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Understanding Selangor's Constitution

Abdul Aziz Bari

Introduction

In any modern democracy the constitution is the backbone of the governance and the nation as a whole. The constitution provides the framework within which all branches of government have to operate. This is crucial in order to put the ideal of democracy – particularly the notion of limited government which is important to protect citizens' rights – into practice. The State Constitution, namely the Laws of the Constitution of Selangor 1959, needs to be understood within the framework of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia which is the supreme law of the land. The starting point for the operation of a fully-fledged democratic system took place in 1959. Although the country attained her independence in 1957 it was only two years later that the Federation of Malaya became truly democratic when parliament and all the state legislative assemblies came into being. The existing state constitution revoked two earlier constitutions, originally laid down in 1948 and 1950. Those earlier constitutions were part of the commitments undertaken by the Malay rulers who had signed the Federation of Malaya Agreement of 1948. As it happened this agreement formed part of the foundations for the Federal Constitution of Malaya which came into force on 31 August 1957.