

All parties must patiently wait for results: Minister

PUTRAJAYA: Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad has called for patience as authorities await the medical report on former PKR deputy president Rafizi Ramli's son.

"We need to allow the investigation to run its course. We have to be a little patient," he said at the Cancer Care Closer to Community event on Monday.

Recently, the media reported that Rafizi's son was attacked around 2pm at a drop-off area of a shopping mall here, Bernama reported.

Rafizi claimed the attack involved two men in black clothes and helmets on a motorcycle, with one of them dragging his son before injecting him with a syringe.

Last Friday, Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Mohd Khalid Ismail said police had recorded statements from 19 individuals, including Rafizi's family members, a driver, employees and several other witnesses to assist in the investigation.

Mohd Khalid said the police are still waiting for a chemical report on the liquid injected into Rafizi's son.

PETALING JAYA: On Dec 1, 1997, Dominic Damian was driving when a radio show cut into his thoughts.

The voice was A. Radha Krishnan, known as "The Black Stallion". It was World Aids Day. He spoke about an infant girl.

She had been found under a bus in Alor Setar months earlier. Abandoned, wrapped in a plastic shopping bag, malnourished.

When the bus engine roared, people nearby heard a child's piercing cry. A policeman pulled her out to safety. She was about five months old.

Doctors later noticed scars on her head, a silent indication that she might have been physically abused before being dumped.

At the Penang General Hospital, two families had already turned away from her. The reason was stark: she was HIV positive.

Music teachers Damian, then 42, and his wife Jacinta Samuel from Jalan Ipoh in Kuala Lumpur had little money, but when they heard her story they decided to take her.

They trusted the assurance that she would receive free medical treatment for life.

They named her Amanda Mei Chu. Her Chinese name means "Pretty Pearl".

➔ A family built on choice

She was the third among five children adopted over the years.

Each had been abandoned. They shared nothing but need. What they found was love.

Music became their language. The twin sisters, 31, teach piano, violin, flute and voice. Their brother, 24, teaches guitar. The

Forgotten promise to abandoned child with HIV

➔ Woman assured help by NGOs after promise of lifelong care withdrawn by govt hospital

youngest, 15, is focused on her schooling.

But Amanda, who came to them at 19 months, carried the heaviest burden.

"Every child is a gift of life. Each child must be given a chance. We as adults must protect them. We cannot do any less. We owe them," said Damian.

➔ A baby no one would take

The Community AIDS Service Penang, which helped in Amanda's placement, repeated the assurance that she would get lifelong treatment.

She would have a birth certificate. She would be cared for as a citizen. For years, the promise held.

The Kuala Lumpur Hospital treated her without question. She carried a blue hospital card marked *warganegara* (citizen).



Each day without treatment weakens Amanda.

— DOMINIC DAMIAN PICS

But at the end of 2017, the hospital told Damian that Amanda was not Malaysian.

Her treatment was no longer free. The promise they had built their lives on was gone.

➔ A life now in pain

Amanda is now 29 years old. She weighs just 23kg. Less than the weight of a healthy 10-year-old. Her height is under 120cm.

"She is a bag of bones," her father said.

Since January this year, she has grown weaker. Her mouth is filled with ulcers. Her lips bleed. Eating is torture. Some days, she must be force-fed.

Every night, Damian, now 70, cleans her mouth inside and out. It is the only relief he can give.

"I cannot give her the treatment she needs. One, it is the cost. Two, it is not available everywhere. Only the government hospitals can provide it."

➔ A father's heartbreak

During the interview, Damian broke down.

"She is Malaysian. Everything is there to say that she is a citizen.

"Please make this exception. Please do the right thing. Do not let her down. She must know this is a nation that cares for her."

HIV treatment is not ruinously expensive. Malaysia already runs one of the best HIV programmes in the region.

So, why deny it to Amanda? She is not a medical tourist. Not a stranger.

She was abandoned once by her birth parents. Now, she has been abandoned again, by the state that once claimed her.

"We just want her to live with less pain. To have the treatment she was once promised."

Following his appeal, the Malaysian AIDS Foundation (MAF) said it has approved an emergency medication subsidy to restart antiretroviral therapy (ART) for Amanda.

"Getting her safely back on treatment is the immediate priority,"

it said in a joint statement with the Malaysian AIDS Council (MAC).

Their case managers are also supporting Amanda with practical needs, including psychosocial support and links to social assistance, FMT reported yesterday.

They also said they would assist Amanda's family in navigating her documentation and citizenship processes.

"(We) will liaise with the relevant authorities and partner organisations so that administrative issues do not stand in the way of lifesaving care."

The groups said modern ART can suppress the HIV virus to undetectable levels, protect health and allow people living with HIV to lead full, healthy lives when treatment is maintained consistently.

MAF and MAC said they paid Amanda a visit to understand her situation in full after FMT highlighted her plight yesterday.

Damian is a poet, music educationist and composer. His children carry on the tradition, teaching and performing.

Even Amanda still responds to music. A melody can bring a smile.

"Music has always been our healing. But medicine is what Amanda needs to survive," he said.

— By Frankie D'Cruz/FMT

'Complaints portal not enough to solve bullying'

► Lawmakers must go beyond digital fixes, establish single, nationwide anti-bullying policy covering all types of schools, says NGO

■ BY KIRTINEE RAMESH
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PETALING JAYA: A child-friendly complaints portal, an initiative by the Parliamentary Special Select Committee, will not be enough by itself to shield children from being bullied, said CRIB Foundation co-chairman Srividhya Ganapathy.

She urged lawmakers to move beyond digital fixes, and establish a single, nationwide anti-bullying policy covering all schools – government, residential, private, international and religious.

"Right now, different schools fall under different ministries and agencies. So, policies are inconsistent. But bullying cuts across all types of schools. It should be treated with the same seriousness as fire safety or crime prevention, with one common standard."

Srividhya said many children do not have personal devices while others face language or ability barriers.

"Phones are often confiscated by parents as punishment. That's the reality."

Through its youth initiative, the Talisman Project, the CRIB Foundation found bullying to be widespread, with many students reporting at least one experience of being targeted. Some said they retaliated and were then branded bullies themselves.

Srividhya said the most damaging type of bullying takes place online, where harmful



posts vanish quickly unless children know how to preserve evidence.

CRIB has made three key requests to Parliament:

- A single national safeguarding and anti-bullying standard across all school systems;
- Minimum, enforceable requirements such as trained safeguarding teams, qualified counsellors, clear reporting channels, secure records and firm response times; and
- Funding and oversight, including a dedicated budget for counsellors and training, with schools required to publish

yearly safeguarding reports.

She said the portal must trigger real-world action and be embedded within schools' safeguarding systems.

"An app is a tool, not a solution. What matters is who receives the reports, how quickly they act and whether children feel safe coming forward."

Beyond technology, CRIB's blueprint recommends safeguarding and anti-bullying teams in every school and counsellors with manageable caseloads.

She said cases involving physical harm must be treated as crimes under the law, not dismissed as "child's play".

"At the same time, both victims and perpetrators, often children themselves, must have their identities protected under the Child Act, with restorative approaches used where possible."

Srividhya also cautioned against measuring success by portal usage alone.

"A good system separates reporting from prevalence. If reports rise but repeat harm declines and response times improve, children are safer, not worse off."

She urged schools to adopt clear benchmarks – acknowledgement within 24 hours, meeting within 48 hours, investigations within two school days and updates within five.

She said progress should also be tracked through anonymous student surveys and annual public reports.

She added that for the portal to be credible, cases must be logged securely in the *Sistem Sahsiah Diri Murid*, comply with the Personal Data Protection Act and include breach notifications within 72 hours.

Srividhya said offline reporting channels must also be provided, with forms available in Bahasa Malaysia, English, Mandarin and Tamil, using plain language, large text and simple icons as well as have screen-reader compatibility.

M'sia to be **ageing** nation by 2048

► Fertility rates set to drop from 1.67 children per woman in 2025 to 1.60 in 2035, below replacement level of 2.1, says minister

■ BY **QIRANA NABILLA MOHD RASHIDI**
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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia is expected to become an ageing nation by 2048, when 14% of its population will be aged 65 and above, Economy Minister Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan told the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

He said the shift, driven by longer life expectancy and falling fertility rates, would see the number of children aged between zero and 14 shrink as the elderly population steadily rises.

Amir Hamzah said according to the Statistics Department, Malaysia's 34.2 million population in 2025 is projected to grow modestly to 36.4 million by 2030 and 38.3 million by 2035.

"However, fertility rates are set to drop from 1.67 children per woman in 2025 to 1.60 in 2035, well below the replacement level of 2.1, which the country has failed to meet since 2013.

"Adding to the concern, the crude marriage rate has also declined, falling from 6.6 marriages per 1,000 people in 2022 to 5.7 in 2023.

"The department highlighted that this trend shortens the reproductive window and is likely to further accelerate the decline in births."

Amir Hamzah said preparing for an ageing population is a complex task involving fiscal policy, labour markets, healthcare and long-term care services.

He said the National Ageing Blueprint 2025-2045 launched this year, which outlines

strategies across key areas, would be implemented through the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP).

"While we have a Youth and Sports Ministry, we do not yet have a dedicated ministry for senior citizens to address ageing-related issues.

"However, several ministries play a role – the Finance Ministry manages economic and fiscal matters, the Implementation Coordination Unit oversees social protection, the Human Resources Ministry covers employment and skills, the Health Ministry handles healthcare while the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry manages long-term care."

He said under the 13MP all ministries must adopt a whole-of-nation approach, which includes expanding home-based care, encouraging part-time work for older individuals, strengthening financial and community support and improving retirement security through measures such as reviewing the EPF withdrawal scheme.

"We are moving away from the old demographic model which was based on three clear stages of life – childhood, youth and old age, or school, work and retirement.

"But today, as people live longer, these stages overlap and intertwine, creating a 'multi-stage life'. For example, retirees are now often encouraged to rejoin the workforce in various capacities. Retirement is no longer a fixed stage."

Amir Hamzah said the government, through 13MP, aims to strengthen long-term care, enabling caregivers to provide home visits, activities and companionship for the elderly to remain in their own homes, while also guiding younger generations.

He urged civil society to play a greater role in supporting the ageing process.

"The framework for an ageing society is already laid out in the 13MP. What is left is to bring it to life.

"If we succeed, we will be in a much better position to face the challenges of an aged society."

From hunger to hope: Empowering youths as changemakers

TODAY'S young people are living through a time of profound global challenges.

Conflicts continue to uproot families, hunger remains widespread and millions of children face uncertain futures.

This year's International Youth Day theme, "Local Youth Actions for the SDGs and Beyond", calls attention to the vital role that young people can play in turning global ambitions into realities.

The link between war and hunger is undeniable. Unicef reports that nearly one in six children worldwide lives in conflict zones, with their education, health and nutrition deeply disrupted.

The World Food Programme warns that hunger is rising sharply in war-affected regions such as Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, where access to food has become a daily struggle.

According to the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025 report, 673 million people were hungry in 2024, a figure that remains alarmingly higher than pre-pandemic levels. These statistics remind us that hunger is not only a distant issue but one that urgently demands awareness and action.

However, young people are far

from powerless. Around the world, youth-led initiatives are showing how awareness can be transformed into meaningful action.

In some communities, young people are establishing school and community gardens to improve food security. Others are using social media to raise awareness and mobilise support for displaced families.

Research has shown that when youths are engaged in humanitarian response, such as during the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone, they can play critical roles in education, advocacy and community mobilisation.

Education is central to enabling such actions. Schools and universities can provide platforms for young people to engage with global issues, learn about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and develop projects that address local needs.

Embedding the SDG into school and university curricula as well as offering SDG-related training programmes, workshops and experiential projects can help young people gain a deeper understanding of sustainability challenges while equipping them with practical tools to design

solutions in their communities.

Platforms like Unicef's "Voices of Youth" demonstrate how empowering young voices can transform awareness into advocacy and collective responsibility.

The message of this year's International Youth Day was clear: young people must be supported not only to understand the challenges of war and hunger but also to take action in their communities.

By turning awareness into action, youths can contribute to ending hunger, advancing peace and ensuring that the SDG are not just distant goals but also living commitments shaping a more just and sustainable future.

Sustaining progress on the SDG depends on empowering youths as present changemakers and future leaders, ensuring that their actions today will carry forward into lasting global impact.

If we invest in youth awareness and action today, we are ultimately investing in the future of humanity.

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Luangkan 5 Minit Anda untuk HILANGKAN STRES

STRES merupakan satu keadaan emosi yang boleh dialami oleh sesiapa sahaja, tidak kira usia mahupun latar belakang. Dalam dunia yang serba pantas ini, tekanan hidup seringkali datang tanpa diduga, sama ada daripada kerja, pelajaran, hubungan sosial mahupun masalah kewangan.

Namun begitu, stres yang tidak dikawal boleh memberi kesan buruk terhadap kesihatan mental dan fizikal seseorang. Oleh itu, adalah penting untuk mengetahui cara-cara mudah bagi mengurangkan stres, terutamanya dalam masa yang singkat seperti lima minit.

Antara cara paling berkesan ialah latihan pernafasan dalam. Teknik ini sangat mudah dan boleh dilakukan di mana-mana sahaja. Caranya ialah dengan menarik nafas perlahan-lahan melalui hidung selama empat saat, menahan nafas selama empat saat, dan kemudian menghembus nafas perlahan-lahan melalui mulut selama empat saat. Ulangi proses ini beberapa kali. Latihan pernafasan ini membantu memperlahankan degupan jantung, menenangkan sistem saraf, dan memberi ketenangan kepada minda.

Selain itu, berjalan sekejap atau melakukan sedikit regangan fizikal juga boleh membantu mengurangkan stres dengan cepat. Pergerakan ringan seperti meregangkan tangan, menggoyangkan bahu, atau berjalan mengelilingi ruang kerja selama beberapa minit dapat membantu melancarkan peredaran darah dan mengurangkan ketegangan otot. Aktiviti ini juga dapat mengalihkan perhatian kita daripada tekanan yang sedang dihadapi.

Menulis perasaan dalam jurnal ringkas juga merupakan cara yang baik untuk meluahkan tekanan secara positif. Luangkan lima minit untuk menulis apa yang sedang mengganggu fikiran. Dengan menulis, kita dapat mengenal pasti punca stres dan meredakan tekanan dalaman. Kaedah ini juga boleh membantu kita berfikir dengan lebih jelas dan rasional.

Mendengar muzik yang menenangkan juga merupakan kaedah yang mudah tetapi sangat efektif. Pilih lagu bertempo perlahan, seperti

muzik instrumental atau bunyi semula jadi seperti aliran air dan kicauan burung. Muzik boleh memberi kesan langsung kepada emosi dan mampu menenangkan fikiran dalam masa singkat.

Pada waktu cuti, luangkan masa untuk menikmati keindahan alam semula jadi. Pergilah ke taman-taman yang penuh kehijauan. Melihat dan menghargai keindahan alam dapat merehatkan minda daripada pelbagai masalah yang mendatangkan tekanan.

Berzikir, berdoa atau bermeditasi secara ringkas juga boleh menjadi cara yang sangat berkesan untuk menenangkan jiwa. Dalam masa lima minit, seseorang boleh melafazkan zikir atau doa dengan penuh penghayatan, yang bukan sahaja memberi ketenangan rohani, malah mengingatkan diri bahawa segala tekanan adalah sementara dan setiap masalah pasti ada jalan penyelesaiannya.

Kesimpulannya, walaupun masa lima minit kelihatan singkat, ia sudah cukup untuk membantu mengurangkan tekanan jika digunakan dengan betul. Antara cara mudah yang boleh diamalkan termasuk latihan pernafasan, pergerakan ringan, menulis, mendengar muzik, melihat keindahan alam, dan berdoa. Amalan-amalan ini bukan sahaja membantu menenangkan emosi, malah melatih kita untuk lebih peka terhadap kesihatan mental sendiri. Dalam dunia yang sibuk ini, meluangkan masa walau seketika untuk diri sendiri adalah satu bentuk kasih sayang kepada diri yang tidak ternilai.



WHEN a man is unable to perform sexually, his self confidence is shattered. Low libido and erectile dysfunction (ED) are two common bedroom issues affecting men. Yet, few open up about these issues.

Many men assume they are

the only ones facing such issues, when in fact it's more common than they think, says Pantai Hospital Melaka consultant urologist Dr Christopher Ho Chee Kong.

Rather than visiting a doctor, these men surf the Internet anonymously and even purchase medicines online.

Such behaviour can have serious consequences. ED may be linked to underlying causes, such as heart disease, hypertension or diabetes, and not getting a check-up means these conditions go undetected.

"If they see a doctor and get these conditions managed, their problems with ED may even come to an end."

Low libido is linked to a drop in testosterone, explains Dr Ho. For men, testosterone levels peak at 30 and start to drop after that. Most men notice a change once



Dr Christopher Ho Chee Kong. PICTURE CREDIT: PANTAI HOSPITAL MELAKA

Low libido impacts sexual health

they hit 50.

Besides ageing, low libido can also be linked to psychological problems like stress, depression and anxiety. The use of certain medications and painkillers may also cause the problem.

Today, low libido and ED are problems for younger men too. It's a pattern being observed worldwide,

including in Malaysia, says Dr Ho.

"Young men are having heart attacks, diabetes and hypertension — lifestyle diseases which can give rise to ED."

MENTAL OVERLOAD

An often unnoticed factor is the impact of modern lifestyles on sexual health.

Dr Ho says many young men grapple with stress, anxiety and depression brought on by work and family commitments, and this impacts sexual function.

"When we tell these same men to go on vacation or schedule some rest and relaxation, they say their ability to achieve an erection improves."

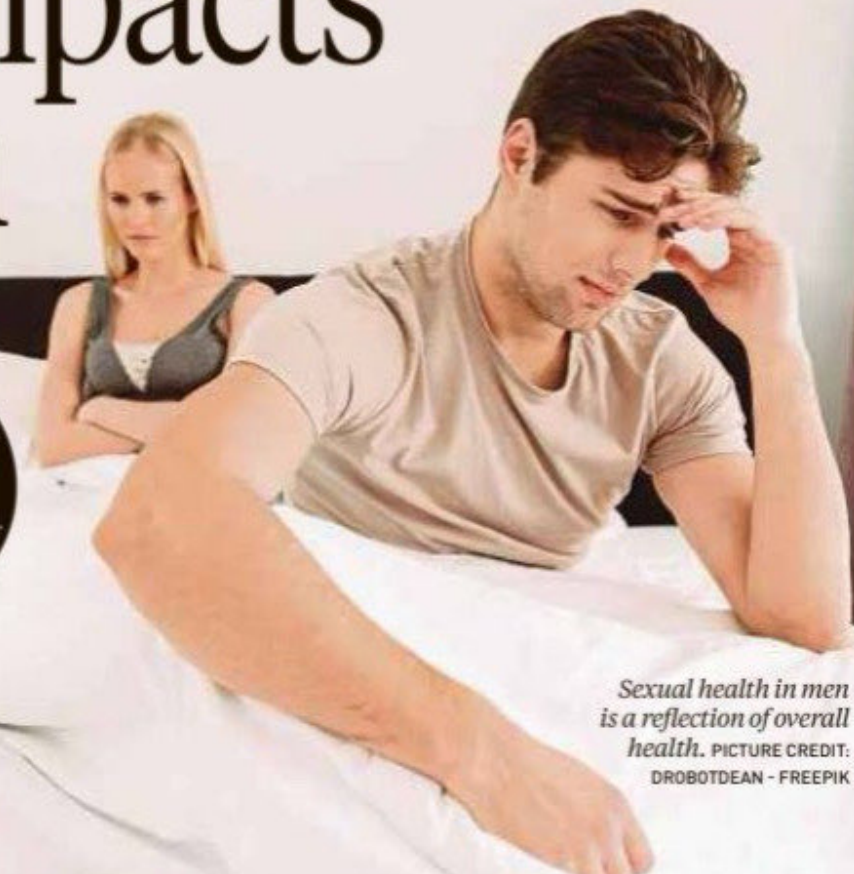
Sometimes, they may be prescribed medication temporarily to break the cycle and improve their confidence.

The rise in the number of men accessing pornography on a daily basis can also be a problem, says Dr Ho.

Addiction to pornography results in men failing to get aroused during normal intercourse.

"Simply put, an average woman doesn't get them stimulated enough to achieve an erection."

The first line of treatment for ED usually involves lifestyle modifications such as quitting smoking or switching to a healthy diet. If it fails, then medication may be prescribed.



Sexual health in men is a reflection of overall health. PICTURE CREDIT: DROBOTDEAN - FREEPIK

In 80 per cent of cases, medication will be able to solve the problem, says Dr Ho.

If oral medications fail, doctors may initiate injection of drugs directly into the penis or recommend the use of a vacuum pump on the penis to help men achieve an erection.

Shockwave therapy may also be used to change the component of

tissue in the penis to be more healthy and improve erection.

The final option, in very severe cases, would be surgery to put an implant into the penis.

Dr Ho says what's important is that men be aware that ED is a treatable medical problem. They don't need to suffer in silence.

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Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah and Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam arriving at the joint academic symposium between Universiti Malaya and the National University of Singapore in Ipoh yesterday. NSTP PIC BY L. MANIMARAN

'PRECISION HEALTH'

Sultan Nazrin graces UM-NUS symposium

IPOH: Sultan of Perak Sultan Nazrin Muizzuddin Shah yesterday attended the joint academic symposium between Universiti Malaya (UM) and the National University of Singapore (NUS), highlighting the enduring academic and cultural ties between Malaysia and Singapore.

Present were Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who serves as NUS chancellor, Singapore High Commissioner Vanu Gopala Menon and UM Vice-Chancellor Professor Datuk Seri Dr Noor Azuan Abu Osman.

Themed "Precision Health", the symposium brought together distinguished scholars and clin-

icians from UM and NUS to share groundbreaking research and innovations in drug discovery, genetic and non-genetic biomarkers, clinical artificial intelligence applications and advancements in precision health.

Sultan Nazrin, who is also UM chancellor, attended a session on the UM-NUS Joint History, presented by Professor Dr Gua Quan Seng from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, NUS, and Professor Dr Zamri Radzi from UM's Faculty of Dentistry.

Noor Azuan highlighted the distinctive role of universities in global society, stating that institutions of higher learning thrive

not through competition for resources, like states or corporations, but through collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

As Malaysia assumes the Asean chairmanship this year, Noor Azuan said that the region was facing significant challenges, from climate stress to rising security threats.

"In this context, UM and NUS must lead in offering thought leadership grounded in evidence and foresight, driving solutions for the region and beyond.

"From energy transitions to regional health security, UM and NUS must emerge as global leaders in shaping ideas and action."