

05 JAN 1997

Family

NCWO'S PROPOSAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT BODY TO MONITOR ISLAMIC FAMILY LAW

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- The setting up of an independent body in every state to monitor matters relating to Islamic family law and to assist victimised family members is among proposals to be submitted to the Prime Minister.

The National Council of Women's Organisations (NCWO), which submitted a memorandum on polygamy to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Dec 11, has come up with another memorandum containing 11 proposals for consideration of the government to overcome injustices and weaknesses of the Islamic family law in the country.

The Memorandum on Reform of the Islamic Family Laws and the Administration of Justice in the Syariah system of Malaysia stated that the body would be entrusted to supervise family courses organised by religious authorities so that they gave a true and correct picture on the rights and responsibilities of men and women in a family.

The NCWO said the explanation in the memorandum relating to the need for such a body stated that it is due to the tendency of judges of Syariah courts and staff of religious departments to adopt a negative attitude towards women facing domestic problems.

"There still exist an attitude that women were the cause of domestic problems and they are denied rights compared with the men," said the representative of the Women Lawyers Association, Noor Farida Ariffin, at a workshop organised by the NCWO relating to reforms of Islamic family law and its implementation and administration here yesterday.

The workshop confirmed the contents of the memorandum as well as made several additional proposals to the draft prepared by the Women Lawyers Association and a women's organisation, Sisters In Islam.

According to Sisters In Islam president Salbiah Ahmad, the workshop provided a forum for Muslim women to discuss problems of Islamic family law and served as a platform for women to voice their views on domestic issues like polygamy and divorces as well as related laws.

Other proposals in the memorandum included the standardisation of Islamic family laws in every state to overcome the differences that exist now especially relating to polygamy and divorces besides proposals that the curriculum of pre-marriage courses be reviewed by emphasising on the responsibilities of both husbands and wives.

There was also a proposal to set up a computerised registration system to gather information on the status of married Muslim men in the country and the setting up of Federal Syariah Bar as a body to represent and supervise Syariah lawyers.

Other proposals include the appointment of women as judges in Syariah courts and the upgrading of the structure and administration of Syariah courts. -- BERNAMA

RAZ MTA RM