

"Right to smoke" is not a good reason to continue puffing away, says MMA

By [Dania Nabila](#) - July 28, 2022 @ 4:40pm



Dr Koh said while it could not be denied that the freedom of choice was placed under the Federal Constitution, the right of citizens to smoke is not guaranteed as smoking is not considered a fundamental liberty. - NSTP/GENES GULITAH

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) believes that while freedom of choice is a right for Malaysians, the right to smoke should not be placed in the same category.

MMA president Dr Koh Kar Chai said it supports the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, also known as the tobacco generational end game (GEG), in prioritising any policy supportive of health in preventing the increase of chronic health issues among Malaysians.

Dr Koh said while it could not be denied that the freedom of choice was placed under the Federal Constitution, the right of citizens to smoke is not guaranteed as smoking is not considered a fundamental liberty.

"It would be irresponsible if the government were to disregard or ignore the dangers of tobacco smoking, e-cigarettes and vaping products to the health of the population.

"The public should be reminded that the Health Ministry's top priority is the health of the nation," he said in a statement.

He said according to reports, the government stands to lose RM273 billion owing to early deaths from smoking-related diseases if no action is taken to reduce the country's smoking rate.

"Every year, it is estimated that 20,000 individuals in the country die as a result of smoking-related illnesses," he said.

He added that there was substantial data on the harms of cigarette smoking, as well as several developing research on the major health concerns linked with e-cigarette and vaping use.

"E-cigarette use or vaping has been linked to lung, heart, brain and gum illnesses which might result in coughing, breathing difficulties, chest pain, nausea, fatigue, and in some cases these health conditions may require hospitalisation."

Dr. Koh said the E-cigarette or Vaping Product Use Associated Lung Injury (EVALI) is a medical diagnosis that already has Clinical Practice Guidelines for its treatment.

MMA, he said, hoped that the public will understand the issue from a larger perspective as it could benefit everyone in the long run as well as urge all the members of parliament in focusing on improving health issues nationwide.