

DAP women slam gov't over sex discrimination

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By S Pathmawathy

Opposition lawmakers slammed the government for its apathy in enforcing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Cedaw), saying its actions do not reflect its vowed intention to end discrimination against women.

NONEFong Po Kuan (DAP-Batu Gajah) (right) ticked off the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry yesterday for not getting the Education Ministry to drop its appeal against a landmark judgment on discrimination against a relief teacher.

Shah Alam High Court judge Zaleha Yusof on July 12 last year ruled in favour of Norfadilla Ahmad Saikin, after finding that Cedaw has the force of law and was binding on Malaysian gender equality laws.

Norfadilla, 29, a relief teacher, had sued among others, the Education Ministry and government, for withdrawing her appointment letter as an untrained relief teacher at a secondary school in Kajang for being pregnant at the time of her interview three years ago.

NONEFong, as well as Chong Eng (DAP-Bukit Mertajam) in demanding that the women's ministry compel the government to uphold the ruling, asked what steps had been taken to enforce the court order.

"The Education Ministry had (on Jan 28) filed an appeal to overturn the ruling in the case of Norfadilla (left).

"How can this be allowed to happen?" Fong asked the Women, Families and Community Development Deputy Minister Heng Siai Kie, who was winding up the motion of thanks on the royal address.

Singing the same old song

However, Heng skirted around the issue, saying calmly, "the decision to appeal the ruling lies solely in the hands of the Education Ministry.

"However, my ministry is in support of the Court of Appeal's ruling to uphold women's rights, in line with Article 8(2) of the constitution."

NONEThis added fuel to fire, with Fong and Chong lashing out at the government for its "inconsistent" stand on policies that clearly define gender discrimination.

"As a ministry that represents women in this country, why is it unable to compel the government to endorse the landmark ruling?" Chong asked.

Both the DAP MPs kept pressing Heng (left) for a reply, which she did not appear able to, forcing Dewan Rakyat speaker Pandikar Amin Mulia to intervene.

"I am not as stupid as you might think. I've got your message: The government is inconsistent in its stand. So please do not bring up the same issue again and again," Pandikar said, effectively dousing the fire.

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