

CONFERENCE OF SINGAPORE- MALAYSIA-BRUNEI

Issues and Challenges

REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE

- One of the most developed countries in Southeast Asia (ASEAN)
- Location: islands between Malaysia and Indonesia
- People: 5.2 million
- Population 3.5 million
- Ethnic Groups: Chinese 77%, Malay 14% and Indians 8%

SINGAPORE

- 10 official religions represented in the Inter-Religious Organisation (or the IRO):

Buddhist (predominantly Chinese), Muslim (majority Malays), Christian (Catholics 7% and Protestants 5%), Hindu, Sikh, Taoist, Zoroastrian, Jain, Baha'i and Jew

SINGAPORE

Challenges:

- Low birth rates, an ageing population
- Growing sense of resentment against the government because of growing numbers of PRs and citizenships offered to foreigners.
- Heavy dependence on foreign workers resulting in unhappiness among the locals. They blame foreign talents, foreign workers cos they believe good jobs are going to them and not us. A survey shows that Singaporeans are very unhappy and always complaining.

SINGAPORE

- Low unemployment but a highly stressed society including the education system and long working hours. Affluence and fast pace result in unhappy Singaporeans despite progress. Craving for work-life balance.
- Smallness of country – Singaporeans becoming xenophobic...recent breakdowns of our transport system and flash floods.

SINGAPORE

- Social media and the influence – erodes a society that is still very conservative
- High standard of living that results in rising costs. Housing and medical cost beyond the reach of many Singaporeans. Foreigners buying up landed property.
- Interreligious and inter-cultural relations are healthy but its fragile. Government is very firm in dealing with this issue.

MALAYSIA

Federation of Malaysia (made up of Peninula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak)

In Kuala Lumpur alone: 6.9 million

Total Population : 29 million

Ethnics: Malay (50%), Chinese (24%), Indigenous (11%), Indian (7%), and others (7%).

Religions: Islam (60%), Buddhism (20%), Christian (10%), Hindu (6%) and others.

MALAYSIA

CHALLENGES

- Rampant corruption – nepotism and contracts given to relatives/friends amongst elite class.
- Widening gap between rich and poor
- Disparity between bumiputeri and other citizens
- Islamisation – Politically motivated. Ruling party uses Islam to gain support of ethnic Malays. Non-Muslims blamed for problems

MALAYSIA

in Malaysia e.g. Chinese are rich, Indians are thugs, Malays are the victims.

- Allah Controversy – Catholic and ultra conservative Muslims (Perkasa, UMNO).
- Interreligious and cultural issues – it has become an issue between us and them (government and the ethnic communities e.g. Chinese, Indians), different religions and Islam. Blame game after the last General Election.

MALAYSIA

- Illegal immigrants – more than a million e.g. in Kuala Lumpur alone. Human trafficking by law enforcers themselves during raids.
Prostitutions of underage girls, trafficking of fishermen, plantation workers, men in the construction industries, etc.
- Each state within the Federation faces different problems

Collaboration within the Conference

- Support amongst members within the Conference
- Recognise the importance of good ties with the A/bishops even though there are those who do not appreciate religious.
- Sharing of resources – intercongregational formation, sessions, share experiences of schools, lands, retreats, etc.

Collaboration within the Conference

- Support anti-human trafficking efforts
- Encourage dialogue between priests and religious that leads to formation of Priest-Religious Commission
- Care of sick and elderly religious from those who runs Homes. Initiation of dialogue with Archbishop for Nursing Home for religious as well in the long run.

Collaboration within the Conference

- Interreligious and Ecumenical Dialogue – collaborate with the Archdiocese and together foster understanding amongst those from other religions and other denominations. Congregations offer their members to serve in Council in Archdiocese.