

# 'More needs to be done to curb violence'

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KUALA LUMPUR: More support groups are needed to help tackle the growing number of incidence of violence, including abuse and rape among women and children, said National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

She said the existing social service networks were insufficient to resolve the problem.

"We need to build stronger networks with non-governmental organisations to help provide social services for our target groups, particularly victims of violence," she told reporters after opening the

first Women Peace Convention organised by Soka Gakkai Malaysia Association yesterday.

"I believe many cases of rape and abuse have gone unreported. We need more volunteers to reach out to our target groups and provide them with some form of protection."

According to police statistics, there were 1,457 reported rape cases, out of which 233 were incest cases, last year.

The police also received 3,195 cases of domestic violence.

Siti Zaharah also said the ministry planned to build more community service cen-

tres to provide counselling services. Currently, there are 122 such centres nationwide.

She said the Government encouraged NGOs to carry out social work by providing incentives to those which had shown great initiatives in dealing with complex social problems, besides the annual grants.

"Therefore, the community should not place low priority in helping the Government in efforts to eliminate social ills.

Siti Zaharah said the Government was currently outsourcing qualified staff to provide psychological services to mentally unstable individuals in order to prevent

incidence of violence.

Earlier, in her speech, Siti Zaharah said women should play a role in promoting peace within the family and society.

Commending Soka Gakkai's women division for organising the convention, she said other women-related groups should hold dialogues and share ideas on the culture of peace within the community.

She said such dialogues could help raise awareness about each individual's responsibilities.

"More women should join forces to contribute towards nurturing the culture of peace through educational and cultural activities," she added.



Siti Zaharah ... 'more community service centres planned to provide counselling services'