

Riot: Drug syndicates turn to social networking sites to lure young women

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KUCHING: International drug syndicates are allegedly resorting to social networking sites to recruit Malaysian women as drug mules.

Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Richard Riot Jaem said the victims, mostly young women, were more often than not lured with promises of overseas vacation via these sites by "smooth-talking conmen".

He said based on interviews with victims, international drug syndicates would promise the women free trips to China, Japan and South America in exchange for carrying packages, mainly from Nigeria and South Africa.



Public awareness: Riot (left) with Sarawak Commissioner of Police Datuk Acryl Sani Abdullah Sani at the launching of the Foreign Ministry's Outreach and Diplomacy Programme in Kuching yesterday. — ZULAZHAR SHEBLEE / The Star

Riot said: "Many Malaysians caught overseas for drug-related offences are aged between 20 and 30," adding: "Most do not have previous criminal records and are either unemployed or have low-income jobs."

Speaking at a press conference after the launch of the Outreach and Diplomacy Programme here yesterday, the Serian MP disclosed that as at Dec 31 last year, a total of 889 Malaysians, comprising 714 men and 175 women, had been detained overseas for drug-related offences.

Of this number, 20 were Sarawakians, including five women, he added.

Riot said according to the Malaysian Embassy in China, some 75 Malaysians had been arrested in the country in 2010 for drug trafficking and other smuggling cases.

"Of this number, 57 were charged with drug and drug-related offences with many of them claiming that they had been used as mules to smuggle drugs into China."

In China, drug trafficking carries capital punishment.

On a separate issue, Riot said a total of 1,941 Malaysians had been detained abroad for various offences as at Dec 31 last year.

A total of 41, comprising 35 men and six women, were from Sarawak, he added.