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Putrajaya warned against working with tobacco industry-funded lobby groups

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By Danial Dzulkifly



The Malaysia Medical association urges the Malaysian government and researchers to reject funding from entities funded by tobacco companies. — AFP pic

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 20 — The Malaysia Medical association (MMA) has warned the federal government today against working with groups that are stealthily being funded by tobacco companies.

In a press statement, MMA said they stand with the World Health Organisations (WHO) in urging governments around the world to reject working with Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW) that is funded by tobacco giant Phillip Morris International (PMI).



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“MMA is also calling on Malaysian government and researchers to reject funding from entities funded by the tobacco industry like FSFW,” its president Dr Mohamed Namazie Ibrahim said.

“We join the WHO in calling on governments and research institutions to shun any prospect of receiving support or research funding from the tobacco industry as well as from those furthering its interests.



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“FSFW is entirely funded bu PMI which continues to earn billions at the expense of those who fall prey to tobacco addiction. Our concern is that FSFW effectively oerationalises PMI’s corporate affairs strategy to further PMI’s business interests which include the promotion of its heated tobacco products, a market which PMI seeks to dominate,” he added.

MMA further add that they echoed the sentiment of WHO and the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, a global treaty mandating states to, among others, protect their governments from interference by the tobacco industry.

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It was reported that FSFW was set up in 2017 US\$80 million (RM325 million) funding from PMI, which makes Marlboro cigarettes among others.

WHO’s director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus in Geneva last month has made strong public comments against the foundation that aim to influence anti-smoking and public health policy globally.

Last month, it was revealed that Malaysia’s Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (Ideas) is among free-market think tanks globally that have received donations from tobacco companies and had opposed measures to curb smoking such as higher cigarette taxes.

UK daily *The Guardian* highlighted Ideas’ statements and work in objecting to the Malaysian government’s 2017 proposal to impose a hike in cigarette tax, in the latter’s bid to cut down on the death toll of over 27,200 Malaysians annually from smoking.