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Junid-Students

20,000 STUDENTS ESTIMATED TO BE INVOLVED IN DADAH

KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- The problem of drug addiction among students in the country is very serious with an estimated 20,000 students hooked to the habit, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said today.

"If the figure is already 20,000, it is very serious ... we have not gone all out yet. If we do, I think the figure is big," he told reporters at the presentation of a RM65,000 car, from Tan Chong and Sons Co. Sdn Bhd, to Pemadam to be used by former drug addicts to keep the North-South Highway clean.

The Projek Lebuhraya Utara-Selatan (Plus) had given a RM8 million maintenance contract to Gema Sepakat whose workers comprised former drug addicts.

He said the government would not keep secret the seriousness of the situation but instead would take immediate action to stop it before it turned to worse, including intensifying preventive and educational programmes.

Megat Junid, who chaired the National Narcotics Council meeting yesterday, said he had asked the committee headed by the other Deputy Home Minister Ong Ka Ting to study and plan a suitable rehabilitation programme for students turned addicts.

The committee had been given two months to submit its proposal to the council, he said, adding that such a programme was needed considering the students were juveniles and would still have to continue with their education.

"We can't send them to rehabilitation centres. It could make things worse, mixing with adults.

"If we ask them to stop schooling and let the parents take care of them, then we will be throwing the problem into the street. This is the dilemma we are facing," he said.

Megat Junid said the council also decided to implement as soon as possible the project to use Naltrexzone pills in the treatment of drug addicts.

He said the decision had been forwarded to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for their green light.

Some 2,000 addicts in rehabilitation centres throughout the country have been identified for the pill treatment where they would take a pill per day and would vomit if they take drugs the same day.

An experiment, carried out by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) several years ago, revealed that 91 per cent of drug addicts given the treatment were fully cured.

Megat Junid said if the Naltrexzone pioneer project proved successful, parents with addicted children could ask for rehabilitation treatment to be conducted at home.

During the function, he also received cassettes containing songs on leading a better life from Syarikat Nusantara Gems for rehabilitation centres. -- BERNAMA

AFY ABG