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SUHAKAM CALLS FOR URGENT REFORMS TO IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTRES

KUALA LUMPUR (1 JULY 2026) – The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) is deeply concerned by the disclosure that 465 deaths were recorded in immigration detention depots between 2021 and 2025, as reported by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Parliament. These figures underscore the urgent need for comprehensive reforms to better protect the lives, dignity and health of all persons held in immigration detention.

Every death in custody must be treated with the utmost seriousness. Regardless of an individual's immigration status, every person deprived of liberty remains entitled to the right to life, the highest attainable standard of health, and to be treated with humanity and dignity.

SUHAKAM has consistently maintained that deaths in custody are not merely operational or administrative matters, but serious human rights concerns that demand transparency, accountability and meaningful systemic reform. Through its monitoring visits to immigration detention depots and continuous engagement with the relevant authorities, the Commission has repeatedly raised concerns over overcrowding, inadequate healthcare services, delayed medical referrals, poor sanitation, insufficient nutrition, prolonged detention, and the detrimental impact of these conditions on the physical and mental well-being of detainees. These long-standing concerns highlight the need for sustained structural reforms to ensure that immigration detention facilities comply with Malaysia's human rights obligations.

Therefore, SUHAKAM reiterates its longstanding recommendations that the Government:

- i. Strengthen healthcare services in all immigration detention depots by ensuring adequate numbers of qualified medical personnel, regular health screenings, prompt referrals to hospitals, continuous treatment for chronic illnesses, and sufficient access to essential medicines;
- ii. Improve detention conditions by addressing overcrowding, sanitation, ventilation, nutrition and access to clean water to minimise the risk of communicable diseases and prevent avoidable deaths;
- iii. Ensure every death in custody is subject to a prompt, independent, transparent and effective investigation, with findings made public where appropriate and accountability established whenever negligence or misconduct is identified; and
- iv. Strengthen independent monitoring of immigration detention facilities by facilitating regular oversight by SUHAKAM and other relevant independent bodies.

Beyond improving conditions of detention, greater emphasis must also be placed on preventive measures. Early medical screening upon admission, regular health assessments, continuous monitoring of detainees with pre-existing medical conditions, timely referrals for specialist treatment, and uninterrupted access to essential healthcare are critical to preventing avoidable deaths in custody. The reported number of deaths should serve as a catalyst for the Government to undertake a comprehensive review of immigration detention policies and practices, placing equal emphasis on accountability for deaths that occur and, more importantly, on preventing future deaths through effective, rights-based reforms.

SUHAKAM therefore calls on the Government to take immediate and concrete action to strengthen healthcare, improve detention conditions, and implement rights-based reforms to ensure that every individual in immigration detention is treated with dignity and that preventable deaths are never regarded as inevitable.

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**Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
1 July 2026**