



26th April 2017

PRESS RELEASE

This response article is regarding the statement made by Minister John Seneviratne:” Reduce Price of Special Arrack” which was published on many newspapers including Lankadeepa, Ada, Dailymirror on 25th April 2017.

Those articles made below statements:

- 01. Majority of people engaged in manual labor consume special arrack and it helps in reducing tiredness and bring relaxation after a heavy day.**
- 02. People tend to increase consumption of illicit alcohol like *Kasippu* due to high price of Special arrack.**
- 03. Not only men, even woman in estate areas increase using kasippu in the evenings.**

As above statements establish misleading ideas in readers’ mind, our organization believes it is our responsibility to correct them with scientific explanations.As you are accountable to deliver correct information to your readers ,we believe that you will give the same importance to these explanations as you given for the original article.

Scientific explanations on above facts are as below:

- With above statements the reader can conclude that alcohol is a chemical with its magical properties of acting as a stimulant which reduces tiredness and bring a pleasant feeling for anyone who use it.But to be truth there are no scientific information to be found to prove above fact as scientifically alcohol (C₂H₅OH) is identified as chemical which is a depressant. It causes tiredness, uneasy and physical disturbances for normal healthy person. So the reducing tiredness is a myth among people without any scientific evidence.
- On the other hand it is a well-known fact that whatever substance use is directly linked to the poverty among people and it is more critical in the case of people who work for daily wages and who are temporary employed. According to past studies one third of income in low to middle income people in rural areas is spent on alcohol and it is bit higher among the estate workers in Sri Lanka.

- In most scenarios low income people spend large portion of their income on alcohol and usually little portion of income remain for the food, health and education in family. This situation leads families drag into extreme poverty while all legal and illegal alcohol industries better off with higher profit margins.
- Further many social science researches reveal that more the substance use is discouraged more the people achieve wellbeing in their lives. So our opinion is that as a government representative Minister should discourage alcohol use rather than facilitating its affordability to people. So indeed reducing price of whatever kind of alcohol worsen the situation and more money from family is absorbed to the alcohol industry.
- It is a clear fact that people who use illicit alcohol like *kassippu* and people who use sealed arrack not belong to same social status or social group. The consumption patterns, income level, demand variability for these two types of alcohol are incompatible. Therefore these two products are not substitute for each other in economic sense. This concept acts differently on very few people but it indeed not enough to increase the consumption of kasippu among majority of people.
- So the aforesaid condition which Minister declared is not practical and no research further has proved the high price levels of legal arrack will lead to increase the consumption of illicit alcohol. Changes in consumption of illegal substances can never be controlled through the policies of legal substances. Thus to control illicit alcohol, it should be considered separately as an illegal activity.
- Moreover if the price level of alcohol remains low, demand for alcohol will rise and the number of new users will rise accordingly. It was proved with increased consumption of Beer resulted by high tax cutoff on Beer instead reducing use of illicit alcohol in 1995 – 1996 period where Minister G.L.Peris was regulating financial policies in Sri Lanka.
- Evidences can be found for the fact that segment of women who use alcohol in the past are continuing usage although the number is very few. Further studies proved that alcohol usage among female estate workers are drastically reducing.
- It is common in many countries in order that irrational arguments come into discussion as a result of influences from alcohol industry when adding taxes or increasing prices of legal alcohol.

This is to state that alcohol cannot reduce tiredness, increasing price of legal alcohol (special arrack) will not affect in increasing sales of kasippu and woman in estate areas are not increase using kasippu.

Further details can be obtained from our organization.

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Yours sincerely,

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