

# BAT initiates campaign to fight illegal cigarettes

**PETALING JAYA:** With its performance under pressure from cheaper illicit cigarettes, British American Tobacco (M) Bhd (BAT) has launched a nationwide campaign to intensify its fight against contraband tobacco in Malaysia.

Launched yesterday, the campaign, called "Stop the Black Market", would draw attention to the seriousness of the tobacco black market. It would also invite Malaysians to share their thoughts on curtailing this crime.

The initiative followed the company's recent AGM, whereby it voiced its commitment to

help tackle the problem of illicit cigarette.

In a statement, BAT noted that today, 62% of the total tobacco market in Malaysia belongs to criminal gangs, and the country is now ranked No. 1 in the world for illegal cigarettes.

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

BAT managing director Jonathan Reed said the negative impact of the tobacco black mar-

ket 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 that these efforts continue to pressure the syndicates operating in this black market. However, enforcement alone is not enough to address this issue.

"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," he added.