

'Drug Dependents Bill doesn't grant full authority to Nada officers', says ex-DG

By **Amalia Azmi** - July 5, 2024 @ 1:09pm



National Anti-Drug Agency former director-general Datuk Seri Zulkifli Abdullah. -NSTP FILE/HAFIZ SOHAIMI

KUALA LUMPUR: The Drug Dependents (Treatment and Rehabilitation) (Amendment) Bill 2024, which was tabled in the Dewan Rakyat on Wednesday, does not grant full authority to the National Anti-Drug Agency (Nada) officers without the consultation of registered medical professionals.

NADA former director-general Datuk Seri Zulkifli Abdullah said the authority is specifically for voluntary treatment and recovery cases aimed at expediting the rehabilitation process for individuals involved in drug addiction or abuse.

"In reality, the role of medical officers remains unchanged from the original Act, except for certifications in voluntary cases aimed at accelerating the treatment and recovery process.

"This aligns with the competency of rehabilitation officers who undergo specific training and certification," he said in a Facebook post today.

Zulkifli said claims that the amendments were prepared without engagement with stakeholders were highly inappropriate and inaccurate.

"It is also incorrect to say there was no engagement with non-governmental organisations.

"During my tenure as Nada director-general over four years ago, we initiated engagements with other agencies and NGOs, which, from what I understand, have successfully realised improvements in the latest draft.

"I personally believe that delaying the implementation of this act is unhealthy and could hinder the achievement of Control of Drugs 2025," he said.

Drug addicts and abusers will undergo rehabilitation based on the severity level at Nada facilities, except for cases of non-compliance, he said.

While welcoming the government's initiative to amend the Act, the Malaysian Psychiatric Association (MPA) said the bill contains policies of "punishing those who use drugs" .

This includes maintaining fines, community service and mandatory entry into rehabilitation centres for violators.

It said such measures contradicted the government's intention to destigmatise drug use by considering it a medical and health issue.

"The MPA also believes that the treatment and rehabilitation process should be friendlier and encouraging drug users to seek treatment and rehabilitation voluntarily rather than compulsory is better.

"It is also more effective to conduct treatment in the community than in a rehabilitation centre," it said in a statement.

It said voluntary drug treatment and rehabilitation have been proven to be more effective and in line with the decriminalisation elements intended by this amended act.

The association suggested that the amendment integrate treatment services provided by the Health Ministry, Higher Education Minister and private medical facilities under Nada.

"The MPA urges the government to reconsider the mandatory reporting requirement to the Nada by medical practitioners treating drug users.

"Regardless of the reasons behind this requirement, MPA believes that the absence of mandatory reporting will encourage drug users to seek medical treatment from medical practitioners in both the government and private sectors," it said.

It also called for any amendments to be made based on input and views from all stakeholders in the field of drug treatment and rehabilitation, including former drug users.

The bill was tabled for the [first reading](#) in Dewan Rakyat on Wednesday by Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail.

Among others, the bill was aimed to amend the Drug Dependents (Treatment and Rehabilitation) Act 1983 which was last amended in 1998.

The bill sought to improve by differentiating the interpretation between a drug or substance dependent and a drug or substance abuser.