

24 JUL 2001

Sex-Amendment

AMENDMENT ON GENDER BIAS HAILED

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Organisations today hailed the government's move to amend the Federal Constitution to prohibit gender as a ground for discrimination.

Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) secretary Kamaruddin Mohamed Baria said this would be a major step forward in recognising the fundamental human rights principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

"Suhakam hopes that the constitutional amendment will take into consideration Suhakam's recommendation that an act of discrimination be defined as any action which has the effect (and not just the intention) of discriminating on the basis of sex," he said in a statement.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said the constitution would be amended to reaffirm the position of women as equal partners in the country's progress and development.

Kamaruddin said the government should also take steps to incorporate this new constitutional principle of equality and non-discrimination into all domestic laws and other mechanisms to enable women to fully benefit from it.

Women's Aid Organisation president Meera Samanther said other laws that discriminate against women should also be revised in line with the proposed amendment.

"There is indeed a pressing need to look into laws relating to citizenship, family, domestic violence, foreign domestic workers, rape and sexual harassment," he said.

He said the government should develop holistic and multi-disciplinary strategies to prevent and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women.

DAP national deputy chairman Karpal Singh said for uniformity and emphasis, constitutions of states in the country should also include similar provisions, particularly to ensure civil servants were not discriminated based of gender.

" The Attorney-General's Chambers should make an in-depth study of all existing laws and policies which discriminate against women so that the proposed amendment could give expression and spirit to the government's proposal which ought to be welcomed by everyone," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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