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All-out war against Ecstasy (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Alarmed over the fact that 90 per cent of Ecstasy users are Chinese youths, the MCA today pledged an "all-out war" against the drug.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said the party had launched a campaign to neutralise the drug's influence among Chinese youths.

He said the Cabinet had given the party its support in the battle against the drug.

"The large number of Ecstasy abuse cases involving Chinese youths is shocking. The MCA has, therefore, decided to combat this social ill to the last," he told reporters after opening a one-day seminar for MCA town councillors and members of local authorities at Wisma MCA.

The campaign will try to help raise awareness among Chinese youths on the devastating effects of Ecstasy.

Dr Ling said the campaign would also seek to educate parents on the need to maintain a tighter rein on their children. Parents, he said, should not allow their children to patronise nightspots known to be places where Ecstasy was sold.

"Posters and videotapes will also be distributed to show how dangerous the drug is. It can adversely affect the brain, heart, kidneys and liver.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, too, had during the recent Menteris Besar conference, commented on the need to arrest Ecstasy use.

"We have briefed MCA local authority members to keep tabs on the situation on the ground. We have also sought the help of the police," Dr Ling said, adding that he would be submitting progress reports to the Cabinet.

Asked why Ecstasy use was more prevalent among Chinese youths, Dr Ling said: "I do not understand why myself. But let it stop here ... don't let it go to the other races."

He said if Ecstasy abuse was not eradicated, it would destroy a generation of Malaysians.

"Can you imagine what will happen if the country's workforce is mentally debilitated? What is going to happen if schoolchildren cannot wake up to go to school and workers cannot find the energy to work after indulging in Ecstasy?"

Dr Ling said Ecstasy use was an expensive habit as each pill cost between RM50 and RM100.

Ecstasy is the common name of a chemical constituent, 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine or MDMA. It is classified as a dangerous drug but users consider it "safe" and indulge in it at all-night dance parties specialising in pounding "techno" or hypnotic "trance" music.

Ecstasy is available in a few varieties, characterised by name, logo and colour. The choices in Kuala Lumpur clubs include Spaceman, Butterfly, XOXO, Dove, Playboy, Horse and Pink.

The drug causes psychological problems like fear, anxiety, panic and depression. It can also bring about dehydration, or exhaustion at a later stage, elevation of body temperature and breaking down of skeletal muscles.

It has been reported that the majority of users are aged between 15 and 25, from middle to upper-middle class families and mostly girls.

Dr Ling also spoke up against illegal gaming machine outlets, saying

such outlets could cause family instability.

"Those who become addicted to gambling are willing to steal money from their parents.

"It may also lead girls to prostitution when they are badly in need of money to satisfy their addiction."

Dr Ling thanked the police for raiding many such outlets.

"I have received a report that some 400 of such outlets have been closed down in Kuantan."

Later in Penang, Dr Ling said the MCA's crusade against the use of Ecstasy pills might be the reason why some party leaders had received threats over the telephone in the past few weeks.

Charging that the threats were coming from gangsters and dealers intent on "destroying the Chinese race" by pushing the drug, he said the threats would in no way shake the party's resolve in fighting the scourge.

The phone calls, he alleged, were made to MCA State Assemblymen and divisional leaders nationwide, warning them to back off from fighting the social ill.

However, no police reports had been lodged.

Appealing to dealers pushing Ecstasy at discotheques and pubs to stop it, Dr Ling said: "This is not a healthy way of making money, especially in a manner which can destroy one generation of Malaysians.

"We hope these dealers see the light and find other healthy businesses to make money."

He told reporters this after a dialogue with members of the Penang Chinese Town Hall this evening.

"I am proud to say that the party leaders who received these calls have been brave and will remain committed to saving our youths.

"If all 800,000 MCA members were to say no to these calls, who are they (the callers) going to threaten after this?"

MCA State Executive Council members, Dr Ling said, would have a word with State police chiefs to help them solve the problem.

In seeking feedback on whether the relevant authorities in each State were doing their bit in the crusade against Ecstasy, Dr Ling called on the public to contact their respective State MCA Assemblymen or e-mail the party headquarters directly by accessing the party's website at www.mca.org.my

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