



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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Regressive idea on duty-free cigarettes for Langkawi

The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) is shocked that the Langkawi member of Parliament Dato' Haji Mohd Suhaimi bin Abdullah urged the government to allow the sale of duty-free cigarettes.

It is myopic of him to push this idea because smoking is a known contributor to premature deaths and the cause of many non-communicable diseases including cancer, cardiovascular diseases, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and pregnancy complications. It kills about 28,670 Malaysians annually.

Tobacco use also imposes a heavy economic burden on society and the government through increased healthcare costs as well as human productivity losses (such as medical leave, hospitalisation, or death).

In 2012, Malaysia incurred RM15.8 billion on direct and indirect economic cost for tobacco-related diseases. It was equivalent to 1.7 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for that year! It would have been more beneficial to the people if that sum had been spent on education or public transport development.

Duty-free cigarettes were no longer sold in Langkawi since 1 April 2021. If Mohd Suhaimi thinks that it is duty-free cigarettes that draw tourists to the island, he is grossly mistaken. Not only that the re-introduction of duty-free cigarettes a bad idea, it is simply penny wise and pound foolish.

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