



Sweet scents, bitter consequences

THE sleek, neon-coloured devices and sweet scent of mango or vanilla wafting through our public spaces tell a deceptive story. To the untrained eye, the use of vaping devices or e-cigarettes looks like a harmless modern habit – a trendy lifestyle choice for the digital age.

But as Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad sternly warned during the recent national-level World No Tobacco Day 2026 celebration, this is a carefully crafted illusion – some are even designed to mimic USB drives or stationery in efforts to normalise its existence in everyday life.

It is time for Malaysia to strip away the cool factor and see nicotine addiction for what it truly is: a danger to our health.

And unrealised by many, the statistics are alarming.

While traditional cigarette use among Malaysians aged 13 to 17 has dipped to 6.2%, an electronic version has filled the void. Nearly 15% of our teenagers are now using e-cigarettes. This shift is no accident. It is the result of a calculated industry effort to repackage dependence as lifestyle products that appeal directly to children's and youths' aesthetic and sensory preferences.

Nevertheless, behind the vibrant colours and enticing flavours lies a harsh reality.

As Dzulkefly noted, behind every cloud of flavoured vapour is a public health burden and a lifetime of addiction; we are witnessing the normalisation of a product that, in its intended use, kills one in two users.

To the naysayers of those who oppose the use of vapes and e-cig-

arettes, it must be reminded that there is no concrete proof that it is objectively better than smoking tobacco, as nicotine alone is toxic enough especially for the young. The aerosol produced by these devices also contain harmful cancer-causing carcinogens as it is inhaled deeply into the lungs.

Some claim that it is a better alternative to traditional cigarettes particularly for those who want to stop lighting up one, but what good does an alternative offer if it similarly leads the user down the same path?

This is a trend that must be stopped, especially for our children, judging by the statistics laid out by the Health Ministry. That is more than a reminder; it's also a warning for something worse to come if it is goes unmitigated.

True, we, the people, must act

as the first line of defence. Parents and teachers cannot afford to be complacent, dismissing e-cigarettes as a safer alternative to smoking. They must be exemplary and educated to identify these devices and have honest conversations with youths about the chemical traps hidden within them.

But the burden should not be weighed and rested solely on families' shoulders. This is where the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 steps in, which enforcement can realise the aspired change.

Eyes must be trained at companies or vendors that target minors as their potential product users.

We can take a leaf out of the new Tamil Nadu chief minister, actor-turned-politician Joseph Vijay Chandrasekhar's book – just

a few days into the office, he has ordered the immediate closure of 717 state-run liquor shops and reinforced strict regulatory restrictions. The policy shift focuses on heavily restricting alcohol access near public spaces, especially schools, and enforcing age laws.

Similarly, there must be zero tolerance for shops located near schools or for those that sell vapes and e-cigarettes to underage individuals in Malaysia.

If these products are repackaged to lure children, then the law must be packaged to bite.

We cannot allow the health of future generations to be traded for corporate profit. We must unmask the appeal, regulate the industry without compromise, and collectively insist that addiction is never, and will never, be cool.

'Liquid nicotine delisted to curb black market sales'

PETALING JAYA: Former health minister Datuk Dr Zaliha Mustafa has defended the government's 2023 decision to remove liquid nicotine from the Poisons Act after the High Court ruled the move as "irrational", saying it was a critical step to regulate the booming vape industry and curb black market sales.

She said she subsequently tabled the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Bill in June 2023 to plug the legal loophole.

She explained the delisting was approved by the then government as it could no longer allow the multi-billion ringgit vape industry to operate without records, registration and monitoring.

Her statement yesterday came after the High Court on Friday allowed a judicial review filed by three health non-governmental organisations, ruling that the government's decision to delist liquid nicotine was "irrational".

"Before March 2023, enforcement under the Poisons Act was no longer able to contain the flooding of vape products in the market. Despite being a controlled poison, nicotine vapes were being sold openly in the black market.

"The exemption was a critical step to pull the industry out of the black market so it could be declared, its supply chain monitored and taxed. This matter was also discussed in detail by the Cabinet at the time," she said.

The then Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Bill, now a standalone law enforced as Act 852, comprehensively regulates smoking products, vape devices and nicotine liquids while strictly prohibiting sales to minors.

"Malaysia now has a tobacco and vape control ecosystem that is much safer, comprehensive and protects the younger generation, compared to when we only relied on the outdated provisions of the Poisons Act," she said.

Dr Sim: Putrajaya must weigh Sarawak's healthcare situation before budget cuts

KUCHING: The federal government must take a comprehensive view of Sarawak's healthcare situation before implementing any budget cuts, said Deputy Premier Dr Sim Kui Hian.

Speaking after officiating at the Fourth International Nursing Students' Conference

(INSC) 2026 at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday, he stressed that hospitals in the state were already operating under significant strain.

"If you go to Sarawak General Hospital (SGH) now and look at the accident and emergency unit, patients are waiting for beds.

"Although it is not my direct

responsibility, I come from the healthcare profession myself, so I understand the situation and we will continue to fight for it," he told reporters.

In acknowledging the financial and global challenges, Dr Sim said any cost-cutting measures involving healthcare should be carefully reviewed

based on existing conditions in Sarawak.

"At the moment, due to the Middle East conflict and other related challenges, I understand the federal government is facing financial constraints, and there is a need for budget cuts.

"Hopefully, healthcare would not be significantly affected.

"I also hope the Malaysian government will seriously look into this issue, taking into consideration Sarawak's healthcare condition," he said.

Dr Sim added that critical healthcare issues deserved greater priority, citing overcrowding and understaffing issues, particularly at the SGH.

'Nursing shifting towards community, elderly care'



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KUCHING: Nursing is rapidly evolving beyond hospital-based care towards community and home-based services, particularly in response to an ageing population, said Deputy Premier Datuk Amar Dr Sim Kui Hian.

Highlighting the significance of the profession within the healthcare system, the state Minister for Public Health, Housing and Local Government said the shift would require greater specialisation among nurses, alongside stronger adoption of new technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) and other healthcare innovations.

"Nursing is not only on the front line, but is also part of the backbone of the entire healthcare system," he said after officiating at the Fourth International Nursing Students' Conference (INSC) at Dewan Tun Abdul Rahman Putra (DeTAR Putra), Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), in Kota Samarahan



Dr Sim (fourth left) and Ahmad Hata jointly highlight the conference, as Dr Asri (right) and other guests look on. — Photo by Chimon Upon

yesterday.

Citing the National Health Morbidity and Mortality Survey launched by the Health Minister, Dr Sim noted that only around 15 per cent of the ageing population was considered healthy.

"The remaining 85 have some form of illness or health condition.

"This does not only refer to cholesterol, blood sugar or high blood pressure, but also mental health conditions such as Alzheimer's."

He stressed the need to prepare

future healthcare workers meet the growing demands for elderly care services.

On the conference, Dr Sim congratulated Unimas for successfully hosting the fourth edition of the international event, which gathered delegates from Singapore, Indonesia and the Maldives.

"We hope the Unimas medical school would continue to expand by offering programmes such as pharmacy and dentistry, making it a truly complete medical school," he said.

Carrying the theme 'Innovating with Compassion: Empowering Inclusive and Equitable Nursing for the Future', the conference aims to bring together nursing students, educators, researchers and healthcare professionals from various institutions to discuss advancements, challenges and innovations in nursing and healthcare practice.

Also present were Unimas vice-chancellor Prof Dr Ahmad Hata Rasit and Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences dean Prof Dr Asri Said.

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Dominasi Gaya Hidup

Dr Afif menekankan kepentingan mengawal populasi tikus dengan menutup lubang masuk dan membersihkan stor berkala.

Hantavirus: Ancaman 'maut' dalam debu

Kenali perbezaan serangan virus tikus liar dengan leptospirosis serta langkah pencegahan selamat elak risiko kegagalan pernafasan pantas



MEDIK

Oleh ZAITON ABDUL MANAF

Su kebersihan persekitaran sering kali menjadi topik hangat, namun sejauh mana kita benar-benar cakna tentang ancaman yang bersembunyi di sebalik debu dan kotoran?

Baru-baru ini, tular mengenai kebimbangan terhadap jangkitan tikus, namun ramai yang masih keliru antara kencing tikus atau leptospirosis dengan ancaman lain yang perlu diberi perhatian iaitu hantavirus.

Nama hantavirus diambil sempena Sungai Hantan di Korea Selatan, tempat virus itu mula dikenal pasti ketika Perang Korea pada awal 1950-an apabila ramai tentera mengalami penyakit misteri melibatkan demam dan kegagalan buah pinggang.

Virus itu kemudian dikenal pasti oleh saintis Korea Selatan, Ho-Wang Lee, pada tahun 1970-an selepas beliau berjaya mengasingkan virus daripada tikus lapangan.

Kemunculan semula hantavirus menjadi perhatian dunia pada tahun ini selepas beberapa kes dan kematian dilaporkan melibatkan sebuah kapal persiaran antarabangsa, MV Hondius.

Kejadian itu mencetuskan kebimbangan global kerana ia melibatkan strain Andes virus yang dalam kes tertentu boleh merebak antara manusia.

Dalam mendepani isu kesihatan semasa, masyarakat perlu lebih berwaspada kerana ancaman ini bukan sekadar demam biasa, malah boleh menyebabkan kegagalan pernafasan akut dalam tempoh singkat jika tidak dipantau rapi.

SinarPlus baru-baru ini menemu bual Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif Pusat Rawatan Al Farhain, Dr Afif Mohd Ridzwan.

Menurut beliau, pemahaman masyarakat mengenai



UNTUK kawasan berisiko tinggi, gunakan pelitup muka yang lebih bagus berbanding jenis pembedahan biasa.

hantavirus masih rendah berbanding leptospirosis.

"Hantavirus berpunca daripada virus, manakala leptospirosis pula disebabkan oleh jangkitan bakteria yang menular melalui air atau kawasan tercemar dengan air kencing haiwan," jelasnya.

Symptom hantavirus sering menyerang paru-paru dan menyebabkan pesakit mengalami sesak nafas yang teruk.

Berbeza dengan leptospirosis yang lebih banyak melibatkan simptom demam, sakit otot, jaundis, serta kerosakan hati dan buah pinggang.

Apakah yang lebih membimbangkan, risiko kegagalan pernafasan bagi pesakit hantavirus berlaku sangat pantas.

Secara klinikal, virus ini bermula dengan tanda demam biasa, sakit badan, dan keletihan. Namun, dalam beberapa hari, ia boleh berkembang menjadi batuk dan sesak nafas serius sehingga memerlukan bantuan pernafasan segera.

Menyentuh tentang cara penularan, beliau mendedahkan hantavirus daripada tikus liar biasanya menjangkiti manusia melalui habuk yang tercemar dengan najis atau sarang tikus.

"Kebanyakan strain hantavirus jarang berjangkit sesama manusia, namun ia mudah menular apabila kita tersedut habuk yang mengandungi virus daripada air kencing, najis, atau sarang tikus yang kering," katanya lagi.

Virus terbang

Oleh itu, Dr Afif memberikan peringatan agar orang ramai tidak sesekali menyapu, menggunakan vakum, atau meniup habuk di kawasan disyaki menjadi sarang tikus kerana tindakan itu menyebabkan virus terbang ke udara dan masuk ke sistem pernafasan.

"Cara terbaik membersihkan kawasan berisiko adalah dengan memakai sarung tangan dan pelitup muka sesuai.

"Saya sarankan penggunaan penyembur disinfektan atau kain lembap untuk mengelap kawasan kotor bagi mengelakkan habuk berterbangan.

"Selepas membersihkan, kain tersebut hendaklah terus dibuang ke dalam plastik tertutup dan pastikan tangan dibasuh bersih dengan sabun," ujar pakar itu.

Mengenai pelitup muka, beliau menjelaskan, jenis pembedahan biasa boleh membantu, namun bagi kawasan sangat berisiko seperti stor lama yang tertutup, penggunaan pelitup muka lebih 'advance' sangat digalakkan.

Faktor risiko jangkitan pula tidak dapat lari selagi terdapat populasi tikus tinggi, longkang kotor, serta pengurusan sampah tidak sistematik.

Walaupun kawasan luar bandar mempunyai risiko lebih tinggi, penduduk bandar juga tidak boleh merasa selamat.

Tempoh inkubasi virus ini biasanya mengambil masa sekitar satu hingga lapan minggu selepas pendedahan.

Antara kumpulan berisiko tinggi ialah pekerja gudang, petani, pembersih dan pengendali sampah.

Hingga kini, beliau menjelaskan, tiada ubat antivirus spesifik yang standard untuk merawat hantavirus, tidak seperti leptospirosis yang boleh dirawat dengan antibiotik.

Rawatan utama adalah bantuan sokongan intensif di hospital termasuk oksigen dan hidrasi.

Sebagai langkah pencegahan, Dr Afif menekankan kepentingan mengawal populasi tikus dengan menutup lubang masuk dan membersihkan stor berkala.

"Kita perlu faham matlamat utama adalah menghapus habitat tikus, bukan sekadar membunuhnya," tegasnya lagi.

Simptom hantavirus sering menyerang paru-paru dan menyebabkan pesakit mengalami sesak nafas yang teruk."

-Ketua Pegawai Eksekutif Pusat Rawatan Al Farhain, Dr Afif Mohd Ridzwan



KKM akan rayu keputusan mahkamah isu nikotin

KUALA LUMPUR - Kementerian Kesihatan Malaysia (KKM) akan mengemukakan rayuan ke Mahkamah Rayuan terhadap keputusan Mahkamah Tinggi semalam berhubung isu pengecualian cecair dan gel nikotin daripada Akta Racun 1952.

Bekas Menteri Kesihatan, Datuk Seri Dr Zaliha Mustafa berkata, beliau telah dimaklumkan mengenai perkara itu dan menegaskan proses rayuan tersebut penting bagi membetulkan tafsiran perundangan berkaitan kuasa eksekutif menteri dalam membuat keputusan dasar demi kepentingan strategik negara.

Sehubungan itu, beliau menyifatkan masih terlalu awal untuk membuat kesimpulan terhadap isu berkenaan memandangkan proses rayuan akan berlangsung.

"Keputusan yang diambil pada tahun 2023 merupakan satu langkah berani yang akhirnya berjaya memayungi keselamatan rakyat di bawah Akta 852 yang sedang berkuat kuasa sekarang," katanya dalam kenyataan pada Sabtu.

Beliau yang juga Ahli Parlimen Sekijang mengambil maklum dan menghormati keputusan mahkamah tersebut, di samping menghargai usaha pertubuhan bukan kerajaan (NGO) kesihatan yang membawa kes berkenaan ke mahkamah sebagai bukti sistem demokrasi yang sihat.

"Proses semak dan imbang ini bukti sistem demokrasi yang sihat. Hakikatnya, kerajaan dan pihak NGO berkongsi satu matlamat akhir yang sama iaitu melindungi kesihatan rakyat Malaysia," katanya. - *Bernama*