

KUALA LUMPUR, 28th June 2016 – Yeo Bee Yin, of Pusat Khidmat ADUN Damansara Utama, in conjunction with All Women's Action Society (AWAM), kicked off their second collaboration centered on anti-rape awareness today. The launch of the new website, antirogol.com, aims to educate and provide survivors and the general public with basic information and resources on rape and sexual violence such as what constitutes rape, information on the laws pertaining to rape in Malaysia and possible steps that survivors could take if rape takes place and other avenues where survivors can seek help.

On average, 3000 rape cases are reported every year in Malaysia. Over 60% of these cases involved children below eighteen years old. This breaks down to a woman or a child being raped every three hours. More disturbing and important to note is that only two out of ten rape cases are estimated to be reported, which means that the overall number of cases occurring per year would be much higher.

Despite these rising numbers and the urgent need to address this issue, the toxic belief that victims are partly or fully responsible for their own violations continues to permeate. Questions ranging from "What were they wearing?" "Were they drunk?" to "But she didn't say no" points to society's lack of understanding and deep-seated need to rationalise that these senseless violence are somehow deserved and only happen to "the unlucky few", while sidelining the perpetrator's part from the conversation. Anyone can be a target of rape, regardless of gender, location, age, clothing, and more. Rape is never the victim's fault.

This over-arching culture of victim blaming -- experienced by survivors from family members and friends to institutions such as police officials, healthcare providers and in court proceedings -- make it extremely difficult for survivors to seek the help that they need and might play a factor as to why some might choose not to report or couldn't report their rape. In such occurrences, measures beyond the justice system such as counselling might prove more effective in facilitating the healing process for survivors.

It's clear that there needs to be a complete systemic overhaul and individual shift in attitude in regards to rape and sexual violence in Malaysia if we were to ever address this societal ill. Effective and early implementation of awareness programs and preventative education is a critical step in ensuring the elimination of long-held prejudices and beliefs about the issue of rape.

Through this joint campaign, DAP Selangor and AWAM are determined to raise awareness on the issue of rape in Malaysia and to provide survivors with resources that they might need. However, it is only one step of many and a lot more work needs to be done in order to create a society that respects everyone's bodies, rights and dignity.