

Save Youths From Nicotine Addiction, Pass The Tobacco Bill, MMA Tells MPs

By CodeBlue | 31 May 2023

MMA urges MPs to prioritise the health of Malaysians by voting in support of the tobacco bill. “We now have the opportunity to save the younger generation and generations to come from the dangers of smoking and vape addiction”.



The crushing of cigarette mock-ups during the 28th National Anti-Smoking Poster Drawing Competition prize-giving ceremony held in conjunction with World No Tobacco Day in Melaka on May 31, 2023. Picture courtesy of MMA.

KUALA LUMPUR, May 31 — Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) president Dr Muruga Raj Rajathurai has called on all MPs to make the health of Malaysians their highest priority by voting in support of the Control of Smoking Product for Public Health Bill 2023, which will be tabled in June.

He said this in his speech at the 28th National Anti-Smoking Poster Drawing Competition prize-giving ceremony, held in conjunction with World No Tobacco Day in Melaka today. Close to 500 people attended the event officiated by deputy health minister Lukanisman Awang Sauni.

“We now have the opportunity to save the younger generation and generations to come from the dangers of smoking and vape addiction. My wish for Malaysia on World No Tobacco Day this year is to see a Malaysia free from the harmful effects of smoking and vaping products,” said Dr Muruga Raj.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) is set to table the Control of Smoking Product for Public Health Bill 2023 in June. Under the Bill, children born from 2007 and subsequent years will be prohibited from smoking, buying, or possessing any type of smoking product, including electronic cigarettes or vape products, even after reaching the age of 18.

“We are pleased that the Ministry of Health had recently reaffirmed its commitment to tabling the bill in June. However, we hope all MPs regardless of political affiliation, will put the health of Malaysians first and support the bill” added Dr Muruga Raj.

He urged all Malaysians to voice out their support for the bill to MPs through various social media platforms.

“Tell them to stand up for the health of Malaysians and say a big No to smoking and vaping with their vote for the bill in parliament.”

He added that MMA has also been speaking to MPs from both sides of the divide for their support on the bill.

“There is more than enough scientific evidence showing the damage to health caused by smoking and vaping.

“Cigarette smoking causes numerous types of cancers, heart disease, stroke, lung disease, diabetes, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis, while vaping can lead to E-cigarette or Vaping product use-Associated Lung Injury (EVALI), which is a fatal disease.

“Health care expenditure to treat these diseases are also high. I am sure Malaysians do not want this,” he said.

“To all our Malaysian youths, my message to you today is there is nothing cool about smoking or vaping. All it does is destroy health and cause suffering. Treatment costs for diseases associated with smoking and vaping can also run into six digits, causing financial hardship. Being sick with no money is not cool,” Dr Muruga Raj said to an audience consisting of over 200 primary, secondary, and college students, who attended the competition’s prize-giving ceremony with their parents.

“The long-awaited Control of Smoking Product for Public Health Bill 2023 is expected to be tabled next week and we hope that it will have smooth passage, becoming the greatest gift the nation receives in terms of our commitment to the health of all Malaysians,” said Dr Murallitharan Munisamy, chairman of MMA’s Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) committee.

“The Bill will regulate and restrict both conventional cigarettes and vape; while the Generational End-Game portions of the Bill will act as a clear roadmap for our country to be able to wrestle free out of the chains of nicotine addiction that continues to cause so much sorrow, death, health and economic suffering for all Malaysians.

“In conjunction with this World No Tobacco Day, the public should play their part in speaking up on social media, in their communities, and most importantly, to their parliamentary representatives. We need to pass them the clear message that the majority of Malaysia is committed to ensuring that we leave a legacy of a tobacco-free Malaysia for our children and grandchildren,” he added.

During the event, a book titled *The Harms of Harm Reduction in Tobacco Control* was jointly launched by MMA, the Malaysian Council for Tobacco Control (MCTC), and the National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM).

Dr Murallitharan, who is also MCTC chairman and NCSM managing director, said that a commonly held misperception that is making its way is that e-cigarettes and vaping products are safer than cigarettes, though the available science is proving otherwise.

“To address these concerns, tobacco control advocates including MCTC, MMA, and NCSM have come together to compile the most updated relevant evidence in a guide called *The Harms of Harm Reduction in Tobacco Control*, which we have also incorporated into a training module that is being used to train health care professionals all across the country.

“This will both empower health care professionals to be able to understand the facts about harm reduction, misconceptions being put forward and how to advocate and correct misinformation to the public in their professional and private roles,” he added.

The 28th National Anti-Smoking Poster Drawing Competition was organised by the MMA’s ASH committee, in collaboration with the MOH, the Ministry of Education, NCSM, and MCTC.

The competition recently made it to the Malaysia Book of Records for the Most Anti-Smoking Poster Drawings in a Competition with a total of 24,248 entries.

The Anti-Smoking Poster Drawing competition themed “We Need Food, Not Tobacco – Ke Arah Generasi Tanpa Merokok” was open for participation from February 9, 2023 in three categories, namely primary schools, secondary schools, and universities, colleges, and the public, with RM750, RM1,000, and RM2,000 as the first prize for each respective category. The closing date for entries was on April 30, 2023.