

## Generational smoking ban 'prohibitive', only fuels illicit tobacco market, says BAT Malaysia chief

KUALA LUMPUR (July 25): British American Tobacco (Malaysia) Bhd (BAT Malaysia) has said the Ministry of Health's (MOH) proposed generational smoking ban is a prohibitive way to reduce the health impact of smoking in the country and will only fuel the illicit tobacco market.

"It has never been tested in the real world, lacks any scientific evidence of effectiveness and is likely to be detrimental to our country's health agenda," BAT Malaysia managing director Nedal Salem said in a statement on Monday (July 25).

The Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, which is expected to be tabled in this Dewan Rakyat sitting, includes a proposed tobacco generational endgame law that bans smoking and prohibits the ownership of tobacco and vape products by those born after 2005. However, Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin on Monday was reported as saying that the government is revising the year to 2007 after considering views gathered during stakeholder engagement sessions.

In a statement on Monday, Salem said prohibition will fuel the illicit tobacco market, which already accounts for almost 60% of tobacco sold in Malaysia and will accordingly have negative consequences to public health.

"Fuelling the illicit tobacco market doesn't just line the pockets of criminals. It will have a significant impact on Malaysia's economy, already struggling to recover from the global pandemic. Industry, jobs and growth will be impacted, and government revenue will fall significantly."

He said the MOH should pursue a science-based regulatory framework, informed by the positions of countries such as New Zea-



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land and the UK, where vaping is acknowledged as significantly less harmful and a viable alternative to reduce smoking prevalence.

"Our belief is that tobacco harm reduction is the most effective way to reduce the

health impacts of smoking without fuelling the growth of the tobacco black market and criminalising entire future generations.

"In parallel, introducing some of the more balanced tobacco control measures seen in these same countries will support smokers switching to less harmful alternatives and should be considered instead of prohibition," said Salem.

BAT Malaysia also called on MOH to include industry players in the overall consultation process in developing appropriate regulations for vapour products.

"We believe instead in a holistic approach which strengthens the role of harm reduction and less harmful alternatives to smoking; policies which encourage adult smokers to switch to those alternatives; and the enforcement and control of the illicit tobacco market to ensure that cigarettes cannot be more easily accessed than less harmful alternatives and comply with specific tobacco control policies," he added.