

Zahid: Careful checks on student visas to curb 'love scams'
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PARLIAMENT Visa approvals for foreign students furthering their studies in this country have been made fastidiously to prevent them from being involved in unhealthy or criminal activities such as love scams.

Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said this was being done with monitoring of the foreign students' activities through the Education Malaysia Global Services (EMGS) and the Higher Education Ministry.

"We thought that the best way was to ensure that they were genuine students and not would-be love scam culprits.

"In this matter, it is however unfair to accuse all African countries of lending support to their students and citizens in love scams, 'tetapi sebab nila setitik, rosak susu sebelanga' (but because of a drop of indigo dye, a whole pot of milk is spoilt)."

Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, was replying to a question from Ikmal Hisham Abdul Aziz (BN-Tanah Merah) in the Dewan Rakyat today, on measures taken by the government, particularly the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM), to curb love scams in which thousands of women in this country had lost huge amounts of money.

Ahmad Zahid said according to PDRM records, there were 4,673 love scam cases reported between 2013 and May 2016, involving losses amounting to RM182.3 million and the arrest of 1,773 people.

"PDRM has taken some proactive measures in combating this crime which occurs widely through the social media, and it does not happen only in this country but in other countries as well."

He said in fighting crime, PDRM which had its Special Tactical Intelligence Narcotics Group (STING) and Special Task Force for Anti-Vice, Gaming and Gangsterism (STAGG), had also set up the Special Task Force on Organised Crime (STAFOC), which also monitored and acted against offences under the Prevention of Crime Act (POCA).

Ahmad Zahid said efforts to detect and prosecute those involved in love scams were on-going, apart from monitoring those divulging bank account numbers to the scam syndicates.

“We also wish to warn and remind the public not to be mules even if they are promised lots of money by criminals. Action can be taken against them under the Anti-Money Laundering and Anti-Terrorism Financing Act 2001.

“Cooperation with Bank Negara Malaysia has also been established to watch out for suspicious bank accounts, besides carrying out awareness campaigns to prevent the public from being easily duped,” he added.

- *Bernama*

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