Ann Low
21	Prayer Shield Launch—Miri	Ann Low
23	Prayer Shield Launch—Kota Kinabalu	Ann Low
28-30	*Orang Asli Sunday School Teachers' Training Camp	Leong Yew Lai

* Organised by the NECF Malaysia OA Commission, the camp will train Christians who are teaching Sunday School to Orang Asli children and those with a desire to be involved in the OA children's ministry. The trainers are Rev. and Mrs Lieow Meng Kuan and Pr Saraban Arun. The OA Commission believes that the OA's children ministry must be given greater emphasis to ensure that the future OA leaders are Christians with strong, unshakeable faith.

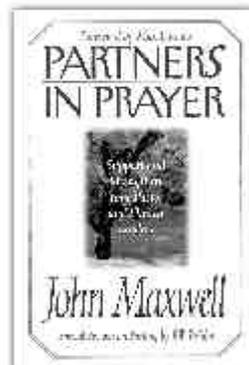
The Rayakan Yesus conference has been postponed to June 4-6 at FGA, KL.

For more information on the above events, contact the respective staff at NECF Malaysia office 03-77278227 (tel.); enquiries@necf.org.my (e-mail) and Pr Ann Low: 013-3649239; Alfred Tais: 019-2683119; Pr Lai Moo Him: 012-5055836. ■

SHARING RESOURCES

"Partners in Prayer" Book and VCD

Written by John Maxwell, the book is being used by the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission as part of the training material for the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign. It discusses the importance of praying for pastors and church leaders and suggests how to organise prayer partner teams. Maxwell also shares real-life incidents in churches where the congregations committed themselves to praying for their pastors and leaders. The book and training VCD are available at RM15 and RM5 respectively from Gladsounds and the NECF Malaysia office.



Creation Science Series

How old is the earth? The universe? Did dinosaurs really exist? How could Man live to nearly 1,000 years old in the Genesis days? Where is the Ark today?

Find the answers to these questions and many more in the Creation Science series written by President and CEO of Christ for the Nations, Dallas, Dr Dennis Gordon Lindsay. The thought-provoking easy-to-read series contains 10 volumes with over 1,000 illustrations. The books cover subjects such as science and Scripture, the Genesis Flood, the creation of the earth and universe, dinosaurs and Stars Wars. Creation Science is retailed at RM199.90 per set of 10 volumes and can be viewed on the internet at www.vhckl.homestead.com

For orders and more information, contact Pr Albert Kok at 03-40212500 (tel.); 013-3622724 (h/ph); or vhc@tm.net.my (e-mail).

Other books and resources available from NECF Malaysia

- **Watchmen's Forum 2**

A compilation of articles on current issues with an eschatological perspective written by NECF Malaysia Research Commission members. RM10 each.

- **Handbook on Mission Agencies**

A local resource booklet containing information on the mission agencies operating locally, some statistics and data on the state and needs of missions worldwide. RM8 each.

- **Preacher, Prepare Yourself! (Towards Better Preaching)**

by Tan Jin Huat at RM30 each.

- **Treasure in Jars of Clay**

by Claudio Freidzon at RM35 each.

- **Freedom of Religion in Malaysia**

by Lee Min Choon at RM15 each.

- **Breakthrough Worship CD**

at RM10 each.

- **Celebration Worship CD**

with singers Darin Browne and Vani Francis at RM5 each.

'Sheep' surround 'shepherds' at prayer launch

Some 400 church leaders and members from over 30 churches in Klang Valley accompanied their pastors (about 100 of them) to the launch of the Pastors' Prayer Shield campaign in a show of support and love for them.

Several NECF Malaysia council members were also present to give away certificates of appreciation to the pastors in recognition of their services towards building and shepherding the Body of Christ. Church leaders and elders performing pastoral duties were also given the certificates.

Following the presentation, the church leaders and members surrounded their own pastors and prayed for them. The short intercession was an emotional affair as many were seen crying and hugging their pastors.

Earlier in his welcoming address, NECF Malaysia Chairman Rev. Datuk Dr Prince Guneratnam said pastors must have prayer partners who could walk alongside them in their ministry. According to him, his faithful prayer partners are one of the greatest factors for his long stay in full-time ministry—35 years now.

Later in his message, NECF Malaysia Secretary-General Rev. Wong Kim Kong

shared about the plight of pastors and the loneliness they often endure in their ministry. He urged church members to provide adequately for their pastors' physical needs. "Less criticism and more affirmation" from the congregation will spur pastors to serve even more enthusiastically and effectively, Rev. Wong said.

The Prayer Shield launch in late February was held at Calvary Church Kuala Lumpur for the Klang Valley region. A

similar launch for Pahang was held at Christian Praise Church, Kuantan, in early February where about 100 church leaders and pastors from 10 churches attended.

The prayer campaign, an initiative of the NECF Malaysia Prayer Commission, aims to unite churches from within. It will be launched in various regions throughout Malaysia. For more information, contact Pr Ann Low at NECF office 03-77278227 (tel.) or 013-3649239 (mobile phone). ■



Elder Dr Koh Eng Kiat of FGA, KL (centre) surrounded by his "sheep" during intercession.

NECF Survey on Churches, Pastors and Christians

NECF Malaysia Research Commission will be undertaking a massive survey on churches, pastors and Christians. The project is targeted to cover some 1,500 churches, 3,000 pastors and 30,000 Christians. The objectives of the survey are:

- To obtain accurate and up-to-date empirical information on the subject matter for future study and research on church issues and trends.
- To form the basis for prayer and consultation with pastors and church leaders to enhance or address strengths and weaknesses in the Malaysian Church.
- To identify the common needs and struggles of pastors and Christians and map out practical ways to help them.
- To formulate strategic recommendations to facilitate NECF Malaysia to meet its objectives.
- Topics to be covered include church growth, pastors' struggles, and the lifestyle and spirituality of Christians in our country. The Survey Taskforce invites pastors and Christians to write in with suggestions on the types of questions to be included in the questionnaires. Kindly email research@necf.org.my before April 15, 2001. ■

FOREIGN NEWS

World Persecution

Release International has published figures showing that only 30% of all committed Christians live in the free Western world. The remaining 70% endure 'varying degrees of harassment, discrimination and persecution from communism, military dictatorships, and from radical and extreme elements within Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism.'

Release estimates that a staggering 450 to 500 Christians are martyred for their faith everyday. That's one every three minutes.—*Evangelicals Now*

Taliban vow to execute converts

The supreme leader of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia warned on January 8 that his regime will apply the death penalty to any Muslim who converts to another faith. Monitored over Radio Shariat, Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar declared that any Afghan caught professing Christianity or Judaism would be executed, as required by the strict Islamic law enforced under Taliban rule. Omar also specified that "any non-Muslim found trying to win converts will also be killed." Of necessity, secret Christian believers in Afghanistan have remained invisible since the Taliban takeover, both in terms of identity and numbers.—*Compass*

China Churches closed and destroyed

Chinese authorities in southern Zhejiang province closed or destroyed at least 450 churches, temples and shrines in a campaign launched last November. To the astonishment of international observers, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qi Yue said on December 13, "It is clear that China has been carrying out a policy of protecting religious freedom." The campaign of closure was orchestrated from Wenzhou, a prosperous port city of 600,000 people, and extended over seven surrounding counties, which have a combined population of approximately seven million. This area has seen a massive religious revival, particularly for Buddhism and Christianity.—*Compass*



Bedouin Outreach

Many experts say that literacy is key to escaping poverty, so a Christian Bedouin has launched a school using the Bible to teach and write. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board has made the more than 19 million Muslim Bedouins an outreach priority, offering village leaders Bible cassettes and Jesus films in their native language. The Bedouins have no written Bible in their language.—*World Pulse*

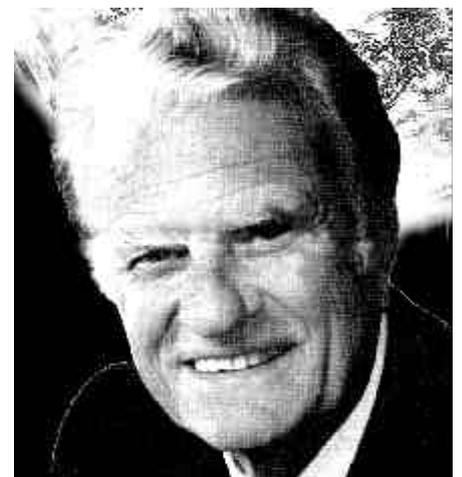
Billy Graham and Bill Bright step down

The founders of two of the worlds' leading evangelistic organisations have handed over to younger men. Dr Billy Graham, who turned 82 last November, will be succeeded by his son Franklin, 48, as chief executive officer of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Billy Graham, who retains the position of Chairman of the Board, founded the organisation in 1950. Franklin will continue to serve as first Vice-Chairman, a position he has held since it was created in 1995.

In a parallel move within Campus Crusade for Christ (CCC), Dr Bill Bright has announced that Steve Douglass, the current Executive Vice-President, will succeed him as President. Bright, 79, who has led the organisation for nearly five decades, will turn over the presidency on 1 August. He will continue to serve as Chairman of the Board of Directors.

During the CCC's US Leadership Conference in October, Bill Bright shared with 275 senior staff members of the worldwide movement that he has a lung condition, initially diagnosed as pulmonary fibrosis, and prostate cancer.—*Renewal*



Dr Billy Graham

For Your Intercession



CHINA

Last year, between three and five million Chinese became Christians. Many can barely read. They trust the first person they hear who can quote the Scriptures. Pray that God will give these new-borns the gift of discernment to withstand those who misuse Scripture for personal gains. Pray also against the spread of cults in China.

An example of the many cults is the "Two Grains of Rice" sect. Open Doors has just concluded research into the cult founded by a husband-and-wife team, San-Shu and Hsu-Shu, who claim to be the second manifestation of Christ in the flesh. They claim to be able to forgive sins and decide whose names will be written in the Book of Life. Among the practices that are imposed on the few thousands followers, who have been lured from conventional churches, are: give up their properties to the founders; eat only two grains of rice at each meal, refuse medicine when they are sick; and refrain from tilling the fields since the Lord's return is near. Pray for God's protection on His sheep.

SERBIA

Just like the territories of the former Yugoslavia, Serbia's evangelical churches prefer to remain small and independent rather than large and unified. Evangelical Alliance's attempts to encourage unity have met with much resistance. Pray for Christians in Serbia to unite for the Gospel's sake. John 17:21

SOUTH INDIA

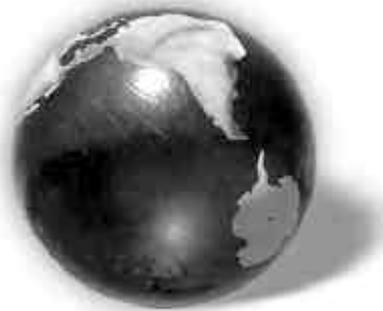
Twenty years of dedicated work by national translators, theologians, linguists and editors came to fruition with the launch of the Kannada Bible in Hubli, South India. Pray for this translation, the New India Bible Version, produced by International Bible Society, to be a significant instrument in building the Lord's church among the Kannada people. 2 Tim. 3:16-17

NEPAL

Despite more religious freedom in Nepal in the last 10 years, Christians suffer

discrimination in everyday life. They are routinely denied employment in public services such as the police and the army in the predominantly Hindu land.

In some areas, Maoist rebels harass Christians, threatening them if they attend church meetings. Christians are often caught up in battles between Maoist and government forces. Some have been killed indiscriminately, others targeted by the government as suspected rebels. Christians are targets of militant Hindus. Pray for the fast-growing Church amidst these pressures and for God's protection on His people. Ps. 91:12



ETHIOPIA

There were no known Christians among the 100,000 Me'en people of Ethiopia 11 years ago. Today, there are some 50 churches, including one in a prison and several thousand believers. Groups of new Me'en believers have tattered copies of the Scriptures but lack teachers. Pray for Me'en Christians studying at Bible school and attending church-based literacy classes, that they will become effective teachers and evangelists. Pray also for the successful production of the Scriptures in their own language. 1 Thess. 1:3

EGYPT

Christians here suffer injustice and discrimination at every level of society. Coptic Christian William Shaiboub was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment for hard labour for the murder of two men. The two witnesses later retracted their statements admitting they had been forced to say he committed the crimes under

torture. Pray for William Shaiboub and for the suffering Church in Egypt. Heb. 13:3

HONG KONG

A series of Asian Outreach evangelistic meetings in Hong Kong secondary and primary schools saw over 8,000 children and young people ministered to, 5,644 made a commitment to Christ. Pray for the discipleship of these new babes in Christ by local churches and Christian fellowships in this materialistic society where the young people suffer great pressure to conform.

INDONESIA

Thank God for the many people who have been born again in the refugee camps through the love of Christian workers and volunteers. A wonderful spirit of love and sharing is reported among the Christians who have had to live for months in close quarters. There is a great need for Bibles because many of them were lost or burnt along with their houses and other possessions. Pray for the 24,000 refugees from Sampit, Kalimantan, who recently fled from the bloody tribal clashes in their town. Pray for God to send workers to minister His love, comfort and healing to those who have suffered tremendously.

LAOS

Laos is a little land-locked nation in South-East Asia with 5.2 million people in 138 ethnic groups. Many of the estimated 65,000 to 100,000 Christians have come to faith in the last few years as the Holy Spirit has moved in a wonderful way. Whole villages have turned to the Saviour, renouncing spirit and idol worship. But believers are severely persecuted by the Communist rulers.

An evangelist preached for 22 days in a village of 6,000 and 100 became believers. But when the village head's wife was converted, another evangelist was chained in a pit for four days, then jailed for seven weeks. During this time, more villagers were converted and people were asking why the man was being held. Eight months later, half the village had become Christians. Ps. 46:10