

# PM: STATELESS KIDS ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED

**Amendments to citizenship law for those born overseas to Malaysian mums to be tabled in Sept**

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**D**ATUK Seri Anwar Ibrahim said the government will table the amendments to the Federal Constitution to resolve the citizenship issue involving children born overseas to Malaysian mothers in the next Parliament sitting.

At the opening ceremony of the International Malaysia Law Conference here, the prime minister said the amendments were expected to be tabled in September.

Anwar said the amendments were to replace the words "whose father" with "at least one of the parents" in Parts I and II of the Second Schedule of the Constitution.

"On the plight of stateless persons, the Home Ministry has received numerous citizenship requests under Article 15(A) of the Federal Constitution, which underscored the urgent need for action.

"Several critical issues contribute to the challenges faced by stateless persons in Malaysia.

"As for children born overseas to Malaysian mothers, efforts are underway to resolve the issue of citizenship for them.

"*InshaAllah* (God willing), we will be able to table amendments to the Federal Constitution to resolve this issue," he said.

Present were Yang di-Pertuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Muhriz Tuanku Munawir, Tunku Ampuan Besar Negri Sembilan Tuanku Aishah Rohani Tengku Besar Mahmud, Tunku Besar Seri Menanti Tunku Ali Redhaudin Tuanku Muhriz and Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin Tuanku Muhriz, who is also Institute, for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) founding president.

Also present were Chief Justice Tun Tengku Maimun Tuan Mat and Court of Appeal president Tan Sri Abang Iskandar Abang Hashim.



Members of Family Frontiers holding up placards demanding equal citizenship rights for Malaysians in Kuala Lumpur last year. FILE PIC

Anwar added that he was expected to present the matter to the Conference of Malay Rulers within the next one or two days.

"Under the existing laws, only the father (if the child is born overseas to a Malaysian father) is allowed (to pass down his citizenship).

"This is not fair to the (Malaysian) mother."

Anwar also announced that the time had come for a review of the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010, with a view to expand protection and avenues for disclosure to appropriate agencies without fear of punishment.

"I would like to call on members of the legal fraternity to continue to support our initiatives to institutionalise good governance by advocating transparency and reinforcing our efforts against the abuses of power and corrupt practices of those who have full control over the reins of power."

Anwar also announced a RM10 million increase in allocation for the National Legal Aid Bureau.

"I am glad to note that the module (the National Legal Aid Bureau) has seen hundreds and thousands of persons represented in criminal proceedings.

"I have seen hundreds of prisoners being given the chance to defend themselves reasonably in a fair trial."

He said the increase in the allocation for the bureau was to allow the people, especially those from the poor, to have access to legal representation.

"There were instances where small cases were postponed as these people did not have the financial access to legal representation.

"Therefore, I hope the increase in the allocation will help the poor who are unable to pay for their legal fees."

Anwar also assured members of the legal fraternity that his unity government would uphold judicial independence.

"I can say with utmost certainty that, since my taking office as prime minister, not only have I not encroached on a single inch of this sacred terrain, I shall also defend, at all costs, the independence of the judiciary."

He said the federal government understood the importance of judicial independence for the betterment of the nation.

"I was asked to give due consideration in my speech to the subject of judicial independence, but truth be told, that is quite unnecessary as I need no reminder about the importance of such a topic."

Anwar also applauded Tengku Maimun for her courageous role in strengthening the people's faith in the country's judiciary.

"And by this, I mean that thanks to her steadfast stand on the independence of her judicial office and that of her judicial brethren in the face of relentless attacks, the horizon for continued judicial independence appears bright and promising," he said.