

MAHATHIR-DRUG

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PENANG, MARCH 8 (BERNAMA) — THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO PLACE THE ANTI-NARCOTICS BUREAU UNDER THE HOME AFFAIRS MINISTRY TO STRENGTHEN ITS WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE.

IN LINE WITH THIS, HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER TAN SRI GHAZALI SHAFIE HAS BEEN APPOINTED THE NEW CHAIRMAN OF THE ANTI-DRUG ACTION UNIT, IN PLACE OF NEGRI SEMBILAN MENTRI BESAR DATUK RAIS YATIM. DATUK RAIS WILL, HOWEVER, REMAIN A MEMBER OF THE UNIT.

DISCLOSING THIS HERE TODAY, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID THE WAR AGAINST DRUG ABUSE NEEDED COORDINATION AT THE CENTRAL LEVEL. 46

THIS MEANT THAT SOMEONE FROM THE +CENTRE+ OUGHT TO HEAD IT.

AS IT IS NOW, DATUK RAIS WAS AWAY FROM THE CENTRE, + HE SAID AFTER CHAIRING THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF THE UNIT AT THE UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA HERE.

THE FIVE-HOUR MEETING WAS ALSO ATTENDED BY TAN SRI GHAZALI SHAFIE, DATUK RAIS, THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF CUSTOMS, DATUK RAHIM DATUK TAK, THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF THE ANTI-NARCOTICS BUREAU, DATUK JARJIS HAJI ALI, THE DEPUTY SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE INFORMATION MINISTRY, DATUK WAN MAHMUD PAWANTEH, AND THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF WELFARE SERVICES, ENCIK ADNAN ABDULLAH. — BERNAMA MORE 1838/ZCM

MAHATHIR-DRUG 2 PENANG

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE ROLE OF THE UNIT BE EXPANDED AS THE DRUG PROBLEM WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE ACUTE.

THE UNIT, HE SAID, WOULD ALSO REPORT ITS ACTIVITIES TO THE CABINET COMMITTEE ON DRUG ABUSE FOR WHICH HE HIMSELF WAS THE CHAIRMAN.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER REVEALED THAT SINCE LAST YEAR A TOTAL OF 36,000 DRUG ABUSERS HAD BEEN DETECTED IN THE COUNTRY.

EIGHTY PER CENT OF THEM WERE BETWEEN THE AGES OF 15 AND 29.

HE SAID THAT IF THE UN'S CONTENTION THAT THE NUMBER OF DETECTED DRUG ADDICTS WOULD NORMALLY REPRESENT ONLY ABOUT 1/10 OF THE ACTUAL FIGURE, MALAYSIA'S REAL FIGURE OF DRUG ADDICTS WOULD SWELL TO 350,000.

HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT'S ESTIMATE WAS AROUND 250,000.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE DRUG ADDICTS IN MALAYSIA WERE YOUNG PEOPLE SHOWED THAT DRUG ADDICTION STARTED AT AN EARLY STAGE OF THEIR LIVES.

THIS HAD CAUSED A CONSIDERABLE CONCERN TO THE GOVERNMENT.

THIS PHENOMENON ALSO INDICATED THAT THE YOUTH WERE NOT ENJOYING IDEAL CONDITIONS AT HOME, GENERATED PROBABLY BY THE LACK OF PARENTAL CARE.

MAHATHIR - DRUG 3 PENANG 金'金'金'

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAD PROVIDED SEVERAL REHABILITATION CENTRES FOR THE ADDICTS AND OTHER EFFORTS TO CURB THE PROBLEM, IT WOULD NOT BE IN THE POSITION TO CATER FOR ALL.

THE VARIOUS REHABILITATION CENTRES NOW AVAILABLE IN THE COUNTRY WERE ONLY CAPABLE OF CATERING FOR ABOUT 4,000 PEOPLE.

IN VIEW OF THIS, SOME PEOPLE HAD BEEN TAKING THE ADVANTAGE OF TREATING THE ADDICTS ON THEIR OWN SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF MAKING PROFITS.

ON DRUG SEIZURE, THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAD SEIZED LARGE QUANTITIES OF DRUGS SO FAR, THERE WAS NO INDICATION WHATSOEVER THAT THE SUPPLY LINE HAD BEEN DESTROYED.

ASKED WHETHER OR NOT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD CONSIDER ISOLATING THE ADDICTS IN AN ISLAND, DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID THE IDEA HAD BEEN CONSIDERED.

HOWEVER, UNTIL TODAY THE ISLAND HAD NOT BEEN FOUND.

HE ALSO DISMISSED A SUGGESTION THAT DRUG ADDICTION TREATED AS A CRIME.

THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT WANT TO PASS A LAW THAT COULD NOT BE ENFORCED, HE EXPLAINED.

—BERNAMA HM 1915