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## Alleviating the difficulties faced by foreign spouses

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THE news report "Review law on foreign spouses" (NST, July 30) is most timely and a relief to many troubled souls who are married to foreign spouses.

Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil should be commended for her care and concern for Malaysian women who marry foreign men.

It is also noteworthy that the Bill on equal rights for women was passed in Parliament only a few days ago.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has said recently that this was done to enable women to enjoy equal rights as men and ensure they are not discriminated against.

The difficulties faced by those with foreign spouses are many.

They include anxiety, frequent travels to Kuala Lumpur to sort out their problems with the Immigration Department, endless expenses and above all a lingering uncertainty.

Very often applications submitted for permanent residence are rejected after prolonged delay without any reason.

Sometimes one has to re-apply after a year of waiting to know that it has been rejected.

For some, repeated applications and repeated interviews are of no use as the end result is only repeated rejections.

Sometimes when the application is rejected at the Immigration Department, the foreign spouse is directed to appeal to the Home Ministry with a fresh application.

Because of these arduous procedures the applicant is finally left confused.

A few months back there was a news report that foreign spouses would be given permanent resident status. The report said it would be implemented within a stipulated time-frame.

It is hoped that at least now all foreign spouses would be granted permanent residence.

This would at least enable them to settle down peacefully with their families.