

GAINS ARE SHORT-TERM

# CALLS MOUNT TO BAN VAPES OVER BURDEN

Illnesses caused by e-cigarette use have long-term consequences, say experts

AMALIA AZMI  
**KUALA LUMPUR**  
amalia.azmi@nst.com.my

**T**HE long-term health and economic burdens of e-cigarettes are expected to outweigh any short-term financial gains to the country, economists said.

Universiti Putra Malaysia senior economics lecturer Dr Wendy Bui Kher Thinng said the economic returns generated by sale and taxation of e-cigarettes, popularly called vapes, were relatively small and short-term.

“While the vape industry may generate some short-term economic activity, such as retail sales and limited tax revenue, these benefits are quickly offset by rising healthcare costs, declining productivity, and the broader social burden of addiction, illness, and premature death,” she told the *New Straits Times*.

She said vape-related illnesses and fatalities not only strained the public healthcare system but also reduced the nation’s labour

force, diminishing the country’s productive capacity over time.

“People often focus on immediate economic gains and overlook these long-term consequences. We must recognise that economic sustainability depends on a healthy population,” she said.

Bui said the government estimated that treating a case of vaping-associated lung injury costs about RM150,000.

She said this was only the cost of hospitalisation and excluded wider economic impacts.

“Taking into account indirect costs, such as lost productivity, job loss due to long-term health issues, financial strain on families and the opportunity cost of family members leaving the workforce to provide care, the total societal cost becomes substantially higher,” she said.

She said vaping should be banned and accompanied by strong enforcement, effective tracking and monitoring, and ongoing public education.

Putra Business School economist Associate Professor Dr

Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff echoed similar concerns, warning of the hidden costs of losing key household contributors to vape-related illnesses or death.

He said if the government banned vaping without strong enforcement, the situation could mirror that of the cigarette industry, where more than half the products sold in Malaysia were smuggled.

“When it comes to protecting public health, we should not consider the vape industry’s economic contribution, just as we do with other banned substances,” he said.

Malaysian Vape Chamber of Commerce secretary-general Ridhwan Rosli said there was no regulatory body responsible for inspecting vape products.

“At present, Sirim only inspects the battery components, while no regulatory authority is tasked with ensuring the safety of the substances used in vape devices.

“Vapes sold in the United States and United Kingdom adhere to strict Food and Drug Administration and European Union standards.

“However, those in Malaysia do not follow any of these standards.”