

# 'Tougher action on child abuse'

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## Repeat offenders should be charged

THE Government needs to take stricter action against irresponsible parties who exploit children under 16 years as their source of income.

First time offenders should be issued warnings while repeat offenders should be charged, MP for Petaling Jaya Utara Chew Mei Fun suggested when debating the Child Bill 2000.

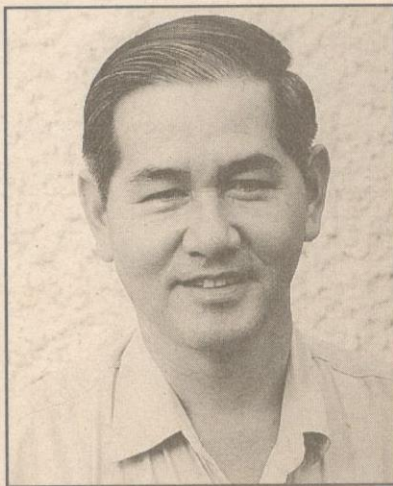
The Barisan Nasional MP also suggested that guidance classes and financial aid be given to children who were "forced to sell their talents by singing and dancing to help their poor families".

Chew also chided those who used teenage girls for stage shows, to sing and dance while dressed in sexy attire to look like adults.

Chang See Ten (BN-Gelang Patah) said children should be encouraged by their parents and teachers to take up hobbies like reading, painting and sports.

He said parents should not blame the video arcade operators or the authorities if their children spent most of their time and money playing video games.

"Parents should ask themselves what are their efforts to guide and educate their children to fill their free time with beneficial activities.



**CHANG ... take up hobbies**

"Parents should ask if they have ever explained to their children the negative effects of turning video games into a hobby."

Teresa Kok (DAP-Seputeh) said the definition of a child had to be clarified as the Bill simply states that a child is anyone under 18 years old.

"However, the Penal Code under rape defines the child as that of under 16 years. So if a 17-year-old is

raped, she will not be protected under the Penal Code and the offence will not be considered statutory rape.

"The Government has to rectify this contradiction as it will cause legal confusion," Kok said.

Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail (Keadilan-Permatang Pauh) said victims of abuse should be given better protection and placed in shelter homes to ensure their safety.

"The Child Bill does not stress on education for children under 16 years ...these are children that require a good basic foundation," she said.

Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar (BN-Batang Lupar) said parents should set a good example to be followed by their children in their everyday life.

"For example, some parents ask their children to buy cigarettes for them. This is surely something bad and will have a negative impact on the child."

Wan Junaidi also called on welfare officers, police, lawyers and judges dealing with children's cases to explain the offences the children committed and the consequences, before sentencing them.