

IDPC & HRA News Digest, Asia-Pacific | 8-14 February 2016

Australia

[Australia commits to legal growing of medicinal marijuana](#)

The Washington Post (09/02)

Australian lawmakers move closer to the amendment of the Narcotics Drugs Act 1967. The bill, which intends to create a licencing scheme for the cultivation of medicinal cannabis, was guaranteed to become law last Wednesday after the opposition party offered its immediate support. A recent government survey showed that 69% of respondents approved the change in law.

[High hopes for cannabis regulator](#)

PS News Online (12/02)

A 'National Regulator' to track the development of cannabis products grown and processed for medicinal purposes has been proposed by the Minister for Health, Sussan Ley, as part of new laws partially decriminalising the controversial plant.

[Getting tough on Crime Needs a softer approach](#)

Huffington Post (09/02)

For a change in direction to occur the political discourse on prisons in Australia has to change. There are more effective, more efficient and more humane responses available. These range from the broad based approaches of justice reinvestment and drug law reform to better pathways and investment in specific drug and alcohol, mental health and other treatment services. Courage is not about looking tough or doing what's popular -- it's about challenging the status quo with what works.

[What needs to happen now to get medicinal cannabis to those who need it?](#)

The Conversation (12/02)

This week minister for health Sussan Ley tabled amendments to Australia's drugs act to allow growing cannabis for medicinal or scientific purposes. The amendments will create two licence classes (medicine and research), limit access only to "fit and proper" Australians with no ties to crime, and allow the importation of plants and seed.

[Australia's former top cop Mick Palmer says drug policy is failing, new approach needed](#)

ABC Radio (15/02)

An increased police presence and large numbers of sniffer dogs have failed to stop young people from taking drugs at dance parties around the country. The former head of the AFP, Mick Palmer, and the former NSW Director of Public Prosecutions Nicholas Cowdrey have both told *Four Corners* current drug policy isn't working and a new approach is needed.

Malaysia

[National Drug Agency 'going all out' to tackle growing female drug use](#)

Free Malaysia Today (12/02)

Blaming prostitution, marital problems and peer pressure, the National Anti-Drugs Agency's director Suhaimi Abdullah, said growing drug use among females would be tackled through its prevention and treatment programme. Abdullah added that lessons learnt from a fruitful pilot project in Kampung Sungai Buloh, Jelebu in 2015 should be implemented. He also revealed state government plans to make Negeri Sembilan drug-free by 2020, asserting that the full participation of society was needed if the plan was to be successful.

Special courts to hear drug cases will be set up in stages throughout the country

Malaysia Mail Online (12/02)

The Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said special courts for drug cases were being set up following calls by NGOs, the National Anti-Drugs Agency and the Royal Malaysia Police for such courts to clear backlogged remand drug cases, at a 'brain storming session' for enhancing cooperation between agencies. The outcome of the session would be presented to the Cabinet, which would include, among other issues, enforcement, rehabilitation and eradication of drugs in the long-term. "What is important is the commitment of all parties, especially the NGOs, and a new approach including emphasis on religion and spirituality, and hopefully strong willpower on the part of the addicts," he said. Ahmad Zahid said besides Malaysia, other ASEAN nations were also committed to making their countries drug-free.

Almost all major syndicates from Nigeria and Iran busted in intensive effort

The Star/Asia News Network (12/02)

For close to six years from 2009 to 2015, drug rings from two countries ran rampant in Malaysia, smuggling drugs into the country from places like Nigeria and China, and sending drug mules to South American countries. The billion-ringggit industry involved some 30 syndicates from two dominant players – the Iranians and Nigerians. However, Malaysia's counter-narcotics law enforcement operation got wind of their activities and hit them hard.

Singapore

Singaporean Government fails to address key human rights concerns in UN review

Online Citizen (08/02)

The international Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) has accused the Singaporean government of failure to respond adequately to a number of human rights concerns raised at the country's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) last month. The government defended its continuing use of capital punishment as 'legitimate' to deter most serious crimes, including drug trafficking, despite UN jurisprudence which has repeatedly stated that drug related offenses do not meet the threshold of 'most serious crimes'.

Thailand

Mekong nations launch fresh drug blitz

Bangkok Post (11/02)

The third phase of multinational drug crackdowns targeting the Mekong river and the Golden Triangle has begun, with particular attention given to the interception of precursors and chemicals used in drug production to prevent them reaching narcotic production bases. Some resources have been allocated to alternative development programmes to improve the livelihoods of residents living in border villages.

Pakistan

UK in court over fear British Money is assisting Pakistan Drug Executions

Sputnick News (11/02)

The UK government was taken to court, by lawyers from human rights organisation *Reprivee*, on Thursday after failing to publish documents detailing its support for Pakistan's controversial Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF). Its failure to publish the document has led to concerns that the UK's support is funding death penalty sentences and executions, many of them for drug offences, in Pakistan.

Pakistan calls for closer adherence to existing UN Drug Conventions

Daily Times (10/02)

Pakistan has urged countries to pursue more effective implementation of the three drug control conventions, as opposed to seeking a new declaration. Speaking at a parliamentary hearing ahead of the United Nations Special Session on the world drug problem (UNGASS), MNA Aasiya Nasir took the opportunity to denounce drug liberalisation as counter productive, and discouraged governments from adopting these policies simply because unlawful activities had become 'difficult to control'. Nasir called for some forms of alternative development to be adopted alongside increased government control of territories associated with illicit drug cultivation.

Philippines

Presidential hopeful Duterte promises tough stance on illicit drugs

Inquirer (09/02)

Rodrigo Duterte, Philippine presidential hopeful and Davao City Mayor, has made a promise to 'stop' illegal drugs, criminality and corruption in the country within the first 6 months of his administration, if he is elected. Mr. Duterte proposed a number of policy measures to achieve this goal, including giving the police authorisation to shoot drug addicts and those committing drug related offenses. Measures to deter corruption in law enforcement included increased salaries and harsher sanctions for guilty parties.

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