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Fadhlina wants teachers, administrators to report student sexual abuse to authorities

By Adie Zulkifli - October 24, 2023 @ 1:06pm



(FILE PHOTO) Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek. -NSTP/MOHD FADLI HAMZAH

ALOR STAR: Education Minister Fadhlina Sidek has reminded teachers and school administrators to report any incident of sexual abuse involving students to the authorities.

She said this was in line with the guidelines for managing misconduct, particularly those related to sexual harassment and bullying launched by the ministry last month.

"The Education Ministry has given its full commitment on this matter and it is imperative that I remind you that we have launched guidelines on the management of sexual abuse at learning institutions under the ministry.

"It is not just merely a guidelines but more importantly, it proves our seriousness in ensuring sexual harassment is being aptly managed at the ministry level," she told reporters after launching the state-level 2023 Healthy Meals Programme (Promak) Riang Ria Nutri held at Albukhary International University (AIU) here today.

Present were Bernas chairman Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim, its chief executive officer Zulkiflee Abdul Rahman and Albukhary Foundation advisor Datuk Seri Abdul Aziz Shahar.

Promak is organised and sponsored by Padiberas Nasional Bhd (Bernas) with the cooperation of the Education Ministry and Health Ministry.

The programme, which is aimed at addressing malnutrition issues among young children, has benefitted almost 20,000 pupils in 93 selected schools in Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu since it started early last year.

Fadhlina was responding to the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said statement yesterday that she was considering prosecuting witnesses who fail to report sexual abuse cases.

Azalina was reported as saying that she was looking into enforcing Section 19 of the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (SOAC) which prosecutes witnesses who withheld information on sexual abuse cases involving minors.

She proposed that the victim's neighbours, teachers, and family members who were aware of child sexual abuse should face criminal charges for neglecting to report the incident.

Last month, the Education Ministry launched guidelines for managing misconduct especially related to bullying and sexual harassment, in a bid to create a safe ecosystem within educational institutions.

Fadhlina was reported as saying that the focus of the guidelines was to protect human dignity and prevent violation against it from happening within the school ecosystem.