More women as decision makers in three years, projects Fatimah

KUCHING: Over the next three years, more women will have the opportunity to hold decision-making posts in the private sector.

According to Welfare, Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Fatimah Abdullah, more women nowadays have proven that they are as capable and on the same level as men in decision-making tasks.

"Therefore I think it is important for the Government to play a role in encouraging at least 30% of women participation in decision-making positions in the corporate sector by year 2016," she said during the opening ceremony of the "Women Directors Programme Roadshow" here yesterday.

Fatimah pointed out that chairmen of companies would have to set out the percentage of women on their boards from this year through to 2015.

She added that chief executives and board of directors should also review the percentage of women they aim to have in their executive committee throughout that period.

"Companies should disclose annually the proportion of women on the board, women in senior executive positions as well as female employees in the whole organisation.

"Companies should also establish a policy concerning boardroom diversity including measurable objectives for implementing any policy and periodically advertise non-executive board positions to encourage greater diversity in applications," the minister said.

Another point Fatimah highlighted was that there were more female students in higher learning institutions than their male counterparts. According to data from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM), this year the university has 3,984 female students or 61.93%, compared to 2,449 male students.

In Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), there are 6,500 or 68% female students for the 2011-2012 session.

Meanwhile, NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW) director Tan Sri Datuk Dr Rafiah Salim agreed with the minimum 30% participation of women in decision-making positions in the private sector.

Dr Rafiah said it would be a waste for the country to ignore these talented women.

"About 49.1% of the country’s population is women, many of whom are highly-educated. The country needs to harness all these available talents regardless of gender.

"The nation would not achieve its high-income status if the highly-educated and capable 50% of the population is underemployed. It makes business sense.

"The Government plays the role as a catalyst in this and should encourage the corporate and private sectors to look into this," she said.