Number of women on boards of PLCs, GLCs discouraging

SINTOK: The percentage of women appointed to high positions in the corporate and public sectors is discouraging, according to the NAM Institute for the Empowerment of Women (NIEW).

Its Director, Tan Sri Dr Rafiah Salim, said the percentage of women on the boards of public-listed companies was only seven per cent while those of government-linked companies stood at between 11 and 13 per cent.

“The situation is discouraging,” she said in her opening remarks at the national seminar on contemporary women issue, ‘Towards Establishment of Asean Women Institute’ at University Utara Malaysia (UUM) here yesterday.

She suggested that business schools in universities include an aspect of gender parity into their business management programmes to expose graduates to the importance of addressing gender issues in the corporate world.

Rafiah said the recent announcement by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Abdul Razak to have at least 30 per cent women in the decision-making levels of the corporate sector could be achieved in five years.

She said many women were not employed because of skewed perception about women’s ability to perform, adding that many organisations were not sufficiently flexible to cater to the needs of women when they bore children or had other family commitments.

“Nearly all organisations fight shy of having flexibility at work. In fact, the Malaysian Employers Federation is still resisting the policy of providing three months’ maternity leave.

“When we talk about equal rights for men and women, there are still instances of women being discriminated against, because of their gender,” noted Rafiah.

Bernama