

GOV'T WILL NOT

RATIFY ICERD

Govt will uphold Constitution, ^{M/S 02} social contract enshrined within, says PM's office

KUALA LUMPUR

THE government has announced that it will not ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD).

In a brief statement yesterday, the Prime Minister's Office said the government would continue to uphold the Federal Constitution and the agreed upon social contract enshrined within.

"The Pakatan Harapan government will not be ratifying the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination."

"The government will continue to uphold the Federal Constitution, in which the social contract was agreed upon by representatives of all races in the formation of this country," it said.

ICERD, a United Nations convention, commits members to the elimination of racial discrimination and the promotion of understanding among all races.

The treaty provides individuals worldwide with a mechanism for complaints over such issues and is enforceable against member states.

Its ratification was first raised by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department P. Waytha Moorthy and has been met with opposition from various groups.

Those who oppose the move said it contravened the Federal Constitution, particularly Article 153, which touches on the special rights of the Malays and Bumiputeras. Thousands had gathered after Friday prayers at mosques nationwide last week to voice their displeasure over the plan.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said it would be difficult and "almost impossible" to ratify ICERD.

He said it would require an

amendment to the Federal Constitution and, thus, require a two-thirds majority in Parliament.

On top of vocal opposition by Umno and Pas leaders, the proposal to ratify ICERD was also criticised by senior officials of Pakatan Harapan component parties, such as Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia's (PPBM) Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir and Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman.

Mukhriz, who is PPBM deputy president, had said there was no need for Malaysia to ratify ICERD) as it was "unsuitable" for the country.

Syed Saddiq, who is PPBM Youth chief, had said the wing would reject the ratification if it weakened or eroded the rights stipulated under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution, the constitutional monarchy system, the position of Islam or any other rights enshrined in it.

Top leaders from Pas and Umno had agreed to hold a rally here on Dec 8 to protest plans to ratify the convention.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi has urged the government to make a formal stand on ICERD.

This, he said, must be reflected in a Hansard in Parliament.

"It can only be verified through the signature of the prime minister himself, which is then tabled as a motion in Parliament, then recorded in the official Hansard.

"This (current) approach is unacceptable and does not guarantee that it will not change at any time, not to mention it (the decision) was made in hurry."

In thanking the government for not ratifying ICERD, the former deputy prime minister said he believed the government reached the decision due to the opposition by the people nationwide.

He said the move by the government was politically motivated due to the Rantau by-election, which may be held soon.

"The opposition calls on the government to follow the procedure to announce a decision in relation to the country's foreign policy.

"Until it is included in the Parliamentary Hansard, we will find it tough to trust the government's sincerity."