

Child marriages not condoned by government, says Shahrizat  
Malaysianmirror.com  
6 December 2010

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government does not condone child marriages and will look into the wedding of a 14-year-old girl to a school teacher.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil (left) said the government was clear in its stance that it did not condone child marriages.

Shahrizat said the ministry's policy was that children below 16 years were still in need of guidance, protection and the chance to form their own character.

"A marriage is about responsibility. She is still a child.

"As far as I know, she's got the consent of the court. But I implore the courts to be cautious.

"As far as the government is concerned, a wedding does not make a marriage," she said when met at the Barisan Nasional Convention here yesterday, according to The Star.

Teenager Siti Maryam Mahmud married 23-year-old Abdul Manan Othman, a family friend in July.

They were one of 250 couples at the 1Malaysia mass wedding held at the Federal Territory mosque on Saturday.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom, who was the event's guest-of-honour, was reported to have said the marriage was legal as it had the Syariah Court's consent.

Currently, Muslim girls below the age of 16 can marry with the Syariah Court's consent while non-Muslim girls between 16 and 18 years old can marry with the authorisation of the Menteri Besar or Chief Minister.

Women's Aid Organisation executive director Ivy Josiah called for a review of civil and Islamic laws to prevent child marriages.

"The minimum age of marriage should be 18.

"There should be no exceptions for Muslims or non-Muslims," she said.

Empower executive director Maria Chin Abdullah said Siti Maryam's marriage was sending out the wrong message, that it was all right to have child marriages.

"We are denying the child the right to live, learn and develop, and forcing them to become adults.

"Our actions must reflect our international commitments," she said.

Source : <http://www.malaysianmirror.com/media-buzz-detail/6-nation/50938>