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Letter to the Editor

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Tobacco Generational Endgame Legislation Is An Important Step Forward

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) welcomes and applauds the announcement by Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin to propose a progressive law to eliminate smoking and possession of tobacco products for people born after 2005.

We urge the cabinet members and members of parliament (MPs) to unanimously support Khairy's proposal because, as he described, "Malaysia will become the first country in the world to enact a tobacco generational endgame legislation". It will be a momentous achievement for Malaysia which started its tobacco control in the early 1970s.

If the law is enacted, it will contribute to a healthy society and at the same time reduce the financial burden on the healthcare system. Chronic smoking-related diseases also cause man-hour loss at work.

The government made a bad decision when it imposed a 10% excise duty on all electronic and non-electronic cigarette products to raise revenue in 2021 without considering the economic cost of treating chronic smoking-related diseases. The taxes earned from all tobacco products is minuscule compared to the estimated current expenditure of RM3 billion on treating chronic smoking-related diseases. The amount is projected to increase to RM8 billion by 2030.

The claim by the tobacco industry that vaping is harmless and the way to take people off smoking tobacco products is baseless and self-serving.

Studies have shown that vaping is unsafe as the aerosol contains heavy metals and other toxic chemicals as well. Vaping has been found to be more addictive, making it harder to quit.

Malaysia desperately needs a comprehensive tobacco control law to replace the current Control of Tobacco Product Regulations 2004 that, oddly placed under the Food Act 1983. In fact, if there had been no tobacco industry's intense lobbying, the Regulations would have been replaced by a standalone Tobacco Control Act in 2007.

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