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| Event | ICERD kept on ice? |
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ICERD kept on ice?

I AM deeply disappointed that Malaysia has chosen to keep the ICERD on ice. I believe that most informed Malaysians will support the ratification of the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), as postulated by the G25 and many thoughtful public intellectuals and thought leaders.

As pointed out well by the G25 and many others, there is no conflict between the ratification of the ICERD and our Federal Constitution.

The NEP or affirmative action policies can still carry on when we hopefully ratify the ICERD. After all there are reservations and provisions in the convention to protect our constitutional principles, governing our official religion Islam, while preserving the position of all other religions, the special rights of the bumiputras as well as the special position of the Malay rulers.

The problems of ratification stem from misunderstanding, misinformation and miscommunication.

Misunderstanding comes from the failure to appreciate that affirmative action can continue. Hopefully, however, the affirmative action policies to help the underprivileged and deprived poverty-stricken groups will not be based on race but will be based on basic needs and low incomes.

That is where we have had to bear the criticism of unfairness and racial discrimination, which no one really wants. No religion or culture tolerates discrimination against the poor, based on race as we all wish to promote equality for all God's children.

Misinformation arises from distortion of the truth about ICERD. ICERD is not against our constitution.

However some politicians for their own desperate survival instincts, have wrongly discredited the ICERD, which most nations, including most Muslim and Muslim-majority countries have ratified.

So why indulge in the false purveyance of distorted information, as this is forbidden by all religions and universal ethics. Is it for narrow political ends?

Miscommunication has been spread maliciously through the social media and even public speeches and fora and conferences.

Here I wish that the police will take stronger action, using the strict laws that they have, to contain any false and vicious communications, whether verbal or in the written form. Some quarters have maligned the ICERD as if it's a threat to our constitution and future, when it is for our good.

The critics should ponder over the disadvantages of non-ratification.

They are:

- ▶ The isolation of Malaysia at the UN, given that we are one of the very few countries that have not ratified the ICERD.

- ▶ Malaysia and Malaysians will be regarded as discriminators, with a broad brush and that will not be fair to our country and our people.

- ▶ The continued rejection of the ratification could entrench the whole concept of protection, discrimination and noncompetition and make it a permanent feature of our national policies. This will debilitate us in the longer term, unless we change from this course in a more timely manner.

Considering the present circumstances, it may be right and proper at this time to defer ratification of the ICERD.

This is only because of the unexpected and unjustified huge emotional wave against the ratification at this time.

Nevertheless, it is regrettable that we seem to be more regressive than progressive and have succumbed to vociferous protests.

I hope that more public debate and discussion will soon overcome our misunderstanding, misinformation and miscommunication.

I hope we will all see the bigger broader world picture that struggles against rather than promotes negative discrimination, which is intrinsically bad and self destroying.

Lets all together continue our struggle against negative discrimination and treat all Malaysians as equals.

Lets focus on helping the poor regardless of race and religion, in the interests of building greater national unity and a better Malaysia for all its citizens.

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