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#### Action against errant scholars

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SEREMBAN, Thurs. - More than 100 people, mostly businessmen, have yet to settle about RM19 million in study loans which they took from the Negri Sembilan Foundation to pursue higher education.

Although the foundation managed to trace most of the defaulters, the majority of them simply refuse to pay up.

Foundation director Datuk Abdullah Sani said they were left with no choice but to file notices of bankruptcy against them after several reminders went unheeded.

So far, 22 defaulters, mainly successful entrepreneurs, had been issued such notices. "They are wasting our time but we are left with no choice.

"Although we know we are not going to get even a single sen back from these defaulters, at least we are satisfied that justice has been served. In a way, this move serves as a reminder to other students to pay up or face the music."

He said most of these businessmen are "very well-off" and chauffeur-driven in luxury cars. Other defaulters held high positions in multinationals, private companies and government departments.

"They are leading such good lives. We do not understand why they do not want to pay up. Maybe, it is true what the Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) said that Melayu mudah lupa (Malays easily forget)."

He said if the sum owed is settled promptly, the foundation would be able to increase the amount of loans and scholarships given. The number of applicants could also be increased.

The foundation was considering other drastic actions against defaulters. Abdullah, however, refused to elaborate.

Stricter conditions would be imposed on new applicants beginning next year to prevent them from evading payments after securing jobs.

Next year, about RM3 million would be set aside for loans and scholarships.

About 300 students, mostly those studying at polytechnics, would benefit from it.