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PRESS RELEASE

2020 General Election – Programme to reduce tobacco, alcohol and other drug use and direct the country to rapid development

Annually over 35,000 Sri Lankans die due to alcohol and tobacco use. Further, many people are being diagnosed with mental disorders due to the use of drugs such as cannabis and heroin. People in our country spend Rs. 380 million, per day on cigarettes and Rs. 590 million, per day on beer and arrack. A massive amount of money which can be earned as tax revenue for the government from tobacco and alcohol companies are being lost due to the lack of a rational taxation policy.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have identified tobacco and alcohol control as an investment towards development of a country. Therefore, the argument that tobacco and alcohol are revenue generating is an outdated one. Research has shown that every Rs. 1000 invested in tobacco control will have a return of Rs. 87,000.

In this context, this programme aims to introduce to 2020 General Election candidates – who are expecting to be elected to Parliament – effective policy measures to reduce tobacco, alcohol and other drug use and direct the country to rapid development. Further this programme will present the steps which must be taken to reach this goal and obtain the commitment of candidates for this programme through signed pledges.

The goal of this programme is to obtain the commitment of 2020 General Election candidates to below mentioned proposed recommendations.

1. Ban sale of cigarettes as single sticks.
2. Implement plain packaging for tobacco products.
3. Ban tobacco sale within 100 meters of an educational institution.
4. Develop a rational taxation formula to collect the maximum amount of tax from tobacco companies that has to be paid to the government.
5. Approve the proposed amendments to the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act.
6. Implement the National Policy on Alcohol which was approved by the Parliament in 2016.
7. Stand against cannabis legalization in Sri Lanka which is an attempt by multinational tobacco corporations.
8. Enforce the existing laws on heroin and all other drugs.

Many 2020 General Election candidates from each district covering the entire nation have signed the pledge to implement these effective tobacco, alcohol, and other drug control policies (<http://adicsrilanka.org>).

The Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC) – Sri Lanka has developed an action plan to implement the above policies in the country with the candidates who signed the pledge and are elected to Parliament through the upcoming General Election. Therefore, ADIC emphasizes that it is the responsibility of voters to elect candidates who agree to support these policies which are beneficial to the country.

Pubudu Sumanaskera
Executive Director