

I love Abe because he is a nice man, says 11-year-old bride



By **RAMLI IBRAHIM** - June 30, 2018 @ 7:03pm

GUA MUSANG: "Since we got married about two weeks ago, we have yet to sleep together because Abe (Kelantanese slang for Abang which is a term also used to refer to husbands) promised we will only live together in another five years."

These were the words of an 11-year-old who is now the third wife of a 41-year-old local rubber trader, here.

Earlier today, social media went abuzz with a posting by a woman who claimed her husband had married an 11-year-old.

The posting was accompanied by several pictures in which the caption read, "Selamat pengantin baru suaminya (congratulations on your wedding, my husband). Suami 41, Maduku 11 tahun (My husband 41, his wife 11 years old)."

"Even though many people are angry with me, I do not want a divorce, as long as Abe wants me and I love him," the 11-year-old said.

It is learned that the child is a Thai citizen.

The young bride said they were married on June 18 and she was accompanied by her parents.

"Before Hari Raya, my parents asked me about Abe's intention to marry me. I accepted because I love him.

"I know I am still young and not in school, but I have known Abe for a long time, one of Abe's children is also my friend.

"I love Abe because he is a nice man," she said, when met here, today.

Meanwhile, her father, a 49-year-old rubber tapper said the family has been living in Gua Musang for 20 years.

He said there are times when he would sell the rubber he collected to the person who is now his son-in-law.

"A week before Hari Raya, my (then) son-in-law came to see me to express his intention to marry my youngest child and asked if I agreed," he said.

Explaining that he was initially shocked because his daughter is still young, the rubber tapper said his son-in-law sympathised with them as they were not well off and promised a more comfortable life for them.

"Infact my son-in-law said they would only live as husband and wife and register their marriage in five years. That is why I accepted his proposal," the rubber tapper said.

He added that despite people talking about the marriage, his daughter was not saddened or depressed by it.

"What happens after this, I leave it up to my son-in-law to handle it. I have known him for a long time because previously we used to rent a house next door to his first wife.

"My daughter is also friends with my son-in-law's child with his first wife. Before this, whenever they (son-in-law's family with his first wife) went on holiday, they would take my daughter along.

"On the question of divorce or whether his other wives accept this or not, let my son-in-law handle it because we are just poor people," he added.

Meanwhile, the second wife said she found out about her husband's third marriage from his first wife.

The 41-year-old said she was told her husband had married the 11-year-old in Southern Thailand.

"I asked him if this was true, that he had married a child...but he denied it," she said.

"I am not angry that he has taken another wife, but I don't agree with the fact that his new wife is still a child and is also friends with my 15-year-old stepdaughter," she added.

Asked why she took to uploading the pictures of her husband and his new wife on Facebook, the second wife said she wanted it to serve as a lesson for her husband as well as members of the public on marrying an underage.

"I am tired of having to do business to raise my four children aged between 3 and 10 because even though my husband's income is quite high from his work as a rubber trader, he only gives me between RM50 to RM100 for groceries and the children," she said.

In related development, the Narathiwat Islamic Religious Council however denied the 11-year-old and the rubber trader had married in the district.

A spokesperson from the council, Abdul Aziz Che Mamat said the council has never conducted a marriage process for the couple.

He however informed that Thailand's religious law does not prohibit underage teenagers from getting married if consent is obtained from the parents, but stated that for the past few years until today, they have not conducted any marriage procedures for underage teenagers at their Narathiwat office.

A source meanwhile said the couple could have married at the Sungai Golok religious office which borders Kelantan.