

# Stubbing out the smokers

## Malaysia to ratify UN tobacco control framework today

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GET ready for cigarette packs with nauseating pictures of tooth decay and ravaged lungs.

These graphic health warnings covering half the packet will become the norm after Malaysia endorses tough legislation on tobacco control today.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is here to deposit the instrument of ratification for the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control at the UN headquarters, the last stage before the country joins the league of nations with the toughest laws to discourage smoking.

Malaysia and other members of the UN adopted the convention four years ago but only 55 countries have ratified it. But with the smoking culture becoming more pervasive in recent years and more young Malaysians picking up the habit, the Cabinet recently decided to fast-forward the process of embracing the tobacco control convention. The tougher regime also comes in the wake of the failure of the Government's anti-smoking campaign.

The *New Straits Times* understands that a host of new rules for tobacco companies will become effective once the FCTC is ratified. These include:

- Making it necessary for all ingredients of the product to be listed, including toxic constituents and additives.



**MINISTERS OF THE ROUND TABLE:** World leaders attending the Security Council meeting at the United Nations in New York on Wednesday. — Reuters picture

- Prohibiting them from describing their products as low tar, light or mild, as these labels can mislead the public.

- Restricting them from using direct or indirect incentives to encourage the public to buy tobacco products.

- Stopping them from using their name or brand in any sponsorship or promotional programme.

More importantly, the con-

vention also paves the way for Malaysians who have been struck down with tobacco-related illnesses to sue tobacco companies — an interesting development in a country where lung cancer victims are becoming younger.

It also places the onus on governments to put in place laws to protect the public from exposure to tobacco smoke in public places and indoors.

In Kuala Lumpur, Annie

**Freda Cruetz** quotes Malaysian Council for Tobacco Control president Professor Dr Syed Mohamed Aljunid as saying that the ratification clearly showed the Government's commitment towards the control of tobacco use and smoking.

He said the Government must now look at all legislations related to control of tobacco in order to ensure all rules and regulations were enforced, including the use

of taxation as a way to reduce tobacco access by youths and children.

"There must be enough manpower to carry out the law effectively," he said.

He added that the Government should also review the decision to defer the withdrawal of the "kiddie pack" in the market as well as to allow the international tobacco expo "Emerging Tobacco Market 2005" in Kuala Lumpur in November.