

Bid to decriminalise suicide attempts to check its rising rate

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HULU SELANGOR: The government is studying ways to decriminalise suicide attempts in a bid to address a rise in such cases nationwide, says Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Together with Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, she said they had stressed upon the need for the government to review Section 309 of the Penal Code, which deals with attempts to commit suicide.

Both of them spoke about the decriminalisation of suicide attempts during an intra-agency meeting on mental health issues that she chaired recently, said Dr Wan Azizah.

"I was made to understand that the Attorney General's Chambers is studying and looking into the existing laws on the issue.

"After the study is completed, I will bring this matter to the Law Minister (Datuk Liew Vui Keong)," Dr Wan Azizah told reporters at the



Tinker therapy: Dr Wan Azizah sharing a light moment with a student at the National Skills Development Centre in Serendah. Looking on are Malaysia Airports chairman Tan Sri Zainun Ali (left) and Women, Family and Community Development Ministry deputy secretary-general (operation) Anis Rizana Mohd Zainudin (pink hijab).

National Skills Development Centre in Serendah here yesterday.

Dr Wan Azizah, who is also the Women, Family and Community Development Minister, agreed with a call by social activist Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye for lawmakers to speak up on mental health issues.

Speaking to Bernama on Sunday, Lee, who is also the Mental Health Promotion Advisory Council mem-

ber, urged the government to abolish laws criminalising suicide attempts as well.

"I very much agree because it is an issue and the suicide rates are rising so we want to move to decriminalise suicide attempts," said Dr Wan Azizah.

When asked if the amendments could be brought up in the current Parliament meeting that ends on

Dec 5, Dr Wan Azizah said that although the government did not want any delays, more evaluation was needed on the subject.

Earlier, Dr Wan Azizah launched the Digital Space (Computer Lab) programme, a strategic collaboration between Malaysia Airports and the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry.

The programme saw new comput-

ers being donated to the training centre's computer lab to benefit over 50 trainees at the National Skills Development Centre in Serendah.

The all-male trainees aged between 12 and 18 are also residents of children's institutions that are under the Welfare Department's supervision.

She also said the RM80mil allocation announced in Budget 2020 to upgrade facilities under the Welfare Department including old folk homes and children's homes would be distributed fairly.

"Currently, the Welfare Department and the ministry is compiling comprehensive information and vetting the needs of each institution in order to avoid overlapping allocations," she said.

To a question about the distribution of a comic book, *Belt and Road Initiative for Win Winism*, to schools recently, Dr Wan Azizah said the distribution of materials or publications by outside parties to educational institutions, including schools, required the prior approval of the Education Ministry.