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Fight drugs on home front

IT is very sad to hear that in 2016, the National Anti-Drugs Agency (AADK) recorded a total of 30,847 drug addicts, an increase in number from the 26,668 in 2015. It is estimated that Malaysia currently records an average of 70 new drug addicts daily.

The Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation revealed that 70% of snatch theft cases reported nationwide involved drug addicts and, according to Prisons Department records, 55.4% of the inmates in 2015 were drug offenders.

Peer influence and curiosity are the main factors leading to drug abuse. Impulsive individuals with weak social attachments, rising unemployment among youth, social dysfunction and weak enforcement strategy also contribute to the rise in the number of persons involved in drug abuse.

The fight against this social menace is being hampered by corruption among law enforcement agencies. On May 21, high-ranking narcotics police officers were nabbed on suspicion of being on the payroll of a major drug ring, and involvement in protecting and allowing the illegal distribution of drugs.

But the Inspector-General of Police has since warned that the law enforcement authorities are not going to compromise in their fight against this heinous crime.

In this country, possession of drugs is a serious offence that can incur capital punishment. But even this harsh deterrent does not seem to be working to reduce the scale of the problem.

Some have argued that jailing drug users is not the answer, as in most cases they would continue their habit once they were released from prison.

The AADK has identified 2,000 schools nationwide as being at high risk of student delinquency and 400, mainly secondary schools, were involved in drug abuse. Majority of the students involved were males aged between 14 and 16, and the schools were located mainly in farming and fishing settlements.

According to the findings of a study done by Universiti Utara Malaysia, the government spent RM8.65bil in direct and indirect costs to tackle drug issues in 2009. The programmes have obviously not been effective going by the increase in the number of new cases recorded in 2016.

All the relevant authorities need to exchange information to curb the demand and supply of illegal drugs. The Global Financial Integrity, which works to curtail illicit financial flows by producing groundbreaking research, promoting pragmatic policy solutions, and advising governments, estimates that the illicit drug trade is worth US\$652bil yearly.

The most important place to fight this drug war is the home front. The main players are mothers, fathers, grandparents and other family members. Many parents think that education on drug abuse prevention for their children should be done in school. But even then, the schools must be supported by very strong anti-drug efforts at home. Parents should spend quality time with their children, respect their feelings and opinions, and teach them about the bad effects of drugs. Cooperation from all quarters is vital to ensure a society free of drug abuse and give Malaysian youths the opportunity to grow up to be a competitive and successful generation.

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