

SOCIAL REALITY

SEX EDUCATION IS A MUST

Greater awareness, stronger laws and enhanced moral-based teachings are needed to tackle child sex abuse and dumping of newborns

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TUCKED in a police file somewhere is a statement recorded from a well-educated young woman who thought that a kiss could make her pregnant.

What she didn't know, as she claimed after being caught abandoning a new-born baby, was that she could get pregnant by having sexual intercourse.

Federal police Sexual, Women and Child Investigation Division assistant principal director Assistant Commissioner Ong Chin Lan said it might sound silly but that was the social reality in Malaysia.

Child sexual offence cases remained high in the country, where last year, there was an average of about five cases per day although not too long ago, in 2012, the average was eight cases per day.

Ong believed greater awareness of sex crimes was needed to increase vigilance against sexual predators, along with stronger laws as a deterrent for others, such as the newly passed Sexual Offences Against Children Bill 2017.

She also believed moral-based teachings needed to be enhanced along with the present academic-based curriculum, and that there was a need to take another look at the approach to sex education in schools.

The cases of young women dumping newborn babies also highlighted the crucial need for a more comprehensive syllabus on

“ Sex education is crucial and parents must communicate, and be sensitive and observant towards their children. It should not be a taboo to discuss sex with them.

ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER ONG CHIN LAN

Federal police Sexual, Women and Child Investigation Division assistant principal director



sex education.

In the last two weeks, two cases were recorded.

One was in Kuching, Sarawak, yesterday, where a newborn was found at an apartment garbage collection area, while the other was on March 30 in Bukit Kayu Hitam, Kedah, where a college student and her boyfriend are now facing murder charges.

The Women, Family and Community Development Ministry recently revealed that 104 newborn babies were dumped last year, of whom 61 were found dead.

Ong said the case of the girl believing that a kiss could get her pregnant might not be the first or the last, and pinned it on the lack of early sex education by parents.

“The girl believed her mother that she could get pregnant if she was kissed by a man.

“Sex education is crucial and parents must communicate, and be sensitive and observant towards their children. It should not be a taboo to discuss sex with them,” Ong added.

There were also cases where mothers turned a deaf ear or even “closed an eye”

to their children who are sexually abused for fear of losing their breadwinner and lover.

“I have come across such terrible cases, too,” she said of such betrayal by parents.

“They need to listen and trust their children apart from being open about the subject.”

Ong revealed there were very few child rape cases where the victims did not know their assailants.

“Most of the time, they know who raped them but are caught in a situation where it's hard for them to speak up.”

SEX EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

As an alternative to sex education, the Education Ministry introduced the Reproductive and Social Health Education (PEERS) in secondary schools in 1989 and extended it to primary schools in 1994.

Sabah Education director Datuk Mafmunah Suhaibul said the term “sex education” was not used because it was deemed a taboo to society and that the subjects were only taught verbally.

“The content of the curriculum is more to teaching the science of male and female reproductive systems, fertility and childbirth, and identifying and handling unwanted sexual attention,” she said.

Last year, Education director-general Tan Sri Dr Khair Mohamad Yusof said the PEERS content would be upgraded.

He said the upgrade would include equipping students with the knowledge to prevent them from falling victim to sexual harassment and abuse.

SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST CHILDREN BILL 2017

The act applies to children under the age of 18

- Extraterritorial application: Any Malaysian who commits these offences outside the country will face prosecution
- Child grooming: Sexually communicating with a child with the intention to either develop a relationship or for child pornography
- Penalising those who abuse their positions of trust — parent, guardian, teacher, warden, coach and any person in healthcare services — with a maximum 5 years' imprisonment and 2 strokes of the cane
- Male offenders above 50 may still be punished with caning
- Child pornography: Any person who makes, possesses and distributes any material with sexually explicit conducts will be liable to a maximum 10 years' imprisonment and 6 strokes of the cane
- Physical and non-physical assault, which includes sexual harassment
- Child testimonies will be prioritised
- Failure to give information will be liable to a fine not exceeding RM5,000
- One cannot defend himself in court by giving the excuse that he was not aware that the child was under 18.