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MMA urges govt to explain vape nicotine exemption from poisons list

By MANJIT KAUR
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PETALING JAYA: The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) has called on the government to clarify its reported move to exempt liquid nicotine used in vape products from the Poisons List.

MMA president Dr Sivanaesan Letchumanan said the association was deeply troubled by a news portal report that Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad had proposed the exemption, which had reportedly received the endorsement of the Poisons Board.

He said MMA strongly opposed the move if the claims were true, adding that it raised serious questions about the government's commitment to public health.

"We call on the Health Minister to urgently clarify the matter and explain the public health justification for the proposed exemption," he said in a statement on Tuesday (Nov 3).

Dr Sivanaesan said the government should not repeat the events of 2023, when the Poisons Board opposed the exemption of liquid nicotine but the government proceeded with it.

He said in May this year, the High Court struck down the exemption, ruling that the decision was irrational and driven primarily by economic considerations.

He also highlighted growing concerns over drug laced vape products, saying the issue had gone beyond nicotine addiction, with vape devices increasingly being misused to consume dangerous and illicit substances.

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He said in July, the Home Ministry revealed that 718.43kg of vape products suspected of containing prohibited substances had been seized between 2023 and June 2026, with 585 arrests involving 400 cases.

Dr Sivanaesan warned that drug-laced vaping could lead to drug dependency, serious medical complications, increased pressure on healthcare services and wider public safety concerns.

He recalled that Dr Dzulkefly had acknowledged in June that the discovery of dangerous synthetic drugs in vape products provided strong grounds for a nationwide ban.

"The minister had also publicly declared last year that banning vape was no longer a question of 'if' but 'when', with the government targeting a nationwide ban in 2026.

"Is the government still committed to a nationwide vape ban, or has that commitment been abandoned?" he asked.

Dr Sivanaesan said MMA's position remained unchanged, with vape products needing to be banned nationwide, particularly to protect children and young people from nicotine addiction.

He also questioned whether public health or commercial interests and tax revenue were taking precedence in the government's decisions.

He said decisions on vaping must be guided by scientific evidence and public health priorities rather than commercial considerations.

"MMA urged the Health Minister to provide an immediate explanation, reaffirm the government's commitment to a nationwide vape ban and outline a clear timeline for its implementation.

"Malaysia should be moving towards eliminating vape, not normalising it. Public health must come first," he said.