Fatimah: Include women on board of directors

Private companies should disclose annually the proportion of women on the board, women in senior executive positions and female employees in the whole organisation. They should establish a policy concerning boardroom diversity, including measurable objectives for implementing the policy.

Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, Minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development

KUCHING: Top leaders of the corporate sector have been called to include certain percentage of women on their board of directors.

This is in line with the government’s initiative that at least 30 per cent of decision-making posts in the private sector are to be held by women by 2016.

Minister of Welfare, Women and Family Development Datuk Fatimah Abdullah said all chief executives of private companies should also review the percentage of women they aim to have on their committees to help meet the government’s objective.

“Private companies should disclose annually the proportion of women on the board, women in senior executive positions and female employees in the whole organisation.

“They should establish a policy concerning boardroom diversity, including measurable objectives for implementing the policy,” she said when addressing the roadshow on women directors’ programme organised by NAm Institute for the Empowerment of Women at Riverside Majestic Hotel here yesterday.

Fatimah added that private companies should periodically advertise non-executive board positions to encourage greater diversity in applications.

“What keeps women away from positions of great monetary significance in their organisations? Why are there fewer women sitting in high-level decision making committees compared to men?”

She observed that women were less likely to be promoted on the side of operations and sales, positions that came with monetary authority and responsibility.

“There are always the traditional socio-cultural perceptions among our community that women should not be in a vertically higher social position than that of men.

“Gender-based stereotypes continue to play a part in decision-making and social values have it that men should always lead.”

Of utmost importance, she opined that men seemed to be more comfortable promoting themselves and therefore could have deprived some talented women of chances.

“That leaves women to figure out strategies to support and promote one another. Women are more prone to do a good job and wait to be recognised for it than to promote themselves.

“We donotblowourowntrumpets. That is not our culture.”

Fatimah pointed out the tendency had it that higher learning institutions in the state registered more female than male undergraduates.

At the Sarawak Campus of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), 3,964 or 61.93 per cent were female students while 2,449 male students for the enrolment year of 2012, she said.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS), during the year of 2011-2012 took in 6,500 female students, constituting 68 per cent of total enrolment, she added.

“This scenario is clear that female talent should be acknowledged, and it is important that we optimise our resources to see fair gender representation in society.”
EMPOWERING WOMEN: Fatimah (front right) and Rodziah Morshidi (left), permanent secretary of Ministry of Welfare, Women and Family Development, at the roadshow on women directors programme.