

Stress and rising cost of living lead to rise in violence

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PETALING JAYA: An increasingly stressed community and the rising cost of living may be among the causes of the spike in the number of domestic abuse cases, said several groups.

All Women's Action Society (Awam) programmes manager Betty Yeoh said while power and control issues were the underlying reasons for abuse, higher stress levels could also be a trigger.

"We are a very stressed society. If there is no proper communication between the couple or individuals, it can definitely lead to conflict," she said yesterday.

Some people, she said, felt they had the "privilege" to "punish" their spouses or partners.

"This shows that there is no respect for the other person."

Some influential persons, or those "connected" to higher authorities, she said, felt they were powerful and above the law and would show this by being abusive.

"We have had victims who did not dare take up legal cases against the perpetrators because they felt they would not win against such influential persons," she said.

Some 991 domestic violence cases – of which 715 involved female victims – were lodged with the police from January to April last year.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Rohani Abdul Karim said the number rose to 1,353 for the corresponding period of this year and of this, 998 cases involved female victims.

On Wednesday, two video clips of women being severely beaten up – one by her husband and the other by her ex-boyfriend – went viral on Facebook.

Befrienders KL chairman L. Mary Raj said individuals who were not able to express their stress and anger in a healthy way could turn abusive.

"Stress is definitely one of the contributing factors to the increase in violence. You need to talk to someone instead of keeping your problems bottled up.

"The problem is, many still think it makes them seem 'weak' to seek help," she said.

Neuro-psychologist Dr Nivashinie Mohan said abusers learnt violent behaviour from their family, people in their community and other cultural influences as they grow up.

"Society as a whole is becoming more violent as people resort to violence as a way of coping with the daily stress of life," she said.