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Consumers Association of Penang
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Press Statement

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Do Not Sacrifice Malaysians' Future to the Vape Industry

Vaping will be the scourge of the future and will be difficult to eliminate just like smoking unless it is banned now.

Therefore, the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) urges the government to seriously consider banning it altogether.

Vape traders are exploiting school children by selling vape products to them illegally.

CAP found many school children admitting that they vaped and this brings us back to the question of how could they have access to vaping devices.

While illegal sale of vape products to minors are happening in Malaysia, reports also revealed that it is also happening in Canada, the United Kingdom (U.K.), Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India, and the European Union (E.U.).

According to the latest National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS) 2022, Malaysian teens aged 13-17 using e-cigarette and vape rose from 9.8% in 2017 to 14.9% in 2022.

Although there is a drop in cigarette smoking, however the bad news is the statistics suggest a trend of teens switching to e-cigarette and vape. The Health Ministry (MoH) aptly described the emergence of these products as a "public health threat".

The government needs to catch those who violated the law and impose the harshest punishment allowed.

Accidental nicotine poisoning among children is on the rise in Malaysia. The Universiti Sains Malaysia-based National Poison Centre (NPC) reported 66 calls of vaping-related poisoning between January 2015 and August 2022.

Most of the cases involved children aged between one and four years old, the youngest being 4-month old infant.

Ingestion of e-liquids can kill and many thousands of flavours being sold are enticing to children. Such poisoning cases have taken a different turn in recent times because there is an increasing number of young vapers who suffered from nicotine poisoning through inhalation rather than from consuming.

Substances contained in the e-cigarette or vape devices, when heated, will produce chemicals that can have an inflammatory effect on the lining of the lungs and cause e-cigarette or vaping product use-associated lung injury (EVALI).

With thousands of e-liquids variants flooding the market sold by 3,300 known retailers, it is impossible to monitor the nicotine concentration of each bottle or brand.

According to the Malaysian Vape Chamber of Commerce there are more than 97 per cent of e-liquids with nicotine in the local market.

It is costly to determine the nicotine content because each sample must be tested with sophisticated laboratory machines. Studies have found that labelling is not always a reliable indicator of nicotine content and this appears to be a common issue. One study published in a professional journal showed that, of the 20 articles assessed, nine had more than half of their samples with nicotine content outside 10 per cent of the labelled nicotine concentration.

A wide range of e-liquids, vapes, and shisha are readily available online platforms easily accessible to Malaysians.

A person just needs to declare that the person is aged 18 and above by just clicking a button to access the respective webpage to browse or purchase the item. Some do not even need age verification.

A foreign online report exposes “how ruthless firms are targeting youngsters with cartoon characters and bubble-gum flavours”.

Their marketing strategy targets children, youths, and women with fruity and bubble gum flavours is widespread globally.

Women market segment of cigarette smokers is usually much smaller than men as statistics show in the Asean countries and such ‘pleasing’ vape packaging and flavours can entice them into the addictive habit that cigarettes are unable to do.

The Smoking Product Control Bill (RUU) was scrutinised and approved by the Special Select Committee on Health (JKPK) of the previous parliament but before it could be debated and approved, the parliament was dissolved.

This delaying tactic, apparently under pressure from the tobacco lobby, is totally unjustified. Those who argue for the right of individuals who want to vape, simply ignore the harm the product does.

Essentially there is no moral principle behind such argument and the government has the duty to limit an individual’s liberty on the grounds of healthcare.

Hence, we urge for a total ban on e-cigarettes and vapes because parliament should not sacrifice the future of Malaysians to the industry.

The current parliament must pass the GEG soonest possible in view of the overwhelming scientific evidence that e-cigarettes and vapes have serious health consequences.

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