

Protect our children

> NGOs want reproductive health curriculum for primary schools – approved in 2006 – to be implemented

BY CINDI LOO
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: Two child health organisations have called on the government to revisit the reproductive health curriculum for primary schools following the recent court rulings on statutory rape cases.

In a joint statement, the Malaysian Paediatric Association and Malaysian Medicine Academy College of Paediatrics said the curriculum had been approved way back in 2006 but is yet to take effect.

“The curriculum for primary schools was approved with an allocation of more than RM30 million in 2006. Unfortunately, the implementation of the subject has yet to take place,” they said.

The statement was issued by association president Dr Noor Khatijah Nurani and college president, Prof Dr Thong Meow Keong, on Friday.

They have also called on teachers, educators and parents to play a role in providing sex education for children and teenagers.

“The physical and mental health of children and teenagers are important not to be left to untrained persons in child and adolescent health.

“They must be made aware of the importance of abstinence, the health risks of unplanned pregnancy and the consequences of having unprotected sex and sex at an early age,” they said.

They were responding to recent court

rulings of statutory rape cases, where national bowler Noor Afizal Azizan and electrician Chuah Guan Jiu were let off with a light sentence after they pleaded guilty to committing rape.

Noor Afizal and Chuah were caught when they were 19 and 21 respectively after having sex with girls aged 12 and 13 years old respectively.

The judges let them off on good behaviour bonds, considering their future and the cooperation given to the police.

Noor Khatijah and Thong added the government can also play a role by recognising that a child is not only a crucial component of a society but also the key to its survival, development and prosperity.

“The government must acknowledge that a child is in need of special safeguards, care and assistance, to enable them to contribute positively towards the society in future,” they said.



PATRIOTIC SPIRIT ... A group of children from Simunjan town in Sarawak displaying their patriotic spirit by singing the Jalur Gemilang song and waving the flag when welcoming the Kembara Merdeka Jalur Gemilang Aidilfitri convoy to Simunjan yesterday. The convoy, organised by Samarahan, Serian and Simunjan districts Information Department, comprised 30 4WDs, 25 high powered motorbikes and private vehicles.

Cops under fire for handcuffing girl

BY MUMTAZ BAHIR
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: The authorities have been criticised for their heavy-handed manner of detaining a 19-year-old girl who turned herself in after she was accused of stepping on a photograph of the prime minister on Merdeka eve.

Dr Cheah Soon Hai, head of Gerakan's central bureau on environment, safety and quality of life, said it was unnecessary for the police to use handcuffs after the girl voluntarily turned up and did not show any resistance to the police.

“It was an unnecessary show of force by the police to handcuff the teenaged girl who voluntarily turned herself in.

“My concern is that the intimidation and humiliation from the action will probably have a negative psychological impact on the teenager,” he said in a statement yesterday.

Although the action may have been in accordance with the law and procedure,

Cheah felt the excessive demonstration of power in this case undermined the police's previous efforts to get closer to the people and be approachable.

It would also discourage future suspects from surrendering themselves to the police, he added.

Another 19-year-old youth who had “mooned” over the photos of the prime minister and his wife that night also turned himself in to the police last week.

DAP chairman Karpal Singh, meanwhile, said although the youths' behaviour was rude and uncouth, it did not amount to a crime under Malaysian law.

“It is not a criminal offence. You cannot be handcuffed (for such behaviour),” he told reporters in Penang on Saturday.

He stressed that unlike Thailand which has an explicit lèse-majesté law making insulting the royalty a crime, Malaysia did not have any such law that makes the actions of the youths a crime.

“It is not an arrestable offence,” the

Bukit Gelugor MP said. “But it was rude behaviour, and it should not be done. There are other ways of criticising a leader.”

Meanwhile, Youth and Students Democratic Movement (Dema) urged Cybernatics International College of Technology to withdraw its decision to expel its student who had “mooned” on Najib's photograph.

Dema said the student's behaviour was an individual action to express his dissatisfaction. The behaviour was not a crime or academic offence.

“Although the behaviour was rude, it only involved discipline, it was not that serious to the extent that he has to be expelled.

“The college can disagree with his behaviour but they should not stop him from continuing his studies,” it said.

Dema also expressed disappointment that Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin has defended the college's decision to expel the student.

No 'bots' in Merdeka tweets

BY MICHELLE CHUN
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

KUALA LUMPUR: The government yesterday rubbished claims that ‘clones’ had been used to bloat the number of National Day-themed tweets sent on Merdeka. Insisting that the figure is accurate, Deputy Information, Communications and Culture Minister Datuk Maglin Dennis D'Cruz said there had been no tampering to reach the 3.6 million tweet mark.

“Many people actually wanted to support Merdeka and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak,” he told reporters after launching the ‘Kembara Merdeka’ book here yesterday.

Social media research house Politweet.org had reportedly said the ministry's claim that #Merdeka55 had been tweeted 3.6 million times between 8.15pm and 9.15pm on Aug 31 was doubtful as there was no third party verification.

According to Politweet, there was an ‘odd pattern’ during the hour, in which blocks of identical tweets were sent at the same time.

“Investigations revealed that a small group of users were responsible for a large volume of tweets. They had similar characteristics, such as account creation date, profile photos, location and follower/following relationships,” it said.

D'Cruz said the ministry's target had been to reach one million tweets, adding there was no reason to bloat the actual figure.

“People can say anything, but we did everything properly. All of us involved in the attempt asked our friends, family and members of the public to take part,” he said.

On Merdeka eve incidents which included a man mooning at Najib's photograph, D'Cruz said parents are responsible for bringing their children up properly.

“Don't let politics enter the home, otherwise children's minds will be polluted and they'll come out and start disrespecting the flag and the prime minister,” he said.

The Tamil-language Kembara Merdeka book, written by Minnal FM deejay Johnson Sinappan, chronicles his experiences during a month-long journey through Peninsular Malaysia with only RM10 in his pocket.

Meanwhile, Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng who is also DAP secretary-general, questioned why Twitter has made no mention of the record as claimed by the ministry.

Pointing out that there were only five tweets from overseas according to newsreports, Lim asked minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim to prove that the figure is authentic and the tweets sent were not automated.

“Can we have an inquiry on this matter?” he added.

BRIEFS

HEALTH PROGRAMME DRAWS 140,000 PARTICIPANTS

PUTRAJAYA: Some 140,000 people participated in the Health Ministry's ‘Berjalan 10,000 Langkah Merdeka’ programme held simultaneously at 75 locations nationwide yesterday. The programme involved participants walking 10,000 steps along a 6.5km route while flying the Jalur Gemilang and distributing messages on healthy living. The event is also expected to be entered into the Malaysia Book of Records. – Bernama

'WANG IHSAN' PAYOUT DELAYED

BACHOK: The disbursement of ‘wang ihsan’ (compassionate money) for Kelantan students accepted into public institutions of higher learning for the 2012/2013 academic session is delayed due to technical problems. Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin said the payment would be made soon and advised the students to submit their application now. – Bernama

MISSION SETS SAIL TO MYANMAR

BUTTERWORTH: Putra Malaysia Club's humanitarian aid mission will set off for Myanmar on Royal Malaysian Navy ship KD Sri Indera Sakti next week, bringing along 480 tonnes of essential items and logistics support. Its president Datuk Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim said they were scheduled to depart on Sept 1 but the journey was held up pending clearance from Myanmar. – Bernama

BUDGET 2013 WILL PUT FOCUS ON SPORTS TOO

PADANG BESAR: Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek says Budget 2013 will empower youths and sports. “The government has never dismissed the importance of this area and they will be addressed by the budget,” he said. Budget 2013 is also expected to focus on the “Road to Rio 2016” programme. – Bernama