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Studying proposal to whip first time escapees

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GRIK, Sun. - The National Dadah Council is studying the proposal by Prime Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that those who escape from dadah rehabilitation centres for the first time be subjected to mandatory whipping.

Deputy Home Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub said that once completed, the proposal would be submitted to the Attorney-General before the Cabinet approves it for tabling in the Parliament.

He said the proposal had been included in the proposed amendments to the Drugs Dependants (Treatment and Rehabilitation) Act 1983.

He said earlier it was proposed that only second-time escapees be whipped but Dr Mahathir had wanted the first time escapees to be also whipped because of the seriousness of the situation.

Megat Junid, who was speaking to reporters after opening a seminar on parental guidance organised by the Umno Grik division said Dr Mahathir was concerned because the Government had spent a lot of money on rehabilitating the dadah addicts.

"The addicts have degraded themselves, shamed their parents and country, and must, therefore, face the consequences.

"If they do not appreciate our efforts to rehabilitate them, they have to be punished," he said, adding that other amendments to the Act were still being studied.

Other amendments include whipping for staff of rehabilitation centres and prisons caught for supplying dadah.

Megat Junid also said there was no other country which had such a system where dadah addicts were sent to rehabilitation centres.

"But in Malaysia we have a systematic rehabilitation programme for the addicts because we are a caring society," he said.

Megat Junid also said the Home Ministry had directed commandants of dadah rehabilitation centres to transfer out inmates suspected of dadah trafficking within the centres.

He, however, said inmates suspected of trafficking must be interrogated and investigated before they were transferred out to other centres.

He said this was to ensure the safety of other inmates and also to prevent a recurrence of the recent riot at the Perlop dadah rehabilitation centre near Lasah in Sungai Siput.

Hundreds of inmates went on a rampage and set ablaze two buildings during the incident last Wednesday night and 16 of the 551 inmates took advantage of the situation and escaped.

To date police have arrested 12 of the inmates. The manhunt is being carried out by the police and Police Field Force with the help of tracker dogs.

Megat Junid said the riot at Perlop happened because three of the inmates were suspected of trafficking dadah and had been brought to the police for questioning.

"The mistake happened when the police released the inmates and said they could return to the centre.

"As an act of retaliation, perhaps because of the questioning by the police, the inmates rioted," he said, adding that the incident would not have occurred if the inmates had not been released or sent to another centre.

Megat Junid also said it was important to cross-examine inmates

suspected of dadah trafficking to ascertain the source of supply and to ensure that the centres were not used to distribute dadah.

He also said inmates who had completed their two-year rehabilitation period and released would be placed under strict police supervision for two years for easy monitoring of their activities.

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