



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press statement

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Ban all e-cigarettes and vaping devices

There were three recent suspected cases of vaping-related illnesses in Malaysia and these should raise red flags for the Malaysian Ministry of Health (MoH) to ban all e-cigarettes and vaping devices. The government should not involve the tobacco industry (TI) in any tobacco control policy discussion because TI is known to interfere with governments' formulation of tobacco control policies.

While Malaysia maintains “no direct participation of the tobacco industry in policy development”, there are indications that the government have accepted pro-tobacco industry policies.

For example, contrary to MoH's recommendations to ban all Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)/ Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENNDS), and e-cigarettes, they were allowed under the purview of the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs after intensive lobbying of vaping groups/associations.

As for the alleged vaping-related illness cases, the media reported:

- > An asthmatic 17-year-old boy who was admitted to Labuan Nucleus Hospital in Labuan recently. He has “severe internal lung damage suspected to have been caused by vaping”. He had been vaping two weeks before suffering from what the doctors diagnosed as “internal lung injuries, rhabdomyolysis and kidney failure”. It was claimed to be the first case in the country.
- > In an earlier case, Wan Muhamad Amirul claimed that vaping “accelerated growth of a tumour in his nose” and caused “an inflammation of his tonsils”. Wan Muhamad Amirul ended up spending RM20,000 in medical bills to have his tumour removed and his tonsils treated.
- > The other suspected victim of vaping is Mohd Firdaus, from Subang Selangor who was warded into a hospital for dengue fever. His doctors found “something else” in his blood test results. After recovering from dengue, the doctors found fluid in his lungs. Subsequently he has to undergo surgery to have the fluid removed. It took almost a week of treatment and he still has to go for follow-up treatments.

We urge the government to ban all e-cigarettes and vaping devices without exception as more than 40 countries had done. China is among the latest country to join those that banned or regulated e-cigarettes. It announced a ban on the on-line sale of e-cigarettes recently. There are more than 7.4 million e-cigarette users in China which also happens to be the largest maker of e-cigarette products.

MoH has announced that the case in Labuan will be thoroughly investigated to determine if vaping is the cause of his condition. Regardless of the cause of the lung illness, we urge MoH to ban all e-cigarettes and vaping devices as youths who have taken up vaping and feared the health consequences of vaping may switch over to smoking which is also hazardous to health. In fact, none of these – vaping or smoking – is beneficial to health and on the contrary a total waste of money that can be put into better use. It does not make a difference if vaping is the cause of the illnesses of the cases cited above because taking up vaping or smoking is like playing the Russian Roulette. We do not need a new form of addiction or unnecessary suffering.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association of Penang