The Star

‘Social media tools can have positive effects on sex education’

By **FAZLEENA AZIZ**
Thursday, 16 Nov 2023

PETALING JAYA: While she supports the call for parents to be open about discussing sex education with their children, an activist says using social media tools can bring positive effects to the sensitive issue.

Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) honorary secretary Tunku Munawirah Putra said in line with current trends, it will be useful to have short TikTok videos of public service announcements on sexuality education.

“In this digital day and age, more can be done by both the Education as well as the Women, Family and Community Development ministries to guide and support students and parents in teaching and talking about this subject matter,” she said.

She was commenting on the answer given by Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek at the Dewan Rakyat on Oct 29 that over 900 teenagers, with some as young as 13, having tested positive for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) between 2018 and 2022.

Tunku Munawirah, however, said “having the talk” remains the best method when addressing the elephant in the room or when children start asking questions.

“No doubt parents play a big role in educating their children but they too will find it challenging to discuss such a complex subject and may shy away from talking about it.

“It is indeed worrying that children as young as 13 are sexually active but do not know what they are getting themselves into.

“It is even more worrying that these young teens could be victims of sexual violence or sexual grooming that they have no knowledge of,” she said.

National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) secretary-general Fouzi Singon said the minister’s revelation would not surprise disciplinary and guidance or counselling teachers.

Schools can only provide input and information but parents are the ones who should ensure their children are educated about such matters, he said.

Fouzi cited family issues, abuse, peer pressure and social ills as among the main reasons contributing to teenage sex.

A teacher, who wishes to be known only as Rumie, 43, said she was not surprised by the data.

“As a teacher, I take it upon myself to warn my students; with girls I focus on trust, with the boys I’ll have to practise a bit of reverse psychology on them,” she said.

Even though topics on safe sex and sex education are covered under Islamic studies and morals, at the end of the day there is no control over what teenagers will do because most are influenced by friends and peer pressure coupled with their raging hormones, she added.