

## Experts eye to proposal for non-Muslim pre-marriage course

KUALA LUMPUR: Non-Muslim divorces in the country have risen by 30.4% in 2021 compared with 2020, according to the **Statistics Department's** latest figures.

Its spokesman told theSun 12,284 divorces were granted in 2021 compared with 9,419 in the preceding year.

The highest number of divorces involved men aged between 35 and 39 years and women in the 30-34 age group.

Meantime, the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry is looking into having pre-marriage courses for non-Muslims. Its deputy minister Aiman Athirah Sabu said the ministry is drafting a paper to establish a committee to study the feasibility of having such a course.

Experts theSun spoke to agreed that the spike in divorce rate is a matter of concern.

Marriage counsellor Lim Jin Huan, 30, said the proposed pre-marriage course will give couples an insight into what married life would be like before they take the plunge.

"A couple might decide to marry to build a family and gain a sense of belonging and fulfilment. However, in the process, sacrifices have to be made and efforts put in to make the marriage work," she said.

Divorce lawyer Veeran Muthu Kumar said mandating a pre-marriage course for non-Muslims will help a lot in ensuring couples know what they are getting into when they tie the knot.

"From my experience, a large number of those seeking divorces didn't realise what marriage meant in the first place. The couples failed to understand that in a marriage, one cannot come and go as he or she pleases.

"Marriage is a serious commitment which involves honesty and even financial stability. You need this to buy a home, raise a family, pay for a certain lifestyle and more," he said.

Matthew Chong Cheong Fook, who chairs the Archdiocese Catholic Marriage Preparation Course (CMPC) with Serena Wong Lai Kuen, said depending on the church, six to seven weeks of programmes are held for couples prior to tying the knot.

"We run a course of two to three hours each week. It covers topics such as communication in a relationship, God and marriage, the importance of intimacy between married couples, the sacrament of matrimony and many more topics so couples understand what marriage life consists of.

"We follow up on some couples that we've guided, and from the testimonies we've received, CMPC has guided them through a lot of conflicts," Chong said.

Rachel Woon, the administrator of an Anglican church, Holy Trinity Bukit Bintang, said the pre-marriage course that is run in her church is not only for Christians who plan to marry but for all non-Muslims regardless of their race or relationship status.

“We also encourage couples in the initial stage of a relationship to attend a pre-marriage course as it will help them build a strong foundation for their future.”

Conflicts among married couples, Woon said, are the most common issue. “Hence they are guided on how to resolve issues and not hold grudges because the first to apologise is the bravest,” she told theSun.

Hindu Sangam women, family and welfare bureau chief Dr Kalaivani Shanmugam said the NGO holds pre-marriage workshops with the support of the National Population and Family Development Board (LPPKN).

“Last year, we held several pre-marriage workshops with funds from LPPKN, but the attendance was poor.”

She said if the government’s proposal to mandate the pre-marriage course is confirmed, the Hindu Sangam will conduct it for couples planning to get married.

“To ensure their attendance, we will issue a certificate, which will be made a condition for the registration of marriages,” she said.

<https://www.thesundaily.my/local/experts-aye-to-proposal-for-non-muslim-pre-marriage-course-CJ10809830>