

Terengganu proposes rehab for transvestites
Malaysiakini.com
April 12, 2007

Terengganu may set up a rehabilitation programme for cross-dressers and transvestites amid worries that men are becoming "effeminate".

The chair of Terengganu's Islam Hadhari and Welfare Committee, which oversees the practice of Islam in the state, said a rehabilitation centre may be set up if numbers of transvestites and cross-dressers increased.

"Those involved would be given a court order... to attend rehabilitation programmes," Rosol Wahid was quoted as saying in the New Straits Times.

"Although the problem is not serious, we have to act before it gets out of control," he said.

Rosol said Terengganu was looking at ways to curb such conduct, with religious officials rounding up 12 transvestites and cross-dressers so far this year, including two sentenced to jail, according to reports.

Back to their old habit

"We found out that those sentenced to jail were back to their old habit when they were released. We are looking into counselling as a way to curb the problem," he said.

Rosol also said boys in the state were becoming more feminine by copying the mannerisms of popular ethnic Malay male celebrities considered effeminate, according to the state Bernama news agency.

"It seems to be a trend among the youngsters to become effeminate. We are worried that this phenomenon could become a major problem in society and become difficult to curtail," Rosol was quoted as saying.

"It is also blasphemous for men to become women," he said. "We have to educate them because their behaviour is not only harmful to society but we are also scared of the wrath of God."

Rosol courted controversy in February when he suggested recruiting volunteer spies to catch couples engaged in allegedly immoral activities such as kissing and sex before marriage.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi ruled out the move, saying it amounted to an invasion of privacy.

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