

MMA: Vaping a health issue, not economic by loh foon fong



PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) says discussions on vaping should focus on health issues and not on the economic well-being of dealers.

MMA president Dr Ashok Zachariah Philip said e-cigarettes had not been around long enough for anyone to claim with certainty that they were safe for long-term use.

"Long-term damage to the organs may take 15 or 20 years to develop," he said in a statement Saturday.

Dr Ashok said common sense and caution suggest that inhaling volatile active chemicals into the delicate tissue lining the air sacs of the lung is more likely than not to have damaging effects, he said.

Many have claimed that the liquids used in e-cigarette contain only "safe" substance such as colourings and flavourings with small amounts of nicotine and propylene glycol.

"The fact is that food additives are safe when taken orally, but have not been tested as inhalants," he said.

He cited cinnamon for example, which was delicious when taken orally but became a serious irritant when inhaled.

"The harmlessness of all these additives must be studied and confirmed before claims are made," he said, adding that high temperatures could produce irritants and carcinogenic formaldehyde.

Recently, the Health Ministry wanted to ban e-cigarettes but the Cabinet decided against the ban and said it should be regulated instead.

Rural and Regional Development Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri was also against the ban, saying the Malay-dominated industry would die if only pharmacists and doctors were allowed to sell nicotine-laced vaping fluids.