

Don't take prostitution issue lightly, IGP told

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PPBM's Syed Saddiq says he worries over a report about a Johor Bahru street turning into a red light district.

PETALING JAYA: PPBM Youth chief Syed Saddiq Abdul Rahman has accused Inspector-General of Police Khalid Abu Bakar of making light of reports that a street in Johor Bahru may be a prostitution hub for Singaporean retirees.

The China Press recently reported that the street had earned a reputation as a red light district, thanks to the many elderly men from Singapore who head there for the services of prostitutes from Vietnam and China.

In his response to the report, Khalid acknowledged that prostitution existed in Malaysia but added that authorities had been able to contain it.

He appeared sceptical that the problem in Johor was as serious as China Press made it out to be, saying there should be little reason for Singaporeans to look for prostitutes in Malaysia since prostitution was legal in their country.

Johor native Syed Saddiq, however, said he believed the problem was serious enough to merit police attention.

He told FMT he was a frequent visitor to Singapore and his friends there would often "joke about how cheap it is for Singaporeans to get hookers" in Johor and elsewhere in Malaysia.

"I think this is quite saddening," he said. "I don't want to see my beautiful Johor transformed into Hooker Central."

He said Khalid should not have been too hasty with his response to the China Press report, adding that it showed police were taking the matter too lightly.

He pointed out that prostitution was often linked to human trafficking.

"That these foreigners are brought in to work in the prostitution industry often means it also involves human trafficking," he said. "They are often duped into the sex trade. But even if they get into the trade willingly, they lack legal recourse if anything happens."

Meanwhile, PT Foundation, an NGO that often works with sex workers, said there had been no study to give a clear picture of the extent of prostitution in the country.

“We have done some studies that show a lot of sex work happens out of homes, especially in Kelantan, and a lot of this is also happening on the internet,” said Raymond Tai, PT’s acting chief operations officer. “However, until there is a more objective study done on this whole matter, it is very difficult to comment.”

China Press said its report was based on interviews with several Singaporeans, some of whom claimed they typically spent between RM80 and RM150 on girls from Vietnam or China, depending on their age and appearance.

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