

Agency: Peer pressure, experimentation among major causes of drug abuse

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SIBU: Peer pressure tops the list of reasons that lure many Malaysians into drug abuse, according to data from the National Anti-Drugs Agency (AADK).

Based on last year's data, a staggering 8,966 individuals attempted drugs after succumbing to peer pressure.

On the other hand, 1,936 did it out of curiosity, while another 1,314 got into it just for fun.

Emotional stress was another reason that pushed 1,132 individuals into doing drugs.

The rest of the figure on new cases comprised those who got into it unintentionally, as well as those who used drugs to withstand pain and for stimulation.

On the statistics, Assistant Minister of Youth Development Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah concurred that peer pressure was among major causes of youths experimenting with drugs.

"That is the very reason why the government – through AADK, Pemadam (Malaysian Drug Prevention Association), schools and other related agencies – is working hard on the ground to counter this scum that is polluting our young minds.

"The programmes come in many folds – through schools, media, sports, music, NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and anything that is of interest to the youths.

"Enforcement agencies like narcotics police as well as the judiciary also play a big role in our attempt to eradicate this menace from our society," he told The Borneo Post yesterday.

According to AADK, new cases refer to addicts detected for the first time when undergoing treatment, rehabilitation and/or supervision at the agency.

The statistics revealed that there were 13,605 new addicts, constituting 62.47 per cent of the total 21,777 addicts including repeated cases.

By age category, AADK observed that the bulk of new addicts were those aged between 20 and 39 – one that it referred to as the 'productive age group'.

Breaking it down further, 3,270 new addicts fell into the 20-24 age bracket, 3,230 (25-29), 2,568 (30-34), and 1,590 (35-39).

Abdul Karim remarked:

"This is very sad as their young energy, which could be used for nation-building, is being wasted.

"I hope parents, youths and those who love this country, would help in their little way to help eradicate drug abuse and stop its spread."

Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation (MCPF) vice-chairman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye also observed that those aged between 20 and 40 made up the majority of drug addicts in the country.

“They are supposed to be the productive group; the assets of this country.

“They can contribute in various ways but once (they get) involved in drug abuse, it would pave the way for self-destruction.”

As such, Lee said all efforts in fighting this menace should be intensified.

“This would mean beefing up educational campaigns to prevent the younger generation from getting illegally involved in drugs,” he said, adding that this feat would involve the public and private sector as well as NGOs.

In addition, the AADK statistics also broke down new cases of drug abuse according to occupation. The largest group involved general workers, which recorded 2,825, or 20.76 per cent of new cases, while part-time workers numbered at 2,336 (17.17 per cent) and the unemployed, 1,946 (14.30 per cent).

The commonly used drugs, it pointed out, were opiate (referring to heroin and morphine), ganja and methamphetamine.