

Call for **new law** to deal with derogatory language

Existing laws insufficient, says human rights lawyer

BY ELLY FAZANIZA
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PETALING JAYA: There should be a separate and more effective law against uttering obscenities and making rude gestures, according to a human rights lawyer.

Charles Hector said such "non-physical" assaults are currently punishable under sections 509 and 354 of the Penal Code, but they are insufficient to deal with offenders.

Apart from the Penal Code, there is also a provision under the Minor Offences Act 1955 that makes it an

offence to use indecent, threatening, abusive and insulting words or behave in an insulting manner with the intention to provoke a breach of the peace.

Anyone guilty of such an offence can be fined up to RM100.

Under section 509 of Penal Code, one could make a police report against anyone who insults a person's modesty through words, sounds or gestures. If found guilty, the offending party could be jailed for up to five years, fined or both.

But under section 354, which also deals with the same offences, a

person guilty of two of such offences could be jailed for up to 10 years, fined or whipped.

However, Hector said, this is insufficient to deal with such offenders.

"What we need is a law specifically to deal with those who utter derogatory remarks or make offensive gestures directed at another person.

"Existing laws are insufficient to deal with anyone who says words that are sexually or racially derogatory and which could lead to disharmony."

However, uttering obscenities and making offensive gestures are fair game in Parliament.

Members of the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara are protected by their parliamentary privileges.

It is up to the speaker to ensure that they do not get out of line, according to Hector.

Kluang MP Wong Shu Qi's name was given a vulgar twist at a gathering attended by Umno Youth chief Datuk Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki that was streamed "live" on Tebrau Umno Youth's Facebook page.

In the event last Friday, Asyraf had asked the crowd why they had gathered outside Wong's office and what was the symbolic gesture behind the move and they responded twice with vulgar remarks amidst a roar of laughter.

The participants were protesting against her recent reference to pictures of what they saw as inappropriately dressed women with captions in Jawi.



Desa Green residents walk through the rubble yesterday. —BERNAMAPIX

Below: A view of the damaged unit on the 20th floor. —BERNAMAPIX

Sexagenarian hurt in blast at apartment unit

GEORGETOWN: A man suffered burns on 80% of his body following an explosion at his unit in Desa Green Apartment on Jalan Paya Terubong yesterday.

According to a Fire and Rescue Department spokesman, the man, who is in his 60s, was at home during the explosion which occurred at 8.16am.

"When the fire fighters arrived at the scene, part of a bedroom wall had collapsed and the impact of the

explosion also caused the wall of the house next door to crack."

The explosion is believed to be caused by a gas cylinder leak.

The man was hurled onto a wall by the force of the explosion.

He is currently in stable condition in Penang Hospital.

The man's son, daughter-in-law and grandchild were unhurt as they were in another room at the time.

The neighbours were also unhurt.

