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Local dadah officer does Malaysia proud

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - A local dadah prevention education specialist Tay Bian How has done Malaysia proud - he has been appointed chief of the international drugs division of the prestigious Colombo Plan.

An assistant director of the Home Ministry's National Narcotics Agency, Tay will take up his new post as the director of the Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Programme from June 1 for a four-year term.

Based in Colombo, Sri Lanka, the programme was set up in 1973 to work closely with national governments, international organisations, NGOs and various United Nations agencies to develop co-operative programmes to combat the drug scourge.

A total of 24 countries including Malaysia are full members of the Colombo Plan whose main objective is to promote economic and social development, technical co-operation and transfer of technology among the Asia Pacific region as well as enhance South-South collaboration.

Tay, who will take over from Rabi Raj Thapa of Nepal, is a specialist in drug abuse primary prevention education and has played a leading role in the development of a special curriculum in this field for local schools and universities.

He is also an International Labour Organisation-appointed trainer of anti-drug personnel in Southeast Asian countries.

"I am very grateful to my director-general and the Malaysian Government for supporting my appointment," said Tay who obtained his Bachelor of Social Science and Master of Public Administration from USM and studied substance abuse prevention at John Hopkins University in the United States as a Fullbright scholar.

Malaysia's strong stand against drug abuse and trafficking has resulted in several Malaysians being appointed to key international posts.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad set the pace when he was elected president of the UN International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking a few years ago.

Other Malaysians who have played key roles in the international anti-dadah scene were Chung Tsu Tuan (director, DAP Colombo Plan), Dr Azimah Pilus (she developed an AIDS education programme for New York), Gerald Jeremiah, Aloysius Joseph and Frederick Loke (heading international NGO called Daytop in New York).

Another Malaysian, Datuk Idris Ibrahim is the vice-president of the UN-recognised World Federation of Therapeutic Communities, a US-based anti-drug NGO.

Tay said that his priority as the chief of the drug body in Colombo will be going all out to tackle the new millennium drug - synthetic drugs.

"Now, many traffickers worldwide are manufacturing billions of tiny pills which are causing untold harm to millions of youths, even schoolchildren.

"Amphetamine-type stimulants, or commonly called ATS, are produced under various names.

"Today, youths are resorting to so-called designer and recreational drugs. The damage they do to the brain and the health in general is serious.

"I hope to seek the co-operation of anti-drug personnel in the Asia-Pacific region to devise more stringent measures to combat this newly emerging type of drugs which are really raging across many borders," added

Tay who has presented papers in this field in several countries.

He is convinced that the only way to address this issue is to adopt a comprehensive approach.

"All anti-drug programmes must work closely in prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, research and development and the meaningful exchange of both successful programmes and programmes which were not successful.

"By being transparent, no country will embark on a programme if it is known that such a programme was a failure in another country."

"I am disturbed to observe that many countries and organisations are working far too independently. I am also sad to observe that there is not much collaboration among some of the bodies involved in the programme, especially NGOs."

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