

MAHATHIR-DRUGS

79
KUALA LUMPUR, JUNE 18 (BERNAMA) — BETWEEN 250,000 AND 380,000 PERSONS IN MALAYSIA ARE INVOLVED IN DRUG ABUSE, AND MOST OF THEM ARE YOUNGSTERS, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

THERE WAS ADEQUATE STATISTICAL EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT ALMOST 90 PER CENT OF DRUG ABUSERS WERE MALES UNDER 30 YEARS OF AGE, HE ADDED WHEN OPENING THE FIRST MEETING OF THE COMMONWEALTH WORKING GROUP OF ASIA AND PACIFIC REGION ON ILLICIT DRUGS, HERE.

+THIS PROBLEM BECOMES EVEN MORE SIGNIFICANT WHEN CONSIDERATION IS GIVEN TO THE FACT THAT AT PRESENT MALES ACCOUNT FOR 11.2 PER CENT OF THE TOTAL POPULATION OF 16 TO 30 YEARS IN PENINSULAR MALAYSIA.

+IT IS THEREFORE EVIDENT THAT PERSONS AT RISK ARE THE YOUTHS OF THIS COUNTRY, WHO REPRESENT THE MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE OF THE NATION, + HE SAID.

AUSTRALIA, BANGLADESH, INDIA, NEW ZEALAND, PAPUA NEW GUINEA, SINGAPORE, SRI LANKA, TONGA, WESTERN SAMOA AND MALAYSIA ARE PARTICIPATING IN THE FIVE-DAY MEETING. -- BERNAMA MORE 1413/SZ

NO29 (F)
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FOURTEEN COUNTRIES AND INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES ARE ATTENDING AS OBSERVERS. AMONG THEM ARE BRUNEI, CANADA, FRANCE, HONG KONG, INDONESIA, THE NETHERLANDS, THE PHILIPPINES, SWEDEN, THAILAND AND THE U.S.A. AND INTERPOL.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID MALAYSIA, BY VIRTUE OF HER GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION, WAS FACED WITH A SERIOUS PROBLEM OF ILLEGAL DRUG TRAFFICKING.

THE NATIONAL ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES, HE SAID, HAD RESPONDED WELL TO CURB THIS TRAFFIC AND IT WAS REFLECTED BY THE LARGE SEIZURE OF ILLICIT DRUGS MADE BETWEEN 1970 AND 1978.

DURING THE PERIOD, A TOTAL OF 11,721 KG OF OPIUM, 470,434 KG OF MORPHINE, 430,887 KG OF HEROIN AND NEARLY 9,000 KG OF DRY CANNABIS, MORE THAN 200,000 CANNABIS PLANTS AND 160,000 PSYCHOTROPIC TABLETS WERE SEIZED.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR, WHO IS ALSO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NATIONAL CABINET COMMITTEE ON DRUG ABUSE CONTROL SAID WHILST THESE FIGURES ESTABLISHED THE FACT THAT MALAYSIA WAS BEING USED AS A TRANSIT ROUTE FOR THE TRAFFICKING OF ILLICIT DRUGS, IT WAS EQUALLY BECOMING APPARENT THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE THE ILLICIT DRUGS WERE BECOMING EASILY AVAILABLE IN THE COUNTRY. 148
— BERNAMA MORE 1417/SZ

NO30 (F)
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DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID IT WAS ESSENTIAL FOR THE WORLD TO REALISE THAT DRUG ABUSE COULD SPREAD FROM ONE SOCIETY TO ANOTHER AND AS SUCH NO LONGER COULD ANY NATION AFFORD TO SIT BY THE SIDELINES AND BLISSFULLY DISREGARD THE SUFFERINGS OF ITS NEIGHBOURS WHO WERE AFFLICTED BY THIS CRUEL DISEASE.

HE HOPED THAT THE MEETING WOULD DISCUSS VARIOUS MEASURES TO DISCOURAGE CULTIVATION, PRODUCTION AND TRAFFICKING OF ILLICIT DRUGS.

AT THE SAME TIME, HE ALSO HOPED THAT IN DISCUSSING THESE PROBLEMS THE MEETING WOULD ALSO OUTLINE THE SCOPE FOR GREATER REGIONAL COOPERATION AND JOINT EFFORTS IN ERADICATING DRUG MENACE.

THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER POINTED OUT THAT THE MEETING WAS SIGNIFICANT AS THE COUNTRIES PARTICIPATING WERE WITHIN THE AREA OF THE +GOLDEN TRIANGLE+ WHICH COULD BE APPROPRIATELY DESCRIBED AS THE HUB AND PRIMARY SOURCE OF ILLICIT DRUGS.

HE SAID THAT IT WAS INAPPROPRIATE TO ATTRIBUTE THE ENTIRE BLAME FOR THE DRUG ABUSE MENACE ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT AND MODERNISATION. -- BERNAMA MORE 1420/SZ
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+EXTERNAL INFLUENCES AND PRESSURES ARE EQUALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR AGGRAVATING THIS PROBLEMS,+ HE ADDED.

HE POINTED OUT THAT BECAUSE OF THE LUCRATIVE NATURE OF THE TRANSACTIONS, PEOPLE IN TRAFFICKING WERE NOW PREPARED TO TAKE HIGHER RISKS.

THIS PROBLEM, HE ADDED, WAS FURTHER COMPOUNDED BY THE FACT THAT DIFFERENT COUNTRIES ADOPTED VARYING STANDARDS OF PUNISHMENT FOR DRUG RELATED OFFENCES.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR SAID WHILST MALAYSIA ADHERED TO STRINGENT MEASURES, IT WAS EVIDENT THAT A NUMBER OF OTHER COUNTRIES APPEARED TO TOLERATE DRUG RELATED OFFENCES AND THE PUNISHMENTS DO NOT REFLECT THE SEVERITY OF THE OFFENCES.

HE ASSURED THE PARTICIPANTS THAT MALAYSIA WOULD GIVE DUE CONSIDERATION TO ALL THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS. -- BERNAMA 1425/SZ