



**MEDIA STATEMENT
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

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**COMMEMORATING THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
RACIAL DISCRIMINATION 2026: STRENGTHENING MALAYSIA'S COMMITMENT
TO ELIMINATING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

KUALA LUMPUR (26 MARCH 2026) - In conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, observed annually on 21 March. The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) calls for a renewed national commitment to eradicate racial discrimination and to strengthen unity, social cohesion, and mutual respect in building a more inclusive and harmonious Malaysia.

As Malaysia celebrates the richness of its diversity through various cultural and religious festivals throughout the year, these moments of celebration should serve as important reminders of the values that bind the nation together. Festivals in Malaysia provide opportunities for people of different backgrounds to interact, appreciate one another's traditions, and reinforce the spirit of mutual respect and solidarity that is essential to maintaining national harmony.

Nevertheless, recent public discourse, including incidents that have sparked racial and religious tensions, demonstrates that the risk of discrimination and division remains present within society. These developments highlight the need for sustained and collective efforts by all segments of society to promote mutual understanding, respect for diversity, and responsible public dialogue that safeguards harmony in Malaysia's plural society. Strengthening national unity requires a sustained commitment to the constitutional principle that all persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law, as guaranteed under Article 8(1) of the Federal Constitution, while also recognising that Article 8(2) prohibits discrimination against citizens on the grounds of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender.

In this regard, SUHAKAM urges the Government of Malaysia to take steps towards acceding to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), a core international human rights treaty ratified by the vast majority of United Nations Member States. Within the ASEAN region, several countries are already States Parties to ICERD, including the Philippines (1967), Lao PDR (1974), Vietnam (1982), Cambodia (1983), Indonesia (1999), Thailand (2003), and Singapore (2017), reflecting a shared regional commitment to addressing racial discrimination. Accession to ICERD would provide Malaysia with a comprehensive and internationally recognised framework to guide national efforts in preventing and addressing racial discrimination, strengthen legal safeguards and institutional accountability, and enhance policy coherence across sectors. It would also support greater public confidence by demonstrating Malaysia's commitment to upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination, while reinforcing its credibility and leadership within the regional and international human rights community.



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In this connection, commitments outlined in the Pakatan Harapan manifesto, including the establishment of a National Consultative Council for Harmony and the proposed National Harmony Act to promote unity and address discrimination, provide an important foundation for advancing these efforts. SUHAKAM also recalls that Malaysia had previously indicated its intention to consider accession to ICERD at the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on 28 September 2018. Moving forward, a constructive and inclusive approach, one that takes into account Malaysia's constitutional framework and societal context, will be important in ensuring that progress in this area continues to foster unity and public confidence. In parallel, continued efforts to align Malaysia's legal and policy frameworks with international human rights standards would further reinforce national initiatives to combat racial discrimination, strengthen public trust, and promote a more inclusive, just, and harmonious Malaysia.

On this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, SUHAKAM calls all Malaysians to stand united in rejecting racism, xenophobia, and racial discrimination in all its forms. Building a truly harmonious and inclusive society requires not only strong laws and policies, but also the collective will of all Malaysians to embrace diversity as a strength and uphold the values of equality, dignity, and mutual respect.

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Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)

26 March 2026