



TODAY FILE PHOTO

30 nabbed in ring-fencing operation

THE police arrested 30 drink-drivers in a six-hour islandwide operation in the wee hours of yesterday.

The latest ring-fencing blitz brings the total number of people caught for drink-driving to 2,061 this year.

This was the first time the police had carried out ring-fencing on a mid-week night since such operations started in February.

In a statement yesterday, they said they set up checkpoints along major roads around the city — such as Jalan Bukit Merah, Marina Boulevard, Clemenceau Avenue, Hill Street, River Valley Road and Whitley Road.

In yesterday's raid, breathalyser tests were carried out on 129 motorists.

Thirty drivers aged between 21 and 40

failed the test and were arrested. Of these, 27 were men.

Another 28 motorists were also booked for driving while under disqualification and other traffic offences.

The highest breathalyser result clocked was 70 microgrammes of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath, almost double the prescribed legal limit of 35 microgrammes of alcohol per 100ml of breath.

Those convicted of drink-driving will be disqualified from driving for at least 12 months. In addition, first-time offenders can be fined between \$1,000 and \$5,000 or jailed for up to six months.

Repeat offenders face a maximum fine of \$30,000 and a mandatory jail term of up to three years.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Breaking the silence

More victims of abuse at home speaking out

ESTHER NG

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ON A global average, just six in 10 abused wives confide in their friends. The surprise? The figure is seven in 10 for Singapore, and that is heartening news for organisers of the Stop Violence In The Home campaign, who want to get women to break the silence on domestic abuse.

According to recent studies by campaign organisers The Body Shop Singapore and the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (Pave), as well as the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, more women and men are voluntarily coming forward for help with domestic violence.

Pave saw an 11-per-cent increase in the number of women seeking help. As for its 191 male clients — most of them abusive spouses — 46 per cent sought help on their own accord, a huge jump from five years ago when only 13 per cent voluntarily sought help. The rest were ordered to do so by the court.

But when it comes to reporting domestic violence officially, victims are far less forthcoming. Only two in 10 abused women here would turn to the authorities for help, according to research commissioned by The Body Shop last year.

Hence, the theme of this year's campaign is "Break the silence on Domestic Violence: Talk to a friend". But getting people to open up is easier said than done.

Counsellors like Mr Adrian Lim Peng Ann and Pave's head of casework services, Ms Soh Siew Fung, put this down to a variety of reasons: Shame of washing one's dirty linen in public, fear of being ostracised by relatives, fear of further abuse, fear of losing the kids and breaking up the family, as well as "the loss of face".

Sometimes, Ms Soh added, "it could be

VIEWS ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

In comparative studies done here, the proportion of respondents who felt that abuse is not just a 'private' issue:

2003: 41% 2007: 49%

Those who thought violence may not stop without intervention:

2003: 57% 2007: 69%

Those who felt an abusive spouse should be reported to the authorities:

2003: 79% 2007: 90%

SOURCE: MCYS

that people misinterpret religious injunctions to take obedience and submission literally".

Actress Cynthia Lee Macquarrie, 29, emotionally recounted to TODAY how a close female relative was so badly beaten that she was hospitalised. Her family members were reluctant to face up to the problem of abuse, and some even stopped Ms Lee from calling the police.

"They felt such things were meant to be kept in the family. Talking about the problem gives it form; it forces one to confront reality," she said.

It is also not just women who are victims of domestic violence. Last year, one out of every 10 of those who applied to the court for personal protection orders were men. And the problem could be under-reported, because abused men are less likely to admit to it.

Overall, experts say, more needs to be done to raise awareness of what domestic violence is, and how to recognise the signs of it — something Pave is doing. It has been going to schools and there are plans to expand its public education programmes to tertiary institutions.

Said Mr Lim: "Children in abusive households should be encouraged to report instances of domestic violence to their teacher, or to the police."

Abused daughters become abusive mums?

WHAT some mothers may not realise, is that they can be abusive without being physical about it.

To underline the point that violence can be emotional as well as mental, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sport Yu-Foo Yee Shoon cited the example of an 11-year-old boy who killed himself after being constantly nagged at by his mother. Mrs Yu-Foo urged mums not to let work stress or family problems get the better of them.

Counsellors TODAY spoke to said mothers who abuse their own children have poor self-control and may have been conditioned to act in such a way, by their own history of violence within the family.

Counsellor and psychologist Adrian Lim Peng Ann said: "Women in abusive situations may be short-fused because they are very needy themselves. If they are not short-tempered, they are depressed."

One such mother, Ms Elizabetta Franzoso, recently came clean about hitting

her daughter.

In her book, *Stella's Mum Gets Her Groove Back*, Ms Franzoso reveals how she was physically abused as a child and that her parents also came from abusive households.

She first hit her own daughter, Stella, when she was four. "I flew into a terrible rage. I didn't even know where the anger came from, and I hit my daughter many times, smacking her on her head. After I realised what had happened, I swore I would never do it again. But I did," she wrote. "Finally, one day I realised I needed to get help."

Ms Franzoso, who is based in Singapore, went through many counselling sessions to overcome that anger. She is now founder and executive director of Inside-OutYou Coaching and Training.

Mr Lim noted that abused women don't automatically become abusive, and Pave's head of casework social services, Ms Soh Siew Fung, agrees. Among the numerous victims she has counselled, most were not likely to abuse their own children. ESTHER NG

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