FAM to help rather than punish players who smoke

BY WAN NORIZA MEOR IDRIS

PETAULLING JAYA, May 27 — Smoking has a bad impact on athletic performances but there are still no reprimands being enforced to discourage athletes from lighting up.

FA of Malaysia (FAM) Sports Science department will have “one-on-one” discussions with national footballers to help curb the unhealthy habit, in lieu of penalising them.
“Smoking is an addiction. It’s not fair for us (FAM) to punish them,” said FAM head of sports science S Sivanasvaran.

“We need to educate and help them quit as smoking affects stamina. Among our plans is to have individual discussions with players and get them into stop smoking programmes,” he said, yesterday.

He said footballers need to quit as they were role models for youngsters.

“We may work something out with private companies and involve them in a ‘no smoking’ campaign.”

Last year, FAM president Tengku Abdullah Shah called on footballers to be more disciplined and engage in healthier lifestyle to maintain peak fitness.

This came after Safee Sali was caught smoking in Singapore during the group stages of the AFF Cup in November.

This led to an outcry by fans on social media. His action resulted in him being warned by the national body.

Tengku Abdullah said if Safee or anyone else is caught smoking, FAM would not hesitate taking disciplinary action.

Meanwhile, newly elected Malaysian Hockey Confederation (MHC) deputy president George Koshy said smoking was a “culture” among athletes.

“Everyone knows there are players who smoke, be they footballers, rugby or hockey players.

Koshy expressed MHC’s concern with the prevalence of the habit and advised its players to not smoke.

“MHC has no punishment for smoking unless it occurs at a stadium. None were caught doing so in sports compounds,” said Koshy.

Smoking is common among footballers and even the world’s best have been caught lighting up.

Arsenal fined goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny £20,000 (RM111,000) for smoking in a dressing room shower in January while Wesley Sneijder, Lionel Messi, Mario Balotelli, Wayne Rooney and Ashley Cole had been caught smoking.