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PETALING JAYA — Parents and teachers have been urged to work closely together to raise the awareness on the dangers of drugs to students.

This follows the alarming number of primary and secondary school students nabbed for drug-related offences as revealed by the authorities on Monday and yesterday.

Federal police had revealed on Monday 134 secondary and primary school students were paid by members of syndicates to transport or sell drugs since January. Yesterday, the National Anti-Drug Agency said over 800 students tested positive for taking syabu, ganja or designer drugs in the first three months of the year.

National Union of Teaching Profession Malaysia president Kamarolzaman Abd Razak said the authorities were overwhelmed and required help from

parents to monitor their children.

"Parents can't just shrug off their responsibilities once their children are in school. It is impractical for teachers to check their school bags daily," he said.

"Parents must be conscious of their children and what they are up to and who they hang out with. Children and teenagers exposed outside school grounds."

Kamarolzaman said parents must engage with their children if they find their loved ones worried or in distress.

He said there was only one counsellor for 500 students, which made it difficult for them to communicate or keep tabs on delinquents.

"The current student-counsellor ratio is overwhelming to the teachers tasked to monitor the children," he said.

"These counsellors are also required to carry out other compulsory programmes

set by the Education Ministry and they have to deal with other students."

Kamarolzaman suggested the ministry reduced the student-counsellor quota to 200:1 to ensure every school would have enough manpower to deal with the problem.

Parent Action Group for Education Malaysia (PAGE) president Datin Noor Azimah Abdul Rahim said news of students being used as drug "mules" and abusing drugs would horrify parents.

"We need to constantly remind our children it's not just about smoking cigarettes but about the dangers of drugs and being a 'mule'," she said.

"Hopefully, the ministry will also send the same message to the schools. This is another vice they must look out for."

Noor Azimah suggested schools could increase their awareness campaigns to

ensure their students understood the dangers of drugs and transporting drugs.

Malacca Action Group for Parents in Education (MAGPIE) chairman Mak Chee Kin described the figures as a "worrying trend".

"Why are drugs still easily available?" he asked.

"Drug syndicates often target children from broken families. Those who abuse drugs also often come from poor families. It is important for families to ensure there is harmony at home."

Mak said those who used children as drug "mules" should be handed stiffer penalties.

"Teachers already have a lot on their plate. It is time for parents and the authorities to step up and play a more proactive role in combating this menace," he said.