

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

END CHILD MARRIAGES: GIRLS NOT BRIDES

Bandar Sunway, 26 November 2019 - The Management of the Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI) urges Malaysians to support the call to end child marriages.

In particular, we implore the Federal Government to expedite the amendments to section 10 of the Law Reform (Marriage and Divorce) Act 1976 [Act 164] (LRA) and section 8 of the Islamic Family Law (Federal Territory) Act 1984 [Act 303] in order to increase the minimum age of marriage to 18. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) defines a child as *“every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”*. Therefore, child marriage refers to a marriage or an informal union in which one or both parties are younger than 18 years.

Malaysia, being party to CRC, has clear obligations to abolish practices that are harmful to children including child marriages as this will often deprive them of their right to education, increase in fatality occurrences during child birth and in some cases, lead to an abusive marriage.

We applaud and support the decision made by the State Governments of Selangor, Penang, Sabah, Johor, Melaka and Perak to amend their states’ Islamic laws in order to ban child marriages. We hope that the State Governments of Sarawak, Pahang, Terengganu, Perlis, Negeri Sembilan, Kedah and Kelantan would soon be following suit. While there have been on-going efforts on the part of the Federal Government to amend relevant legislations, we urge the Federal Government to expedite the issuance of the detailed guidelines in order for the Shariah Court judges to approve the child marriages based on the existing state Islamic laws.

We strongly call on the Federal Government and State Governments to take the necessary measures to amend the relevant laws and to ensure that our domestic legal frameworks are “fully compatible” with international and regional human rights standards which firmly condemn child marriages.

We stand in solidarity with all Malaysians who believe in doing what is best and right for our children and the future generations.

END

About Asian Strategy & Leadership Institute (ASLI)

The Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute or in short “ASLI” is Malaysia’s leading independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit think-tank. Since its establishment in 1993, ASLI has established a renowned reputation as the definitive link between the public sector, the private sector, academia and civil society in pursuit of its mission of creating a better society. ASLI is owned and governed by the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation (JCF). We curate thought-provoking and intellectual dialogues in an effort to bring change in public policies for the betterment of society. We provide strategic analysis and advise on critical issues impacting the nation and beyond. In the wider Asia Pacific region, we capitalise on our influential network to harness best practices and connect strategic partners across APAC on highest-value business investment and trade opportunities to foster bilateral relations and economic growth. Further information of ASLI is available at www.asli.com.my

Contacts:

Mr. Danesh Chandran
Head, ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies
danesh@asli.com.my

Mr. Thiyagu Ganesan
Director, ASLI Centre for Public Policy Studies
thiyagu@asli.com.my