

Another NS death - she's number 19
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The latest victim has been identified as P Prema who was placed at the Kisana Beach Resort training camp in Kelantan.

According to Bernama, camp commander Zulkarnain Abdullah said Prema was rushed to the Tengku Anis Hospital after she was found unconscious in a toilet at Jeram Linang about 2.30am.

He said Prema, from Kajang, Selangor, was confirmed dead at the hospital.

She was among the 400 NS trainees from the camp undergoing training at Jeram Linang near Pasir Puteh yesterday.

Prema was said to have gone to the toilet with a few other trainees at the training area. Her friends later came looking for the deceased, who had not come out of the toilet, and found her unconscious.

National Service Training Department director-general Abdul Hadi Awang Kechil is scheduled to hold a press conference on the incident later today.

Full investigation

In January, following the death of another trainee Ili Ameera Azlan in Malacca, Parliamentary Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang called for a full public investigation.

He said Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who is directly in charge of the NS programme, to commission the probe in order to allay the concerns of parents and the public.

"Parliament was informed by Deputy Defence Minister Zainal Abidin Zin last December that in the past years, there had been 17 cases of NS deaths - eight trainees and nine trainers. The total casualty (including Ili Ameera) will now be 18.

"Why is there such a high rate of fatalities in the NS programme?" asked the opposition leader.

On Jan 19, Ili Ameera, 17, from Seremban, was rushed to the emergency unit of the Malacca Hospital after other trainees found her struggling to breathe at 6.30am.

The compulsory NS programme, approved by Parliament in 2003, was mooted by former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The trainees are randomly chosen from eligible youths aged 18, although the scheme covers those up to 35-years-old.

Absentees are liable to be charged and could face up to six months' jail, a maximum fine of RM3,000, or both.

The programme has been dogged by numerous controversies, including a rape case, assault cases causing death and incidents of mass hysteria in several camps.

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