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Divorce declaration through SMS valid, rules Syariah Court

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LAFAZ cerai (divorce declaration) through the short messaging system is valid, ruled a Syariah court in a landmark decision, reported Utusan Malaysia and Berita Harian yesterday.

But both dailies gave the Gombak Timur Syariah Lower Court's decision different play-ups.

Utusan front-paged it as its main story while Berita Harian gave it a five-paragraph mention in page 15.

In the Utusan report, syariah judge Mohamad Fauzi Ismail said as the divorce declaration was deemed valid, the marriage between plaintiff Azida Fazlina Abdul Latif and defendant Shamsudin Latif was annulled.

Shamsudin sent Azida Fazlina a SMS Kalau engkau tak keluar dari rumah mak bapak engkau, jatuh talak tiga (If you do not leave your parents' house, you'll be divorced).

The paper reported that the syariah court in Singapore had in July last year affirmed the divorce of a couple made through the SMS.

The court ruled that the intent to divorce through a message sent over the phone was as valid as one conveyed via a letter.

In another report, the paper carried comments from Health Minister Datuk Chua Jui Meng who confirmed the increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases in Kedah and Perlis, including among the women.

However, he said the increase was not worrying, adding that many women contracted the deadly disease from their dadah addict husbands.

He also did not discount the possibility of prostitution playing a contributory factor with local men crossing the borders for pleasure, but said there was no proof of this.

The increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases in Kedah and Perlis has sparked a debate with various quarters blaming prostitution in border towns as the main cause.

Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, who came under fire for naming Bukit Kayu Hitam in Kedah as one of the border towns where prostitution was rampant, made a clarification yesterday.

He said when he mentioned Bukit Kayu Hitam, he was referring to the Thai side of the town.

The school computer laboratory fiasco was the subject of Berita Harian's editorial yesterday, with the headline "Malay contractors should learn the lesson".

Using the comments of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on the issue as the peg, the paper said integrity could not be developed overnight.

It said in their desire to make a fast profit, some contractors chose to sell their contracts.