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Committee to challenge ROS in court

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The pro-tem committee of Parti Sosialis Malaysia will file a suit in the High Court to order the Registrar of Societies to register the party.

PSM pro-tem chairman Dr Mohd Nasir Hashim said this would be the first case in Malaysia where the rejection of an application to register a political party was challenged in court.

Mohd Nasir said an application for a civil suit against the ROS and Home Ministry would be filed by the end of next month.

"We will challenge the decision based on the right to form political parties, as enshrined in the constitution," said Mohd Nasir.

Article 10 of the Federal Constitution states, among others, that, 'all citizens have the right to form associations.'

The Dewan Rakyat was told in July that 22 applications to register political parties since 1994 were rejected, with another 11 still being processed by the ROS.

It is believed that only one new Sarawak-based party was approved, headed by Dr Patau Rubis, who was sacked from SNAP.

As at August, there were 39 registered political parties in the country.

PSM is a splinter of Parti Sosialis Rakyat Malaysia.

Several members including Mohd Nasir left the party when it changed its name to the current Parti Rakyat Malaysia.

He said they had been toying with the idea of setting up PSM since 1990 but decided to register the party only in 1998 after all preparations were fully in place.

Mohd Nasir said the application process followed the guidelines provided by the ROS.

"They provided us with samples of constitutions and a guide booklet. We followed it."

He claimed that efforts to register PSM was fraught with bureaucratic delays, which he claimed were deliberate.

The ROS rejected the application in a letter dated November 24 last year with a one month grace period for appeal. Mohd Nasir said PSM was not able to appeal as the letter did not reach them.

He then produced a photocopy of the rejection letter which contained several typing errors in the address. A subsequent appeal was made and rejected by the Home Minister in a letter dated September 15. No reason was stated in the letter.

"We will accept a rejection if it was stated which conditions we did not fulfil, but as it is, we are not told why," said Mohd Nasir.

He said there was no reason for rejecting the application as all conditions had been met. "Why is the ROS and Home Ministry rejecting a valid application? It's not like we are going to create an underground organisation," he said.

Mohd Nasir added that it was not for the Home Ministry and Registrar of Societies to determine whether the party can exist.

"Let the people decide our fate in the elections. We are a small party, not likely to threaten anyone."

He subsequently suggested that the Election Commission be made in charge of the registration of new political parties.

Mohd Nasir said the move to register PSM was in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's challenge for non-governmental

organisations which liked to champion political issues to enter politics.  
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