



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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\Press Statement

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Stop splurging public's money to gratify smokers

The government should not bow to the demands of smokers calling for smoking corners to be set up. The priority should be focused on non-smokers who equally pay taxes.

The expenditure on constructing smoking zones are for 22.8 per cent of the population who are smokers. As the proponents of smokers' rights call for respecting of their rights, they are silent on the rights of non-smokers who are forced to inhale their toxic cigarette smoke.

MoH has estimated that the government will be spending RM7.4 billion on treatment cost for major illnesses caused by smoking by 2025. This amount wipes out tobacco tax that smokers are paying which could have been put to better use.

Putting the argument into proper perspective, colorectal cancer was the most common cancer followed by lung cancer in men aged 25 years and above. Not surprisingly smoking has been found to be responsible for 80 to 90 per cent of lung cancer cases. There is a total of 11,256 cases of trachea, bronchus and lung cancers registered for the period between 2012 and 2016.

Smokers' rights proponents and tobacco industry supporters are strangely silent on the cost of treatment of cancers, many of them associated with smoking. Below is the estimated cost of treatment of some of the cancers in 2018, without considering the employment of caregiver and other miscellaneous expenditures:

- Breast cancer: up to RM395,000
- Colorectal cancer: up to RM85,000
- Lung cancer (including trachea & bronchus): up to RM56,000
- Lymphoma cancer: up to RM95,000
- Nasopharynx cancer: up to RM70,000

As for the link between smoking and smoking-related diseases and the damaging health effects on passive smokers, there are 30 volumes of US Surgeon General's Reports and publications on smoking comprising tens of thousands of peer-reviewed studies published since 1964.


In 1992, an actor asked a R.J. Reynolds executive why he does not smoke and his reply was: "We don't smoke that s***. We just sell it. We just reserve the right to smoke for the young, the poor, the black and the stupid." This unadulterated quotation is from a tobacco industry representative himself.

In 1998, a shop manager in Kuala Lumpur commented about Benson & Hedges' promotion of new ranges of coffee products under the cigarette brand names, "Of course this is all about keeping the Benson and Hedges brand name to the front. We advertise the Benson and Hedges Bistro on television

and in the newspapers. The idea is to be smoker-friendly. Smokers associate a coffee with a cigarette. They are both drugs of a type.”

Smoker rights activists and pro-smoker rights policy makers are proving the tobacco industry’s perception of smokers as being stupid is correct. It was estimated that 14.6 per cent of smokers in Malaysia attained less than primary education; 20.2 per cent, primary education; 25.2 per cent, lower/upper secondary education; and 14.3 per cent, college or above. In other words, 34.8 per cent of smokers did not even complete their primary education.

We call upon the government to let good sense prevail and not use tax payers’ money to build sheds for smokers. The expenditure to pander to the smokers’ whims and fancies are non-justifiable at all.



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