

# 'Rise in LGBT due to internet, boarding schools'

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GEORGE TOWN — Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim) social and community director Mohd Izwan Md Yusof has blamed the internet and boarding schools as part of the reason for the rise in the number of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT).

He said there was a rise in the LGBT community in recent years as the internet has become easily available.

"Youths now have easier access to the internet, social media and mobile apps on LGBT, they are watching videos they are not supposed to watch about LGBT," he said at a seminar on LGBT awareness at the Caring Society Complex here.

Mohd Izwan said parents should be more

vigilant and monitor their children's online activities especially when they are in their rooms.

"Parents should be more aware of their children's activities because gay tendencies can be developed at a young age due to LGBT influences," he said.

Mohd Izwan also blamed boarding schools as potential places for students to develop homosexual tendencies.

"These same-sex boarding schools mean the students spend a lot of time with the same sex and they might be unaware of the inappropriate influences they are exposed to especially at a young age," he said.

He suggested that boarding schools be open only for students aged above 16 as at that age, they can differentiate between bad and good.

Mohd Izwan warned society against using derogatory terms against LGBT groups such as *sotong* (cuttlefish).

"We should stop calling them *sotong*, instead, we should take them in, talk to them and pray for them," he said.

He said the use of such derogatory terms against the LGBT community might backfire and cause them to be more daring in promoting their lifestyle.

He said homosexuality is a sin according to Islam but Muslims must not hate the LGBT community.

"In Islam, we don't support the LGBT lifestyle but we have to take a different approach to counsel them instead of hating them," he said.

He said the LGBT community should be counselled so that they can "go back to the right path".

He said Jakim has the "Mukharyyam" programme to rehabilitate those in the LGBT community.

"We have helped 1,450 people under the

programme where some have went on to get married, some have changed their dressing and some are practising control from going back to that lifestyle," he said.

Mohd Izwan had earlier revealed that there were 173,000 homosexuals in Malaysia in 2013 but the number has almost doubled to 310,000 this year.

"Studies have shown that the transgender population, consisting mostly of sex workers, is at about 30,000 this year compared to 10,000 in 1988," he said.

Another speaker at the seminar, Dr Janizah Abdul Ghani, claimed homosexuality has caused a spike in sexually transmitted diseases (STD) in the country.

The doctor, from the Penang Health Department, said this included HIV cases.

She claimed that 80 per cent of homosexual patients who sought treatments for STD in hospitals used dating apps for homosexuals.