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'Grim Reaper' appears at tobacco expo  
Kuek Ser Kuang Keng  
Nov 14, 05 6:29pm

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Four anti-tobacco activists, including one clad in a 'Grim Reaper' costume, staged a protest at the international tobacco congress and exhibition, Tabinfo 2005, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre this morning.

The four carried placards and had gathered for about 30 minutes before being dispersed by police personnel who asked if they had a permit to assemble at the premises.



Grim reaper.org pix

One of the protesters, president of the Malaysian Women's Action for Tobacco Control and Health (MyWatch) Hatijah Ayob said the Dang Wangi police had refused to grant them a permit earlier.

"We were there to carry out awareness action, we were not demonstrating, that is why we did not call a big group to be there," she said when contacted later.

Commenting on the exhibition, she said the tobacco industry players are trying to lobby the local authorities to push their agenda and business.

"And they always target the youths. They oppose all the things that protect the youth from smoking including the banning of [kiddie-packs](#) (small cigarette packs).

"Although the exhibition is not open to public, we are not in support of anything that promotes tobacco," she added.

Hatijah said there were officers from the tobacco control unit of the Health Ministry at the exhibition to ensure that the organiser followed the admittance rule, permitting authorised personnel only.

### 'A product that kills'

Errol Povah, a Canadian volunteer for Airspace Action for Smoking and Health, was also one of the protestors.

"They (tobacco manufacturers) are murderers, they are manufacturing and marketing a product that kills people," he said when contacted.

Povah said the Malaysian government and the convention centre's

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## OPINION & FEATURES

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management should not have agreed to the exhibition.

“It is all about money, the industry has a lot of money. But we should think about where the money comes from? They are from dead and dying smokers,” he added.

He said the tobacco market in North America was dying after strong protests from the people and the desperate industry was now looking for new markets in third world countries which lack stiff regulations.



“Malaysia is where Canada was 15 years ago. It is hard to find a non-smoking room or floor even in a hotel. Everywhere is smoking area. It should be the other way round,” he added.

The three-day exhibition themed ‘Emerging Tobacco Markets’ is organised by Tabexpo Coalition, comprising Tobacco Reporter and Tobacco Journal International based in the United States and Germany respectively.

According to the official [website](#), the exhibition is “the largest Asian tobacco show ever” and is the “meeting platform for all members of the Asian tobacco industry.”

The exhibition has [drawn flak](#) from various non-governmental organisations (NGO) since it was announced in February.

A total of 50,000 signatures opposing the exhibition were collected by NGOs and institutions and sent to Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi last Friday.



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