

CANNABIS: DEADLIER THAN YOU THINK



"Come on!" exclaimed Teck as he dragged his friend through the streets of a northern European city. Benson could hardly keep up with his roommate's pace while fiddling with the camera. They had landed the night before in the country as part of their university's exchange programme. Having heard so much about cannabis and the relaxed rules that prevail in this European city, Teck decided to check out the situation with Benson. They were headed for one of the city's many 'coffeeshops' where it is legal to smoke cannabis. He could hardly wait. Neither could the negative effects of this drug.

As they eagerly opened the doors to the 'coffeeshop', a gush of warm odorous air greeted them. They could see hordes of patrons seated or standing in the establishment puffing away. Teck was absolutely enthralled by this sight. He found what he was looking for and he assumed this must be the place where he could try cannabis without any legal implications since he was out of Singapore.

"Will we be ok? I mean taking drugs..." asked Benson apprehensively. "Of course we will be fine! Cannabis is a mild drug and furthermore, we aren't in Singapore!" retorted Teck. Unbeknownst to them, consuming cannabis outside of Singapore even for recreational purposes is a criminal offence and the same penalties apply once they return to the country.

They are also setting themselves up for a lifetime of regret as cannabis is in no way a mild drug. Contrary to popular belief, smoking cannabis has several negative effects such as:

- Depression
- Motor coordination problems
- Anxiety, panic and paranoia
- Distorted perceptions
- Psychosis
- Decline in motivation for long-term abusers

Like many other drugs, this drug is also one that will haunt the abuser even during abstinence. The following are some withdrawal symptoms associated with the lack of access to cannabis:

- Anger, aggression and irritation
- Loss of appetite and loss of weight
- Insomnia
- Depression
- Physical discomfort
- Tremor

As both of them sat down in front of the bar counter, Teck flipped through the menu excitedly. Somehow, Benson did not feel right about this despite his friend's assurances. He could only look around the premise with uncertainty as other patrons puffed away.

All Singaporeans / Permanent Residents found to have consumed illegal substances, EVEN OUTSIDE SINGAPORE, will face the penalty of imprisonment of up to 10 years, fine not exceeding S\$20,000 or both.

IT MAY BE TEMPTING TO TRY CANNABIS 'JUST ONCE' WHEN ABROAD ESPECIALLY IN COUNTRIES WHERE THE RULES HAVE BEEN RELAXED.

BUT IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE FIRST ATTEMPT COULD LEAD TO ADDICTION AND LIKE ALL SUBSTANCE ABUSE, IT IS NEVER EASY TO QUIT.

