

LEFT FOR 4 HOURS

# OUTCRY OVER BOY'S DEATH IN VAN

Revamp of laws and practices urgently needed to curb such tragedies, say experts, NGOs

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**T**HE tragic death of a 5-year-old boy left in a locked school van has shocked the country and sparked urgent discussions on child safety in transportation.

As public pressure mounts, experts are calling for a comprehensive overhaul, not just of regulations, but also of everyday practices and community culture.

Putra Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Group at Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) head and Safe Kids Malaysia ex-

ecutive director Professor Dr Kulanthayan K.C. Mani said the issue of children being forgotten in vehicles was entirely preventable. He said that no family should ever have to experience such a loss.

"We need a multi-pronged approach, technological, procedural and educational to prevent such cases," he said.

Kulanthayan called for parent-teacher associations (PTAs) to keep records of transport arrangements and to be actively engaged in monitoring schoolchildren.

"A simple step like this could save a life."

MY Mobility Vision founder and transport consultant Wan Agyl Wan Hassan said the immediate safety improvement would be child-check alarm systems.

"These systems are simple yet

effective. They require the driver to walk to the back of the van to deactivate the alarm.

"Countries like South Korea already mandate them," he said.

Wan Agyl suggested adding attendance logbooks or digital tracking systems to monitor pickups and drop-offs, but warned that cost remains a significant obstacle.

"Most van operators are small-scale and are struggling to cover costs. We cannot impose safety upgrades without financial support," he said.

He also proposed a mobile verification app for parents to check the legitimacy

of van operators, providing informal services with a path to formalisation without exclusion.

Suriana Welfare Society of Malaysia consultant and child safety advocate Dr James



Professor Dr  
Kulanthayan K.C.  
Mani

Nayagam pointed out that a lack of collaboration among stakeholders was a major issue.

"We must get parents, schools and (transport) operators to work together in a more systematic way.

"By coordinating efforts, from basic checklists to shared accountability, we can significantly reduce these risks."

He said raising public awareness and involving PTAs in monitoring transport arrangements would be key to improving safety.

"The community has to be part of the solution, it can't be left to the authorities alone."

From a legal standpoint, Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) Child Commissioner Dr Farah Nini Dusuki underscored the importance of enforcing child protection laws.

"Failure to check for children can be deemed negligence under Section 31 of the Child Act 2001.

"If a child doesn't show up at school, the centre should contact the parents immediately. This is a basic, proactive safeguard."

As Malaysia mourns this avoidable loss, experts agree on one thing — safety reform must be inclusive, affordable and community-driven.

It was reported that the boy died after being left in a locked school van for over four hours at Taman Bukit Indah in Iskandar Puteri, Johor, on April 30.

Police have arrested the school van driver to assist in investigations under Section 31(1)(a) of the Child Act 2001 for negligence resulting in harm to a child.



Wan Agyl Wan  
Hassan