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Zaleha-Integrity

SOME 500,000 WOMEN DIE EACH YEAR DUE TO PREGNANCY-RELATED CASES

KUALA LUMPUR, July 25 (Bernama) -- The non-recognition by men of women's rights pertaining to the "integrity of their body and their sexual autonomy" has resulted in some 500,000 women dying all over the world each year due to unavoidable pregnancy-related cases.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datin Paduka Hajjah Zaleha Ismail, quoting World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, said today 90 per cent of the deaths occurred in developing countries and about 200,000 deaths were due to unsafe abortions.

Frequent pregnancies also led to various forms of morbidity and was a major cause of anaemia and ill health in women, she said.

Therefore, the denial of women's rights pertaining to reproduction and sex had resulted in a denial of human rights which were guaranteed in many international human rights laws, she said.

Zaleha was opening the "Panel Discussions On International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Charter On" Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Setting The Agenda" here.

Zaleha said frequent pregnancies also prohibited the development of women, denied her an identity and contributed to the ideology of seeing women only through her relationship as wife and mother.

The lack of sexual autonomy also led to various forms of sexual abuse and cruelty to women which finally destroyed the women's self esteem and denied her the dignity of being human, she said.

Zaleha said Malaysia as a leader in the developing world had a role in the promotion and protection of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

She hoped the one-day discussion would be successful in determining practical ways in addressing these issues for the betterment of not only women but also men and children.

Among the prominent speakers at the panel discussion was Malaysian AIDS Council President Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir. -- BERNAMA

RHM AAM