

CATEGORY : FOOT IN MOUTH

Nominee

Background and basis for nomination

1. “Let us not try to be so equal that today looking from the back, you don't know whether it is a man or a woman, they all have long hair, even the dress doesn't give away the gender. So let's be different in some ways – hair, clothing, dresses etc.”
– 2 December 2015

Former Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad made this remark at a book launch officiated by his wife, Siti Hasmah. He claimed that there ought to be a limit on gender equality such that men and women were not 'equal in every way', because otherwise, one would not be able to distinguish between them.

This remark suggests that gender is binary and individuals should conform to stereotypical physical appearances. Gender is spectrum of characteristics, which are socially constructed that help express identity. Suggesting that physical appearances are the sole indicator of one's identity is an oversimplification. Mahathir's call for less equality comes from a position of power. It portrays a desire to maintain gender behaviour and roles which generally advantage men, while rendering women subordinate.

2. JAKIM distributing flyers titled “10 Myths about homosexuality” with facts such as homosexuals are less likely to be sexually faithful to a partner - as part of their efforts purportedly to combat homosexuality in Malaysia.
- 14 February 2015

On Valentine's Day, JAKIM shared these flyers containing 'myths and facts' about homosexuals, alleging that they have a higher risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, experience higher levels of mental illness, less likely to be monogamous, and more prone to domestic violence. It was also reported that the flyer was 'strikingly similar' to one issued in 2010 by a US-based conservative Christian lobby group.

The list of 'myths and facts' provided by JAKIM are not only bigoted in their accusations, but also drawn from sources that lack credibility. These efforts by JAKIM appear to be part of a campaign to demonise homosexuals and paint them in a bad light. As a government-funded religious body, it is regrettable that JAKIM uses tax payers' money and its authority to promote hate and discrimination rather than tolerance and acceptance of a marginalised community.

**Prepared by The Joint Action Group for Gender Equality (JAG)
and
the Gender Equality Initiative (GEI)**

3. “I feel that DAP is like a woman and PAS is like a man...women can’t divorce men that’s why DAP keeps asking for *fasakh*, come on lah DAP, be a man.”
–12 June 2015

In a political rift between DAP and PAS — then still part of the Pakatan Rakyat opposition coalition — over the stance on *hudud*, PAS Youth Chief Nik Mohamad Abduh made a statement which first appeared on his Facebook page, calling on PAS to act like a man and divorce DAP.

This comment was made in reference to the current Syariah practise in Malaysia where husbands can divorce their wives simply by pronouncing talak, while wives seeking divorce through fasakh have to make an application and justify why divorce should be granted. It rests on a belief that women are inferior to men because they have difficulty in divorcing their husbands. Rather than their inherent superiority, it is the patriarchal system within the Syariah courts which allows men to divorce their wives with ease. This statement is also a smokescreen to avoid discussing the real issues behind the introduction of hudud.

4. “When a woman’s features are beautiful, she’s bound to have shortcomings and there are bound to be others who will be jealous of her and not like her. This is just like the GST.”
- 11 May 2015, Syed Sis A. Rahman
(BN – Tanjung Surat)

During a Johor state assembly sitting, politicians from both sides of the divide used sexist analogies when debating about the controversial GST. Both assemblypersons used female stereotypes to back their arguments in support of or to argue against the implementation of the GST.

“If the *Yang Berhormat* from Tanjung Surat says GST is like a beautiful woman, then I think it is best we avoid this type of woman and not marry her because she would only burden others,”
- 11 May 2015, Dr Boo Cheng Hao
(DAP – Skudai)

These statements highlight how those we entrust to govern our country lack substantive arguments when debating issues of national importance. They appear happier to rely on jokes that objectify women instead. The objectification of women here operates on false stereotypes that beautiful women are inherently flawed and troublesome and reflect poorly on a government that purports to respect women and value their contributions.

CATEGORY : INSULTING INTELLIGENCE

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
<p>1. “It’s okay for married couples (to get an abortion) and it’s up to a specialist’s discretion. It is only illegal when it involves those who are pregnant out of wedlock, then police will investigate.” – 28 March 2015</p>	<p>Responding to a case involving a couple who paid a clinic for an abortion, the Chief Police of Seremban, Muhamad Zaki Harun, announced that the police would only investigate such cases if it involved unmarried couples because then it would mean that a woman had gotten pregnant outside of marriage.</p> <p><i>The Penal Code states that termination of pregnancy is permissible in circumstances when there is risk to life of the pregnant woman or threat of injury to her physical or mental health. It does not qualify this by limiting it to a woman's marital status. In this case, Muhamad Zaki, apparently influenced by his own personal values, but in his capacity as Chief Police, committed a grave disservice by misinforming members of the public about this law.</i></p>
<p>2. “Even the Prophet says even when they’re riding on the back of the camel, when the husband asks her, she must give [sex].” – 27 April 2015</p>	<p>Weighing in on the debate on marital rape in Islam, Perak Mufti Harussani Zakaria reportedly said that men can have sexual intercourse whenever they desire, even if their spouse did not consent, , adding that a Muslim woman does not have the “right” to reject her husband’s demands.</p> <p><i>This remark that a Muslim woman has no right to reject her husband’s demands, treats women as mere property of their husbands. It disregards how in Islam, it is widely recognised that marriage is a partnership that should be based on love and mutual respect. Islam teaches that men and women are protectors of one another. The concept of musyawarah (consultation), which women are entitled to be a part of, is also seen as key for a happy and harmonious family life. It is worrying when prominent religious leaders reinforce patriarchal beliefs, but worse when this is done by emphasising a limited view of Islam that subordinates women.</i></p>

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and
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3. "If our wives started acting up, our heads are frayed and we cannot become good leaders or elected representatives."
– 6 September 2015
- Prime Minister Najib Razak was reported to have made this statement at a Barisan Nasional (BN) Elected Representatives' Wives annual programme. He further added that the role of an elected representative's wife was to take care of her husband, the family and to be "their everything". This was to ensure that the BN representative was liked by the people. His wife, Rosmah Mansor, was also present at the event.
- Elected representatives are chosen by their constituents, because of their personal track record and party manifestos, not because of who their spouse is. Therefore, if they do not perform well, they alone — and not their wives — should bear this responsibility. The ideas espoused by the Prime Minister are also based on traditional gender roles, which assume that a wife only has a supporting role in a marriage. In reality most wives play a range of roles including contributing to the family income or being the main provider in some cases. Many bear the burden of care giving as well. His statements are also regressive because they promote the notion that wives should be obedient and not "act-up".*
4. "This threat will ruin the Muslim identity ... the liberal ones will take the easy route in matters of religious principles ... groups such as liberal Muslims, LGBT, human rightism will be born. An example was Nur Fitri's case in the UK."
– 14 May 2015, Najib Razak
- At the 57th National-level Quran Recital Assembly, Prime Minister Najib Razak condemned LGBT individuals by linking them and Muslims who support 'liberalism', to Nur Fitri Azmeer Nordin, a Malaysian student in the UK convicted for possession of child pornography. He also mentioned the connection between liberalism and extremism.
- In his capacity as Prime Minister, Najib Razak's statements are extremely detrimental and a poor reflection of the wassatiyah (moderate) Islam which he heavily promotes. The deliberate conflation of liberalism and 'advocates of liberal ideas' (such as LGBTs) to paedophilia serves to demonise the former by suggesting that they too are involved in 'despicable' activities. The PM's statements also infer that those who support liberalism are the same as Muslim extremists. In reality, there is no proven link between liberalism, LGBT individuals, and paedophilia, let alone extremism.*

CATEGORY : CANNOT IGNORE

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
<p>1. Aisyah Tajuddin & Noor Farida threatened with rape and physical violence including death, then investigated by the authorities for allegedly mocking Islam. – 23 March 2015 and 18 December 2015</p>	<p>BFM journalist Aisyah Tajuddin and G25 spokesperson Noor Farida Ariffin rape and violent threats on social presented a satirical piece of <i>hudud</i> and called for a review of <i>khalwat</i> laws respectively. Aisyah Tajuddin was then, investigated under the Penal Code for blasphemy and the Communications and Multimedia Act for making ‘obscene, indecent, false, menacing or offensive’ comments; while Noor Farida was probed under the colonial-era Sedition Act.</p> <p><i>Instead of focusing on those who made these threats and bringing them to justice, the police chose to investigate Aisyah Tajuddin and Noor Farida for reasons mentioned above. In so doing they sent out a message that it is all right to threaten women with rape and violence when they speak their minds, especially when it comes to matters relating to Islam.</i></p>
<p>2. Federal Court dismissed Court of Appeal’s decision on Negeri Sembilan transgender case on technical grounds. – 8 October 2015</p>	<p>The Federal Court reversed the Court of Appeal decision involving three Muslim transwomen — they had earlier successfully proven the unconstitutionality of anti-cross dressing Syariah laws – on technical grounds. According to the presiding judges, the three had used the wrong legal procedure to challenge the constitutionality of Section 66 of the Negeri Sembilan Syariah Criminal Offences Enactment (SCOE).</p> <p><i>In a case of this stature, it is unfortunate that the Federal Court decided on technicalities — rather than dealing with the merits of the case — to overturn the landmark decision made by the Court of Appeal in 2014. This had laid out a number of grounds in which Section 66 of the Negeri Sembilan SCOE was unconstitutional, yet none were given consideration by the Federal Court judges. This was a setback for trans rights in Malaysia and will likely continue to promote transphobia against this community.</i></p>

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and
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3. The Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) announced that it would not pursue further investigation into a complaint lodged by GST protestor, Maisara Amira, about a policeman who had threatened her with rape.
– 29 June 2015, Attorney-General Chambers.
- A plainclothes policeman is said to have threatened Maisara Amira with rape when she refused to answer his questions at the Dang Wangi police station. She had earlier been detained for taking part in an anti-GST rally. She subsequently lodged a report against the policeman only for the case to be dropped by the Attorney General's Chambers which classified it as NFA (no further action). The police had also failed to take the necessary steps to address this complaint.

The actions of the parties involved – the police and the AGC – send out a message that rape threats are not taken seriously by the authorities when it involves one of their own. By implication, they can be said to condone using rape threat as a tool to suppress women's freedom of expression. The fact that there is no due diligence done raises questions about what protective guarantees the current system really offers women who are threatened with sexual violence. It reflects poorly on a government which has pledged to eliminate violence against women.

4. "Saya bimbang, saya tengok laki dia di rumah takut macam ini keadaan."

I am worried when her husband sees her like this at home in this kind of situation [where there is fierce debate]
- 9 June 2015
- Following an allegedly fiery Parliamentary debate which opposition MP Zuraida Kamaruddin had participated in, Bung Mokhtar 'joked' that he was worried for her husband if she was like this at home. This followed a long tradition of sexist remarks from Bung Mokhtar against female politicians.

Bung Mokhtar's statement implies that women who speak passionately or have bold and differing opinions make bad wives. This incident also shows that personal attacks against female politicians have become a custom in parliamentary debates, and a normalised practice that distracts Parliament from dealing with real issues.

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CATEGORY : LEAST HELPFUL TO THE SISTERHOOD

Nominee

Background and basis for nomination

1. "Our culture and religion also do not encourage us to use inappropriate words, more so as we are women, we have to observe our manners."
– 14 August 2015

After a meeting with Malaysian delegates at the World Skills Competition 2015 in Sao Paolo, Deputy Works Minister, Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin was reported saying that female members of UMNO should mind their manners when speaking about the party leader. This appeared to be a response to criticisms made by a former Wanita UMNO member, Anina Saaduddin, against Prime Minister Najib Razak.

This remark implies that women must act or speak in a certain way so as to not offend men, and avoid being perceived as behaving inappropriately. Views like these entrench dominant patriarchal thinking in Malaysia, where women are constantly told to submit to men and conduct themselves in a particular manner, including that which is deemed as respectful of male leaders. Women's right to participate in politics extends to their freedom of speech, which includes expressing opinions about the leadership of a political party.

2. "If you have to play golf, be it, play golf. Take up golf, I mean it'll make yourself visible."
- 8 May 2015

At the launch of the Malaysian chapter of the 30% Club, Women, Family and Community Development Minister Rohani Abdul Karim told women that to stand a better chance of being recruited as board members of companies, they ought to make themselves more visible by playing golf.

This statement places a burden on women to conform to purportedly male social behaviours in order to be more "visible" i.e fit into male-dominated boards of companies. The statement is a distraction from the real issue: the fact that there are still significant barriers of entry to women occupying positions of authority and power within companies. It further undermines and reduces women's intelligence and professional capabilities by forcing them to be assessed based on extra-curricular and/or sporting activities outside the professional realm as opposed to job performance and professional merits.

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3. "...kemerosotan kadar kelahiran mempunyai kaitan langsung dengan sikap wanita masa kini yang memilih untuk berkahwin lambat, mementingkan kerjaya dan beranggapan kos menyara anak tinggi..."
- 3 December 2015
- Kosmo! tabloid published an article on its front page titled, "Wanita Malaysia sudah tidak subur" (*Malaysian women no longer fertile*) to draw attention to the declining birth rate in Malaysia. It quoted Siti Nor lasiah Ismail, Director General of Lembaga Penduduk dan Pembangunan Keluarga Negara (LPPKN) as saying that this was because women were delaying marriage to pursue their careers, and that they (wrongly) believed that it was too expensive to raise children.

[Translated]

"... the declining birth rate is directly related to the attitude of women today who prefer to marry later in order to prioritise their career and the assumption that the cost of raising a child is high..."

There are many factors behind a nation's low birth rate. By ascribing blame on women alone, the Director General ignores other contributors like declining male fertility, and the difficulties women face in juggling paid work and unpaid domestic duties. She also ignores the deterring effect of the rising cost of living which makes it even more challenging to have children. Her views promote the belief that women have no right to decide the number of children they have, because there is a larger national goal that should take priority.

4. "The provision with regard to Section 375 that intercourse between a legally married couple continues to remain in force and cannot be considered as rape."
-10 June 2015
- In a written reply in Parliament, *de facto* law minister Nancy Shukri said that the government had decided to maintain the recommendation of the Parliamentary Select Committee that reviewed marital rape laws a decade ago, i.e. that sex between a man and a woman in marriage cannot be considered rape. This is in line with provisions under Section 375 of the Penal Code.

Consent for sex is important both outside of and within a marriage. Not recognising marital rape is a denial of the reality that rape can also happen between a married couple. Holding the legal status of marriage does not and cannot absolve the crime of rape. Failure to criminalise marital rape also potentially provides a loophole for rapists to marry their victims and avoid being punished under the Penal Code.

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CATEGORY : ENOUGH ALREADY

Nominee

Background and basis for nomination

1. "If you check the two reports, very skeletal and the court is not able to determine if the plaintiff is a male or female just by looking at these two reports."

– 19 June 2015

High Court judge Asmabi Mohamad made the judgment following Vasudevan Ramoo's application to be recognised as a female by the National Registration Department (NRD). In order for the court to rule in her favour, Vasudevan had to prove four factors, chromosomal, gonadal, genital and psychological. Judge Asmabi dismissed the application saying that the documents provided by Vasudevan did not fulfill the four requirements.

The court requirements misunderstand the difference between sex and gender. Sex on one hand describes biological factors assigned at birth. Gender on the other hand, refers to cultural and social behavior, and how the individual expresses said behaviour. The required four factors confuse the two and has place two distinct spectrums into the same category. The requirements represents discrimination against transgender on a systemic level, which can affect a transperson's right to healthcare, education and job opportunities, among others.

2. "Even if this is difficult to defend at the international level, we should defend the definition [of human rights] in the country. These groups [liberals and LGBT], are hiding behind the facade of human rights to approve their acts."

- 18 August 2015

Prime Minister Najib Razak made the statement at the launch of the International Wasatiyyah Seminar 2015, saying that there is a need to defend the definition of human rights according to the Islamic context and Syariah. In the same vein, he placed ISIS and LGBT in the same category as threats to Islamic teachings.

In likening the LGBT to the terrorist organization ISIS, Najib Razak is insulting the LGBT community and painting them as enemies of Islam and the state. The statement also implies that LGBT individuals are not deserving of human rights, because of the perception that it conflicts with Islamic teachings.

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3. LGBT people, I am sorry but even though you argue that it your human right to lead your [life] but it will not be allowed here because it is not allowed in Islam.”
– 11 September 2015

Tourism Minister, Nazri Aziz was reported in a Malay Mail interview saying that LGBT individuals in Malaysia will never be granted equal rights because he claims that the Federal Constitution is superseded by Islamic principles in Malaysia, as Islam is the religion of the federation.

The statement perpetuates several myths about the LGBTs and does so with the intent of appealing to the Malaysian public’s ignorance and what some may say is a distaste for persons who identify with the LGBT.

4. Kelantan Islamic Religious Affairs Department (JHEAIK) raided hotel and arrested 15 transgenders.
– 15 June 2015

JHEAIK conducted a raid and arrested 15 transgenders after allegedly receiving public complaints that the transwomen were making too much noise at the hotel. The women were to be investigated under Section 7 of the Syariah Criminal Code 1985 for wearing women’s attire and “posing as women”.

Another raid carried out on yet another event organised by transgenders is just one of the ways in which state institutions have systematically violated the rights of transgender citizens using laws that are inherently problematic – the Syariah Criminal Code on cross-dressing. The fact that these raids are carried out regularly and targeted specifically against the transgenders only fuels the false impression that a minority group’s activities are “immoral”. In fact, what it does is to divert the attention of the public that members of a minority group such as transgenders in Malaysia are regularly violated and discriminated against.

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5. “Which house would robbers love and break into? Surely house B because it was exposed and made it easy for external elements to intrude. Therefore, that was a simple analogy for women who cover up their ‘aurat’.”

– 6 February 2015, JAIS Friday Sermon

“Looking at today’s social ills, it is worrying. When women fail to cover their aurat perfectly, it will open the door to vices. The exploitation of women will prosper.”

– 4 September 2015, JAWI Friday sermon

At two separate sermons on two different dates, both JAIS (Selangor Religious authority) and JAWI (Federal Territories Religious Authority) issued Friday sermons which talked about women’s aurat (i.e uncovered body parts) by comparing women to unlocked houses liable to break-ins by robbers and also blaming “indecently” dressed women for causing social ills.

These statements hold women responsible for men’s lust and social ills. It perpetuates victim blaming by saying that women who do not cover their aurat (eg: by not wearing the hijab and/or loose modest clothing) are inviting rape. This language sends the wrong message that only women who dress in a certain way are deemed appropriate, and deserve respect. The sermon is blatantly false as there have been many past crimes of rape against women who were fully covered in hijab – highlighting the point that rape is about power, and not about how women dress.

CATEGORY : POLICY FAIL

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
<p>1. 60 year-old man acquitted for raping 15 year-old teen because he claimed to use a finger tainted with his semen to penetrate her. – 8 May 2015</p>	<p>The Court of Appeal acquitted a 60-year old man on grounds that insertion of a finger tainted with semen into a girl or woman’s vagina did not fall under the definition of rape. The judges made this ruling even though the girl had become pregnant and given birth to his son as a result.</p> <p><i>This ruling reinforces the erroneous message that rape only occurs if there is penetration of the vagina with a penis. This extremely limited definition is a flaw of the law, which women's groups have fought to change for a long time, but with little success. It is disappointing that the perpetrator walked away without being charged because of the narrow definition of rape in the law. The judges of the Court of Appeal could have directed the DPP to charge the perpetrator for a lesser account of sexual assault and make a strong statement to legislators to broaden the definition of rape. The teen’s right to bodily integrity and freedom from violence should have been upheld, as guaranteed under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW), which Malaysia is party to.</i></p>
<p>2. Dewan Rakyat Deputy Ronald Kiandee rejecting motion to refer Kinabatangan MP Bung Mokhtar Radin to Parliamentary Privileges Committee for his sexist remark, despite the existence of a Standing Order. - 15 June 2015</p>	<p>Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker Roland Kiandee refused opposition MP Zuraida Kamaruddin’s motion to hold Bung Mokhtar, accountable for yet another sexist remark in Parliament. In this incident, Bung had questioned how Zuraida’s husband could handle a wife like her at home (see also Cannot Ignore). Kiandee claimed that he let off Bung because the objection was not raised on the day itself. He also accepted Bung’s explanation that the statement was made without malice.</p> <p><i>In 2013, JAG acknowledged the positive steps taken by the Dewan Rakyat after it introduced Standing Orders in 2012, which prohibited MPs from making sexist remarks in Parliament. In this incident, the Deputy Speaker’s actions instead made a mockery of these rules. This reflects the dismal state of affairs in the August house where gender discrimination is entrenched as seen by the way jokes at the expense of women are made with impunity.</i></p>

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3. RELA Director-General Lukeman Saaid praises RELA volunteer security guard posted at the Road and Transport Department's (JPJ) Wangsa Maju branch after she asked a woman she believed was 'scantily dressed' to wear a sarong before entering the premises.

– 25 June 2015

A female RELA volunteer tasked as a security guard at the RTD branch in Wangsa Maju had prevented a woman wearing a short skirt from entering the building premises unless she used a *sarong* to cover up her exposed legs. For this, the RELA Director-General gave her a letter of appreciation, also to 'boost her morale' — the incident had drawn public ire — adding that she was 'only doing her job'.

This was the first of three such incidents in a short span of time, where security personnel at public facilities (including hospitals) had refused women they felt were indecently dressed, entry into the buildings they were posted at unless these women covered up. It reflects the state of dress policing in the country, in particular, in public spaces where there are formal and informal codes governing what people wear. The notion of 'decency' is problematic as what constitutes decent dressing is extremely arbitrary, and very often, it is women who are the targets. Public funds are better spent elsewhere than regulating dressing.

4. The Pahang Islamic Religious Department (JAIP) issued a warning that women dressed inappropriately at Ramadan bazaars would be penalised.

- 24 June 2015

JAIP issued a statement saying that Muslim women who did not dress "decently" during Ramadan could be jailed up to one year and/or fined RM2,000. Mohd Anis Azmi, JAIP's head of investigation added that while it could not set a benchmark on what constitutes decent attire, the rule of thumb was to dress "decently".

The disproportionate emphasis on what women wear in public is strongly linked to the belief that women's attire can directly influence public morality, which in turn can lead to social chaos. Such statements provide justification to blame women for sexual crimes committed against them, for example sexual harassment, rather than hold actual perpetrators accountable for their actions.

CATEGORY : RIGHT ON TRACK

Nominee	Background and basis for nomination
1. Kuala Lumpur High Court rewards victim of domestic violence damages, to be paid by the ex-husband. – 28 August 2015	Kuala Lumpur High Court judge, Noraini Abdul Rahman made a landmark decision compelling an ex-husband to pay his former wife and teenage daughter compensation for domestic violence-related injuries. This was in addition to maintenance that he had to provide as well. <i>This was the first time that a Malaysian civil court had awarded financial compensation to victims of domestic violence. Previously, domestic violence had been treated solely as a criminal matter, where the penalty for convicted offenders was jail time and/or a fine. This unprecedented judgement by the judge reflects growing recognition of the severely harmful effects of domestic violence.</i>
2. Sessions court sentences three policemen to 12 years in jail and two strokes of the <i>rotan</i> for raping an Indonesian woman and forcing her to perform oral sex. – 13 May 2015	Sessions court judge Meor Sulaiman Ahmad Tarmizi sentenced three policemen under Section 376 and 377C of the Penal Code after the prosecution proved beyond reasonable doubt, that they had raped an Indonesian woman and forced her to perform oral sex. <i>Despite rape being a serious crime, rapists are often not charged, let alone convicted. Against this backdrop, the Sessions Court's decision is laudable as it effectively holds the perpetrators accountable; even when they were from the police force. Moreover, in a country where an immigrant's rights are usually seen as less significant than that of a citizen, by not dismissing the Indonesian woman's claims, the court can be said to have delivered justice in its truest sense.</i>

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3. “Kita akan cari mereka ini sampai dapat. Biasanya, setelah berjaya ditemui, mereka kena bayar nafkah dan kalau tak mampu, mereka akan dikenakan hukuman penjara selain kena jelaskan hutang (tunggakan nafkah).”
– 17 April 2015
- [Translated]
“We will search until we find them [ex-husbands]. Usually once we find them, these ex-husbands are required to pay maintenance, and if they are unable to, they will be imprisoned while they settle any delayed maintenance.”
4. “When MPs stop judging and blaming women for their attire, only then will women be taken seriously as innocent victims of immoral, indecent and obscene advances by people who look through judgmental, sexist lenses.”
- 17 November 2015
- Speaking to reporters after a forum on Syariah law literacy, Terengganu Chief Syariah judge Wan Mohd Zakri said that the Terengganu Syariah Judiciary Department (JKST) had identified 110 cases of fathers or ex-husbands who had failed to pay maintenance after divorce. He announced that because of this, the state would take action by ‘hunting down’ these men.
- After most divorce cases, ex-husbands refuse to pay maintenance to their ex-wife and children, despite the existence of a court order. Typically, the process of obtaining a court order for maintenance and then to claim delayed maintenance is long and cumbersome. Often Syariah courts too have not taken proactive measures to ensure that ex-husbands pay maintenance on time, thus leaving single mothers to shoulder the burden of raising their children alone. The assurance by Terengganu’s Chief Syariah judge is a step forward in defending the rights of single mothers, and reminding fathers of their responsibility to provide for their children even after a divorce.*
- This statement was made by Batu Kawan MP Kasthuri Patto in response to a ministerial reply session in Parliament, where some MPs had raised the issue of women athletes' attires being too sexy. The MPs were concerned that the supposedly sexy attire would result in close proximity and casual sex. They had also requested that Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaludin introduce more syariah-compliant attire for these athletes.
- The statement by Kashthuri Patto is a step forward in calling out sexism and misogyny in Malaysian parliamentary debates where women are often blamed for the nation's social ills. She rightfully points out that a woman's choice of clothing is not the cause of immorality. Through her intervention, we are reminded that elected representatives have a responsibility to ensure that women are not further stigmatised and blamed for indecency and/or sexual assault, but instead recognised as human beings with rights.*