

14 NOVEMBER 2017

Concern over drug availability

10 | **NEWS** / Nation

ADDICTS

CONCERN OVER DRUG AVAILABILITY

The National Anti-Drug Agency also says addiction among teens on the rise

AINA NASA
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE availability of drugs in the local market is one of the biggest concerns of the National Anti-Drug Agency (Nada) in its fight to make Malaysia drug-free.

Nada director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Halim Mohd Hussin said polydrug abuse, drug relapses and the increasing number of young addicts also prevented the agency from achieving its goal.

"The issue of drug availability is related to how it is always present in the economy, retail and society.

"Availability is related to supply and demand, price setting and the economy of users, access to availability and sources of drugs in the social circle," he said.

He said enforcement, norms and rules in the community, promotion and individual factors could affect the availability of drugs.

He said drugs availability was seen as a strong factor because its foundation was a strong business model.

Polydrug abuse, on the other hand, referred to multiple drug use at a time to maximise and balance effects, besides substituting certain types of drugs.

"Other than the risk of death by overdose, polydrug users are more dependent on drugs as they have experienced multiple effects during use."

Another concern for Nada was that drug addiction could lead to relapse.

Halim said it was difficult to cure drug users who depended heavily on drugs because they could relapse after rehabilitation and treatment.

He said another reason for the authorities to be concerned was that drug addiction among teens and children was on the rise.

"The age of onset of drug use is



Fifty-one youngsters being held for involvement in a drug party in Kuala Lumpur in 2015. FILE PIX



Datuk Dr Abdul Halim Mohd Hussin

getting lower, now at 7.

Factors that contribute to this include easy availability, anti-social behaviour, family history of addiction, failure in studies,

smoking and family problems.

"When comparing Nada's 2015 and last year's records, we can see that there is a rise in the number of teenagers caught abusing drugs."

Halim said hardcore addicts used drug compulsively to the point that their cognitive, emotional and behavioural functions formed a new homeostatis balance that saw drugs as essential for body functions.

He said this posed a challenge to cure and treat them.

Another challenge, he said, was the emergence of drugs known as new psychoactive substances (NPS).

"Unfortunately, the advancement of technology has paved the way for the invention of NPS in the market.



Ten university students were found guilty of using drugs in Shah Alam recently.

"These drugs, made from industrial and household substances, are processed using chemical precursors found here."

He said synthetic drugs or those processed through chemical mixtures, especially amphetamine, led to permanent brain damage.

Synthetic drug users were usually more aggressive, he said, adding that Nada had collaborated with the Health Ministry to cure them.

He said the process of reintegrating former addicts into society must be activated to rehabilitate addicts.

Other concerns of Nada are the spread of diseases and the increase in street crimes as a result of drug addiction.

Halim said Nada would continue to implement advocacy and programmes to encourage drug addicts to seek treatment and rehabilitation.