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No proof kiddie pack sales can curb smuggling of illicit cigarettes: NGOs

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Malaysian Women's Action for Tobacco Control and Health (MyWatch) today expressed concern over the tobacco industry's proposal to reintroduce kiddie pack cigarettes (pack of 10 sticks) into the market. FILE PIC

By JULIA FIONA (/authors/julia-fiona) - January 18, 2018 @ 6:18pm

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Women's Action for Tobacco Control and Health (MyWatch) today expressed concern over the tobacco industry's proposal to reintroduce kiddie pack cigarettes (pack of 10 sticks) into the market.

Describing it as a regressive idea and will only encourage smoking habit, its medical director Dr Zariahah Mohd Zain said reintroducing something that had already been banned will only create a bad image for the country.

She was responding to a statement by Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam yesterday that the government will not support such proposal.

The minister reportedly said that if the government agreed (to the move), it would be against the National Tobacco Policy and Article 8 of the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Dr Zariahah, who echoed Subramaniam's view, said: "It will be a very regressive action if the government allow the reintroduction of the kiddie cigarettes. This idea by the tobacco industry will in no way reduce smuggling of illegal cigarettes into the country.

"Many studies have shown that sales of cigarettes in small packs contribute towards smoking among children, young adult and the poor.

"Whatever the tobacco industry's argument, they have no concrete proof to say that kiddie pack will curb smuggling issue.

"They are only talking about their own interest, not the interest of the people, especially the health of youngsters," she told the New Straits Times.

Dr Zariahah also called on the government to rectify the control of tobacco smuggling protocol under the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and tightened enforcement by curbing cigarettes smuggling at the borders.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Ravindran Naidu said the banning of kiddie pack has proven to be a good deterrent factor against smoking.

"As a major medical association in Malaysia, we view the idea of kiddie pack cigarette's reintroduction as a way to encourage the younger generation to start smoking.

"Not only that, adults will start to smoke more as cigarettes will come in a handy size than before.

"Although there is no significant drop in the number of smokers after increase in retail price over the years, it does not give the tobacco industry the 'green light' for the reintroduction." Dr Ravindran said.

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