

Reform committee identifies key institutions on its list



Top priority: The Election Commission is among the institutions that have been identified for reform.

KUALA LUMPUR: The new Institutional Reforms Committee (IRC) has hit the ground running by identifying key institutions to be examined as its priority.

The IRC, after its first meeting yesterday, named the Attorney-General's Chambers (AGC), judiciary including the Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), police force, Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and the Election Commission (EC) as among institutions to be checked.

Laws that are seen to be affecting fundamental liberties will also be

studied, such as the Anti-Fake News Act, Printing Presses and Publications Act and certain aspects of the Official Secrets Act which prevent truths from emerging.

“Our key institutions have suffered a crisis of public confidence and an erosion of independence and the rule of law.

“What we have to do will be this: to inquire into, examine the present state of key institutions to identify shortcomings and problem areas.

“We also want to examine adequacy on checks and balances to ensure independence of these institutions,” said IRC chairman, retired Court of Appeal judge and former Suhakam commissioner Datuk K.C. Vohrah (*pic*) in a press conference at Ilham Tower here yesterday.





He said the IRC will also study all laws that are not in accord with the rule of law and then make recommendations to the Pakatan Harapan-led government through the Team of Eminent Persons (TEP) by the deadline in July.

The other 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.

While some changes may require a constitutional amendment and a nod from two-thirds of the Dewan Rakyat, others may not, for example changes to Parliament's Standing Orders or who heads the Public Accounts Committee.

Vohrah added that they would study the reluctance to setting up an Independent Police Complaints and Misconduct Commission.

As for the JAC, he said the last thing the public wants is political or executive interference.

“Right now, there is a very top heavy group of people making decisions.”

Mah said it would be good for the Malaysian Bar president to be in the JAC as lawyers were consumers of the courts.

With regard to the EC, Ambiga said that cleaning up the electoral roll would be among the areas to be looked into.

On having a Law Minister, she said they were looking into the possibility of setting up a law commission.

Vohrah added that even if there was a Law Minister, such a person would not control the AGC but would be in charge of administrative matters.

Ambiga said they had a mammoth task ahead, some of which could be done quickly in the short term but not others.

Meanwhile, the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs welcomed the IRC's formation.

Among others, it proposed that the IRC focuses on separating the offices of the Attorney-General and the public prosecutor and strengthen the independence of the MACC.