Experts

Pahang Friday Sermon Highlights Rising Threat of Smoking and Vaping Among Youths

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The recent Friday sermon delivered in mosques across Pahang focused on the increasing dangers of smoking and vaping, particularly among teenagers and young adults. The khatib described smoking and vaping not as casual habits but as harmful behaviours that weaken physical health, impair mental clarity, and affect spiritual wellbeing.

Referring to the 2022 National Health and Morbidity Survey, the sermon highlighted a significant rise in vaping among teenagers, from 9.8% in 2017 to 14.9% in 2022. This trend, according to the *khatib,* poses a serious challenge to public health and to the long-term wellbeing of future generations.

The sermon included the Quranic reminder from surah al-Baqarah, verse 195:

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which warns Muslims not to engage in self-destructive behaviour.

The *khatib* explained that cigarettes and electronic smoking devices contain tar, nicotine, and other toxic chemicals known to contribute to cancer and respiratory illnesses. The sermon also emphasised the dangers of second-hand smoke, which places non-smokers at risk and turns the issue into a community concern rather than an isolated personal choice.

From a religious perspective, the sermon reaffirmed that smoking, including the use of electronic cigarettes and vapes, is classified as haram by the Muzakarah Kebangsaan Hal Ehwal Islam and the Fatwa Committee of the State of Pahang. This ruling is based on Quranic principles that prohibit self-harm and the wasteful use of wealth.

Government Measures and Public Responsibility
To address the increasing use of smoking and vaping products, the sermon highlighted the implementation of the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 (Act 852), which took effect on 1 October 2024. The Act regulates all types of smoking products, including advertising, promotion, sales, packaging, and labelling.

The khatib also referred to Operation Selamat Paru-Paru or Save the Lungs, a coordinated initiative by federal and state agencies together with nongovernmental organisations (NGOs). The operation is intended to curb smoking among the public, especially minors, and includes strict enforcement of smoking bans in restricted areas as well as penalties for the sale of smoking products to underage individuals.

The khatib stressed that these measures aim to protect the future of young Malaysians. Fewer cases of smoking-related illnesses would reduce the long-term financial burden on families and ease pressure on the healthcare system.

The congregation was encouraged to support these efforts. The khatib urged community members to report sales of smoking products to minors and to discourage young people from developing harmful habits. The sermon also pointed out that an estimated 24,000 Malaysians die annually due to smoking-related complications and that smoking remains linked to early exposure to substance abuse.

The Pahang State Government will impose a full ban on the sale of electronic cigarettes and vape products beginning 1 January 2026.

Community Wellbeing and Public Awareness

The sermon ended with a call for continuous cooperation within the community to support public health programmes. Parents, educators, and community leaders were encouraged to promote healthier lifestyles and increase awareness among the younger generation regarding the dangers of smoking and vaping.

The *khatib* emphasised that the combined efforts under Act 852 and Operation *Selamat Paru-Paru* represent a long-term investment in the wellbeing of society, particularly in safeguarding children and teenagers from harmful substances.



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