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The Malaysia-Singapore Coffeeshop Proprietors' General Association wants to be part of the solution and is willing to work with the parliamentary special select committee, which is reviewing the tobacco GEG bill.

WIDE IMPACT

# Over 40 trade groups oppose GEG law

Coffee shop operators, grocers want to resolve issues with PSSC before tobacco GEG bill is passed

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**T**RADE associations have urged the government to address concerns relating to the proposed Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill 2022, also known as the tobacco "generational endgame" (GEG) law, which businesses said could impact the operations of food and beverage outlets nationwide.

Malaysia-Singapore Coffeeshop Proprietors' General Association (MSCSPGA) president Wong Teu Hoon said the association was willing to work with the Parliamentary Special Select Committee (PSSC), which is reviewing the GEG bill, to become part of the solution.

"We are supportive of the Health Ministry's agenda in reducing the number of smokers in the country.

"However, we strongly believe any new measures should be carefully evaluated on their socio-economic impact. All we ask is to be con-



Just like the smoking ban in restaurants, many trade association members fear that the implementation of the tobacco GEG bill will come with a hefty price. PIX BY EIZAIRI SHAMSUDIN.

sulted, given the chance to communicate and speak to the committee members."

Wong said a comprehensive briefing and consultation should be held with retailers on the impact of the bill, instead of rushing to implement its measures.

"We need to strengthen enforcement against illegal cigarettes and we need to focus on youth awareness," he said at the association's headquarters in Jalan Pudu here on Thursday.

The MSCSPGA, which represents 43 affiliates, is one of the largest trade associations in the country,

boasting a membership of 20,000 coffeeshop operators nationwide and employing some 500,000 people.

Malaysian Indian Restaurant Owners Association (Primas) deputy president C. Krishnan echoed Wong's view, adding that to assess the socio-economic impact of the bill, a detailed study and consultation was critical and must be conducted by the government and PSSC with retailers and other stakeholders.

He also believed that the ministry did not have enough manpower to control and inspect every tobacco

product purchase.

"Therefore, we (retailers) automatically become the frontliners in implementing the GEG bill.

"Let's not forget the issue of asking for MyKad. We are afraid that this will lead to arguments and unpleasant situations in our outlets, which any coffeeshop owner knows is bad for business.

"By making this process more tedious, customers will find these checks troublesome. This will cause them to stop patronising our outlets and look for alternatives.

"This will, in turn, result in further loss of revenue for our association members, who are doing this by the book," he said.

Federation of Sundry Goods Merchants Associations Malaysia (FSGMAM) president Hong Chee Meng said the bill would lead to higher penalties besides pushing the burden of enforcement on retailers.

"Just like the smoking ban on eateries, the GEG ban comes at a hefty price for our members and the burden will fall on us. If we fail to enforce this very tedious GEG, we

will be fined a minimum of RM30,000 or face imprisonment of up to three years or both.

"Despite the heavy fine, there is a need for us to act as frontliners now that the burden of enforcement has been shifted to us. But despite this, the PSSC has yet to even speak to us," he said.

Lembah Pantai member of Parliament (MP) Fahmi Fadzil agreed that the concerns of associations had been raised at the PSSC meeting chaired

by Pengerang MP Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said.

Fahmi said lawmakers were discussing what the bill lacked in terms of enforcement.

"I believe their issues should be heard by the PSSC. We see this as a concern and what they are requesting is legitimate. They are not asking for the moon or for the bill to be scrapped.

"I will bring their request to the PSSC. At the same time, I urge them to reach out to the prime minister and finance minister, as well as other relevant ministries that also play a role in the bill to consider the issues to be raised," he said.



Fahmi Fadzil



Hong Chee Meng