

BACK TOBACCO GEG BILL, MPs URGED

Aim is to safeguard people's lives, protect health, says deputy minister

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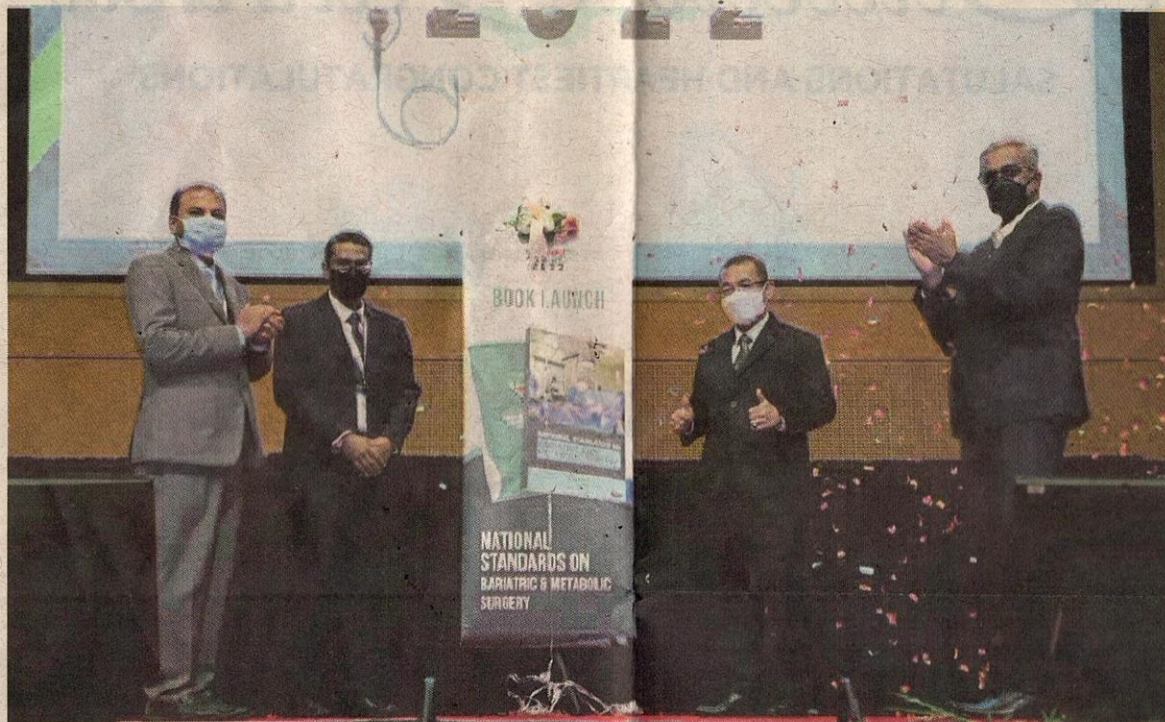
THE Health Ministry is hoping that members of parliament (MP) will vote in favour of the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill when it goes through the second and third readings at the Dewan Rakyat on Monday.

Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali urged parliamentarians to support the bill, also known as the tobacco generational endgame bill, as it was aimed at safeguarding people's lives.

"This is a long-awaited bill and we are doing this because we want to control the use of tobacco and vape products. All this time, tobacco was regulated under the Food Act 1983.

"I hope everyone will give their support, including MPs who take part in the debate and who will subsequently vote. All we want to do is protect the health of Malaysians," he said yesterday.

Noor Azmi, who is Bagan Serai MP, was speaking after officiating at the three-day Congress of Society of Endoscopic and Laparo-



Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali ((second from right) officiating at the Congress of Society of Endoscopic and Laparoscopic Surgeons of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC COURTESY OF HEALTH MINISTRY

scopic Surgeons of Malaysia here yesterday.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin had, on June 27, tabled the law's first reading.

Aimed at ending the smoking habit, the law will apply to those born in 2007 onwards and not 2005 as initially proposed.

The second reading (debate) and the third reading will be done during the current Parliament

sitting. If passed, Malaysia will not only ban smoking but also prohibit the ownership of tobacco and vape products aimed at those born after 2007.

Meanwhile, Noor Azmi said the Covid-19 pandemic was not over yet and that the people should not take lightly the precautions put in place to avert the spread of the virus.

This, he said, followed a higher

transmissibility rate due to the presence of the Omicron sub-variant.

Noor Azmi expressed concern over the sudden surge of new cases and admissions to health facilities nationwide.

"In the last few days, there has been an increase in admissions to hospitals and Covid-19 quarantine and treatment centres.

"Ventilator usage and occupan-

cy of Intensive Care Units are also up. Thankfully, deaths are still in the single digit.

"Our R-naught (infectivity rate) in the 29th epidemiological week was at 1.12, which means the spread is now faster.

"This is compounded by the presence of Omicron's BA.4 and BA.5 sub-variants in the country.

"The people must continue to follow the Covid-19 standard operating procedures."

He also advised adults to take their booster shots and parents to take their children for the third vaccine jab. To date, he said, only 50 per cent of children in the country had been vaccinated against the virus.

"Parents should agree to their children getting the third vaccine shot. This additional shot will strengthen their immunity."

Khairy had said the Covid-19 Vaccine Technical Working Committee had recommended that moderately or severely immunocompromised children aged 5 to 17 be given the third dose as part of their primary series.

He said this was because studies abroad had shown that the effectiveness of the vaccine in preventing hospital admissions among young people dropped between 42 and 73 per cent within five to 10 months after the second dose. The group, he said, would be given a first booster after receiving the three doses.