

HEALTH

Govt anti-smoking drive features tobacco tax hike

POST REPORTERS

The government will increase the tobacco tax from July 4 in an effort to curb smoking, particularly among low-income smokers, according to the Public Health Ministry.

The tax hike is part of the wider enforcement of the Tobacco Products Act 2017 which will come into effect on the same day.

The ministry announced the tobacco tax hike as it rolled out an anti-smoking campaign themed "Tobacco, A Threat To Development" to mark World No Tobacco Day yesterday.

The ministry also announced it will introduce tougher regulations on electronic cigarettes from the middle of the year.

The ministry said its campaign intends to hammer home the message that smoking incurs huge economic losses through the

budget spent on treating people suffering from smoking-related illnesses.

The ministry said people need to become aware that smoking causes serious illnesses, including cancer. Smokers die 12 years sooner than their average lifespan and suffer a great deal of trauma from treatments for an average of two years before they die.

Meanwhile, the head of Chulalongkorn University's Drug Dependence Research Centre, Jitlada Areesantichai, said there was no evidence to support the popular belief that smoking electronic cigarettes can help wean a person off smoking conventional cigarettes.

She said many e-cigarettes are imported and sold illegally, mostly through websites.

New models of e-cigarettes are also promoted, which motivates young people to try

out the products. This leads to many more becoming addicted, she said.

The researcher noted the centre was currently studying the amounts of nicotine in the e-liquids which fill the various types of e-cigarettes.

Research conducted by the centre on consumers of e-cigarettes found the subjects started smoking the e-cigarettes from the age of 16 out of curiosity and because friends asked them to smoke.

She said youngsters took up smoking e-cigarettes because they thought it would make them look cool and believed it would help them give up smoking conventional cigarettes more easily.

However, the study found many remained hooked on conventional cigarettes.



Activists and volunteers wear anti-smoking caps during a campaign to observe World No Tobacco Day yesterday at Siriraj Hospital's Faculty of Medicine. The campaign went around nearby communities to urge smokers to kick the habit. APICHART JINAKUL