



30 AUG, 2026

Youth mental health needs stronger community support

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia



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KOTA KINABALU: Families, schools and communities need to play a greater role in strengthening mental health support for young people, said Women, Health and People's Wellbeing Minister Datuk Julita Majungki.

She said families, in particular, play an important role in shaping values and helping children navigate challenges, including uncontrolled mobile phone use.

"Parents have a role in setting boundaries within the family, particularly while their children can still be guided.

"We live in a world that is becoming increasingly busy and noisy, yet paradoxically, we can also become increasingly lonely," she said when officiating the Seminar on Population and Mental Health: From Stigma to Support "Integrating Community Support Systems" in conjunction with the 2026 Sabah State-level World Population Day Celebration at Kota Kinabalu Polytechnic on Saturday.

The programme was organised by the National Population

and Family Development Board (LPPKN) Sabah, in collaboration with strategic partners including Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Institute for Development Studies (IDS) Sabah, UMCare and University College Sabah Foundation (UCSF).

Julita said based on findings from the National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS), the prevalence of depression among adolescents in Malaysia increased from 17.7 per cent in 2012 to 26.9 per cent in 2022, while the proportion of adolescents reporting feelings of loneliness increased from 8.1 per cent to 16.2 per cent over the same period.

She said mental health issues could not be addressed by the health sector alone, but required the involvement of families, schools, religious institutions, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and communities.

"As parents, we do not necessarily know how to deal with every problem. We also need guidance to strengthen our

knowledge and ability to address challenges within the family," she said.

She said Sabah was also strengthening mental health support through collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MoH) under the Agenda Nasional Malaysia Sihat-Sabah Maju Jaya (ANMS-SMJ) programme, while the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Services Team (MHPSS) was being further strengthened.

Julita also called on all parties to continue listening to the voices of young people, reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and create an environment that supports them in seeking help.

Also present were Ministry of Women, Health and People's Wellbeing (KWKKR) permanent secretary Datuk Maria Chong; LPPKN Sabah director Shahriah Saharom; Dr Maine Suadik, representing the UMS vice-chancellor; and Corina Emily Claudius, representing the IDS Sabah chief executive officer.



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(From right to left) Julita officiates the programme as Maria, Shahriah, Corina and Maine look on.



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SUMMARIES

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