

'AMENDING POISONS ACT WILL CURB VAPE SALE'

Excise duty imposed as sale of such products rampant, PM tells Parliament

NOR AIN MOHAMED RADHI
AND TEH ATHIRA YUSOF
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

THE government's decision to approve an amendment to the Poisons Act 1952 to allow for the legalisation of nicotine-laced products will curb the rampant sale of vape products in the country.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said while increasing smoking awareness was necessary, the banning of vape products and cigarettes was seen as drastic.

"I agree with the professionals who slammed the matter. However, on the government side, it is a bit difficult for us to prohibit nicotine-laced products for the time being.

"Even though I personally do not condone smoking or vaping, the excise duty on liquid or gel products containing nicotine used for electronic cigarettes and vaping was implemented as it

(the use of vape) was too rampant.

"There are also some ulama who prohibit smoking, but the act is still widespread and this is why the excise duty was introduced. It may seem as a mild approach but it can reduce the smoking habit among the young and old," he said during the prime minister's question time in the Dewan Rakyat yesterday.

Anwar said this in response to Datuk Dr Ahmad Yunus Hairi (PN-Kuala Langat) on the government's justification for the removal of liquid and gel nicotine products used in electronic cigarettes from the Poisons Act 1952.

Previously, the Health Ministry approved the amendment to the act to remove nicotine from the list of poisons to pave the way for the legalisation of nicotine-laced products so that it could be taxed.

Its minister, Dr Zaliha Mustafa, said the exemption of nicotine from the act was in line with the 2023 Budget, where the government would impose excise duty on liquid or gel products containing nicotine used for electronic cigarettes and vaping.

Dr Zaliha said liquid or gel containing nicotine for smoking through electronic cigarettes or electronic vaporisation devices was now an excise duty item and

controlled under the Excise Act 1976 (Act 176).

Anwar also promised that the Control of Tobacco Products and Smoking Bill 2022 will be tabled in the Dewan Rakyat next month to ensure comprehensive control over nicotine-laced products.

In response to a supplementary question from Dr Kelvin Yii Lee Wuen (PH-Bandar Kuching) on the government's commitment to table the bill, Anwar said the implementation of the bill was delayed as it received negative feedback from many members of parliament.

"There were a lot of disagreements pertaining to the matter along with questions raised on the excise duty.

"However, we will not cancel the bill and will continue to present it (in May) after taking into account all views and opinions."

Anwar said the government will consider returning 50 per cent of the excise duty to the Health Ministry to help the health sector.

"The government has decided to return 50 per cent (from the excise duty on nicotine products) to the ministry to help with the recovery of the health industry, and the extension to other (matters) will also be considered." **Additional reporting by Qistina Sallehuddin**