

# Najib: Govt concerned over prevalence of social ills

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**PUTRAJAYA:** Urban development in Malaysia has yielded unwanted results: The rise in social ills, like child abuse, and the overall picture is bleak.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the prevalence of social ills was in tandem with rapid urbanisation and the increase in urban population.

"In general, the overall situation is still worrying," he said after chairing a meeting of the National Social Action Council

yesterday.

In 2005, 1,800 cases of child abuse were reported. Najib said these were for various categories such as abandonment, emotional, sexual and physical abuse.

The government was also concerned about social ills among civil servants, involving drug abuse and drug possession as reported by the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

Forty-two civil servants who tested positive for drugs were arrested in the first three months of this year, half the

number arrested for similar offences the whole of last year.

"We are concerned about anyone using drugs whether they are civil servants or other people.

"We need an integrated and holistic approach in prevention, rehabilitation and enforcement, and also the emotional and psychological support from the community and families," Najib said.

The government had never done any study specifically on drug use by civil servants but Najib said based on other studies, it was generally

known why people turned to drugs, such as peer pressure or bad influences, to escape depression and other social factors.

Najib said programmes to fight social ills should be local-centred and involve the immediate community, such as Kuala Lumpur City Hall's anti-crime programme, or Program Gerak Tumpuan, which had reduced the incidence of crime.

Residents, City Hall and the police co-operate in fighting crime through the Rakan Cop programme and other com-

munity-based efforts.

The council reminded all state governments and district authorities to include social ills as a topic on the agenda of their meetings.

Social ills should be discussed as part of regular matters of state so that the authorities would be proactive and not reactive when problems were reported.

The council approved the guidelines for Social Impact Assessments which would soon be adopted by all local councils in the planning of development projects.