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**Press Statement**

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**Ignore the Tobacco Lobby and Enact the Tobacco Control Law**

The tobacco industry and vested interests are mounting a campaign in the media to influence lawmakers to ditch “The Control of Tobacco Product and Smoking (GEG) Bill”. The lawmakers should not give in to the pressure and abdicate their responsibility to the public to enact laws to protect their lives and health. They should enact the law in the next Parliamentary session without any delay.

What is most shocking is the call by the Private Medical Practitioners of Malaysia “to consider the science of harm reduction before rushing ahead with the generation endgame.” What do they mean by this? Scientific studies have established a link between smoking and cancer as well as other major diseases. 400 people are dying every day of cancer due to smoking. How long are we going to wait before taking effective steps to curb this scourge?

Tobacco smoking is an addiction acquired over many years and therefore the GEG bill aims at stopping it by targeting the younger generation. Progressively, in a few years, the endgame of tobacco can be achieved.

Malaysia is a signatory to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), a legally binding multilateral treaty aimed at reducing tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke. We are committed to taking measures to achieve the FCTC objective and the Tobacco Bill is the outcome.

Our government has implemented a strategic plan to comply with our commitments under FCTC. The National Strategic Plan on Tobacco Control 2015-2020 (NSPTC) is aimed at strengthening the implementation of tobacco controls in the country. The NSPTC has a medium-term target to reduce smoking prevalence to 15% by 2025, as well as a long-term target to achieve the “endgame” of tobacco in Malaysia by 2045. The Tobacco Bill is a well thought of, rational and reasonable piece of legislation to achieve the NSPTC and FCTC objectives.

Another group opposing the GEG bill is the vape dealers through their associations. Rizani Zakir and Ridhwan Rosli, representing vape dealers, claim to have collected 600,000 online petition signatures opposing the Bill. The claim is disputable. But a short answer to it is that health policies and laws are not decided through online petition but through an established process.

The Bill had gone through a consultation process and, finally, after the Attorney General’s Chambers and the Cabinet had given their clearance, it was tabled in Parliament. The views of stakeholders have been taken into account. Human health and lives are more important than the profits of vape dealers. We also like to remind them that there is a Fatwa prohibiting vaping.

It has also been reported that owners of over 40 coffee shops and restaurants have expressed concern over the Bill. They are not opposed to the GEG law but worried about its enforcement. It is now before the Special Select

Committee which is dealing with the issues of constitutionality and enforcement. The Government has agreed to some changes in the provisions relating to enforcement to accommodate the trader's concerns. Therefore they should have nothing to worry about.

We urge the lawmakers to ignore the delaying tactics of the tobacco lobby and proceed to pass the GEG Bill.

**Mohideen Abdul Kader**  
**President**  
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