

Federal Constitution reflects racial diversity: Rais

KUALA LUMPUR: There are several provisions in the Federal Constitution that in its implementation, reflect diversity and importance of the races in the country, said former Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Dr Rais Yatim.

He said among the provisions is Article 8, which states that all individuals are entitled to equal protection of the law and it is intended to promote racial diversity.

"Under Article 8, all of them, regardless of whether they are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Kadazan, Murut, Orang Ulu or Dayak, are equal before the law," he said yesterday.

He added that Article 153 provides for the special rights of the Malays and the Orang Asli population of any state, Sabah and Sarawak as well as the interests of other communities.

He emphasised that it would not be right for any party to say that the

> Article 8 guarantees all individuals equal under law regardless of race or religion'

Constitution places no value on racial diversity, Bernama reported.

Rais also said according to Article 11, every individual in the country has the right to practise their religion in peace, while Article 12 mentions the importance of education without discrimination based on religion, race, descent or place of birth.

"Everyone has the right to profess and practise their religion, so Article 11 is also an example of how racial diversity is recognised through religion."

Meanwhile, constitutional expert Prof Datuk Dr Wan Ahmad Fauzi Wan Husain said if promoting a multi-racial country shows that Malaysians are of multiple ethnicities but supports the

identities given in the constitutional rights, it is therefore not in conflict with the Constitution.

He said the identities include assimilating a godly life, being loyal to the King and country, speaking Malay and writing Jawi, practising decency and discipline based on Malaysian values and upholding the supremacy of the Constitution.

"Others are accommodations in the acceptance of Islam as the federal and state religion, Malay custom and native custom within the framework of the Constitution as a source of legislation in the determination of local custom," he said.

Wan Ahmad Fauzi, who is International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation associate

professor at International Islamic University Malaysia, said efforts to promote Malaysia must prioritise national identity as enshrined in the Constitution.

He explained that Article 3 recognises Islam as the religion of the federation and it is the federal doctrine that establishes the criteria for accepting the diversity of ethnic cultural heritage in the country as Malaysia's national culture.

"There are two levels here. The first is the cultural diversity that is to be promoted as the official or national culture.

"Its value and form should not be interpreted as compromising Islam's position as the federal religion," he said.

"Secondly, cultural customs, including specific local ethnic beliefs that contradict Islamic teachings, can be practised by them but cannot be elevated as the cultural identity and beliefs of the Malaysian people or nation."