

# DRUG ABUSE AND ITS PREVENTION IN MALAYSIA

*Vong Poh Fah\**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Drug abuse is indubitably widespread and endemic to the South East Asian region. The principal reason for this undesirable phenomenon can be attributed to the easy availability of narcotics in this region. For as long as most of us can remember, South East Asia has been, and still is, well known for its bountiful production of traditional narcotics such as opium and cannabis. Despite being outlawed internationally, the cultivation of poppies and cannabis is viewed in some South East Asian countries, notably by the indigenous, as a legitimate cash crop. The cultivation of these egregious produce become augmented when law enforcement in the area affected is constrained and hampered, or sometimes stifled, by political turmoil, armed conflicts, insurgencies, difficult geographical terrain, the want of resources of the country concerned or the lack of a political will on the part of the governing authority to stamp out the drug menace. Not surprisingly, this has led to South East Asia becoming a major producer and supplier of the world's demand for opiate based drugs and cannabis. Additionally, the lack of a stringent legislative proscription and poor enforcement in some of these jurisdictions has also contributed substantially to the flourishing drug trade in the region.

## II. THE DRUG ABUSE SITUATION IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia is not a narcotic producing country and there is no known or reported cultivation of poppies or cannabis in Malaysia. This is not a fortuitous circumstance. We attribute it to the stringent legislative proscription and strict enforcement regime adopted by the Malaysian Government in her war against illicit drugs. However, in spite of her harsh stand against drug related offences, the pervasiveness of drug abuse in the country is, in our view, still rampant and alarming. The principal cause of this is due to our geographical proximity to the major narcotic producing region. From the seizures of drugs made by the police and customs authorities, it is found that most, if not all, of the opiate based drugs and cannabis recovered were smuggled into the country from the Golden Triangle, Thailand and Cambodia. One thing for sure, however much we may wish to put a stop to the smuggling activities, it is not possible to eradicate totally the smuggling menace. In our case having a long and porous border hinders our cause substantially. The availability of narcotics through such smuggling activities inevitably gives rise to two most reprehensible activities in the subject of illicit drugs: drug trafficking and drug abuse. Historically, Malaysia has, by reason of her reasonably good communication and infrastructure systems, been a favourite transit point for drugs destined for other more affluent parts of the world, notably Europe and Australia. Though we believe that the drug syndicates' preference of Malaysia as a transit country may have changed over the years from that of a preferred status to one that is less preferred due to her harsh trafficking laws, cross border trafficking of drugs is still rampant. This is because apart from the use of Malaysia as a transit point, there is also a ready market here for these illicit drugs. We in fact face a larger problem from those who abuse drugs than those who traffic in them. Undeniably where there is trafficking of drugs there will also be abuse of drugs. The twain constantly co-exists and can never be put asunder, otherwise without a demand there would be no reason for drugs to be trafficked. In Malaysia, a great amount of human resources is wasted annually through drug addiction with an equally great amount of money spent annually by the government in rehabilitating these addicts. Additionally, the drug menace has also contributed significantly to an unhealthy rise in crime rates. There is invariably a link between violent and acquisitive crimes, and the proliferation of narcotics. Certainly, if the drug menace is left unchecked, the stability of the economy and internal security of the country would be open to risk of being compromised.

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\* Deputy Public Prosecutor,  
Attorney-General's Chambers,  
Government of Malaysia

### III. THE DRUG ABUSE PROFILE

Broadly speaking, the types of illicit drugs commonly abused in Malaysia can be classified into two categories; that is to say, plant-based drugs and synthetic drugs. Examples of plant-based drugs are opium (both raw and prepared), heroin, morphine, monoacetylmorphines, codeine and cannabis. The types of synthetic drugs commonly abused here are syabu (methamphetamine), ecstasy (Methylenedioxyamphetamine, 3, 4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine and N-ethyl), ketamine and psychotropic pills.

Historically, drug abuse in Malaya<sup>1</sup> started with opium smoking in the late nineteenth century. A habit that was brought here by migrant workers from China, which for some unknown reasons, our colonial master did not deem fit to outlaw in the beginning. Over time, and as the country became developed and more affluent, other derivatives of opium, such as morphine and heroin, began to emerge. For many years in the twentieth century the profile of drugs abused in Malaysia was very much confined to opium, morphine, heroin and cannabis. Today, opiate-based drugs remain the preferred drug among abusers in Malaysia. Most of these opiate-based drugs seized in Malaysia are found to have originated from the "Golden Triangle" while cannabis is usually smuggled from countries such as Thailand, Cambodia and lately, Indonesia.

Most countries in the world today do not insulate themselves from world trade. Malaysia, for one, does not practice a closed-door policy. Globalization, a hackneyed phrase these days, has its undesired side effects. As a result of globalization, the drug trend in Malaysia is inexorably influenced by the changes in the global drug abuse scenario. As the world advanced rapidly in the realm of science and technology over the last quarter of the twentieth century, she too has witnessed the flip side of that advancement. It has brought about the emergence of a new breed of narcotics, i.e. the synthetic drugs - the kind that needs no cultivation. This in turn brings more bad news. It means a faster production rate and a cheaper production cost in that vast tracts of land that were previously necessary for cultivation of traditional narcotic is now not required. Apart from generating variety in the drug market it also brought down the price of drugs, making it more affordable for the man in the street. Experience shows that those who abuse drugs do not necessarily confine themselves to one particular type of drug.

Over the last few years, we, in Malaysia, have detected a steady rise in the abuse of synthetic drugs. This may be a harbinger of a changing trend in the drug abuse profile in the days to come. There are compelling reasons as to why these designer drugs are fast gaining popularity. First, in contrast with opiate-based drugs, they are easier and more convenient to be consumed. It does not require drug-consuming paraphernalia such as syringes or smoking utensils. Use of such paraphernalia has its downside. Addicts can either be easily detected or the unhygienic conditions in its use constantly expose them to great risk of deadly infectious diseases such as HIV or HCV. If they do not succumb to their own drug addiction, these diseases are, most certainly, there to see them off. Second, synthetic drugs are usually odourless and can easily be concealed and transported thus rendering detection extremely difficult. Third, consumption of these drugs generally does not lead to the manifestation of any addiction syndrome. Synthetic drug abusers are, hence, less easy to detect. Fourth, pervasive misconception that synthetic drugs are less deleterious than heroin or cocaine and there is no tendency to become addicted to them. Fifth, synthetic drugs are currently fashionable among the younger generation. Drugs like ecstasy and methamphetamine are frequently abused in entertainment places such as discos, a popular night spot among the young and affluent.

Information obtained from Malaysian drug enforcement agencies reveals that most of the methamphetamine sold in Malaysia is smuggled from countries such as China, Thailand and the Philippines. Ecstasy comes mainly from Holland. A major portion of the psychotropic pills found here is known to have originated from Japan.

The following is a summary of the types and quantities of drugs seized by the Malaysian police over the last few years.

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<sup>1</sup> As Malaysia was then known prior to her independence.

RESOURCE MATERIAL SERIES No. 64

Type of Drug	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Raw Opium	31.54	17.9	-	60.67	-
Prepared Opium	0.21	0.016	0.17	8.77	0.54
Heroin Base	3.62	52.19	-	66.56	34.08
Heroin No.3	279.076	148.52	106.09	210.49	417.58
Cannabis	1,513.12	1,617.15	1,612.58	1,570.53	1,910.51
Cocaine				0.017	4.23
Methamphetamine (Syabu)	6.43	5.35	208.11	51.29	28.03
Ecstasy*	7,191	46,970	48,996	224,684	169,296
Psychotropic Pills*	1,633,877	147,652	102,147	155,764	122,217
Cough Medicine (Codeine)**	24,337,95	18,1333.33	17,982.48	5,864.04	8,548.26
Ketamine				7.34	12.92
Erimine*				16,265	170,702

\* represents number of tablets seized

\*\* represents number of litres seized

Except where otherwise indicated, the above figures shown are in kilograms.

The number of persons arrested for drug related offences over the last two years is as follows:

Type of Drug	2001	2002
Opium	35	28
Heroin	4,721	11,070
Cannabis	2,929	3,563
Cocaine	2	3
Methamphetamine (Syabu)	585	1,522
Ecstasy	267	769

From 1988 to 2002, 235,495 drug addicts were identified by the relevant drug prevention agencies. This, however, may not represent the actual number of addicts that exists in the country. The number of new addicts recorded in 2002 was 17,080 compared with a figure of 15,831 in 2001. Of the 17,080, 53.55% were new addicts while the remaining 46.45% were recidivists. The following are statistics for the type of drugs abused and the corresponding number of addicts in 2002:

Type of Drug	Number of Addicts
Heroin	12,266
Morphine	9,076
Cannabis	6,867
Opium	20
Methamphetamine	2,083
Psychotropic pills	334
Ecstasy	388
Amphetamine	535
Codeine	307
Inhalants	17

124TH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE  
PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS

**IV. NATIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES**

Like most other countries, Malaysia has for a long time been plagued with the drug abuse and trafficking problem. The Malaysian Government recognizes the importance and urgency in dealing with the drug problem in the most effective way possible. Pursuant to a Cabinet decision dated 10th September 1983, the National Narcotic Committee was established by the National Security Council to combat the drug abuse and trafficking problems. Several other governmental committees and agencies were also formed shortly thereafter to tackle the drug problem both at the federal and state level. Among these agencies, the Narcotic Task Force acted as the principal drug prevention agency. This agency was charged with the responsibility of:

- overseeing the implementation of national policies on drug prevention;
- coordinating, monitoring and evaluation of drug prevention programmes and activities;
- coordinating the allocation of drug prevention programmes to the various sub-agencies;
- monitoring the drug situation from time to time by creating an information database and feedback system;
- overseeing the development and enhancement of international cooperation in relation to drug abuse prevention; and
- acting as a secretariat to the National Narcotic Committee.

In 1996, the National Drug Agency (NDA) was established under the Ministry of Home Affairs to take over the functions of the Narcotic Task Force and the Department in charge of treatment and rehabilitation of drug offenders. The amalgamation of these two agencies was aimed at enabling the principal national drug enforcement agency to be more effective and comprehensive in its approach in the combat against drug abuse. The primary objective of the NDA is to ensure that all efforts undertaken in combating the drug menace are implemented in a well-planned, coordinated and systematic manner to create a drug free society. The functions of the NDA are:

- To formulate and determine national policies relating to drug prevention, enforcement, treatment and rehabilitation, and international relations;
- To monitor all activities and programmes relating to the prevention and control of drug abuse;
- To coordinate all activities of governmental agencies and non-governmental organizations that are involved in the prevention and control of drug abuse;
- To implement drug abuse prevention programmes;
- To implement drug treatment and rehabilitation programmes;
- To upgrade the system for data collection and to evaluate the effectiveness of all national drug abuse prevention programmes;
- To enhance regional and international cooperation to combat the drug problem; and
- To serve as the secretariat to the National Drug Council.

**A. Primary Prevention (Education)**

The importance of primary prevention can never be over-emphasized. It is one of the primary considerations to be taken into account in any drug abuse prevention strategy. Primary prevention concerns educating the society on the ill effects of drug abuse and the importance of staying away from it. It flows from the time proven adage that prevention is better than cure. For any educational programme to be effective, it must begin at school. It can hardly be open to dispute that good habits are most effectively inculcated in the younger generations. That, however, does not mean that the older ones are to be forsaken. The NDA educational programmes fall into 3 broad categories. They are:

- the school-based programme;
- the community involvement programme; and
- the information and publicity programme.

1. The School-Based Programme

The Students' Resilience and Interpersonal Skills Development Educational (STRIDE) is a drug education programme that is implemented at primary school level (for children between the ages of 7 and 12). Thus at a very young age students are informed of the existence of the different types of narcotics and

the pitfalls of drug addiction. The STRIDE programme is essentially a joint effort of the NDA, the Ministry of Education and the Narcotics Department of the Malaysian police. The objectives of this programme are to:

- enhance the knowledge and living skills of primary school students in order to resist peer pressure to take drugs;
- enhance the self-esteem and interpersonal skills of primary school students to say “no” to drugs;
- encourage primary school students to participate in drug abuse prevention and healthy activities; and
- create a sense of abhorrence for drugs and to ensure that schools in Malaysia are free from drugs.

In 2002 the STRIDE programme was implemented in 416 schools. To ensure a successful implementation of this programme, teachers and drug prevention personnel were also required to undergo training in interpersonal skills on drug abuse prevention. In 2002, a total of 16 training sessions for teachers throughout the country were carried out.

The NDA also conducts surprise random urine screening for students as part of its effort in making early detection. Students found to have abused drugs will be counselled by the school counsellor. In addition, they will also be required to attend motivational camps/courses to redeem their self-esteem and to enhance their interpersonal skills. In 2002, 773 urine screening exercises were carried out involving a total of 35,000 secondary school students.

## 2. Community Involvement Programme

The NDA conducts seminars at government departments and at offices of the private sectors as part of its exercise in implementing the drug abuse prevention programme at workplaces. A total of 65 such seminars were conducted in 2002.

## 3. Information and Publicity Programme

In 1990 the mobile drug abuse prevention unit was created. These units traverse the length and breadth of the country to meet the general public with the objective of creating awareness among the community about the drug abuse problem that currently betide the nation and the strategies that are being employed by the government in dealing with the problem. In 2002, 300 exhibitions were held in schools, institutions of higher learning, government departments and public places throughout the country. Additionally, the National Narcotic Week was celebrated from the 19th till 25th February 2002. During that week various activities focusing on the prevention of drug abuse were held with ample coverage given by the media.

## **B. Treatment and Rehabilitation**

Malaysia practises a compulsory treatment and rehabilitation regime for drug dependants. This compulsory treatment and rehabilitation programme is aimed at aiding drug dependants to overcome their physical and psychological addiction to drugs and to, thereafter, live a drug free life. We are of the view that without compulsion and governmental support and assistance, the probability of these hopeless souls in being able to overcome their drug-taking habits, should they be left to their own devices, would be extremely remote.

In 1983 the Drug Dependants (Treatment and Rehabilitation) Act was passed by the legislature. This Act empowers the designated rehabilitation officer and the police to arrest any person suspected of being a drug dependant for the purpose of subjecting him to a medical examination to ascertain whether he is a drug dependant or otherwise. If the test result is positive the rehabilitation officer is required to apply to the Magistrate’s Court for an order to detain him at a drug rehabilitation centre for compulsory treatment and rehabilitation. The period of treatment and rehabilitation is 2 years followed by aftercare for another 2 years. The rehabilitation centres that treat and rehabilitate these drug dependants are established and sponsored by the government. There are currently 28 such centres situated throughout the country. In addition, the country also has 56 privately managed drug treatment and rehabilitation centres. In 2002, 13,760 drug dependants were reported as having undergone treatment and rehabilitation at the government sponsored centres.

## **C. Legislation**

The seriousness with which a country views the drug problem and the extent to which it desires to eradicate them is, I believe, often characterized by the legislation it employs in dealing with the problem.

124TH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE  
PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS

Malaysia has always been single minded in her approach in the fight against drug abuse. This is because we see it as a threat to national security. The serious measures employed in our drug prevention legislation are a testament to that commitment. We are well known for our mandatory death penalty imposed on convicted drug traffickers. While we may have earned many accolades for our tough stand against the drug menace, simultaneously, we have also earned much flak, notably from Amnesty International, for imposing the mandatory death sentence and the use of presumptions of fact in the prosecution of drug offenders. Coming to a topic that is closer to my heart, I take great pleasure in being able to provide you with a birds-eye-view of the various legislative measures employed by the Malaysian Government in dealing with this social calamity.

1. The Dangerous Drugs Act 1952

The leading Malaysian statute enacted to curb the drug menace is the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1952 (DDA). The DDA criminalizes the self-administration (consumption), possession, importing and exporting, manufacturing, and the trafficking of illicit drugs. The severity of punishment provided under the DDA varies with the nature and gravity of the offence committed. As it is not possible to discuss every offence prescribed in this Act, I will confine myself to the more common ones.

The most severe punishment, i.e. the death sentence, is imposed on those who traffic in drugs. There are three ways by which the prosecution may prove the offence of trafficking in drugs. The first is by way of direct evidence where the accused person was actively engaged in the sale of narcotics. This process usually involves the use of an *agent provocateur* (undercover agent) where trap evidence will be obtained. It is, however, not possible to do this all the time as such opportunity does not come by everyday. Furthermore, the safety of the agent is invariably put to extreme risk in such undercover operations.

The second is by way of the definition of the word 'trafficking' in the DDA. 'Trafficking' is defined here as including the "manufacturing, importing, exporting, keeping, concealing, buying, selling, giving, receiving, storing, administering, transporting, carrying, sending, delivering, procuring, supplying, or distributing" of any dangerous drugs. Admittedly, the meaning of trafficking under the DDA is much wider than that as used in the ordinary context.<sup>2</sup> The natural meaning in the context of trafficking involves dealing between two parties at least. Therefore, acts such as the keeping, concealing, transporting, storing and carrying of drugs in the above definition would appear to be more consistent with the notion of possession<sup>3</sup> rather than that of trafficking. At first blush this might appear unjust in that those who are merely guilty of drug possession run the risk of being convicted of drug trafficking and in the process suffer the peril of a harsher punishment. To distinguish between those who traffic drugs from those who merely keep them for their own consumption, the Privy Council, in a seminal judgment in the case of Ong Ah Chuan v PP<sup>4</sup>, laid down a rule of interpretation that the "keeping, concealing, transporting, storing or carrying of drugs" will amount to an act of trafficking only if it was done for the purpose of being distributed. This interpretation thus brings the statutory definition of 'trafficking' in line with its natural meaning.

The third way of proving trafficking is through the use of presumption of facts, as provided in the DDA. For example, if a person is found in possession of 15 grams or more in weight of heroin,<sup>5</sup> the operation of the statutory presumption is immediately attracted in that he is presumed to be trafficking in the said drug. This presumption is premised on the logical assumption based on human experience that when a person is found in possession of a large quantity of drugs, it is usually not intended for his own personal consumption but for trafficking. The larger the amount, the stronger the presumption applies. Even if the drug was in actual fact kept for the purpose of the accused person's personal consumption, there is no injustice caused to him because the presumption is a rebuttable presumption. The accused person is at liberty to produce evidence in court to show that the drug was not meant to be trafficked. He may, for example, introduce evidence to show that he is an addict and that the contraband was kept merely for his own personal consumption. That would be sufficient to discharge the application of the presumption. However, if the amount of drug found on him is unduly large, he faces an uphill task in persuading the court that the drug was not meant to be trafficked. In

<sup>2</sup> The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines 'traffic' as "to trade or deal in something illegal".

<sup>3</sup> The DDA imposes a less severe penalty for the offence of drug possession than drug trafficking.

<sup>4</sup> [1981] 1 MLJ 69.

<sup>5</sup> Section 37(da) of the DDA contains a list of drugs and the minimum statutory amount thereof which will trigger the application of the presumption of trafficking.

evaluating the accused person's evidence, the court must weigh it on a balance of probability. Contrary to common belief, the purpose of the presumption is not to presume guilt. It merely shifts the evidential burden on to the accused person requiring him to show by way of evidence that the drug found in his possession was not intended to be sold or distributed to a third party.

A lot of criticism had been levelled against us for employing such presumption of fact in the prosecution of drug trafficking offenders. We are nevertheless undeterred. We see the need to resort to such measures because, from experience, the dividing line between addicts and traffickers is often tenuous. It is to ensure that trafficking of drugs at every level of the trafficking chain is effectively curbed. As of today, 127 convicted drug traffickers have been hanged for the period between 1990 and 2002.

Apart from trafficking another important concept that is usually associated with drug proscription laws is 'possession'. The concept of possession is important for two reasons. The first being possession of drugs is by itself a distinct and separate offence. Frequently when a person is found to be in custody of some quantity of drugs, there is a high probability that he is guilty of possession even though he is not guilty of trafficking. Under the DDA the offence of possession of drugs is often punishable by imprisonment and sometimes whipping too. The severity of the punishment is dependent on the amount of drug possessed. For example, a person who is found guilty of having in his possession a small quantity of heroin will, at the very least, be liable to be punished with a fine not exceeding RM100,000 or to imprisonment of a term not exceeding 5 years or both. However, if the amount of heroin possessed is 2 grams or more but less than 5 grams the offender will be liable to be punished with a sentence of imprisonment for a term not less than 2 years but not exceeding 5 years and, in addition, mandatory whipping of not less than 3 strokes but not exceeding 9 strokes. If the amount of heroin possessed is 5 grams or more, the offender is liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term of not less than 5 years but not exceeding 20 years and, in addition, mandatory whipping of not less than 10 strokes but not exceeding 24 strokes.

The second reason is; to prove trafficking one must first prove possession, for without possession there can be no trafficking. The concept of possession has often been a difficult area of law for us. This concept has two elements, the physical and the mental. The former is rather straightforward and easy to prove. It is the latter that is problematic. Accused persons who are caught carrying drugs frequently deny knowledge of the drugs they were carrying. It is indubitably the prosecution's duty to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused person knew of the nature of the drugs carried. This is the rub of the problem. Where proof of knowledge is concerned, it is always a difficult task to handle because one cannot prove knowledge conclusively unless direct evidence is available. However, in reality direct evidence is seldom available. Most of the time one has to rely on inferences. The critical question at the end of the day is whether from the total inferences adduced in court it is possible to say that the accused person knew of the nature of the drug carried. How much is enough? The answer is elusive and this is where the problem lies. The court is often reluctant to accept the sum total of the available inferences as constituting sufficient proof of the accused person's knowledge of the drug. My view of the matter is that sometimes the death penalty seems to hurt us more than it helps us. Because the process involves the taking of a person's life, one obviously cannot blame the courts for being too careful in their approach. This is an area where we are currently facing a big challenge.

The DDA also renders illegal those who administer drugs to themselves or to a third party. The former offence is punishable with fines not exceeding RM5,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years while the latter offence is punishable with fines not exceeding RM10,000 or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or both.

## 2. Dangerous Drugs (Forfeiture of Property) Act 1988 (FOPA)

Despite the imposition of the death penalty under the DDA, the rampancy of drug trafficking in Malaysia did not seem to abate. Recognising that these drug traffickers may have more regard for materialistic gains than their own life, the government introduced this Act in 1988 in a further attempt to curb the trafficking of drugs. The FOPA empowers the Public Prosecutor and senior police officers to trace, freeze and forfeit assets that are suspected to be the proceeds of drug trafficking activities or assets that were used in the commission of drug trafficking offences. Forfeiture proceedings can be commenced even if no one has been prosecuted for a drug offence provided that there are valid grounds to believe that the assets seized were concerned in a trafficking offence. However, the FOPA is not as draconian as it may sound. The Act allows ingenuous

124TH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE  
PARTICIPANTS' PAPERS

owners to challenge the forfeiture in court if the seizure was wrongful. In 2000, RM 3,945,300.89 worth of assets was forfeited under the FOPA.

3. The Dangerous Drugs (Special Preventive Measures) Act 1985

Like the FOPA, this Act was also specifically enacted to combat the drug trafficking menace. It provides for the arrest and preventive detention of persons whom the authorities have reason to believe are involved in or associated with the trafficking of drugs. The arrestee will not be tried in court but could be detained upon the issue of a detention order by the Minister of Home Affairs. Detention without trial has always been a sensitive subject among human rights activists. To ensure that innocent people are not wrongly detained, several safeguards are built into this Act. Before the Minister decides to issue the detention order he must give due consideration to two reports submitted to him under the Act. Once a person is arrested for the purpose of being detained under this Act, the police must investigate the circumstances that led to his arrest. The purpose of this investigation is to obtain further information concerning the person's background and activities prior to his arrest; such as whether he was truly involved in drug trafficking activities and the extent of his involvement. Upon completion of the investigation, the police officer concerned must prepare a report for the consideration of the Minister. At the same time a legally qualified officer, designated as an Inquiry Officer under the Act, will conduct a separate and independent inquiry into the allegations against the arrestee. The Inquiry Officer in conducting his inquiry is mandated to interview the arrestee and any other person who is able to give relevant information about the arrestee, and to review any relevant documentary evidence. The purpose of this inquiry is aimed at procuring further information about the arrestee independent of the police investigation and at the same time gives the arrestee a right to be heard, a fundamental rule of natural justice. Upon completion of the inquiry, the Inquiry Officer must submit his report to the Minister. If a detention order is issued, the detention period cannot exceed a period of 2 years. If the Minister is of the opinion that detention is not an appropriate remedy, he may issue an order to restrict the arrestee's residence to a designated area subject to police supervision for a period not exceeding 2 years. The procedure laid down under the Act must be strictly complied with. Such detention orders can be challenged in court and if the challenge is successful the order will be invalidated.

4. The Poison Act 1952

The purpose of this Act is twofold. To regulate a category of drugs that does not come under the purview of the DDA and to regulate the use of these drugs. In this respect, this Act is complementary to the DDA. These drugs are described as poison because they are generally harmful to the human body and cannot be consumed freely. The Act does not outlaw the use of these drugs but merely restrict and control their import, possession, sale and use. These drugs are usually needed for medicinal, agricultural or industrial purposes. Only persons who are designated under the Act are permitted to store and sell these drugs and every sale must be documented. The frequently abused drugs regulated under this Act are psychotropic pills and codeine.

5. Drug Dependancy (Treatment and Rehabilitation) Act 1983

This Act was enacted for the purpose of introducing compulsory treatment and rehabilitation of drug dependants. The working of this law has already been discussed in the preceding paragraphs.

## V. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Malaysia plays an active role in fostering regional and international cooperation in the reduction of demand and supply of illicit drugs. As of this moment we are signatory to 3 United Nations Conventions, namely:

- Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961;
- Convention on Psychotropic Substance, 1971; and
- Convention against Illicit Trafficking in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988.

We are also signatory to bilateral agreements with countries such as the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, United States of America, Venezuela and the Russian Federation to facilitate bilateral cooperation on prevention of drug trafficking. Additionally, the Malaysian police maintain a close working relationship with drug enforcement agencies of other countries such as:

## RESOURCE MATERIAL SERIES No. 64

- Australian Federal Police;
- US Drugs Enforcement Administration;
- Narcotics Bureau, Hong Kong Police;
- Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
- New Zealand Customs and Police; and
- Drugs Sub-Directorate, Interpol.

### **VI. CONCLUSION**

Our current objective is to achieve the status of a drug free society by the year 2015. We hope to achieve this with a multi-disciplinary approach some of which have been highlighted above.