FAMILY FRONTIERS

Persatuan Kebajikan Sokongan Keluarga Selangor & KL (PPM-011-10-24072020)

Association of Family Support & Welfare Selangor & KL (Family Frontiers)

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Press Statement
10 October 2025

A Call to Recognise the Forgotten Adult Overseas-Born Children of Malaysian Mothers

Family Frontiers calls on the Malaysian government to implement a long-overdue citizenship pathway for adult overseas-born children of Malaysian mothers, contrasting their decades-long struggle with the swift naturalisation of foreign athletes.

For over 60 years, Malaysian nationality laws systematically discriminated against **Malaysian mothers**, denying them the equal right to confer citizenship on their overseas-born children—a right Malaysian fathers have always enjoyed.

Family Frontiers welcomes the 2024 constitutional amendment as a historic step forward. However, it has left behind a generation — adult children of Malaysian women born before the amendment — who still have no clear pathway to citizenship. These individuals remain excluded and in limbo: they care for their ageing parents yet can only visit Malaysia on short-term tourist visas, unable to contribute fully to the nation their mothers call home. The stark contrast between the swift naturalisation of athletes and the decades-long struggle of these adult children reveals deep systemic inequities.

This call follows the recent public controversy surrounding the seven “heritage” footballers whose lineage claims are being questioned by FIFA and the Football Association of Malaysia (FAM). While the awarding of citizenship is a governmental prerogative, **Family Frontiers calls on the Government to ensure that children with at least one Malaysian parent are not left behind, recognising their rightful place in this country.**

Abhay, a 36 year-old overseas-born child of a Malaysian mother, has been living in Malaysia as a non-citizen since he was 10. Since their return to Malaysia, Abhay’s family has been trying to obtain citizenship for him, but to no avail. He was not even offered Permanent Residence as a child of a Malaysian mother. Now, his only pathway to citizenship is via naturalisation under Article 19 which has been pending for the past few years.

For these adult children, citizenship is not merely for work. It is how they stay connected to their Malaysian mothers and families. Hema, a 71-year-old Malaysian mother, has been unable to permanently return to her homeland due to the non-citizen status of her adult daughter, Gayani. The family's circumstances drastically changed when Hema's husband passed away suddenly from a heart attack in 2016. At the time, Gayani, an ambitious career woman, attempted to return to Malaysia to build a life and career there, but her efforts were unsuccessful. As a result of Gayani's status, Hema cannot stay in Malaysia permanently and is forced to travel constantly between Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore where Gayani currently resides.

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The policy has been exceedingly restrictive in granting not only citizenship but even Permanent Residence to non-citizen children, parents, and spouses of Malaysians —a stark contrast to the fast approvals for the heritage players. That said, we acknowledge the commendable steps taken by the current Home Minister in approving many long-pending citizenship applications since 2023. We urge that this momentum continue — through transparent, fair, and streamlined processes that enable Malaysians' immediate family members to secure long-term residence and stability, ensuring the wellbeing and unity of Malaysian families.

As such, we urge the government to establish a clear and efficient pathway for naturalisation or recognition for **the adult overseas-born children** of Malaysian mothers. This is long-overdue justice for the decades of inequality their mothers endured and a necessary step to affirm the equal dignity and contribution of all Malaysians. Granting these adult children citizenship is an investment in Malaysia's social and economic fabric, allowing them to care for their parents, contribute their skills, and finally be connected to the families they belong to.

We stand ready to work with the Home Ministry and the Malaysian government to ensure that the adult children of Malaysian mothers will have the right to call Malaysia their tanah air too.

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