



MALAYSIAKINI
LETTER

Good move to introduce laws, increase no smoking zones

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LETTER | The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) fully supports the Malaysian government's intention to enact new laws to increase no smoking zones as recently announced by our Health Minister.

Any move by the government to promote smoke free environments and reduce exposure to second-hand smoke is much welcomed.

Over 1.4 billion people, or 20 percent of the world's population, are protected by comprehensive national smoke-free laws and therefore this is a step in the right direction for Malaysia.

We are confident also that in the long run, these measures will significantly help reduce the nation's expenditure on healthcare costs in treating Malaysians affected by illnesses and diseases

associated with tobacco smoke.

We also share the same concerns expressed by our Health Minister on the harmful effects of second-hand smoke on the health of in particular women and children. The effects of this are serious.

If you look at the World Health Organisation (WHO) statistics, second-hand smoke causes 890,000 premature deaths per year globally.

In adults, second-hand smoke causes serious cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, including coronary heart disease and lung cancer. In infants, it can cause sudden death and in pregnant women, it may cause low birth weight.

Apart from shopping malls, eateries and offices, we also hope that the government may consider an awareness campaign to prevent smoking in vehicles as families, colleagues or friends traveling together can be directly exposed to second-hand smoke if a person lights up in the car.

In some countries like Australia, Canada and France, there are smoking bans for private vehicles where a person can be fined for smoking in a vehicle in the presence of a minor or a pregnant woman. This may require the involvement of other ministries but we feel this is an important area to be addressed.

We also look forward to continuous efforts to increase awareness on the harmful effects of tobacco smoke and second-hand smoke in schools so that healthy habits can be instilled early among our younger generation who will be contributors to our nation's economy in the future.

The writer is MMA president.

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