



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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The mutual benefits of stubbing out the smoking habit

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) commends and congratulates the Malaysian Health Ministry (MoH) for implementing and enforcing Regulations 11 (1) (d) of the Tobacco Control Regulations 2018.

Under this Regulation, offenders caught smoking in “any eating place or air-conditioned shop” can be fined upwards of RM10,000 or face jail time of up to two years. A total of 605 cases were compounded amounting to RM144,450 were issued to smokers flouting the ban on the first day of implementation, 1 January 2020. Owners of 103 premises were fined a total of RM25,750 for failing to display “no smoking” sign and for providing items (such as ashtrays) which facilitate smoking.

We strongly support MoH's effort in curbing smoking because 20.3 billion cigarettes were consumed in 2018 by more than 5 million smokers aged 15 and above. It is a waste of money on a highly addictive habit that deprives smokers and their families of better food and necessities. We have to consider the discarded 20.3 billion cigarette butts which contribute to the environmental pollution.

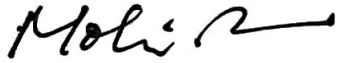
Besides being a wasteful habit, smoking is also dangerous one well to the smoker and those around them. Most smokers fail to realise that smoking-related diseases may take 20 or more years to develop. By then, either the smokers could not associate their smoking habit with the disease or that it is too late to stop their addiction. Moreover, secondhand smoke can also cause smoking-related diseases to non-smokers in the vicinity.

In 1967, the US Surgeon General Report's stated that “cigarette smokers have substantially higher rates of death and disability than their non-smoking counterparts in the population” and the statement is still true. However, the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) warned that secondhand smoke (a combination of the smoke from the burning end of a cigarette and the smoke exhaled by smokers) can also cause numerous health problems in infants and children; as well as increases the risk of developing lung cancer by 20-30 per cent; heart disease by 25-30 per cent; and stroke by 20-30 per cent.

In fact, more than 20,000 Malaysian male adults die from smoking-related complications every year as smoking harms almost every organ in the body. It is associated with many forms of cancers, and more than 30 other diseases such as stroke, cataracts, coronary heart disease, chronic bronchitis, and cardiovascular disease.

It has been estimated that the government will be spending RM7.4 billion on treatment cost for major illnesses caused by smoking, e.g. lung cancer and coronary heart problem by 2025. The cost of treatment is footed by taxpayers and the amount could be put to better use for the public's benefit.

We call upon the government to continue unannounced raids and monitoring at food outlets. Instead of only imposing fines and jail terms, the government should also consider the introduction of community service orders that require offenders to clean public areas for up to 12 hours. The Australian's Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study (BOCSAR) in 2013 shows that community service orders are "more effective than another kind of punishment".



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