NEW STRAITS TIMES

Government called on to tackle uncontrolled vaping among school students

By Kalbana Perimbanayagam - August 4, 2024 @ 9:17pm



FOR ILLUSTRATION PURPOSE ONLY. NSTP/FAIZ ANUAR

KUALA LUMPUR: Alliance for a Safe Community chaiman Tan Sri Lee Lam Thye has called on the government to address the rising issue of uncontrolled vaping among school students.

Expressing concern, Lee urged schools across the nation to take firm action against student vaping and to organise campaigns to combat the growing trend.

He said vaping-related issues are becoming a significant worry for parents, teachers and educational authorities.

"Instances of students vaping in school toilets and unused classrooms have been reported. In a recent incident at a secondary school in Selangor, six students were found vomiting after sharing a vape.

"Another student exhibited signs of being 'high', with bloodshot eyes and difficulty standing or walking," he said.

In response to the growing problem, Lee said the Education Ministry has introduced several measures to remind students of its ill effects during school assemblies, special classes and to organise group guidance sessions, anti-smoking and vaping campaigns, lectures, exhibitions and co-curricular activities warning against vaping.

Lee said some of the health risks associated with vaping, particularly for young, developing bodies, include nicotine addiction, lung damage and exposure to harmful chemicals.

Additionally, he said vaping could lead to traditional tobacco use, creating a cycle of addiction that could negatively impact academic performance and increase dropout rates, thus burdening parents and society.

He suggested that school authorities and students support the Education Ministry's efforts through various strategies.

"Empowering students to take a stand against vaping by implementing peer-to-peer education programmes and encouraging former vapers to share their stories could be effective.

"Collaborating with popular celebrities and social media influencers to spread anti-vaping messages and organising poster design contests or short film festivals with an anti-vaping theme are other potential approaches," Lee added.

Lee also stressed the critical role parents play in shaping their children's attitudes and behaviors.

He recommended involving parents and guardians in informational sessions to combat the vaping habit collectively.

"It takes collective effort from schools, parents, communities and students themselves to combat the vaping habit, and create a healthier and productive future for the next generation. As the saying goes, prevention is better than cure," he said.