



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Letter to the Editor

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More reasons why GEG has to be supported

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urges members of the Special Select Committee and parliamentarians (MPs) to seriously consider if Malaysia advocates the production of generations of nicotine addicts. They have the responsibility to protect the greater interests of the population by supporting the Generational End Game (GEG) rather than those with vested business interests.

According to statistics available, the number of Malaysians using electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) which includes e-cigarettes and vapes doubled to 1.2 million in 2019 from 600,000 in 2016.

The emergence of ENDS came from the tobacco industry's search for 'reduced-harm' products because of increasing pressure on smoking arising from public health concerns. ENDS were only commercially available in Malaysia in 2015.

E-liquids used by ENDS often have nicotine, a highly toxic and addictive chemical, as an ingredient. The nicotine used in ENDS can be in the form of free-base nicotine, nicotine salt, or a mixture of them.

Pure nicotine is not absorbed well by the body. To allow nicotine to reach the brain faster, giving a nearly instant 'hit', the chemical structure of nicotine has to be changed by adding ammonia or its compounds to pure nicotine. The process produces highly addictive free-base nicotine which is commonly used in e-liquids.

The industry knows about the process. In fact, R.J. Reynolds senior scientist stated in a 1973 internal document that "methods which may be used to increase smoke pH and/or nicotine 'kick' include... use of alkaline additives, usually ammonia compounds, to the blend".

On another point, the industry exploited the fact that government tests measure total nicotine content but not the proportions of different forms of the chemical. As a result, it is possible for the industry to use the highly addictive forms of nicotine in formulating their e-liquid.

Although a government may regulate the nicotine content of an e-liquid, the nicotine intake is highly dependent on a few factors: the depth and frequency of puffs, the form of nicotine used, and the amount of nicotine present in the e-liquid.

The Universiti Sains Malaysia-based National Poison Centre (PRN) reported that it had received nearly 30 cases of vaping-related poisoning between 2015 and 2020. There were six reported cases in 2019 and the number of cases doubled in 2020 to 13 cases. Most of the cases involved children aged between one and four years old, the youngest being 4 months. Ingestion of e-liquids can kill and the flavours are too enticing to children.

Data from 55 poison control centres in the U.S. showed that at least 1,892 children aged five and below were exposed to e-liquids in 2018, in most cases involving the ingestion of the liquid. The number is expected to be much higher than what had been compiled by the poison control centres.

A study in the U.S. shows that the industry not only marketed its deadly and addictive products to kids but also sought to redesign cigarettes to make them more appealing to potential new customers, especially kids. This approach has also been adopted in producing e-liquids with fruity and other attractive flavours and packaging.

The obvious goal of the industry is to produce generations of nicotine addicts to keep it in business. However, we want to reiterate our stance of supporting GEG because it is the duty of every Malaysian to act to protect the health and lives of our future generation. We urge our MPs to let good sense prevail and support GEG.

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