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Zeroing in on substance abuse

ON LOCATION

ZEROING IN ON SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Seniman's Op Seni to 'strike' film locations, in assisting government to detect synthetic drug users in showbiz.
DENNIS CHUA has the story

DEEPLY concerned over the threat of synthetic drugs to the entertainment industry, Persatuan Seniman Malaysia (Seniman) has come up with its own programme to nip the problem in the bud.

Its president, Zed Zaidi, said its anti-drug abuse campaign called Op Seni would facilitate surprise visits by enforcement officers of the National Anti-Drug Agency (Nada) to filming locations from time to time.

"Op Seni is our move to enable enforcement officers to test on-location artistes for drug use. It is fully supported by Nada and the National Film Development Corporation (Finas)," said Zed when interviewed by the *New Straits Times* yesterday.

While the Home Ministry recently admitted it was difficult for enforcement officers to detect synthetic drugs, the latest "trend" among drug users, Zed believed that the government would opt for a more sophisticated technology to identify such users.

"Seniman advocates 'zero

dadah abuse' in the entertainment industry and cooperates with rehabilitation centres to 'rescue' those with drug problems," he said, adding that Seniman was willing to assist individuals with drug problems to enter rehabilitation programmes.

"We are also educating artistes about the dangers of drug abuse, and fully endorse Finas' 'anti-dadah' public service announcements starring popular actors on television and in cinemas."

Persatuan Karyawan Malaysia (Karyawan) president Datuk Freddie Fernandez said entertainers facing drug problems should be courageous enough to notify Karyawan or Seniman about their plight.

He said Karyawan also sought the cooperation of artistes' family members, so that they could be rehabilitated fast.

"We've always advised artistes, including those who are not members of our association, to stay clear from drugs and we're willing to help those with problems by getting in touch with rehabilitation centres," he said, agreeing with Zed that artistes



Zed Zaidi says Seniman advocates 'zero dadah abuse' in the entertainment industry.



Datuk Freddie Fernandez

should be "open and honest".

"It is always good to seek treatment fast, rather than sweep things under the carpet and get nabbed by law enforcement. Better be safe than sorry!"

Fernandez said it was regrettable that artistes often became the target of "merchants of death", and synthetic drugs could be more lethal than those usually seized by the police.

"Karyawan fully supports continued enforcement against drug abuse by the Home Ministry, and we hope that they target the sources and supply chains of the syndicates first.

"Enforcement officers from Nada should expose the methods

by which drugs are peddled, so that the public, especially entertainers, will be aware of the magnitude of this social evil."

Zed and Fernandez welcomed Deputy Home Minister Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed's statement on Tuesday that Nada would focus on high-susceptibility areas like the entertainment industry.

Nur Jazlan said synthetic drugs, which usually came in the form of pills, were difficult to detect, and thus it was easy for syndicates to sell them.

He also said that Nada would focus its efforts on showbusiness, but ruled out compulsory drug tests on artistes.



Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed