

One up for women

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PETALING JAYA: Myra Eliza Mohd Danil was overjoyed when she learned that her daughter could now be officially recognised as a Malaysian.

For her, the victory is worth every minute of the anxiety she felt over the years fighting to get Malaysian citizenship for her little girl.

For Myra and other women who married non-Malaysians and gave birth abroad, winning the legal battle means more than just getting a MyKid or MyKad for their children.

According to the All Women's Action Society (Awam), it is also another step in the process of tearing down discrimination against women.

"The state's position has always been that the father plays a more significant role in the child's identity. This has perpetuated the notion that women are inferior to men," Awam told *theSun*.

"It is like discounting women's equal responsibility and role as a parent," the women's rights group added.

On Dec 22, the Court of Appeal denied the government's application to stay the execution of a High Court decision to grant citizenship to children born abroad to

► Court decision on citizenship for children seen as step in right direction

Malaysian mothers.

In its decision made in September, the High Court ruled that children born abroad to Malaysian mothers were equally entitled to citizenship.

Immediately after the Court of Appeal ruling was handed down, several parents took their children to the National Registration Department (NRD) to apply for a MyKid or MyKad.

The children are expected to get their documents three months from now.

For Myra, the breakthrough came as a surprise. She had been trying to get her daughter recognised as a Malaysian since the child was five months old.

The girl is now eight and is still regarded as a foreigner because her father is Zambian.

"I will be very happy once we have my daughter's identification card."

In lauding the court decision, Awam expressed hope that it would eventually lead to the abolition of citizenship laws that discriminate against women.

It said upholding a woman's right to

confer citizenship on her children dismantles regressive narratives, adding that it would be in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

"It would also enable women to fully exercise their fundamental rights, that have been negated by this inequality. Examples of those rights are access to family benefits, freedom of movement and to choose a residence, guardianship, freedom to decide who to marry and rights of their children to inherit family property," Awam added.

For Adlyn Adam Teoh, who had fought for a decade to get her son recognised as a Malaysian, justice has finally been done not just for women and children but for Malaysian families as well.

She now looks forward to seeing her son attend school and being proud to be Malaysian.



Speed up issuance of MyKid: Family Frontiers



Teoh (left), Myra (right) and another mother, Devi, at the National Registration Department to submit documents for the application of MyKad/MyKid for their children.

"A great burden will be lifted off my shoulders when my son finally gets his MyKid," she said, adding that her son was exhilarated about the prospect of finally being a Malaysian.

She said at the NRD office in Putrajaya, the officers were courteous, efficient and very helpful.

"I thank them for upholding and uplifting the spirit of Keluarga Malaysia."

Family unit advancement non-governmental organisation Family Frontiers lead coordinator Bina Ramanand said the step forward was long overdue.

"Women have suffered far too long. We urge the government to withdraw its appeal against the latest court decision. It will save taxpayers' money and keep the focus on implementing the High Court ruling," said Bina.

It is understood that the government is not expected to pursue the matter.

Bina urged the authorities to speed up the process of issuing the MyKid documents, given that the new school term commences just days from now.

She also appealed to the NRD to make the application process simpler, saying that there is less red tape when the father makes a similar application.

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