

CHILDREN SOLD TO SYNDICATES MAY SUFFER GRAVE TRAUMA, SAY EXPERTS, 29 JAN 2013

GEORGE TOWN: Being sold to a syndicate is a very traumatic experience for children and experts believe the psychological impact on them is irreversible.

Children's Protection Society (CPS) Penang president Datuk Seri Nazir Ariff said the psychological impact was especially grave for those who were raised by the syndicate while waiting for a buyer.

"Imagine crying for days without knowing who your parents are.

"I'm very disappointed that it took so many years for an active child trafficking racket here to be crippled," he said.

Universiti Sains Malaysia School of Educational Studies senior lecturer Dr Termit Kaur said a child's self-esteem would be severely affected if he or she found out about the circumstances of his or her birth.

"Growing up, children will always try to find out more about their identity and background.

"It will definitely affect their self-esteem when they learn that they were conceived only to be sold at birth," she said, adding that it was "extremely unethical" for people to sell their babies to make a profit.

Dr Termit said that on the other hand it might be a blessing for the babies as the parents who were willing to spend so much money to buy them were most likely desperate for a child.

"It might have been far more damaging if they were raised by their birth parents who did not want them or could not afford to raise them," she added.

She said, however, that problems arose when there was no immediate buyer.

"Who cares for the child until a buyer comes along?" she asked.

Women's Centre for Change (WCC) Penang programme director Dr Prema Devaraj said that the difficulties in adoption policies or procedures and the exploitation of people's vulnerability must also be addressed.

"We understand from the press that nine of the children involved have since been placed under police protection, away from their adoptive parents.

"This is bound to be traumatic for them as they have been separated from the only parents they knew," she said.

She said it was better if the children were placed with their adoptive parents and monitored by a child protector while investigations were being carried out.

On Friday, police busted one of the largest child trafficking syndicates in the country and arrested 33 people.

Nine children aged between two months and eight years were rescued.

By CHRISTINA CHIN