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Academician says NS Training Programme 3.0 should be given to all youths, unlike previous random conscription selection

By Iylia Marsya Iskandar - October 9, 2023 @ 5:24pm



(FILE PHOTO) National Service Training Programme aim of instilling patriotism and a great social investment. -NSTP FILE

KUALA LUMPUR: The revived National Service (NS) Training Programme should be made compulsory for all teenagers in order to instil patriotism.

National Council of Professors Senior Fellow Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Teo Kok Seng said the latest version of the programme should move away from the previous method of conscription which was done through random selection of 18-year-olds for any particular year.

He said instilling patriotism across the board, or with all the younger generation, should be a priority.

"It's a good idea to revive the National Service Training Programme with an aim of instilling patriotism. But the question now is how the selection would be done.

"It cannot be like before where only a cluster of the youths are chosen. How can you produce patriotic youth across the board? It should be compulsory for all except for very exceptional cases," he told the New Straits Times when referring to the random selection of 18-year-olds to attend the NS training in the past.

Teo said even though there would be financial implications should the NS be made compulsory, he believed NS is a great social investment.

He expressed concern that the youths who did not attend any form of national service would lacking an understanding of nationhood and other important lessons imparted in the programme.

Since the NS's first batch in December 2003, conscripts were enlisted through a random selection process from the National Registration Department's database of people who turn 18 for that year.

The three-month programme's annual intake was between 85,000 to 95,000 trainees, with an average expenditure of RM600 million per year.

It was halted in 2015 due to cost-cutting measures but resumed in 2016 with about 20,000 trainees per year.

The government later abolish both the NS and National Civic Bureau (BTN) programmes in 2018 citing concerns with elements of political and racial indoctrination in such initiatives. The NS was replaced with the 'Malaysia Future Leaders Programme'.

Meanwhile, educationist Dr Anuar Ahmad said the shorter training stint from three months to 45 days would allow trainees time to get ready for enrolment for further studies.

"The shortened period to 45 days is timely. Based on previous studies linked to the NS, trainees said three months was too long. They had other commitments such as having to apply to matriculation centres or higher educational institutions.

"Forty five days is just enough for us to groom and develop our youth to instil patriotism and unity," he said, adding that Malaysia has adequate skilled manpower to realise the NS Training Programme 3.0.

"This would be a positive development for their physical, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing as they would be able to interact and stay together with friends of different races, religion while in NS training ," said Anuar.