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MEDIA STATEMENT

CREATING A NEW GENERATION OF CRIMINALS

The Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, which went through the first reading at Parliament yesterday, will effectively criminalise individuals born from 2007, if they purchase, possess or use cigarettes or vape.

This is an extremely heavy-handed approach, especially for vape users, and will create a new generation of criminals that are penalised for buying or using a substance that is legally permitted to everyone else.

Instead of creating a smoke-free future, Malaysia may very well turn into a crime-laden country.

According to the Tobacco and Smoking Control Bill, anyone born from 1 January 2007, is prohibited from purchasing "any tobacco product, smoking substance, substitute tobacco product, or smoking device". This offence is punishable with a maximum RM5,000 fine upon conviction. Further, the Bill prohibits those born from 1 January 2007, from smoking any tobacco product or substitute tobacco product; using any smoking device; or possessing any tobacco product, smoking substance, substitute tobacco product, or smoking device. This offence is punishable with a fine not exceeding RM5,000.

Even with all of the good intentions in the world, outlawing vape for the new generation would be disastrous. After all, people would still vape, but now, we would find a whole range of "collateral consequences" that come along with prohibition.

Working adults will have to hide their habit and use vape in alleys and dark corners, afraid of being caught using illegal substances. It might lead to absurd situations in which one day a 50 year-old would be forced to ask their 51 year-old friend to purchase a vape on their behalf.

We would have enforcement officers using precious time and resources to hassle and arrest these vape users. We would have a black market, with outlaws taking the place of shops and supermarkets and stepping in to meet the demand and provide the desired substance.

As extreme as these scenarios may be, this is the reality of the future if the vape ban is implemented.

Malaysian Vapers Alliance (MVA) urges the Government and the Ministry of Health to review all these repercussions before implementing a ban that will be detrimental to the country.