

Tsu Koon moots national harmony panel
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 16 — Gerakan president Tan Sri Koh Tsu Koon proposed today the formation of a National Harmony and Race Relations Commission to mediate major racial and religious issues and protect the constitutional rights of Malaysians.

Koh said in his policy speech today that while he welcomed new laws to combat terrorism and extremism in place of the Internal Security Act (ISA), there is a need for such a panel to define the limits of acceptable discourse.

“We must set very clear and consistent definitions of what constitute terrorism and extremism, as distinct from difference in ideas and ideology ... so as to leave no room for abuse and confusion,” he told the Gerakan National Delegates Assembly here at today.

Koh, who is minister in charge of national unity, urged Malaysia to ratify international conventions on political and civil rights as a sign of the government’s commitment to the inclusive 1 Malaysia concept.

“Malaysia needs to move further forward, to be one of the most advanced democracies in the world,” he said.

Putrajaya should enhance the powers of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) so it can play the role of ombudsman to take action against private or public sector parties who flout human rights, he also urged.

Koh added that the government must step up the fight against corruption to erase any lingering doubt among the public about its sincerity.

“They want to see more action on big fish, not just the small fish. Hence, we must walk the talk and do even more before people can be convinced further,” he said.

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