

CARBONATED DRINKS

Tax sugar and not just soda, says academician

KUALA LUMPUR: The government's aim of implementing a "soda tax" on carbonated drinks could possibly generate revenue for the government besides reducing 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 was geared towards reducing consumption of excess sugar, then the public should also adopt a change in lifestyle habits.

He said one alternative was 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 are really the main contributor to 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 a 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 their burden," he told the New Straits Times Press.

Universiti Malaysia Sarawak Economics and Business faculty senior professor, Professor Dr Shazali Abu Mansor, said unhealthy food and drinks should be taxed.

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