

Monitoring Women's Questions for Oral Answer
Report on the First Seating, First Session of the 13th Malaysian Parliament

Women MPs (both newly elected and parliamentary veterans) actively participated in the 13th Malaysian Parliament's first seating. The women MPs [1] asked 124 questions; 14 of which concerned women's issues. The MPs mainly asked about women and work (4 questions) and violence against women (4 questions). Barisan National-affiliated MPs asked 3 of the 4 questions about women and work, and no questions about violence against women. The specific questions, [2] the minister addressed and the MP's political report are in Table 1. In a later report we will expand on this information, and discuss how women and women's issues are talked about in parliament.

Table 1

Women MPs' Questions about Women's Issues (26 June- 18 July)

Women and Political Participation

State ministry's action plan to ensure increase in number of women representatives in State Assembly and the House of Representatives. – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 27 June by PAS MP

Women & Welfare

State (a) the statistics of divorce by year (5 years: 2008-2013) for marriage lasting less than 3 years; and (b) what are the short-term and long-term plans to overcome the problem of divorce? – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 17 July by UMNO MP.

State (a) the agency that is responsible to register and manage records of single mothers in this country; and (b) the types of assistance provided and channeled to this group and the amount of it for the past two years. – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 11 July by UMNO MP

Women & Work

State substantive steps taken by the Government to ensure an increase of the female labour force within the country's labour market. - Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 18 July by PKR MP.

State (a) the statistics of setting up of kindergartens and nurseries in Government departments and agencies in the past two years and the number of civil servants' children that have registered with these childcare centres; and (b) the modules used in these kindergartens and nurseries. – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 17 July by UMNO MP

State how the Ministry monitors the effectiveness of the programme, Get Malaysian Business Online (GMBO), especially the women entrepreneurs in the programme; and also the statistics of the before-and-after effects for the women entrepreneurs who participated in the programme. – Asked of Minister of Communications and Multi-media asked on 15 July by UMNO MP

Show key factors for the success of 4,300 women entrepreneurs in achieving a monthly income of more than RM3,500 under the 1Azam Niaga programme, and clarify whether women entrepreneurs who failed under the programme could be given another chance as their failures might be due to a wrong choice of business. – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development asked on 1 July by UMNO MP

Violence Against Women

State government's guarantee on the safety of under-aged girls from statutory rape, that lighter sentences should not be granted again, as in the case of Noor Afizal Azizan. - Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development asked on 16 July by PKR MP

State whether Section 375 of the Penal Code will be amended so that the act of a husband having sex with his wife while the wife is not willing or by force, is not excluded from the definition of rape. – Asked of Prime Minister on 8 July by DAP MP

State the number of cases of domestic violence and child abuse that have occurred since 2008, and steps taken by the Government to address the problem. – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development asked on 27 June by DAP MP

State the follow-up on Penan Report done by the Penan Support Group (PSG) in 2010. - Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 18 July by PKR MP.

Women, Culture and Religion

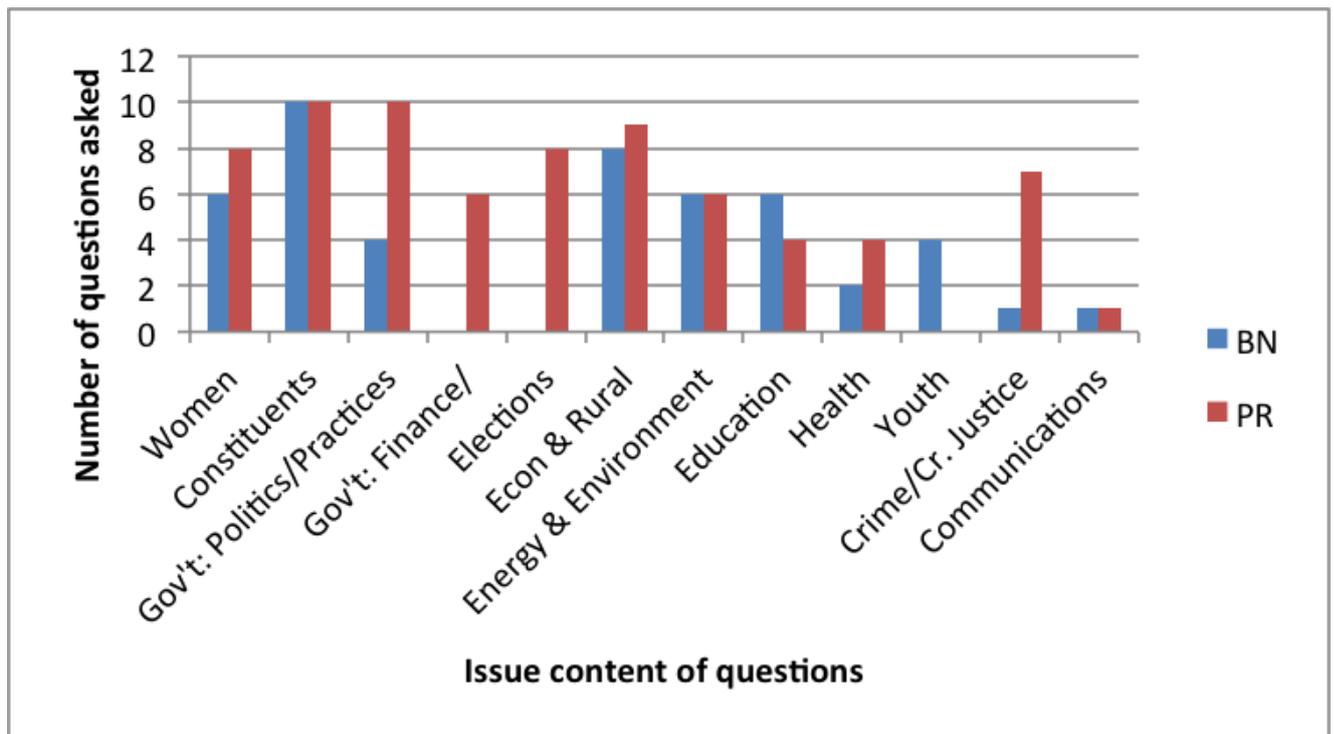
State the government’s policy on the marriage of a Muslim girl under the age of 13 who has attained discerning age (mumayiz). Is it not valid according to Islamic law, even if this problem is seen as an offence under Criminal Law of Malaysia? – Asked of Prime Minister on 16 July by UMNO MP

State whether the Government intends to review Syariah Court laws to tighten rules regarding underage marriage. – Asked of Prime Minister on 10 July by PKR MP

State (a) the statistics of divorce by year (5 years: 2008-2013) for marriage lasting less than 3 years; and (b) what are the short-term and long-term plans to overcome the problem of divorce? – Asked of Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development on 17 July by a UMNO

Women’s issues weren’t the only concern of women MPs. Women members of both Barisan National and Pakatan Rakyat defended and promoted projects in their constituencies. They asked about projects and policies that affect regional and national development, such as those related to housing, air transportation, and roads. PR women were far more likely to challenge how the government organizes its businesses, gets its funds, and spends its money. In general, BN women asked fewer questions.

All questions were put in relevant categories. In Figure 1 “women” includes all questions about women’s concerns. “Elections” includes questions about the Election Commission, the cost of GE13, and all other election-related issues. For information on the other categories see Annex 1.



Annex 1

Categories Used to Summarize Question Content

To identify the concerns that women MPs voice during the “questions for oral answers”, we categorized and tracked questions on the following issues:

Women: Questions that specifically mention women’s issues or rights

Constituents: Questions about specific hospitals, schools, roads and other local projects

Government Policies/Practices: Questions about the nature of the Federation, organization of ministries and national policies

Government Finance/Budgeting: Questions about finances (where the money comes from) and budgeting (how the money is spent)

Elections: Questions about the Election Commission or elections

Development: Economic & Rural: Questions about rural or economic development, such as physical infrastructure, creating and supporting businesses

Energy and environment: Questions about energy sources and availability, environmental impact and conditions

Education: Questions about education policies and school practices (does not include questions about specific schools; these are included under “constituents.”

Health: Questions about health policies and school practices (does not include questions about specific clinics or hospitals; these are included under “constituents

Youth: Questions that specifically mention services to youths, includes questions about sports and recreation

Crime/Criminal Justice: Questions about crime, incidence of crime, criminal charges, and treatment of detainees

Communications Questions about traditional media and electronic communications

[1]The 13th Parliament has 23 women Mps, Six are either ministers or deputy ministers; they do not normally ask questions (they answer them).

[2]English translation of “Questions for Oral Answers” posted at <http://www.parlimen.gov.my/index.php?&lang=bm>