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Tax sugar and not just soda, say academicians



The government's aim of implementing a 'soda tax' on carbonated drinks could possibly generate revenue for the government as well as reduce the people's medical bills in the long run. (File pic)

By **SYALIKHA SAZILI** - August 27, 2018 @ 9:02pm

KUALA LUMPUR: The government's aim of implementing a 'soda tax' on carbonated drinks could possibly generate revenue for the government as well as reduce the people's medical bills in the long run.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Putra Business School senior lecturer, Dr Ahmed Razman Abdul Latiff, said if the soda tax implementation is geared towards reducing consumption of excess sugar, then the public should also adopt a change of lifestyle habits.

He said one alternative way is to implement a tax on sugar, and not just soda.

"The idea is a welcome one as statistics show that 3.6 million Malaysians suffer from diabetes while 1.8 million more may have the disease but are unaware of it as they have never gone for a checkup.

"The government however must conduct a study to determine if sodas really are the main contributor towards diabetes in Malaysia, or is it sugar? Teh tarik, for example, also uses a lot of sugar.

"If yes, then this is a smart way by implementing tax. I am confident that a soda tax can help increase revenue for the government. However, if the people do not change their lifestyle, then medical costs will also increase and add to the burden," he told NSTP.

Meanwhile, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) Economics and Business faculty senior professor, Prof Dr Shazali Abu Mansor, opined that unhealthy food and drinks should be taxed.

This, he said, is for the long-term good of the people.

"I think that in this case, the positives outweigh the negatives.

"As such, the people should not be too quick to get upset as there is the issue of health and could lead to an overall reduction in medical bills for households," he said.

From a consumer standpoint, Malaysian Muslim Consumers Association (PPIM) chief activist, Datuk Nadzim Johan, supported the move but hoped that traders would not take advantage of the situation.

"Consumers have an option to not consumer carbonated drinks. However, we do not want to see any quarters take advantage of the situation," he said.

AGENCY: New Straits Times

LINK: <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/08/405467/tax-sugar-and-not-just-soda-say-academics>

