

30 DEC 1997

Prisons

NEW CHIEF PLEDGES TO UPGRADE IN-PRISON INDUSTRIES

KAJANG, Dec 30 (Bernama) -- The new Prisons director-general Omar Mohamed Dan said he is preparing a proposal paper on upgrading prison-based industries to help jails be self-financing and less dependent on government funds.

He would, among other things, propose for the appointment of marketing officers from among prison staff to promote products made by inmates nation-wide to the public.

The paper would also spell out the Prisons Department's further cost-cutting measures, Omar told reporters after formally taking over the post from out-going director-general Datuk Zaman Khan who retires tomorrow.

Omar said the department would foster closer rapport with the private sector to modernise prison-based industries including buying new machines and introducing the latest approach in skills training.

Presently, inmates have been churning out products such as furniture, handicrafts, clothings and carpets for sale to the public.

"Prison-based industries involving 35 jails nation-wide saw a turnover of RM4.5 million in 1996 compared with only RM3 million in the previous year," Omar said.

The government gets 50 per cent of the income from prison-based industries, the inmates 40 per cent and the remainder goes to a welfare trust fund for prison staff and inmates.

Omar's promotion from deputy director-general to director-general was historic in that the post was once again held by a prison officer after eight years.

Zaman Khan, a police top brass has held the post since February 1994 succeeding another senior police officer Datuk Yassin Jaafar who was prisons director-general from Feb 7 1989.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Home Minister, had then seconded Yassin following a series of jailbreaks, alleged drug trafficking rings among warders and cases of special treatment for certain inmates.-- BERNAMA

NY rn