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Handcuffing of pupils: IGP states police stand

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Rahim Noor said today that police would exercise their utmost discretion over the use of handcuffs when arresting schoolchildren from now on, but he could not give an assurance that they would not be handcuffed.

He told a Press conference after a meeting with Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak that police would handcuff pupils suspected to be involved in crime only if it was absolutely necessary.

In defending the police for handcuffing 13 pupils aged between 11 and 17 in Muar last Monday, he said it was a precautionary measure as the "litigious society must understand the constraints faced by police when dealing with suspects".

"We handcuff suspects for two reasons. One, if the crime said to be committed by the suspect was violent. A suspect like that could attack the police," said Rahim.

"The other reason is to prevent escape."

If a suspect escaped, the police officer would be suspended for negligence, he added.

He was asked why it was necessary to handcuff schoolchildren when they posed no danger.

He said he could not give an assurance that schoolchildren involved in crime would not be handcuffed.

However, in the face of strong criticisms on the handcuffing of pupils, Rahim said police would take a more sensitive approach.

He said he also told the Cabinet Committee on Social Ills, which met today, that the police would try to avoid arresting schoolchildren within the school compound.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said on Saturday that it was unnecessary to handcuff schoolchildren.

Dr Mahathir was commenting on the incident in Muar in which 13 pupils, including three primary schoolchildren, were arrested in anti-dadah raids. They were handcuffed and taken to the police station.

Meanwhile, in Seri Manjung, Deputy Inspector General of Police Tan Sri Samsuri Arshad today reminded policemen to exercise "absolute discretion" on the use of handcuffs when dealing with juveniles involved in criminal offences.

"We have always advised our men to exercise their discretion in a situation like this," he told reporters after opening the RM4.3 million Manjung police quarters.

"The officer has to prevent the suspect from escaping.

"If the suspect escapes the officer would have to answer for it.

"We have written instructions from the IGP as well as the Juvenile Ordinance and also section 15 of the Criminal Procedure Code to serve as a guide for the officers to follow when making such arrests," he said.

When a juvenile was unco-operative and involved in serious crimes, the officer would have to decide whether to use the handcuffs, he added.

He said the killing of a 14-year-old pupil in Tampoi, Johor, on Feb 6, was a good example of whether handcuffs should be used when detaining a suspect.

Later, Perak Chief Police Officer Deputy Commissioner Datuk Mohamed Sedek Mohamed Ali said so far schoolchildren from the State had not been involved in distributing dadah supplied by syndicates.

Asked whether the police would launch similar operations like those held in Pahang, Johor and Malacca, he said it was not necessary as the problem in the State was under control.

He said police officers had regular meetings with Education Department officers to discuss pupils' problems.

"The last meeting was held in September last year.

"If there are problems, the police and the education officers would find ways to overcome them," he said.

Mohamed Sedek said police had also placed liaison officers in schools to establish a better rapport between them.

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