

# Ministry mulls rehab scheme for troubled students

**KUALA LUMPUR** — The government is looking to implement a juvenile diversion programme that will allow for the rehabilitation of troubled students before they are prosecuted through the justice system.

The initiative was proposed by Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Rohani Abdul Karim during a town hall discussion at the Malaysian Social Institute yesterday.

"The ministry suggests that students should no longer be expelled from school, instead they should go through

rehabilitation classes and diversion programmes," she said in a speech read by ministry secretary-general Datuk Suriani Ahmad.

"This will allow for long-term solutions for delinquent students. Physical punishment is not the long-term solution as it is done on a one-off basis."

The diversion programme concept is not new and is practised in New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, among others.

The programme, which focuses on remedying bad behaviour that would

lead to an arrest, is an attempt at avoiding conviction and a criminal record through rehabilitation.

Youths would still be accountable for their actions but as a form of punishment they would instead be required to go through correctional programmes.

Rohani said that children, as the next generation of leaders, should be given a second chance to better themselves before falling prey to the harsh circumstances of their actions.

"They are still developing physically, mentally and emotionally, we want them

to have opportunities to get back on the right track before they are punished as offenders," she said.

Moderating the discussion on issues involving children was Universiti Putra Malaysia Psychiatry Department Associate Professor Zubaidah Jamil Osman who said social workers have to be stationed in schools to aid the initiative.

Zubaidah said there is no point for rehabilitation programmes if children return to toxic environments at home.