

# Punitive action ineffective in reducing unplanned pregnancies, says MMA

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*Women who have unplanned pregnancies in Terengganu now face a fine or jail term or both. (Rawpixel pic)*

PETALING JAYA: The country's largest association for medical professionals has spoken out against Terengganu's move to punish women who have unplanned pregnancies.

The Malaysian Medical Association said global data and research have shown that punitive measures are ineffective in reducing such pregnancies.

MMA president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai said punitive action would only lead to negative consequences, including unsafe pregnancies and childbirths which could result in "permanent harm" to a person's health.

He said this was why MMA was concerned over amendments to the Terengganu Shariah Criminal Offences Enactment which criminalises out-of-wedlock pregnancies and childbirths for Muslim women.

Muslim women in the state found guilty under the law may be jailed or fined up to RM3,000 or both.

Muruga said Malaysia recorded one of the highest maternal mortality rates in its history in 2021, with 68.2 per 100,000 births and 100 babies dumped.

He said countries around the world have seen reductions in unplanned pregnancies after implementing sexual education and providing access to reproductive health services.

"We urge and appeal to all authorities and lawmakers to implement what has been scientifically shown to be effective and to approach this life-changing issue for women, girls, families, communities and the nation," he said.