

IRC to examine judiciary, police, AGC, MACC and EC

KUALA LUMPUR: The Attorney-General's Chambers, judiciary, police force, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the Election Commission are among the key institutions to be examined by the Institutional Reforms Committee (IRC).

The five-member IRC, which convened its first meeting on Wednesday (May 16), said they were prioritising these key institutions.

"What we have to do is to examine key institutions to identify its shortcomings, problem areas and the efficacy of checks and balances.

"We will also consult all relevant stakeholders and make our recommendations to the Government through the Team of Eminent Persons (TEP)," said IRC chairman, Court of Appeal judge Datuk K.C. Vohrah (*pic*) in a press conference after their first meeting at the Ilham Tower here on Wednesday.

He added that the IRC, formed by the TEP to bring positive changes to Malaysia's institutions, would study all legislation that do not adhere to the rule of law.

The IRC will have a deadline of 60 days until July before recommendations can be made to the Pakatan Harapan-led Government.

The other four IRC members are Hakam president Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan, retired Court of Appeal judge and Suhakam commissioner Datuk Mah Weng Kwai, National Patriots Association president Brig Jen (Rtd) Datuk Mohamed Arshad Raji and Tunku Abdul Rahman Professor of Law at Universiti Malaya Datuk Dr Shad Saleem Faruqi.

Vohrah said the IRC's terms of reference included strengthening the rule of law in the country by improving institutions and ensuring checks and balances were in place in our democratic system.

"Our country has had an erosion of independence in terms of the rule of law, while the separation of powers has also been overlooked.

"Other legislations have also removed or affected fundamental liberties provided for in the Federal Constitution," he said.

Some reforms may require a change to the Federal Constitution, meaning that such decisions may require a nod from two-thirds majority of the Dewan Rakyat.

Other reforms may not require any law amendments at all.

On the issue of setting up an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission (IPCMC), Vohrah said the IRC will look into the "reluctance" to form such a body.

Dr Shad said certain laws will also be reviewed by the IRC, including the Printing Publications and Presses Act and some provisions of the Official Secrets Act, which "prevent the truth from emerging."

On the Anti-Fake News Act, Ambiga said the IRC was looking at laws which have impaired the country's fundamental liberties.

On whether there should be a law minister, she said they were looking into the possibility of setting up a law commission.

To this, Vohrah added that even if there was a law minister, such a person will not control the Attorney-General's Chambers but is merely a person in charge of initiatives related to legal institutions.

Asked to give an overview of the current state of Malaysia's institutions,

Ambiga said the IRC had "no doubt a mammoth task."

"Some things can be done quickly in the short term. Others will have to be in the long term. There is a lot of work to be done, without a doubt," she said.