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2019-2020

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PRESS STATEMENT

MMA FULLY SUPPORTS HEAVIER DUI PENALTIES, HOWEVER ENFORCEMENT WILL BE KEY

The Malaysian Medical Association (MMA) fully supports amendments to the Road Transport Act 1987 (Act 333) for heavier penalties to be meted out on those driving under the influence (DUI). We welcome these deterrent measures as current efforts to prevent accidents caused by drink-driving or drug abuse have not been effective enough. These are much needed measures, however it can only work with regular enforcement. We have been hot and cold on enforcement.

It must be noted that while our country is among the strictest in the world in laws against dangerous drugs, illegal drugs still found its way into the country. It is regular enforcement that will ensure effectiveness of the heavier penalties for DUI.

The MMA also welcomes such measures as it may also discourage high alcohol consumption that can over a period, lead to serious health issues such as liver disease, heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, sleep apnea and obesity. These health conditions can also be costly to treat as most Malaysians are under-insured or can't afford to maintain care for chronic diseases.


While much of the focus has been on drink-driving, we should also not forget the dangers of 'drug driving'. There have been numerous reports in the past of drug related offences committed by drivers, drivers of public transport and other commercial transport. Such issues can be even more difficult to monitor. As roadblocks with breathalyser tests for drunk drivers are usually conducted after midnight when bars close, some drivers on illegal drugs can be off the radar and consuming these drugs during the day when more cars are on the road. Some of these drug driving related offences have even been reported during the MCO.

We urge the government to give equal attention in addressing the problem in both drink-driving and drug-driving offences.

Aside from this, MMA also wishes to express its concern over reports of children as young as 8 years old picking up smoking. While sale of cigarettes to minors is prohibited, enforcement has been lacking as can be seen in the number of youths smoking these days. Parents, schools, colleges and the authorities have an important role to play in discouraging and preventing the habit of smoking among our youths. Parents should also set a good example.

Today is World No Tobacco Day 2020 which carries the theme "Protecting Youth from Industry Manipulation and Preventing them from Tobacco and Nicotine use".

While we toughen laws on DUI, we should also look into stricter enforcement against the sale of cigarettes and smoking products to minors. Our doctors are seeing younger heart disease and stroke patients with smoking being a key contributing factor.



Dr N Ganabaskaran
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Malaysian Medical Association