

Girls the main target for sexual abuse

NST 16/4/09 ms 4

GIRLS are more than 10 times likely to be sexually abused compared to boys.

Statistics showed that for this year till July, there were only 21 sexually-abused boys aged below 18 — while there were 335 girls. For the whole of last year, 35 boys were reported to have been abused sexually as compared to 698 girls.

University Malaya Medical Centre senior lecturer and consultant psychiatrist Dr Subash Kumar told *Malay Mail* it is more common for girls to be abused, especially sexually.

"Some cases are committed by serial killers or psychopaths. Unfortunately, such abuse is committed by someone the child knows and often takes place in their own homes. It could be their father, mother, religious teacher, uncle or even grandfather."

Boys are commonly victims of physical or emotional abuse. This, Dr Subash said, is when a child is subjected to an unsuitable environment such as a home where parents are drunkards.

Other situations could occur if the mother or father had been married multiple times.

"Where there is no love, the child suffers. For example, if the parents are just too busy and leave the children to be completely raised by maids, where a child is often yelled at, not provided adequate food and shelter or even left to be raised in a welfare home as the parents cannot take care of them."

Dr Subash — who specialises in cases dealing with children, adolescent and adults — said child abuse is a big problem in the country.

Social Welfare Department children's division director Nor Amni Yusof said the department has noted a number of reasons why girls seem to be the more common abuse target.

"Firstly, young girls are usually weaker and more afraid of things and people. This is what the abuser exploits. Also, girls are seen as being more cute and cuddly, therefore are an 'encouragement' to people with paedophilic tendencies," she said.

Nor Amni said there are those who themselves were abused in childhood and so they too abuse their child the same way, or worse.

"We have also seen mothers or stepmothers who are abusive due to jealousy of their husbands being close with their daughters," she added