



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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A clear pathway to possible illicit drug use

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) calls on the in-coming government to proceed with the adoption of Generational End Game (GEG) soonest possible and ban electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) completely. This is because permitting the use of ENDS will create a massive problem concerning drug addiction for generations to come.

In November 2019 CAP explicitly warned that “vape should be banned – not regulated – because it is impossible to monitor the hundreds of both legal and illegal e-liquid brands in the market”. We even gave the reason that it “would not be able to verify the composition of those e-liquids besides such exercise is very laborious and expensive”.

In early November, the federal police from Bukit Aman confirmed our darkest fear that drug-laced e-liquids were being sold openly. The in-coming government should proceed with the adoption of Generational End Games (GEG) soonest possible, completely banning electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS). The reasons are:

- E-liquids with illicit drugs can be packed in bottles with fake labels. It is humanly impossible for the government to monitor the products sold by some 3,000 domestic vape retailers. DrugWatch conceded that “It’s difficult to determine what is in the thousands of different e-liquids, also called e-juice or vape juice, sold for e-cigarettes”.
- DrugWatch also pointed out that: “Part of that is because the U.S. Food and Drug Administration hasn’t reviewed ingredients or set standards. There are many brands and flavours with many different ingredients.”
- It is possible to include certain illicit drugs such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), cannabidiol (CBD) (both are ingredients in marijuana), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), gamma hydroxybutyrate (GHB), and ketamine in e-liquids.
- E-liquid composition may have to be tested using gas chromatography with mass spectrometry (GC-MS) methods with instruments only found in modern analytical chemistry laboratories. The tests are expensive and an unnecessary fiscal burden to the government.
- A 2017 study conducted in Malaysia revealed that 54% of the vapers interviewed obtained their zero-nicotine e-liquid from the black market; 30% obtained homemade e-liquid. The government should not be naïve to assume that there is no black market for e-liquids. In a matter of fact, e-liquids can easily be formulated ‘in the kitchen’ with only basic equipment.
- There is also a likelihood for unscrupulous people to use cheaper industrial-grade chemicals instead of those of food grade. Industrial grade chemicals are not so critical about certain contaminants, depending on the chemical and its intended use.

How can officers distinguish between genuine e-liquids and those that have been laced with illicit drugs since they use the same type of vaping device? As such, we reiterate our call to the incoming government to adopt GEG, including a blanket ban on ENDS as well.

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