

Move to protect vulnerable groups

Special Cabinet committee set up to safeguard their welfare

SEREMBAN: A Special Cabinet Committee for Protecting Vulnerable Groups has been set up to safeguard the welfare of these people, especially children, persons with disabilities (PwD), women and senior citizens, says Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob.

The committee is chaired by him and has representatives from the ministries of Women, Family and Community Development; Home; Education, Housing and Local Government; and Health; and the Prime Minister's Department (Religious Affairs).

He said the committee would

ensure all care centres are operated according to procedure in line with the Care Centres Act 1993.

"At the same time, this committee will also look into the operations of religious educational institutions like tahfiz centres which are not registered and not managed properly," he told reporters here yesterday.

Ismail Sabri said this after visiting Down Syndrome girl Bella at a Welfare Home under the supervision of the Social Welfare Department (JKM) here.

Also present were Women, Family and Community Develop-

ment Minister Datuk Seri Rina Harun and Malaysian National News Agency (Bernama) chairman Senator Datuk Ras Adiba Radzi.

Ismail Sabri said he found Bella to be in good condition, having a high level of self-confidence and could manage herself.

"Today, I had an opportunity to meet with Bella in a safe place under the supervision of JKJ. Bella has been placed here since July 5 last year.

"From my observation just now, Bella's emotion was normal, no more emotional disturbance like

when she was first brought here. In fact, her injuries, wounds and the like have healed," he said.

Ismail Sabri said Bella also brought him to visit dorm rooms at the care centre and introduced her friends to him.

He said the government took a serious view of the incident which befell Bella, who is alleged to have been tortured and neglected since 2020.

"The case of this special child is being heard in court and all parties should respect the ongoing legal process.

"The incident that befell Bella

was one of several cases which happened but were not reported to the authorities," he said.

Ismail Sabri advised those following the developments concerning Bella to place their full trust in the court to make a ruling on the teenager's case.

"Bella's case has been brought to court, so it is sub judice to discuss it openly. We leave it to the court to make a decision.

"If we comment too much, we may be viewed as interfering with the conduct of the court hearing and cited for subjudice," he added.