

108 police custody deaths in six years

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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today revealed that 108 deaths occurred during police custody between 2000 and 2006.

In a parliamentary written reply to Wong Nai Chee (BN-Kota Melaka), Abdullah, who is also internal security minister, stated that the number of deaths was highest in 2003 with 23 cases.

There was no significance decrease in numbers but a sharp increase was noted in 2000 (seven deaths) to 2001 (16 deaths).

The premier also disclosed the causes of deaths. This include heart attacks, suicide by hanging, fights between detainees, slipping in the lock-up toilet and asthma.

All deaths investigated

Custodial deaths (2000 - 2006)	
Year	Numbers
2000	7
2001	16
2002	15
2003	23
2004	19
2005	14
2006	14
TOTAL	108
Source: Internal Security Ministry	

However, Wong who asked for the number of inquiries held over deaths in custody did not get a response.

According to the written reply, all deaths in custody are investigated.

"Sudden death reports are opened to facilitate such investigations. Each case will be referred to the hospital for post-mortem to determine the cause of death," Abdullah said.

"After the investigations are concluded, the report will be forwarded to the public prosecutor or his deputy to decide whether there was any criminal element involved," it read.

He added that investigation reports will then be sent to the magistrates for an inquest to find out the cause of death.

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