

Suhakam wants PM to form PSC on human rights
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The government should consider forming a parliamentary select committee to look into the various human rights issues in the country, said Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam).

Suhakam chairperson Hasmy Agam (right) in a statement marking the commission's 12th anniversary, said that throughout that period none of its 11 Annual Reports, submitted to Parliament on the first sitting each year, had ever been debated in the House.

“(Our) recommendations have, for almost 12 years, been painstakingly prepared based on the results of numerous researches, consultations, roundtable discussions, public inquiries and other activities, and put forward to the government through its annual reports, which had been submitted at every first sitting of the year.

“Though to date, none of the eleven annual reports had been debated, the commission will continuously urge members of Parliament to pick up the key human rights issues and recommendations in their interventions in Parliament so that the general public would have a better appreciation of the human rights situation in the country,” said Hasmy.

Among the many issues Suhakam had looked into over the years, he singled out laws relating to detention without trial as unconstitutional and “contravenes Articles 9, 10 and 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)” for repeal.

“The commission also firmly reiterates its stand that the people have a right to participate in peaceful assemblies,” he said.

Inquiry on Bersih 2.0 issues

Hasmy said Suhakam plans to conduct a public inquiry into the alleged excessive use of force by the authorities prior to and during the Bersih 2.0 rally in Kuala Lumpur to establish if human rights violations had taken place.

Hasmy said the inquiry panel will be chaired by Khaw Lake Tee, the vice-chair of the commission, and will be assisted by commissioners Mahmood Zuhdi Abdul Majid and Detta Samen.

“In this regard, the commission wishes to reiterate its recommendations as contained in its public inquiry report into the KLCC incident on May 28, 2006, that sub-sections (2), (2A)-(2D), (4), (4A), (5), (5A)-(5C), (7) and (8) of Section 27, and also Section 27A of the Police Act 1967 should be repealed, thereby removing the need to apply for any license to hold a peaceful assembly,” said Hasmy.

He said the government has to deal with globalisation and the information age, that expose the government to international scrutiny and “move with the times” with regard to both local and international human rights obligations.

“There should, therefore, be a conscious effort towards greater awareness of, and respect for, human rights in all its dimensions at all levels of society, and to begin the process of its inculcation as early as possible,” said Hasmy.