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DOF mulls total ban on e-cigarettes

By Chino Leyco

A total ban on electronic cigarettes in the Philippines is one of the options that the Duterte administration may consider amid the proliferation of the unregulated battery-operated devices, the Department of Finance (DOF) said.

While taxation is still on the table, Finance Secretary Carlos G. Dominguez III said the government is not ruling out the possibility to just ban the sale and use of all kinds of e-cigarettes, whether vape or heat-not-burn tobacco.



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Citing several “arguments,” including conflicting health claims, Dominguez said that government regulators are prepared to take the most adverse policy decision against tobacco manufacturers.

“We have to talk to them [Department of Health] because there’s science involved here [and] there are many arguments,” Dominguez told reporters. “Number one, maybe you should ban it all together, other countries have done that like I think Singapore, they have a total ban. That’s one approach.”

Another option is regulating e-cigarettes through taxation, but Dominguez said there are some who are claiming that the levy on these electronic devices should be lower than combustible tobacco products.

“The other approach is you tax it. Why will you tax it? Because it still affects your health. [But] then, others are saying you tax it less because it affects your health less, not sure,” the finance chief said.

“But you know there’s another problem here, it makes you an addict. You know what you are really ingesting there is nicotine, which makes you an addict—that’s not a good thing to be addicted to,” he added.

Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said that the Food and Drugs Administration (FDA) is currently crafting the regulation governing the sale of all battery-operated tobacco devices.

Duque said the FDA may come up with the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) in three-months to six-months.

“The FDA has been tasked to come out with the administrative order for the electronic nicotine delivery system and equally for the electronic non-nicotine delivery system,” Duque said. “We are reviewing it, and in no time, we will come up with the draft IRR probably in three to six months’ time.”

Dominguez also disclosed that there is one company which already expressed interest in formally introducing an e-cigarette in the Philippines.

“There are several kinds of tobacco products right, one is you heat it and it won’t burn, another one is you vape it. So here we are trying to see first where the technology is and where it is going,” Dominguez said. “But definitely, I think there will be regulation and taxation involved. So we are doing the discussions.”

“The DOF and DOH really have to study this because there is a lot of science that we have to understand. There’s a lot of different technology and those technologies are evolving, as you said, very quickly. In a period of five years, it has changed entirely,” he added.