

Firm launches **anti-black market** tobacco campaign

PETALING JAYA: British American Tobacco (Malaysia) Berhad (BAT) yesterday launched a nationwide "Stop the Black Market" campaign, drawing attention to the seriousness of black market tobacco products and urging Malaysians to share their thoughts on curbing such crime.

Today, 62% of the tobacco market in Malaysia belongs to criminal gangs and the country is ranked number one in the world for illegal cigarettes.

As well as impacting Malaysia's reputation, the tobacco black market accounts for RM5.3 billion in excise tax losses each year. It also has other negative implications.

A recent survey conducted by a leading market research firm showed Malaysians believe youth smoking is linked to cheap illegal cigarettes.

► 62% of total trade run by criminal gangs, govt deprived of RM5.3b in tax annually

The tobacco black market also forms part of a RM300 billion shadow economy that continues to hinder the nation's growth.

In order to highlight how seriously the issue affects lives, as well as the socio economic wellbeing of the nation, Malaysians have been given an opportunity to take part in a nationwide survey at www.stoptheblackmarket.com.my and share their views at <https://www.facebook.com/stoptheblackmarket>.

BAT hopes the campaign can cast

a spotlight on the detrimental impact of the tobacco black market.

The results of the survey can help drive a national discussion on how the black market can be stopped.

This initiative from BAT Malaysia comes after a commitment to help tackle the problem was made at the company's recent annual general meeting.

"The negative impact of the tobacco black market is far-reaching as it affects legal businesses and the lives of all Malaysians. We applaud the hard work done by law enforcement

agencies recently and we hope these efforts continue to pressure the syndicates operating in the black market.

"However, enforcement alone is not enough to address this issue," said managing director of BAT, Jonathan Reed.

"More attention needs to be drawn to the severity of the issue and Malaysians should have an avenue to voice their concerns, hence why BAT Malaysia is coming to the forefront with this campaign.

"Malaysians can go to the website to find out more about this problem and participate in the surveys so that they can reaffirm their stand on this issue and share what they think needs to be done to help with the country's economic recovery," he added.