

Baby dumping essay



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Two young lovers pleaded guilty in a Malacca magistrate's court to abandoning a baby girl at a factory in Ayer Keroh this week. That was just one of many such cases of baby dumping reported recently and it has raised concern among the authorities. Lately, there have been reports of baby dumpings in a number of places. According to a Bernama report, three babies were found each in Kelantan, Malacca and Kuala Lumpur last week and a baby girl with the umbilical cord still intact was found in Kota Damansara over the weekend.

The Star reported that one 29-year-old man and 26-year-old unemployed woman were detained last Friday by police for dumping a newborn baby girl at Air Kuning in Gemencheh. An increase in the number of abandoned baby cases has been acknowledged by the police. Bukit Aman CID Director Mohd Bakri Zinin said this year alone 65 baby dumping cases were reported. " Last year 79 such cases were reported but this year, within the first eight months, 65 cases were reported and it is very disappointing," he told reporters.

Mohd Bakri said statistics showed that from 2005 to yesterday, 472 babies were abandoned throughout the country, of which, 258 were dead and 214 were still alive. What are the steps to be taken to prevent such cases from recurring? Is there a deterrent to discourage young people from committing this offence? According to Mohd Bakri, the police would classify abandoned baby cases under Section 302 of the Penal Code (murder) and under Section 307 (attempted murder).

Those found responsible for babies who die would be investigated for murder while abandoned babies found alive would be classified and investigated as

attempted murder. This was followed by the Cabinet's decision to accept Minister for Women, Family and Community Development Shahrizat Abdul Jalil's proposal to charge anyone who dumped their babies and causing the infant's death be investigated under Section 302 of the Penal Code for murder.

If found guilty, the punishment for murder is death penalty. Shahrizat, whose recommendation was accepted and drew attention from various ministers and representative bodies, said that the government had no choice as baby dumping is tantamount to the act of baby killing.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak has chipped in saying that all abandoned baby cases will be investigated before the Attorney-General decides to classify it as a murder case.

He said modern technique such as DNA will be used to identify parents and further clarified that the Cabinet's decision to accept Shahrizat's recommendation does not mean every baby dumping cases will be tried as a murder case. One major factor to baby dumping cases is the increasing number of babies conceived out of wedlock which Hospital Kuala Lumpur has recorded 301 cases of such births this year of which 34 babies were delivered by under-18 mothers. It was an increase from last year's figures which recorded a total of 392 births conceived out of wedlock and 62 of the babies were delivered by under-18 mothers.

Malacca Chief Minister Mohd Ali Rustam has supported the move to impose severe penalties on baby dumping offenders and said that the death penalty is a harsh reminder not to be taken lightly.

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The chief minister, who suggested to set up a special school for pregnant teens, was recently criticized by the public for the controversial decision by the Malacca Islamic Religious Council to allow underage marriage for Muslim girls which aimed to reduce unwanted teen pregnancy conceived out of wedlock.

Among others who supported the harsh move was Lee Lam Thye, vice-chairman of the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF), saying that offenders slapped with heavier penalties will serve as a lesson to the society. PAS spiritual leader and Kelantan Menteri Besar, Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, viewed the death penalty as a possible solution since it is in accordance to the teachings of Islam which forbid such heinous acts, The Star reported.

However, there were also concerns that such drastic measures by the Cabinet will force vulnerable and troubled parents to make hasty decisions and therefore lead to unfavourable situation.

MCA president Dr Chua Soi Lek and vice-president Dr Ng Yen Yen disagreed to the imposition of severe penalties saying that such harsh move will worsen the already dire situation making it more difficult to detect “underground” baby dumping incidents.

They prefer to focus on education as the key solution and will embark on an “Awareness of Sexual Reproduction” campaign to prevent sexual woes among youngsters to tackle unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease. Although the party’s agreement to the idea of establishing special centres where pregnant women can “surrender” their babies does not seem to solve the core problem of baby dumping, the MCA public services and

complaints department has set up a special unit to offer advice to pregnant girls to help them plan their future .

Others have worried that the law enforcement will create negative implications such as an increase of illegal abortion by mothers who are afraid of getting convicted as murderers - with or without intention. James Nayagam, Shelter Home executive director, said current estimate of abortion operations performed daily is top at 300 but expected to increase if women start to resort to illegal abortion. He also said two problems arise before a murder case can be established to charge a mother guilty of causing the infant's death.

Firstly, there is no survival chance for a three-four month old foetus and, therefore, that person cannot be said to have committed murder. The second challenge is that an element of intent is required but would be difficult to prove as the mother can say there was no intention to kill the baby but was left to be picked up by someone. Other reactions include DAP national chairman Karpal Singh who said in a statement, " The solution lies in the eradication of the cause (of dumping babies). "

He proposed for a Royal Commission to study in-depth the reasons behind the heinous act before deciding on the death penalty as the ultimate solution. Women's Aid Organisation president Ivy Josiah and Dr Mohamad Ali Hassan, from the National Parent-Teacher Association Consultative Council, both said that there is no guarantee that the death penalty can help to reduce baby dumping cases as there are still people who commit serious offences such as drug trafficking despite a death sentence attached to it.

Despite the endless debate, Minister Shahrizat said: “ When parents come to know of their children’s predicament (conceive out of wedlock), they will blame the whole world instead of helping them and providing the necessary support. ” She urged parents to guide the children through necessary steps while youngsters who have problems should contact the Nur 1599 hotline number for proper assistance and counselling