

Medical associations in uproar over proposal to remove nicotine from poisons list

By [Kalbana Perimbanayagam](#) - March 28, 2023 @ 9:31pm



Removing nicotine from the Poisons Act before passing the Tobacco Control Bill will give children unhindered access to vape products. - NSTP file pic

KUALA LUMPUR: Medical associations have sounded the alarm over a possible move to remove nicotine from the Poisons Act 1952.

This, they claimed, was being done to enable the government to tax vape products containing the substance.

Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai claimed the association learnt that nicotine was being removed from the list of controlled substances under the Act.

He claimed that the move was imminent and is expected to be carried out by the first week of April earliest.

He expressed concern that if this is done before the Tobacco Control Bill is passed, it would lead to a lack of control over the sale of vape products.

"We are concerned that this move will cause an influx in the sales of vape containing nicotine in public, without restrictions for minors.

"Based on the 2023 Budget, vape with nicotine is due to be taxed but this move seems to be a de-facto legalisation for it to be sold in the public domain.

"In order for vape containing nicotine to be sold, nicotine will have to be removed from list of controlled substances under the Poisons Act," he said.

Dr Muruga Raj said so far there are no proper regulations on the use of vape.

Removing nicotine from the list, he said, would permit the sale of both nicotine and non-nicotine vape to be sold openly and legally to anyone including children.

"It is important to note the current Control of Tobacco Product Regulations (CTPR) is only subjected to cover nicotine in cigarettes and to whom it can be sold, which is to those above 18.

"Nicotine is highly addictive and that's why even in cigarettes, we only allow those above 18 to buy," he said.

He said removing nicotine from the Poisons Act before passing the Tobacco Control Bill will give children unhindered access to vape products containing nicotine - which will lead to a whole new generation of children and young people becoming addicted.

"The Health Ministry via various stakeholder engagements had mentioned that addressing smoking and vape addiction was to be a step-wise process. For instance, the passing of the Tobacco Control Bill - which has comprehensive controls on sale of tobacco and vape, then followed by removal of nicotine from the list before any tax is enforced.

"But this latest news indicates the government is more concerned with the potential tax revenue and has little to no worry about its impact on the health of Malaysians," he said.

Meanwhile, the Malaysian Pharmacists Society (MPS) in a statement also strongly opposed the proposal to exclude liquid or gel nicotine under the Act.

MPS president Prof Amrahi Buang said the move would be detrimental to the health and safety of Malaysians.

"We understand there will be a meeting by the Poisons Board to discuss the exemption of the control of nicotine under Poisons Act 1952 to allow it to be taxed by the government soon but we are completely against the idea, due to various health reasons.

"Studies have shown that nicotine use can lead to cardiovascular disease, lung disease, and cancer. Additionally, nicotine use during pregnancy can harm the developing fetus and lead to complications during childbirth and vaping is a growing trend in Malaysia now," he said.

Amrahi called on the government to reject the proposal to remove nicotine from the Poisons Act 1952 and protect public health and safety.

"We urge the government to strengthen regulations around e-cigarettes and vaping, including restrictions on marketing and advertising, and to increase public education about the dangers before considering the proposal," he said.