

## **No judges, so 500 Perlis syariah court cases postponed**

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KANGAR: Some 500 cases at the Perlis syariah courts have been postponed due to the unavailability of judges. Of the total, 300 have been pending since Aug 1 following the transfer of two Syariah High Court judges.

The rest of the cases are from the lower syariah court, where proceedings have been postponed since Thursday due to the judge being on sick leave.

The syariah courts are being handled by two judges: the state's chief syarie judge and the lower syariah court judge.

Previously, there were two other Syariah High Court judges, who have both been transferred out of the state.

Syariah High Court judge Mohd Hafiz Abdul Hamid was transferred to Negri Sembilan in 2005, while Mohd Zulkhairi Aziz was transferred to Pe-nang at the end of July.

State Chief Syarie judge Datuk Othman Ismail is presiding over cases in both Syariah High Courts.

A source said requests for replacement judges had been made to the State Secretary's Office, which handles the appointment of syariah judges and officers.

"Many people are wondering when the replacements for judges would arrive.

"Nobody can give the answer to that question," said the source.

In the meantime, the syariah court is clearing the backlog by recalling Mohd Zul-khairi to settle his outstanding

cases.

"Certain cases have been running for two years. So it was more practical for the former judge to follow through rather than have his replacement take over a case midway."

Meanwhile, state religious executive councillor Datuk Abu Bakar Ismail said three former kadi may be roped in to temporarily fill the vacant posts.

"We are aware of the backlog of cases. The state Religious Council will meet this week to discuss about seeking temporary officers to handle the two vacant courts."

When the New Straits Times surveyed the syariah court here yesterday, notices were displayed outside the courtrooms informing people about the unavailability of judges.

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