Tens of thousands of schoolkids are smokers

NATION

Friday, 15 Mar 2024

KUALA LUMPUR: Over 38,000 pupils were found to be smokers after the Health Ministry screened over 1.54 million secondary school children across the country, says Deputy Health Minister Datuk Lukanisman Awang Sauni.

As for the 2.4 million primary school pupils screened, 374 were found to have picked up the habit, he said.

“All of these students have since been given intervention to curb their habit,” he told the Dewan Rakyat here yesterday.

The health screening was done under the Oral Health Tobacco-Free (Kotak) programme last year.Lukanisman said in cooperation with the Education Ministry, his ministry had also successfully trained 141 school counsellors and Pendidikan Pencegahan Dadah (anti-drug education) teachers on how to deal with these young tobacco users.

He said the prevalence of vaping among women was on the rise, from 2.8% in 2017 to 6.2% in 2022.Replying to a question from Dr Halimah Ali (PN-Kapar) on efforts to reduce cigarette and vape use among the youth, he said the ministry is looking to develop a plain packaging policy for these products.



“This includes vape product specifications, such as the shape of the products that would be allowed to be sold by the industry,” he added.

Lukanisman said the ministry had also carried out 129 engagement sessions with non-governmental organisations and local authorities on possible policies to curb smoking and vaping in open areas.

He called on MPs to set an example by refraining from smoking in open, public places.

“If we are truly serious about getting rid of vaping and smoking, it needs to start from us in Parliament.

“I urge all MPs to avoid vaping or smoking in premises like the Parliament building and to find a more suitable place instead,” he said.