

Tue, 16 June 2009 - ♦KUALA LUMPUR: A special court for children away from court complexes, presided over by magistrates trained in children's rights and international juvenile justice.

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The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia is also working on alternatives to punishment for children including community service and restitution for juvenile offences especially for petty crimes.

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These are among recommendations to the government that are under consideration.

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According to the commission's 2008 annual report tabled in Parliament yesterday, Suhakam was concerned that while the government was making an effort to consider its recommendations, its response to matters such as arbitrary detention under the Internal Security Act, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of opinion and expression was still negative.

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The report also stated that while Suhakam supported the right to freedom of speech and expression, it recognised that in dealing with a sensitive subject like religion, there was a need to respect the rights of everyone involved.

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On the administration of justice, Suhakam recommended that the prime minister's wide discretionary powers under the Judicial Appointments Commission Act be kept to the minimum, in order to be impartial in judicial appointments.

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It also reiterated its stand that all forms of preventive legislation be repealed in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and that all detainees be released or brought to justice. Detainees who are of old age or in fragile health should also be released.

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Suhakam also urged the government to review all land laws that do not recognise Native Customary Rights to safeguard the rights of Orang Asli.

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It also recommended that migrant workers be allowed to set up or join trade unions.

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The report said Suhakam was also hoping for a positive move by the government to help maintain its international status as an A category national human rights institution.

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In April, the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) had been advised to downgrade Suhakam to B status for non-compliance with

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