

**Special Courts for Drug Cases on the Way - Ahmad Zahid
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MELAKA, Feb 12 (Bernama) -- Special courts to hear drug cases will be set up in stages throughout the country, Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the step was being taken following calls by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), National Anti-Drugs Agency and the Royal Malaysia Police for such courts to clear backlogged remand drug cases.

"Brainstorming sessions by the AADK found the special courts was the best way to go for faster clearing of drug cases," he told a press conference here today.

Earlier, Ahmad Zahid, who is also Home Minister, had attended the 'Brain Storming Session' for Enhancing Cooperation between Agencies that included the National Anti-Drug Agency (AADK), Royal Malaysia Police, Customs Department and Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency and representatives of various NGOs at a hotel here.

Also present were Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Idris Haron, Attorney-General Tan Sri Mohamad Apandi Ali and Inspector-General of Police (IGP) Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar.

Elaborating further, Ahmad Zahid said the outcome of the brainstorming session would be presented to the cabinet as a memorandum paper, which would include, among others, enforcement, rehabilitation and eradication of drugs in the long-term.

"What is important is the commitment of all parties, especially the NGOs, and a new approach including emphasis on religion and spirituality, and hopefully strong willpower on the part of the addicts," he said.

He added that at the same time, all the enforcement agencies including the police, Customs and other agencies will continue with their enforcement activities.

"The success of Bukit Aman's STING (Special Tactical Intelligence Narcotics Group) which has made no less than 26,000 arrests last year with the confiscation value of more than RM500 million is highly commendable," he said.

"The success is the result of cooperation between various enforcement agencies, ministries and departments involved in the eradication of drugs," he said.

Ahmad Zahid said besides Malaysia, other ASEAN nations were also committed to making their countries drug-free.

Meanwhile, at the same media conference, Mohamad Apandi said Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam would be among the first locations for the setting up of the special court to resolve the problem of

outstanding cases.

"This is the outcome of my telephone conversation with the Chief Justice (Tun Arifin Zakaria), Kuala Lumpur and Shah Alam...there is a big number of outstanding cases," he said.

In a separate development, commenting on the proposal by the Inspector- General of Police to increase the compound fine rates in view of the high number of accidents, Ahmad Zahid said the matter had not been finalised.

"This view is due to the disappointment over the fact that fines and penalties are not effective, so it created a reaction. I ask the public to give their views on what measures can be taken.

"Do not just comment on what the IGP is saying, but give views so that there are less traffic fatalities, the accident rate can be brought down and enforcement does not have to be troublesome...but awareness is increased," he said.

Last Wednesday, Khalid was reported to be disappointed over the high number of road accidents, and suggested that the compound rates be increased as an initiative to reduce fatalities.

Khalid said this would educate road users to be more careful when driving as they were the highest contributors to accidents.

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