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Mahathir - Dadah

GOVT TO INVESTIGATE MANHANDLING CLAIMS AT PUSAT SERENTI- DR MAHATHIR

ALOR SETAR, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today gave an assurance that the government will investigate claims by dadah addicts that they have been manhandled at rehabilitation centres.

Kicking and beating and other such abuse against inmates of rehabilitation centres should be stopped, Dr Mahathir, who is also Home Minister said.

He however reminded them that the Pusat Serenti was a place for rehabilitating addicts and the regulations were in fact strict to ensure the effectiveness of rehabilitation programmes.

"The Pusat serenti is not a place for a holiday but to treat and rehabilitate people who have committed the offence of becoming addicted to dadah," he said on arrival at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport here to attend the breaking of fast at the Masjid Bandar Bukit Kayu Hitam.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked to comment on the claims by Pusat Serenti inmates that they were ill-treated and suffered discomfort at such centres.

He said the government could not afford them treatment such as that available at holiday resorts as gentle and soft treatment would not benefit them in anyway.

"If it is that easy ... they will go in, have a rest and then return to their old work (dadah addiction), where is the penalty."

"If we are urged to stop any manhandling, we can do that but if they want comfortable centres, sorrylah," he said.

The Prime Minister stressed that regulations and the treatment accorded to the addicts had to be strict to ensure that the inmates abided by directives.

Dr Mahathir, who is Chairman of the National Dadah Council, said the dadah addiction problem was very difficult to handle and was a physical and mental burden on their family and relatives as well.

"I know because I too have a family member involved in dadah. He does all kinds of things and even wants to kill people and thus makes other people afraid...all because he wants dadah," the Prime Minister said.

Asked whether the present rehabilitation programme needs to be reviewed, Dr Mahathir said he was prepared to accept any proposal that was better than the method currently employed.

He said the government had spent much money on the programme but most of the the ex-dadah addicts returned to their old way of life.

"They are not thankful in the least. They don't have any responsibility to themselves, to the family or society but expect society to be responsible for them," he said.

Asked on the views of certain people that the Pusat Serenti was more of a detention centre, Dr Mahathir said there was truth in such claims as the person had to be detained to rehabilitate him.

On claims that the Pusat Serenti did not have psychologists, he said the pool of psychologists in the country was very small.

"It is not easy to look for psychologists but if anyone of them wants to provide voluntary service at the pusat serenti, we are ready to take them anytime," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the dadah addict rehabilitation programme would continue but reiterated that the government could not afford to provide more comfortable rehabilitation centres.

He said the dadah addiction problem in the country was very serious with more than 200,000 people addicted to dadah.

This figure was only official statistics but from past experience there could be five addicts for every addict who had been identified.

Dr Mahathir was also unhappy over the attitude of some people who had a narrow perception and were not willing to help ex-addicts.

"People's response has been very bad. If they know they are from rehab centres, they don't employ them and don't trust them. Even there are parents who don't accept their children who have been rehabilitated," Dr Mahathir added. -- BERNAMA

MFJ AAM