

TMJ calls for legislative amendments, immediate audit into children's shelters nationwide

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The Johor Crown Prince detailed this in a Facebook posting after having an audience with Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rina Mohd Harun, Unicef Representative to Malaysia Amanda Bissex and chairman of Johor Woman, Family and Community Development Puan Hajah Khairin-Nisa Ismail at the Royal Johor Polo Club, yesterday. - Pic credit Facebook HRH Crown Prince of Johor

KUALA LUMPUR: Tunku Mahkota of Johor, Tunku Ismail Sultan Ibrahim has called for legislative amendments such as to the Child Act 2001, immediate audit into children's shelters nationwide as well as a thorough study to be conducted on the state of childcare centres nationwide.

He said this in sending a strong message to the government, local authorities, and the public at large that children's welfare, especially those living in shelter homes should always be protected and well taken care of.

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Tengku Ismail said he had suggested the three important steps to be carried out to prevent the recurrence of abuse cases, like the one involving Bella, the 13-year-old Down Syndrome teenager currently at the centre of a court case involving the founder of a welfare home, Siti Bainun Ahd Razali.

"An enhancement on the current laws, such as the Child Act 2001 is needed immediately. This should include aspects of child centre registration, accreditation, assessment, funding and monitoring, to ensure that all operators are operating legally with a sense of public service.

"(Besides,) the Social Welfare Department (JKM) needs to audit all existing approved childcare centres and quickly close any childcare centres that are not registered with JKM or operating illegally starting with Johor immediately. Legal action should also be taken against the operators/owners of any illegally run establishments.

"An immediate study also needs to be done on the condition of child care centres starting in Johor commissioned together with guidelines from Unicef and other independent institutions.

The findings of this study should be made public," he shared in a Facebook post yesterday.

He further said he would personally ensure that the suggested improvements are taken seriously and carried out immediately.

"I would like to stress that the welfare of children, especially those in shelter homes should always be protected and well taken care of," he added.

Tengku Ismail had on April 17 shared that he would contact Rina to offer the services of his lawyers for free to hold a watching brief in the trial involving Bella.

Following that, Rina welcomed Tunku Ismail's offer to provide lawyers to help in the Bella abuse case.

The Sessions Court, on April 16, was told that Rumah Bonda founder Siti Bainun began disliking Bella after the girl pulled a curtain and dislodged it from the rod.

Siti Bainun, 30, is charged with two counts of neglecting and abusing the teenager to the point that the victim suffered injuries, physically and emotionally. She pleaded not guilty.

The offences were allegedly committed at a condominium in Wangsa Maju here, between February and June 2021, under Section 31(1)(a) of the Child Act 2001 which carries a jail sentence of up to 20 years or a fine of RM50,000 or both, upon condition.



HRH Crown Prince of Johor