

Silent struggle of survivors breaking free from domestic violence

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PETALING JAYA: It began slowly for Melissa. First, she was asked to pay for the house, then the car, and then almost everything else.

Although she and her husband were both working, the 43-year-old found herself carrying the financial burden of the household.

Whenever she raised questions about money, she was shouted at or slapped.

"At first, I was in denial. I thought whatever he decided was to make things easier for the fam-

ily. Even when he physically hurt me, I believed it was justified because I must have done something wrong," she said.

The abuse stayed behind closed doors for more than 10 years. It was when her children became targets that she realised she had to take control.

"When my children tried to defend me by informing my side of the family, he became more abusive. He even wanted to hit them," she said.

Melissa, who divorced her abusive spouse five years ago, noted that the abuse intensified after

she uncovered his infidelity.

"He apologised at first, but then he continued seeing other women and began treating me as if I were the one at fault.

"It was painful because I had to work extra hours to pay off loans while he went out dating other people," said Melissa, who wished people had warned her about her former husband's temper.

Unlike Melissa, who had support, many others have been less fortunate.

On Aug 16, 2024, Mohd Azzuan Ahmad, 39, was charged with beating and pushing his wife, Nor

Diyannah Ahmad, 32, into a ravine of the East-West Highway along the Gerik-Jeli route in Perak.

Mohd Azzuan also faced a charge of criminal intimidation for allegedly threatening her in a vehicle while travelling towards Kuala Kangsar.

In November last year, Rosmaini Abd Raof was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for assaulting his second wife, Jahidah Nordin, who was pregnant at the time, at a residence in Larkin, Johor, in 2021. However, the sentence was stayed pending appeal.

Jahidah sustained serious inju-

ries, which included brain haemorrhages that necessitated the removal of a portion of her skull, along with fractures to her jaw, spine and ribs.

She gave birth to a baby boy in November 2021. Now 48, she remains bedridden.

For survivors like Melissa, leaving was not a single decision but a gradual awakening.

"I realised that if I didn't stop it, my children would grow up thinking the situation was normal. I didn't want them to believe that love comes with fear," she said.