

## **Women's participation in politics below mark**

KUALA LUMPUR: There is a significant gender gap of women's participation in politics as evidenced by the mere 22 MPs (out of 222) and eight women senators out of 53, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

**“Based on the Malaysian Gender Gap Index released by the Department of Statistics in 2020, the gender gap is quite significant between men and women in political participation of only 0.108% as compared to a full score of 1.0%,” Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development Datuk Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff (Rantau Panjang-PAS) said.**

Kasthuri Patto (PH-Batu Kawan) then pointed out during the Question and Answer (Q&A) session that one of the reasons why women do not want to participate in the political arena is the apparent discrimination and sexism even in the lower house where some MPs still use sexist or abusive words towards women.

“There is still toxic politics even in this hall where abusive and sexist words are thrown at women,” she said.

Siti Zailah said all political parties have a fundamental responsibility to increase women's representation in the parliament as it depends entirely on the number of seats contested and won in general elections.

“There must be an environment that supports women's productive participation, ranging from cultivating interest through training and education as well as efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination that prevent women from engaging in political leadership,” she said.

Kasthuri then asked what steps the government would take to create a safe space for women to be more involved in politics.

To this the deputy minister replied that the ministry is currently reviewing existing policies and laws that may discriminate against women.

“We very much welcome all proposals, all amendments to policies or laws that may discriminate against women. We are also organising various programs for us to produce many more young women who are skilled and qualified to participate,” she said.

Besides that, the government has also announced policy participation to reach at least 30% women as decision makers in the public sector in 2004 and 2011 in the private sector.

“Based on statistics by the Public Service Department (JPA), a total of 38.2% of women in the civil service were in decision-making positions in 2020, while 25.8% in the private sector and

this is based on the numbers of women as board members in the top public companies," she said.

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