

# Igniting the **BAN** on **SMOKING**

THE move to create a smoke-free generation in Malaysia is about to spark off.

Getting the nod from Cabinet, the new Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill is expected to be tabled in the coming Dewan Rakyat meeting beginning tomorrow.

Called the generational end-game (GEG), the new law is the Health Ministry's ambitious move to ban smoking and vaping for those born in 2005 and beyond – even after they turn 18.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin has said the goal is to reduce smoking prevalence among Malaysians to 5% in 2040.

It will be a big change once the Bill becomes law, but many believe the key to its success lies in its enforcement.

For that, there are plans to require cigarette and vape sellers to check the age of buyers before a sale is made when the ban kicks off, the ministry tells *Sunday Star*.

This is similar to the current practice – at present, those who sell tobacco products are required to check the identification of buyers, like their MyKad or driver's license, to verify their age.

Currently, they are not allowed to sell to anyone under 18, in line with the

The Bill to ban smoking for those born in 2005 and onwards will be tabled in Parliament in the new session starting tomorrow. If passed, enforcement will be key to the successful implementation of the law, say experts.

Control of Tobacco Product Regulations 2004.

"The method will be the same when the new Act takes effect.

"Sellers will need to verify that the buyer wasn't born on Jan 1, 2005, and onwards.

"They cannot sell any tobacco or smoking products to this generation under the GEG," says the ministry.

In the long term, the ministry will also update the methods of verifying the age of buyers from time to time using the latest technology.

As for those who

attend a tobacco awareness programme or perform community service," Dr Mohd Afiq proposes.

Similarly, National Cancer Society of Malaysia managing director Dr Muralitharan M. suggests that an additional QR code on MySejahtera or a simple identification card (IC) reader be tied into a purchasing barcode at the point of sale for cigarettes or vapes

illegally sell tobacco products, they may face jail time under the new Act, said Khairy on July 8.

Current regulations also prohibit advertisements and the online sale of tobacco products.

Once the new Bill is passed,

Khairy hopes to execute the law quickly, as regulations on vape have an impact on taxes.

Vape and e-cigarettes are currently outside the purview of any law, so when the new Act comes into effect, the government will be able to collect taxes for these items, he said.

At the same time, the ministry is also concerned about the availability and sale of illicit cigarettes in Malaysia. It hopes to curb such illegal businesses through the GEG too.

"This is because the illegal trade will negatively impact our overall target to reduce the smoking prevalence in Malaysia," it says.

As such, it believes the issue of illicit cigarettes must be tackled simultaneously by various enforcement agencies.

"By having the GEG, the demand for tobacco products will reduce as we aim for no

and ecigarette sellers should be the ones to hold a bigger responsibility under the GEG rather than the youth.

Respiratory specialist Dr Helmy Haja Mydin says punitive action should be focused on retailers who sell cigarettes or ecigarettes to the GEG group.

"They should bear the higher burden of responsibility and

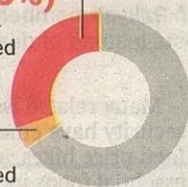
## CIGARETTE SMOKERS



■ Among daily cigarette smokers, the average number of cigarettes smoked was **12.4 sticks** per day

■ Most **(30.5%)** daily cigarette smokers smoked **15 to 24 sticks** per day

**4.2%** smoked **25 or more sticks** a day



**Imposing fines and using MySejahtera among ways to enforce**

electronic cigarettes and vape products, even after reaching 18 years of age.

Apart from this, shopkeepers and cigarette vendors are also not allowed to sell smoking products

# Smoking ban, suggest experts

BIGGER fines for sellers, using MySejahtera to verify ages, getting the public to report illegal sales, and introducing compounds for youths who smoke – such are among the suggestions on how the government can enforce the generational endgame (GEG) law on smoking from several experts who support the policy.

Under the proposed Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, children born in 2005 and subsequent years are prohibited from smoking and buying or possessing any type of smoking product, including

allowed to sell smoking products to those covered by the ban.

President of health NGO Ikram Health Malaysia Dr Mohd Afiq Mohd Nor says the government should increase the workforce, budget and facilities, and create a better system to enforce the move.

“For example, they can create a system using a mobile app or MySejahtera to stop the GEG group from buying cigarettes or vape products,” he says, adding that MySejahtera already has our identification records.

A new feature can be added into the app so that it can scan the cigarette pack or vape packaging while purchasing.

“At the same time, this will be able to prevent retailers from selling the products to the GEG group,” he says.

Malaysia also needs community will and support to implement this law successfully.

“They can report illegal activities to the authorities through a digital platform on smoking issues.

“GEG youths who violate this law may also be fined a minimum of RM50, just to teach them a lesson.

“Those who repeat the offence should

point of sale for cigarettes or vape products.

“This way, immediate verification can be done without any difficulty.

■ Male smokers outnumber females by more than **30 times**

■ The state with the lowest percentage of smokers is Putrajaya (**12.2%**)

■ The overall prevalence of smokers is **21.3%** as of 2019 - a drop from 22.8% in 2015

■ About **4.8 million** Malaysians aged 15 and above are tobacco smokers

## Hold sellers more accountable

Some experts also believe that cigarette

“Another option can be an app available for salespersons to scan and verify the IC of buyers to ensure immediately they are above age,” he says.

He reminds everyone that each person is required to carry their IC as it is an offence to go about without it.

“I think we would need at least a year or two for educational mechanisms to be put in place – similar to what happened with the move to stop smoking in restaurants,” he says.

He also believes that low fines of about RM50 can be introduced for minor offences and subsequently stiffer penalties for repeat offenders.

■ States with the highest percentage of smokers

Kedah (**27.6%**)

Sabah (**25.3%**)

Terengganu (**23.9%**)

■ Tobacco use is more prevalent in rural areas (**25.4%**) compared to urban places (**20.1%**)

■ The age group with the highest percentage of smokers are those between 30 and 34 (**27.1%**)

burden of responsibility, and should be held responsible for their part in

perpetuating the nation's high burden of smoking-related diseases,” he says.

Dr Helmy says there should also be integrated enforcement between the Health Ministry and other agencies like the Customs Department, police and local authorities to strengthen such efforts.

Concurring, Malaysian Green Lung Association president Ho Rhu Yann says retailers should be held more accountable than the buyers.

He says under the current regulations, anyone who is found guilty of selling tobacco products to the underaged will be fined or jailed or both.

“The same mechanism should be maintained with the new policy.

“The fine amount

## E-CIGARETTES / VAPE USERS



■ States with the highest percentage of vapers

**8.2%** Putrajaya

**7.3%** Terengganu

**6.9%** Sabah

■ The use of e-cigarettes among male current smokers was almost **31 times** higher than females

■ The prevalence of e-cigarette/vape use was highest among those aged between **20** and **24** (**14.7%**)

**SMOKING OUT THE HABIT**