

Good news for widows

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Pension to continue even after they remarry

Widows receiving derivative pensions will continue receiving them even if they remarry, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced in his budget speech.

He said a sum of RM59 million under Budget 2002 will be spent on specific programmes aimed at improving the quality of women's lives, particularly in rural areas.

Mahathir said the allocation will also be used to help women entrepreneurs and eradicate gender bias in all aspects.

"The government is aware that the participation of women in the labour force at 44.5% is lower than the 60% in developed countries," said Mahathir, who is also finance minister.

He said the implementation of these measures reflect the government's commitment to ensure equal opportunities for women.

All Women's Action Society (Awam) manager Barbara Yen said the allocation for women is sufficient but much of it should go to underprivileged women and those living in estates and rural areas.

Yen welcomed the move to ensure widows continue to receive their late husband's pensions as it will encourage more widows, especially young ones, to remarry and continue living life in a fulfilled manner.

"Hopefully, it will pave the way for more amendments to be made to certain laws, such as equity owner-

ship, so that women will get more equal rights," she said.

Pertubuhan Jamaah Islah Malaysia women's section head Dr Harlina Halizah Siraj said the proposal for widows to continue receiving pension even if they remarry is a long awaited and hard fought decision.

"Women's organisations have fought for it for so long and it is about time it is implemented.

"Widows can now remarry without fear of losing their pension and still have the means to support their children from the previous marriage," she said.