

PKR wants child adoption laws to be reviewed

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MP Sim Tze Tzin says Al Jazeera documentary exposing local baby-selling network late last year shows legal child adoption procedures take too long.

KUALA LUMPUR: PKR's Bayan Baru MP Sim Tze Tzin today expressed dismay that an illegal child adoption syndicate has been operating in Malaysia without any significant action from the authorities since 2012.

At a press conference in Parliament today, Sim referred to a written reply by Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi in the Dewan Rakyat, and said, "This is very worrying. Babies can be bought and sold. This is a very serious crime."

Sim had asked the home ministry about efforts undertaken to curb the menace following a documentary by international news channel Al Jazeera in November last year which exposed the baby-selling racket here.

The documentary revealed a network involving traffickers, doctors and government officials, all profiting from vulnerable pregnant women and children.

It discovered that babies were being traded like commodities with prices determined by their race, skin colour, gender and weight.

It also found that doctors and National Registration Department (JPN) officials were falsifying birth documents.

In a written reply to Sim, dated March 22, Zahid, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, said police had begun investigations into the matter.

He said police conducted raids together with the medical practice unit of the health ministry a week after the documentary had aired.

"Raids were conducted on two private clinics in Klang and Puchong, as well as on four houses in Seremban and around Selangor, with eight people arrested."

Investigations revealed that the illegal activity had been going on from 2012 until September 2016, with the price of babies ranging from RM3,500 to RM6,700 each.

Seven suspects have been released on police bail, and one suspect has been charged under section 15(1)(c) of the Immigration Act for overstaying in the country, Zahid said.

Sim said a United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (Unicef) report noted such syndicates took advantage of weak laws on child adoption and time-consuming procedures for genuine adoptions.

"I urge the government to review the laws on adoption, specifically the Registration of Adoption Act 1952 and the Adoption Act 1952," he said.

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