

Thursday August 5, 2010

## Students can form religious clubs

By FOONG PEK YEE and LEE YUK PENG  
[newsdesk@thestar.com.my](mailto:newsdesk@thestar.com.my)

PETALING JAYA: The Cabinet has decided that the setting up of non-Muslim religious societies in schools only needs the approval of school heads.

MCA deputy president and Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said the matter was discussed during the Cabinet meeting chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin in Putrajaya yesterday.

"Such societies are good and should be encouraged," Liow said.

Students, he said, could apply to form a society when there are at least 15 of them interested in doing so, adding that Muhyiddin had said existing societies were allowed to continue.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek said he was happy with the Cabinet's decision.

"MCA believes the head of a school is the person who knows best (what is happening in the school) and not the state director of education," he said.

Dr Chua said religious-based societies were in line with the Rukunegara and should be supported.

He said he chaired a pre-council meeting with the four MCA ministers – Liow, Transport Minister Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Chor Chee Heung and Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ng Yen Yen – in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday to discuss the matter.

Kong said the decision was reflective of the 1Malaysia policy that takes care of all communities.

Recent media reports on the Selangor Education Department's alleged order to close three non-Muslim religious societies at the Klang High School was traced to a circular dated Dec 16, 2000, stating the formation of such societies must be approved by the state education director.

MCA Youth chief and Deputy Education Minister Datuk Dr Wee Ka Siong said all must abide by the Cabinet decision and hoped it would put the matter to rest.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Taoism president Rev Dr Thomas Phillips said it was a good decision.

"Spiritual development is important for children," he said.

Malaysia Hindu Sangam president R.S. Mohan Shan also welcomed the Cabinet's decision.