

**Government mulls cigarette minimum price limits**  
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The health ministry may impose retail floor prices for cigarettes to discourage smoking and stop tobacco companies from luring buyers with cheaper products.

Health Minister Chua Soi Lek said a price war had made cigarettes cheaper despite the annual increase of levies for tobacco and liquor, as manufacturers cut prices to boost sales, Bernama news agency reported.

"The ministry is disappointed by the actions of multinational tobacco companies, which of late have launched a price war to increase their sales. This goes against the government's wish to see a reduction in smoking among Malaysians," Chua said, according to Bernama.

Chua said the the government would also continue to review taxes on tobacco products to ensure their prices remained high to reduce demand.

"Studies have shown prices and demand for tobacco products are closely tied. When prices go up, demand goes down," he said.

Chua said the ministry was also pushing for graphic pictures on cigarette packaging to warn of the hazards of smoking.

"These graphic warnings will need to be changed from time to time so that smokers know clearly what they are exposing themselves to by smoking," Chua said.

According to the health ministry's data, 48 percent of males and just over 21 percent of females in Malaysia are smokers, in a population of almost 27 million.

The number of Malaysians taking up cigarette smoking is reportedly on the rise despite high-profile government campaigns to curb the habit.

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