

EDITOR, NEWS DESK

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**CHILDREN COMMISSIONERS CALL FOR CHILD-SENSITIVE AND PROTECTIVE
RESPONSE IN CSAM CASES INVOLVING CHILDREN**

KUALA LUMPUR (24 SEPTEMBER 2026) - Children's Commissioners (CC) of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) commend the Royal Malaysia Police (PDRM) and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) for the successful implementation of Ops Pedo 3.0, and for their continued efforts to combat child sexual abuse material (CSAM) and online sexual exploitation of children. CC note the reported arrest of 53 individuals, including eight children, the youngest reportedly aged 13, following nationwide operations conducted from 14 to 16 September 2026.

CSAM must be treated with the utmost seriousness. It is not merely illicit or harmful digital content; it is evidence of the sexual abuse and exploitation of children. The production, possession, distribution, sharing, sale and other forms of dissemination of CSAM must be addressed firmly. Equally important are efforts to identify and protect children depicted in such material, stop its further circulation, remove harmful content and prevent further victimisation. Malaysian law expressly criminalises, among other conduct, the production, distribution and possession or control of CSAM under the Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 (Act 792).

At the same time, particular caution is required when the person arrested in connection with CSAM-related conduct is a child. A child found in possession of, sharing or allegedly selling CSAM should not automatically be viewed or treated in the same manner as an adult perpetrator. The circumstances of each child must be carefully and individually assessed, including their age, level of understanding, vulnerability, role in the alleged conduct and the circumstances in which they came into possession of or became involved with the material.

A child involved in CSAM-related conduct may, in some circumstances, have been subjected to grooming, peer pressure, threats, coercion, blackmail or sextortion, manipulation, economic exploitation or other forms of online abuse. This does not mean that every child involved is necessarily a victim. Rather, the possibility that a child may have been exploited or coerced must be properly investigated. This is particularly important in light of the legal recognition of child grooming and related sexual offences under Act 792.

CC emphasise that the child justice response should therefore not begin primarily from a punitive perspective. Where a child is suspected of involvement in CSAM-related conduct, the response should include an individual protection and risk assessment, safeguarding measures, investigation into possible grooming or exploitation, psychosocial support and counselling, digital safety education, rehabilitation, family and social support, and diversion where legally appropriate. Such an approach is consistent with the CRC principles concerning the best interests of the child, protection from violence and sexual exploitation, and the reintegration of children in conflict with the law.

A child-sensitive approach, however, does not mean that authorities should ignore unlawful conduct or allow CSAM to continue circulating. Law enforcement must continue to take appropriate action to stop further dissemination, protect and identify child victims, secure and examine relevant digital evidence, identify online networks and facilitators, and investigate any adults who may have groomed, coerced, exploited or profited from children. The distinction is that the role and circumstances of a child must be assessed separately from those of adult perpetrators and exploiters.

**MEDIA STATEMENT
THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER OF THE
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION OF MALAYSIA (SUHAKAM)**

CC are also concerned that an overly punitive response towards children may create a risk of further victimisation and under-reporting. A child who has been exploited or coerced may become fearful of approaching authorities or seeking assistance if they believe that disclosure could result primarily in their own criminalisation. This is a risk that should be carefully considered when determining the appropriate response, particularly where there are indications of grooming, coercion or exploitation.

Where a child is found to have participated in the possession, sharing or distribution of CSAM, the response should therefore be child-sensitive, proportionate, rehabilitative and consistent with the principles of child justice. Diversion should be considered where legally appropriate and where it serves the child's best interests, public protection and the prevention of reoffending. Where deprivation of liberty is contemplated, international child-rights standards require that it be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period.

CC call upon all relevant authorities to ensure that investigations involving children are conducted with due regard to child protection and child justice principles, while ensuring that adult perpetrators, exploiters and networks facilitating the sexual exploitation of children are fully investigated and held accountable in accordance with the law.

Protecting children from sexual exploitation requires more than enforcement alone. It requires prevention, early intervention, effective digital safety measures, protection and support for victims, rehabilitation of children in conflict with the law, and a justice system that recognises every child as a rights-holder.

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**Children's Commissioners (CC)
Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM)
24 September 2026**