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Vet at wildlife dept being probed over 'female dog' joke

By KRISTY INUS
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KOTA KINABALU: A senior veterinarian with the Wildlife Department is being investigated for inappropriate labelling three female colleagues in his Facebook this week which has ignited social media criticism.

In his post earlier this week, he has referred to his colleagues as female dogs, purportedly meant as a joke. He later apologised.

But his apology was not the end of the story when a former colleague who quit in 2019 has now made allegations of his continuous improper behaviour, sharing screenshots of interactions in her Facebook account. The ex-staffer also claimed misappropriation of funds happening back then.

The department later issued a show-cause letter to the veterinarian on his alleged sexual harassment against the three colleagues.

It is learnt that he had also responded to the letter.

Meanwhile, a coalition of 38 civil society organisations and 289 individuals have petitioned the state government yesterday to take firm action against him and also probe allegations of possible abuse in the use of funds at the department's wildlife rescue unit.

State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Jafry Ariffin said the matter was being viewed seriously and that disciplinary action was being taken against the officer.

He said the disciplinary action was under relevant public service regulations relating to the written statement on Facebook.

Jafry admitted that the incident has tarnished the good name of the public service.

He said the department was also re-looking claims of misappropriation of funds as alleged by the department's former staff who said she also sent a letter to the department director in 2019.

He said the matter was previously investigated and there were no complaints by donors over the use of the funds.

However, he said they will look into it again.

"The ministry will never compromise and will take stern action against any staff who takes advantage and abuses their position," he added.

Sabah Wildlife Department director Augustine Tuuga said that the senior officer had been relieved of his duties.