

Bar Council: Sexist remarks unconstitutional
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Sexist remarks by two BN parliamentarians violates provisions within the Federal Constitution which prohibits sexual discrimination, said Bar Council president Ambiga Sreenevasan.

Furthermore, Malaysia is also a signatory of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (Cedaw) since 1995.

"Against this background, the sexist statements reported to have been made by members of Parliament to the effect that another MP who is a woman 'also leaks once a month' are most unfortunate," said Ambiga in a statement.

The parliamentarians referred to were Bung Mokhtar Radin (BN - Kinabatangan) and Mohd Said Yusuf (BN - Jasin) who uttered the remarks in Parliament on Wednesday towards Fong Po Kuan (DAP - Batu Gajah).

The parliamentarians, during a debate on the lack of maintenance resulting in leaks in the Parliament building after heavy downpours, had attacked one of the opposition members who raised the issue.

"Where's the leak? The Batu Gajah MP leaks every month too," Bung said referring to DAP representative of the constituency, Fong Po Kuan [video clip].

Describing the remarks as 'offensive, distasteful and unbecoming of a parliamentarian', Ambiga added that it reflects a mindset that ignores the government's official position on gender equality.

"Enacting laws is one way to ensure equality but no amount of legislating can remove deep-rooted prejudices that lie in the hearts and minds of the people," laments Ambiga.

DAP over-reacted

Dewan Rakyat Speaker Ramli Ngah Talib ruled against referring Bung Mokhtar and Mohd Said to the privileges committee on Thursday.

Former BN Backbenchers Club chairperson Shahrir Samad said the opposition over-reacted in trying to refer the duo to the privileges committee.

"This is not the way to settle the matter unless we want to sensationalise it. As MPs, we can settle this matter among ourselves in the House," said Shahrir according to New Straits Times today.

In another development, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil finally broke her silence on the issue yesterday.

"Even in jest, it should not have been done. I would like to request all MPs to show exemplary behaviour, especially on gender issues," Shahrizat said in a Star report today.

Similarly, Sisters in Islam programme manager Zaitun Kassim said the remarks reflected

badly on the parliamentarians who uttered them.

"The remarks made reflected more on them as they could not think of something better to say," she said.

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