



FAMILY FRONTIERS

Persatuan Kebajikan Sokongan Keluarga Selangor & KL (PPM-011-10-24072020)

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Press Statement

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Malaysia's PR System Is Improving — But Are Malaysian Women with Non-Citizen Non-citizen Husbands Being Left Behind?

Family Frontiers refers to recent improvements to the [application processes to obtain permanent residence \(PR\), particularly for spouses of Malaysian citizens which will be implemented from 1 September 2025.](#)

We commend the government's efforts to streamline policies for PR applications, ensuring that non-citizen spouses are provided with crucial information and consistent timelines for their applications. However, the differences in policies between non-citizen husbands and wives, as mentioned by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs during his recent parliamentary response on 3 March, are concerning.

Gender-Based Pathways Unfairly Disadvantages Malaysian women when their Non-Citizen Husbands face stricter PR rules

While the updated PR criteria for non-citizen wives of Malaysian men bring welcome relief, requiring only three years of marriage and a minimum of one year on a Social Visit Pass before applying, non-citizen husbands face stricter conditions. They must be married for at least five years and undergo a point-based assessment system. While the intention to streamline processes is commendable, this gender-based discrepancy places an unfair burden on Malaysian women with non-citizen spouses, perpetuating gender discrimination and impacting family stability and wellbeing.

The inequality in PR policies places an undue financial and emotional burden on Malaysian women with non-citizen spouses. Many of these women are forced into the role of sole breadwinner, as their husbands—often qualified professionals—face obstacles in securing employment until they obtain PR which in recent years is almost unattainable. Non-citizen spouses holding Long-Term Social Visit Passes (LTSVP) struggle to find work due to the employment prohibition statement in their visas. While the Immigration Department allows endorsements for work, employers are often reluctant to navigate the complex process. Moreover, non-citizen spouses remain barred from certain professions, including medicine, pharmacy, finance, law, and other licensed fields, unless they obtain PR. This situation places immense strain on binational families, disproportionately affecting Malaysian wives who have the burden of single handedly supporting their families.

Although the Home Minister has announced a new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to provide clearer guidelines, it is essential that these rules are publicly accessible. Furthermore, certain criteria within the point-based system seem to disproportionately disadvantage lower-income families. Factors like education level, income, and employment

status—while relevant to national interests—may unfairly penalise families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, particularly those in the B40 income group.

What about existing PR applications?

Based on the parliamentary response by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs, there are 17,411 unprocessed PR applications from 2014 to 2023. The remaining applications from the end of 2024 are 14,472, while there are 11,723 applications from before February 2025. Since the aforementioned policy updates will only apply prospectively to applications after 1 September 2025, the deputy minister has committed to process all these applications by June 2025. We appreciate this commitment by the government to ensure that existing applicants are not left hanging and have opportunities to reapply if needed.

To ensure that this new PR framework truly supports binational families, Family Frontiers urges the government to:

1. **Make PR policies for non-citizen husbands the same as the new policies for non-citizen wives** to eliminate gender-based discrepancies and ensure a fair application process.
2. **Introduce an appeals process for PR rejections**, provide clear reasons for rejections, so that applicants receive clear explanations and opportunities for reconsideration, rather than being left in indefinite uncertainty.
3. **Provide alternative PR pathways for widowed, divorced, and abused non-citizen spouses** to prevent their forced separation from their Malaysian children and ensure they can remain in the country with dignity.
4. **Implement Article 15(1) of the Federal Constitution**, which allows non-citizen wives of Malaysian men to apply for citizenship after two years of residence, removing PR as a prerequisite.

Family Frontiers is committed to collaborating with the government to develop a transparent, inclusive, and fair PR process that respects the rights and dignity of all binational families in Malaysia. As a country that is progressing, it is imperative that Malaysian women married to non-Malaysian men should not be sidelined due to their gender.

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