

Addicts in flats worry fearful residents

DRUG MENACE

ADDICTS IN FLATS WORRY FEARFUL RESIDENTS

THE Mergong Barrage Industrial Area in Alor Star is an unsafe neighbourhood.

Burglaries and thefts are rampant in the area, which is also known as a junkie hotspot. This is despite the police frequently patrolling the neighbourhood.

The residents, especially those in Taman Seri Gemilang Flat, have been complaining about drug addicts gathering in groups of five or six people, on the ground floor of the flat between 8pm and 5am daily.

The residents believe that the burglaries and thefts in the neighbourhood were committed by the addicts, who are mostly flat residents.

A resident, Ahmad, says residents did not dare to take any action, including lodging a police

report, fearing that they would be targeted.

"You can easily spot junkies high on drugs at the corners under the flat units, especially after midnight.

"It is definitely a sore sight. However, the main problem is safety. Apart from having our houses broken into, cases of stolen vehicles, especially motorcycles or their parts and fuel stolen, are also rampant.

"When the police came to investigate, the addicts would take revenge by targeting our homes. None of us dares to lodge a report anymore, no matter how serious it is," says Ahmad, who has been living in the flat for six years.

Another resident, who runs a grocery store near the flat, says the shops in the area had been broken into several times.

"My store has been broken into three times.

"I have changed and added padlocks to the doors, hoping they would stop targeting my shop. I also don't leave any cash behind when I close the shop every day," she says.

ACTIONLINE:

Kedah National Anti-Drug Agency (Nada) director Mohammad Nazer Mustafa says it cleaned up eight drug hotspots out of 186 identified in the state last year.

He says 13 high-risk areas were under Nada's supervision.

"From the more than 180 drug hotspots identified, we have cleaned up eight of them, including in Kuala Kedah and Kota Star.

"We will conduct more operations and checks to tackle the issue this year, including collaborating with the police, Immigration Department, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, National Registration Department and National Pharmaceutical Regulatory Agency," he says.

Nazer expresses his concern about the growing number of youth involved in drug-related cases as those arrested were below 40.

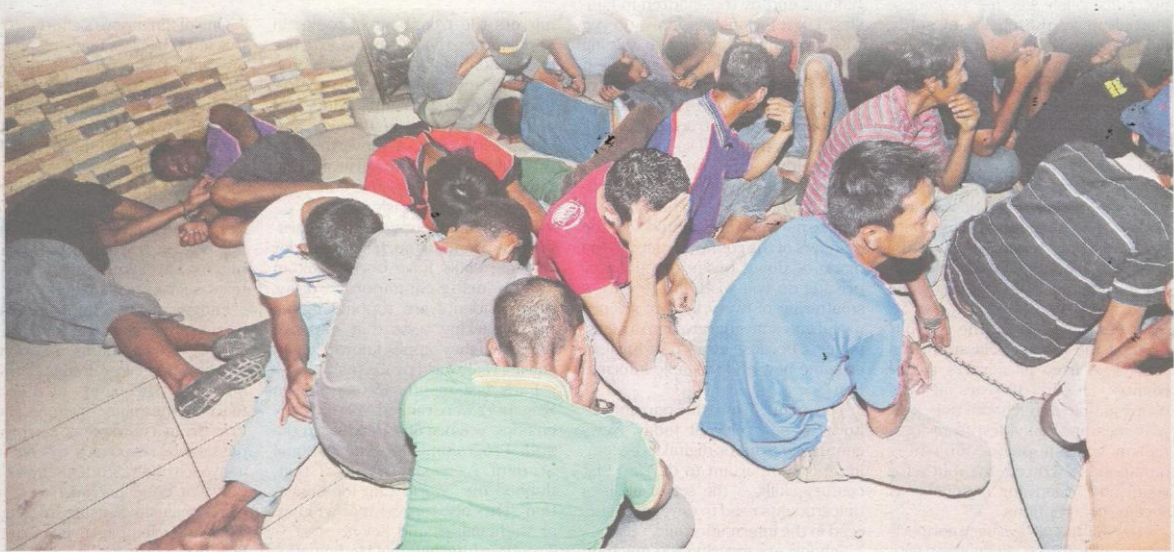
He adds that about 75 per cent of the 6,413 people placed under the agency's supervision are between 19 and 39.

He says the Mergong Barrage Industrial Area will be cleaned up.

Kedah executive councillor Datuk Dr Leong Yong Kong, who is also the Environment, Chinese, Indian and Siamese Community Affairs, Health and Solidarity Committee chairman, says it is imperative for the government to tackle poverty issues, believed to contribute to the increase in drug-related cases in the state.

"Drug-related cases, especially among the youth, are increasing despite the efforts by government agencies and non-governmental organisations to tackle the issue.

"Failure of the family institution and poverty are believed to be contributing factors. Hence, there is a need for the government to look into these aspects," he says.



Drug addicts arrested last year.