

# 'STUB OUT NICOTINE CURSE FOR GOOD'

Ex-smokers share their experience and call for the passing of the tobacco generational endgame bill

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**F**ORMER smokers are fully backing the Control of Tobacco Product and Smoking Bill, otherwise known as the tobacco generational endgame (GEG) bill.

Fairul Ramzi, a 38-year-old father, took his first puff when he was 13 and has spent over two decades trying to kick the habit.

The longest he has gone without taking a puff is six months, after which he relapsed.

+ "Cigarette smoking is a curse that I do not want my children to inherit. I believe the GEG is the best way to protect my children from the dangers of smoking.

"It is our responsibility to ensure that the next generation is raised in a smoke-free environment.

"I grew up surrounded by chain smokers, from my late grandfather to my father. Back then, you could smoke almost everywhere.



A student exhaling cigarette smoke outside a store in Gombak, Selangor. The Control of Tobacco Product and Smoking Bill, also known as the tobacco generational endgame bill, seeks to prohibit the sale and ownership of tobacco and vaping products to those born from 2007 onwards.

FILE PIC

"More importantly, harm reduction officers will be able to conduct in... ing. For over a decade, I tried to... ing habit is way better than trying

"When I commuted using the mini bus, I saw the driver smoking and when I got down, almost everyone was doing the same. I felt like I was missing out if I didn't smoke.

"Cigarettes were also cheap and some shops sold single (loose) cigarettes for only 30 sen per stick.

"How would kids not fall for smoking when the act was normalised and cigarettes were so widely available?

"I really hope my children will not be raised in such an environment," the father of three told the *New Straits Times*.

Fairul finally managed to quit smoking four years ago after switching to vape. But, he eventually wants to quit vaping and be completely free himself from his nicotine addiction.

"People think smokers can turn to vaping and quit the habit whenever they wish to. That is not true.

"Vaping products, like cigarettes, can get children addicted to nicotine at an early age. For some people, smoking is also an entry point for drugs.

"More importantly, harm reduction will not deter potential smokers from taking their first puff.

"So, I am appealing to all the members of parliament to vote for the bill.

"Do this for our children. There is absolutely no reason to vote down this bill. Be on the right side of history," he said.

Likewise, Muhammad Rais Ridzuan, a 22-year-old student, found that quitting smoking was a rough path that he would not want his future children to tread.

"I started smoking when I was 15 and it was difficult to quit.

"Whenever I tried to avoid cigarettes, I struggled with anxiety and felt as though as I was losing a part of myself.

"The GEG will pave the way for tougher enforcement. Health of-

ficers will be able to conduct inspection at retail premises and verify the age of people purchasing cigarettes and vapes.

"If this was done during my schooling days, I probably would have not taken the risk to try smoking."

Mohd Zul Rusdi Mohamad Ghazali, 42, said the GEG could greatly reduce the number of new smokers and eventually phase out smoking from the country's shores.

The father of

four said the law would also reduce incidences of non-communicable diseases and alleviate the government's financial burden to treat these illnesses.

"I started smoking when I began working at 25.

"I was finally able to quit smoking after 10 years in 2016. My family had no idea that I was smok-

ing. For over a decade, I tried to give up smoking.

"I registered at a smoking cessation clinic and tried nicotine replacement and other techniques. But, I failed in my first few attempts.

"Still, I was undeterred. I joined my friends in running and engaged in the activity as a therapy.

"Running boosted my willpower to quit smoking.

"Now, I have not smoked for six years and I still actively run

and have even participated in a few long-distance running tournaments."

However, he stressed that smoking cessation services and harm reduction options would only help chain smokers.

"The GEG will save more youngsters from taking their first puff. Never picking up the smok-

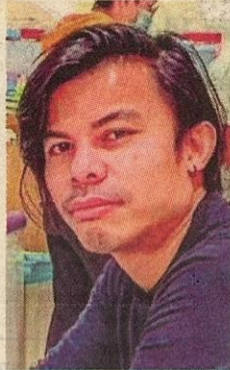
ing habit is way better than trying to quit."

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, on Wednesday, tabled the GEG Bill for the first reading and wants to push the bill through for a second and third reading during the current sitting.

The bill seeks to prohibit the sale and ownership of tobacco and vaping products to those born from 2007 onwards.

Previously, he said the country would have to spend RM8 billion to treat lung cancer, heart problems and chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases by 2030.

The government, he said, had already spent RM6.2 billion to treat the three major smoking-related diseases in 2020 — more than twice the RM3 billion revenue generated from tobacco sales.



Fairul Ramzi



Muhammad Rais Ridzuan



Mohd Zul Rusdi Mohamad Ghazali