

Call for special law to curb bullying

KUALA LUMPUR: Bullying has become an increasingly serious issue, with a significant rise in reported cases. But is legislation the solution?

The problem has raised concern in society, with 4,994 cases reported since October 2023, a significant increase compared with 3,887 in 2022 and 326 in 2021, as revealed by the Education Ministry.

Despite various efforts taken by the ministry, including launching the "Guidelines for the Management of Bullying and Sexual Harassment", the problem persists.

A recent case involved a male student repeatedly hitting his friend's face with a helmet in Segambut Dalam, as shown in a video uploaded on social media.

Based on the increasingly alarming situation, experts believe it is time for a specific law to be introduced to address the problem.

This is considering the guidelines do not provide punishment to curb bullying and thus do not create fear among perpetrators, said Universiti Teknologi Mara Faculty of Law senior lecturer Mimi Sintia Mohd Bajury.

"In Malaysia, there is no specific law dealing with bullying cases. The existing law is only a 'piecemeal', a bit of here and there under the Minor Offences Act. It is time we have a special Act to deal with bullying," she said on a Bernama TV programme.

Mimi said there are various reasons people bully, including previously having been a bullying victim and thus do not regard the act as an offence.

"They think it is a small matter because they have been bullied before and do it to others because they want to feel superior."

She said bullying normally happens at a young age because at that age, a person is easily influenced by peers, especially when in a group that also includes bullies.

Universiti Putra Malaysia Institute of Social Science Studies associate researcher Dr Mohamad Naquiuddin Dahamat Azam there is a need for a special law on bullying to be formulated so that appropriate punishment can be imposed on the perpetrator, whether the offence is physical or verbal.

He said a fine of not more than RM100 for those convicted of verbal bullying provided under the Minor Offences Act 1955 is not commensurate with the sufferings of the victims. – Bernama