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Zaleha-Hawa

HAWA TO BE UPGRADED A FULL-FLEDGE DEPT

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 22 (Bernama) -- The National Unity and Social Development Ministry is to table a report to the Cabinet soon on the proposal to upgrade the Women's Affairs Division (Hawa) into a full-fledge government department.

Its Minister Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail said her ministry has received the report prepared by a consultant.

"We will submit the report as soon as possible, if possible, before the tabling of next year's budget," she told reporters after chairing the Eighth Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians' Group meeting, here.

She said the department might be set up next year.

She said the objective of upgrading Hawa into a government department was to ensure an efficient management of women affairs by adequate staff with the operating cost incorporated in the ministry's annual budget.

Zaleha said the setting up of the department was a direct action by her ministry to carry out several plans agreed to by the World Conference on Women in Beijing last year.

She said the proposal to upgrade Hawa was told to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a special Cabinet meeting on the Seventh Malaysia Plan.

She also said her ministry would appoint contract officers in all states to tackle women affairs pending the setting up of the department.

Earlier, Zaleha said the number of women Members of Parliament in Commonwealth countries were declining.

She said women's participation in the International Parliamentary Union had dropped from 13 per cent in 1989 to 10.3 per cent in 1993 while the number of women MP's in the Commonwealth countries were only 7.2 per cent last year, she said.

On the contrary, women MP's in the Dewan Rakyat has increased to 15 or about 7.9 per cent of the MPs in the House. -- BERNAMA

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