



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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Quitters are not losers, they just kick the butts

In conjunction with the WNTD, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is joining other countries in the world in marking the World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) which falls on 31 May 2022. The WNTD's theme for this year is "Tobacco: Threat to our environment".

Cigarette butts are the most common litter that often go unnoticed and they are discarded everywhere such as on roads, parks, beaches, and even flowerpots. In fact, an estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are discarded every year worldwide.

In Malaysia, smokers often get away with littering and this helps to enforce their habit. We urge the relevant authorities to find those who throw cigarette butts or smoke in non-designated zones by working with local councils which operate close circuit cameras.

In a recent study, CAP found that traffic light junctions are a 'favourite' place for smokers to discard their cigarette butts and almost all of them came with filters. The most likely explanation for them being discarded at traffic light junctions is that the smokers quickly finish their puffs while waiting for the light to turn green and discarding the butts there is a convenient option.

Cigarette filters were introduced in the 1950s and they were meant to give a false sense of security to smokers that the cigarettes are safer. In reality, they do not make smoking any safer as harmful chemicals are still delivered to the lungs.

Next, cigarette filters comprise of plastic cellulose acetate fibres which may take up to 10 years to degrade completely. In the meantime, toxic chemicals partially trapped by the cellulose acetate fibres are leached into the environment and among the chemicals is nicotine.

The amount of nicotine found in six cigarette butts is enough to cause a child to be admitted to the hospital. This excludes other chemicals such as arsenic, formaldehyde, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heavy metals. Often discarded cigarette butts find their way through drainage systems into lakes or the sea. Studies have shown that a cigarette butt in nine litres of water is enough to kill water fleas, a tiny crustacean that is found in both fresh and saltwater. Wildlife could be poisoned after mistakenly eating the butts as food.

It should not be forgotten that even if smokers discard their butts into proper bins for disposal, the butts will also end up in a landfill.

Smoking is a wasteful and harmful habit. We, therefore, urge smokers to quit their nicotine addiction by registering themselves at JomQuit (<https://jomquit.com/>), a Health Ministry (MoH) smoking cessation programme.

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