

# Coalition Urges Malaysia to Reject Bans, Criticizes WHO's Stance on Tobacco Alternatives

*CAPHRA urges Malaysian authorities to reject counterproductive bans on vaping and adopt risk-proportionate regulations*

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, April 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates (CAPHRA) today called on Malaysian authorities to reject counterproductive vaping bans and instead embrace evidence-based, risk-proportionate regulations. The Coalition highlighted the World Health Organization's (WHO) persistent failure to support harm reduction strategies, which continues to fuel preventable smoking-related deaths globally.



Samsul Arrifin Kamal, MOVE Malaysia

The urgent appeal comes as Malaysia faces mounting pressure to tighten vaping regulations under the new Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852). CAPHRA warns that proposed state-level bans and stricter nicotine limits risk replicating the failures seen in Bhutan and South Africa, where prohibition efforts spurred illicit markets and worsened public health outcomes.

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*Samsul Arrifin Kamal*

"Enforcing stricter controls on high-risk products while allowing access to safer alternatives is far more effective than outright bans," said Professor Dr. Sharifa Ezat Wan Puteh. "Malaysia must distinguish between combustible cigarettes and proven harm reduction tools."

Echoing this sentiment, Samsul Arrifin Kamal of MOVE Malaysia added: "We firmly believe that banning vape

products outright is counterproductive and will only lead to unintended consequences, such as the growth of black markets. The solution lies in implementing strict, risk-proportionate

regulations and robust enforcement mechanisms. Clear guidelines for the production, sale, and use of vape products are critical for consumer safety."

CAPHRA further criticized the WHO's outdated position, which continues to ignore the growing body of evidence supporting vaping as a key tool in smoking cessation. Despite illicit tobacco products accounting for 55.3% of Malaysia's tobacco market in 2023, WHO projects the country's smoking rate will rise to 30% by 2025—starkly contrasting with Sweden's 5% smoking rate, largely achieved through harm reduction strategies.

"The WHO's anti-harm reduction dogma is costing lives," said Nancy Loucas, CAPHRA's Executive

Coordinator. "Malaysia now stands at a crossroads: it can either repeat the failures of prohibition or embrace the evidence. Sweden's success proves that science must prevail over ideology."

While Act 852 introduces important measures such as nicotine caps and health warnings, CAPHRA warns that proposed bans in states like Selangor and Johor could fragment national policy and undermine progress. The Coalition urges federal and state governments to work towards harmonized regulations that protect public health without driving consumers back to combustible cigarettes.

With 68% of Malaysian ex-smokers crediting vaping for helping them quit traditional smoking, CAPHRA calls for expanded, regulated access to safer alternatives. The Coalition also urges Malaysia to pressure the WHO to modernize its stance on harm reduction.

"Malaysia has the opportunity to lead ASEAN by putting the health of five million smokers ahead of outdated rhetoric," Loucas concluded.

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TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION ADVOCATES

The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates

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