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Violence against women 'on the rise'

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Women continue to become victims of violence with statistics of them being raped and murdered increasing by the year.

Women and Family Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said until March alone, about 400 women were raped while 105 were murdered.

Last year, 1,500 women were raped compared to 1,200 cases in 2001.

She said in the wake of the worrying trend, the ministry was planning to launch the second phase of its "Women Against Violence" campaign, which was first launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 23, 2001.

Shahrizat, in her speech read by her political secretary Rizal Merican at the launch of a seminar and workshop on Self-Defence for Ladies here, said women had to be on their toes to protect themselves against heinous crimes.

The event was organised by the Malaysian Aikido Association YZ Alliance Group Sdn Bhd and attended by 200 people.

Present to enlighten the public and association members on existing laws pertaining to the issue and the definitions of sexual harassment and rape was Bukit Aman Crime Investigations Department's Chief Inspector Nor Riza Maishah.

Nor Riza said while there had been an escalation in rape cases, the inclination to commit the crime at home was most rampant.

She said reports showed statutory rape made up the largest number of such cases while fathers were the main perpetrators in incest cases.

She said studies also revealed pornographic materials did not increase the propensity to rape as only one case in Kelantan of such a nature was recorded.

YZ Alliance chief executive officer Raja Royani Rafe'ah Raja Ahmed Siffudin said women should not only take the "prevention is better than cure" approach and equip themselves with self-defence skills, but also have mental toughness.

Aikido was one form of self-defence which women could learn to protect themselves, said Raja Royani, who is a member of the Malaysian Aikido Association.

Present was the Raja Puan Muda of Perlis, Tuanku Lailatul Shahreen Akashah, who tried her hand at aikido by flooring an "attacker". English Channel swimmer Datuk Abdul Malik Mydin was also present.