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Parliament-Debate

STATE ISLAMIC BODIES SHOULD COORDINATE FAMILY LAWS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- All State Islamic Affairs Councils should coordinate Islamic Family Laws particularly those dealing with polygamy to ensure justice for all, Government backbencher Aionon Khariyah Datuk Mohd Abas said today.

She said if the State Islamic Affairs Councils did not come up with a just and consistent recommendation in the matter of Islamic family law, society would tend to cast doubts on the existing legal mechanism.

"I feel it will not be too much if I ask the relevant authorities to review all regulations relating to polygamy including training and professional programmes for Syariah Court judges and kadis," she said when taking part in the debate on the Supply Bill 1997 in the Dewan Rakyat today.

She said the government should speedily streamline the administrative affairs in the Islamic Affairs Departments and in the Syariah Courts, which she claimed were weak and slow.

She said the stand adopted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim in the protection of women particularly in relation to Syariah Law should be supported by the state governments.

Aionon Khariyah proposed that Islamic Affairs Councils make it mandatory for Syariah Courts to produce written judgements to ensure justice for all and these judgements could act as a guide and reference for other cases in the future.

She said "The Doctrine of Binding Precedent and Written Judgments" which did not form part of the Syariah Court system in Malaysia had resulted only in verbal judgements being given in the Syariah Courts,

Aionon said Muslim women were now nervous and anxious over the current implementation of polygamy laws in the country, which according to her, did not take into account the feelings and interests of women but only facilitated Muslim men to take more than one wife without a just screening process.

Aionon Khariyah claimed that the implementation of polygamy law in Selangor and several other states in Peninsular Malaysia, allowing a Muslim man to take another wife without the signature of the first wife was unjust.

"The Syariah Court can probably investigate the financial status of the husband but can it do so in the area of the heart and deeds, character and behaviour, his physical and sexual performance, is not the first wife who is the person well versed in these matters?"

Aionon proposed that apart from getting the signature of the first wife and having dialogue with the Syariah Court, an intensive course on polygamy be held for every Muslim man wishing to practise polygamy as well as for his wife or wives and the wife to be.

A counselling course should also be held for children to make them understand the environment in a polygamous family, she added.

Datuk Hon Choon Kim (BN-Seremban) proposed that the list of the hardcore poor be reviewed constantly.

This was because their income could have increased and would therefore no longer qualify for special assistance.

"We also do not want people who are really very poor from being left out of the list," he said.

He was disappointed that even though the government had spent up to RM1.76 billion under the special assistance programme for the very poor, the poverty rate in the country had only declined a little.

Mohamad Sabu (PAS-Kubang Kerian) claimed the issuance of licence to import foreign workers had only benefited big towkays.

He also urged the Prime Minister's Departemnt to undertake a serious study on the problem of Muslims abandoning their religion.

The Dewan will sit again tomorrow. -- BERNAMA

NZ MS AAM