New dept for children's issues to be set up, says deputy minister

KUALA LUMPUR: A new department will be set up to handle issues affecting children, says Datuk Zailah Mohd Yusof.

"The Children's Development Department will be set up as a new agency.

"This will involve amendments to laws as children's matters are handled by several agencies," the Deputy Women, Family and Community Development Minister said when replying to a question from Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said (BN-Pengerang) in Dewan Rakyat on Tuesday (Nov 2).

However, Zailah said no time frame was fixed as more discussions were needed with other relevant agencies connected to children's welfare.

She also said that her ministry was currently looking at restructuring the functions of certain agencies to better handle such issues.

"This includes upgrading the post of directors and employing more officers," she said.

Earlier, Azalina pointed out that there was only a division in the ministry and not a specific department to look after the welfare of children.

She noted that the division also had to deal with other matters such as those concerning the disabled, homeless and senior citizens.

"Based on the Statistics Department's 2020 data, there are 9.24 million children in the country, representing 28.3% of the entire population.

"I was informed that only five officers under the division are looking after children's welfare.

"This means that each officer has to take care of 1.848 million children," she said.

Azalina suggested that a new dedicated department be set up to look after children's welfare.

Alternatively, jurisdiction over such matters could be transferred to the Children's Commission under the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia. (Suhakam), she proposed.

Earlier, Zailah took note of the suggestion to enact a Children's Commission Act but noted that the proposed law must not overlap with the current functions of Suhakam.

https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2021/11/02/new-dept-for-children039s-issues-to-be-set-up-says-deputy-minister