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Zaharah-Custody

"FILIPINO" GIRL UNDER CUSTODY OF SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT

KUANTAN, Dec 28 (Bernama) -- The Social Welfare Department has been given the custody over the 13-year-old Malaysian girl who claimed of being raped at the Temporary Detention Centre at Menggatal, Sabah.

National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman said the girl would be placed under the Department's care until she reached the age of 18.

"We will do whatever necessary for the girl in terms of social welfare, education and so on," she told reporters after attending a Hari Raya gathering with residents of Taman Sri Mahkota Jaya here today.

Siti Zaharah said this when asked on the latest developments regarding the girl who claimed she had been raped while being held at the detention centre before being repatriated back to Philippines, last August.

The alleged rape of the girl, who had earlier claimed to be a Filipino had caused strains in diplomatic relations between Malaysia and Philippines.

Philippine president Gloria Macapagal Arroyo had also sent a protest note to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad regarding the matter.

However, police investigations last October found that the girl was a Malaysian and she was sent back here (Malaysia) last Dec 9.

Siti Zaharah said the move to take custody of the girl was made due to concerns over the unpreparedness of her family members to take her in and look after her properly.

Meanwhile, commenting on western scientists' claim on their success in producing the world's first human clone, Siti Zaharah said the success would not necessarily bring any good.

"The matter has to be studied from the aspects of religion, morale and humanity," she said.

She said much reference had to be made with various groups in order not to spark any controversies or create problems within the community.

"It (human cloning) has to be viewed from various angles, its pros and cons," she said.

Today's daily reported on the success by a sect which claimed it had produced the world's first human clone despite receiving international criticism.

The cloned baby girl was reported to be in healthy and good condition.

-- BERNAMA

MS SHR