

Female judges may adjudicate Muslim marriages
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The government is scrutinising all regulations for the appointment of female Syariah Court judges to enable adjudicating cases related to marriage and divorce, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Jamil Khir Baharom said, however, such efforts required cooperation from state Islamic religious councils and departments as they would have certain regulations and constraints on the matter.

He said the process pertaining to female syariah judge adjudicating cases involving women is already stated in the state enactments and regulations under the Syariah Judicial Department of Malaysia.

"However, efforts to provide a wider perspective, including areas allowed for, by the syariah and ulama (religious scholars) are being carried out, but it cannot be implemented in the blink of an eye.

"We need the support and approval of state religious councils and departments to ensure that the female syariah judge is given broader opportunities," he said in reply to Ismail Kasim (BN-Arau) during Question time.

The issue was also raised Dr Siti Mariah Mahmud (PAS-Kota Raja) who wanted to know why two female Syariah Court judges who were appointed in July, have been prohibited from adjudicating cases related to marriage and divorce.

The duo are Suraya Ramli, 31, and Rafidah Abdul Razak, 39.

Jamil Khir said the government is very concerned about women, adding that the appointment of the two judges was solely to see women as judges in the Syariah Court.

"However, we must understand that each state has its own appointment regulations and constraints," he said.

On Siti Mariah's question about the number of syariah judges nationwide, Jamil Khir said of the 160 posts available nationwide, only 119 have been filled, while 41 others are vacant.

He said the vacancies are due to the fact that judges are civil servants and subject to the promotion and regulations of the Public Service Department and other qualifications stipulated by the state government.

"A syariah officer with Grade LS41, who has not fulfilled the promotion requirement, cannot be promoted to Grade LS44, which is the minimum grade for appointment as Syariah Court judge," he added.

- Bernama

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