

# 'Amendments will save lives'

## Ministry will push through adjustments to Domestic Violence Act

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**PUTRAJAYA:** The proposed Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2017 is set to be tabled for second and third readings when Parliament convenes on Monday.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim said the Bill was expected to be the first one to be tabled and debated on July 24.

"I am prepared for it but we need to play up interest on this issue so that victims know there are laws to protect them," Rohani said at a media briefing on the subject yesterday, and shared her ministry's commitment to see the amendments through.

When a Bill is tabled for second reading, MPs get to debate it at policy stage. Then it will be tabled for third reading where the Bill will again be debated, now at committee stage, where MPs will discuss its finer points. After the Bill is passed by the Dewan Rakyat, it goes to the Dewan Negara to be debated before it is passed and gazetted.

Amendments to the Bill include an emergency protection order (EPO) which allows social welfare officers to grant survivors immedi-



**Much-needed change:** Rohani wants the amendments to come into effect as soon as possible.

ate protection against abusers within 24 hours, without having to make a police report or go to court.

It also includes an expansion on the definition of domestic violence to include criminal intimidation and misappropriation of property. The 2017 amendments were tabled for first reading in April but the second reading was deferred.

Rohani said she hoped the amendments would be passed and come into effect as soon as possible.

"Police statistics show that

domestic violence is on the increase, with 15,617 reported cases between 2014 and 2016. These are real and serious cases, so we need to see this through," she said.

"Everyone in the ministry is involved in this including the Social Welfare Department, Department of Women's Development, National Population and Family Development Board, our counsellors, and even our national helpline Talian Kasih," said Rohani.

She added that the same briefing

will be given to MPs in the next few days.

Women's rights groups also welcomed the minister's commitment to see through the amendments, which they say could save the lives of thousands of domestic violence victims.

"We support the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Bill 2017. The amendments are positive and will improve protection for domestic violence survivors," said Women's Aid Organisation communications officer Tan Heang-Lee.

"If implemented effectively, this new Bill can transform and save many lives."

"The introduction of the EPO will go a long way in protecting victims of domestic abuse," said Melissa Mohd Akhir, senior advocacy officer of Penang's Women's Centre for Change.

The EPO lasts seven days, and is an addition to the existing interim protection and protection orders.

It also allows victims to get exclusive occupation of the whole shared residence, and not just a specified part.

However, just as important is the clause that makes sure the victims get updated on their cases by the police.