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By LOONG MENG YEE

 KUALA LUMPUR: The Health Ministry will continue advertising shocking photographs in local dailies as part of its anti-smoking campaign despite some negative feedback.

The ministry has even successfully enlisted the cooperation of tobacco companies to print these pictures on cigarette packs, said minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

Many have complained to me saying the pictures should not be published because they are too graphic and shocking, he said.

He added that the complainants had, however, eventually accepted the need for such shocking pictures when told that it had helped to deter the young from picking up the smoking habit.

The ministry created an awareness campaign in the print media using a series of graphic photos, such as a cancer-ravaged mouth and lungs and a dead foetus, to warn people of the dangers of smoking.

Liow said feedback showed that the pictures, although unpleasant, had been useful in deterring youngsters from picking up their first stick.

Prevention is better than pouring money into curative measures, which can be very expensive on the public health cost, he said in an interview here.

By June 1, Liow said all cigarette packs must carry the graphic pictures and the ministry was committed to lobbying for higher cigarette prices.

He said the ministry was also working towards getting the 14-stick cigarette packs phased out by next year to make it harder for youngsters to buy them.

Import and export manager Tiffany Samuels, 25, who lives in Bandar Utama, said a regular smoker like herself would not be deterred by the graphic pictures.

The pictures make no difference to me. For us smokers, the urge to stop must come from inner will.

However, the ministry's intention is good; it does force a young person to think whether succumbing to peer pressure is worth the pain of getting cancer, she said, adding that this shock factor had more impact than the earlier tak nak (say no to smoking) campaign.

Source: <http://thestar.com.my/news/story.asp?file=/2009/4/14/nation/3642992&sec=nation>