

## Children also addicted

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Children as young as seven were found to be addicted to drugs, making them the youngest to fall under the scourge, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"These children were initially given free drug-laced sweets. When they (eventually) became addicted, they were made to pay (for the drugs). In this regard, even though five acts were formulated in an effort to eradicate drugs with heavy penalties, including the mandatory death sentence, cases of drug trafficking and abuse still continue to proliferate in the country.

"This was due to demands from both addicts and traffickers," he told the Dewan Negara here today.

Ahmad Zahid, who is also home minister, was replying to a question by Senator Datuk Koh Chin Han who wanted to know the statistics of drug addicts, according to age and gender from 2010 to date, as well as the measures taken to overcome the menace.

Based on statistics from the National Anti-Drug Agency, a total of 131,841 Malaysians were identified as drug abusers from 2010 to 2016.

"It should also be noted that 42% of inmates in prisons throughout Malaysia were involved in drug-related crimes," he said.

Meanwhile, he said the government will not legalise any form of drugs including marijuana, "pil kuda" and "ketum".

He said Malaysia will not bow to pressure by several human rights groups who are pushing for the legalisation of certain type of drugs.

"I would like to state that the government will never submit and compromise to legalise any type of drugs in Malaysia.

"We will also not compromise on the usage of 'daum ketum', despite it being traditionally used as an energy enhancer," he said.

Ahmad Zahid was responding to a supplementary question from Senator Datuk Mohd Suhaimi Abdullah who had asked about the government's stand on the legalisation of marijuana.