



2020.06.16

Press release

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The proposal of the Excise Authority to order alcohol online is a violation of the country's law.

Excise as government income is an out-of-date economic system, and the amount of money obtained from excise cannot be regarded government income simply by calculating the amount of money received from excise. The difference between the amount that the government has to bear on the health, economic, and other expenses of individuals due to alcohol usage and the amount of excise should be determined scientifically, to see if the excise money is government revenue. A study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in Sri Lanka, the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) and the Ministry of Health reveals that the excise revenue received in 2015 was Rs. 105,234.00 million and the health and economic loss incurred by the government due to alcohol consumption in that year was Rs. 133,769.00 million. This shows that considering only the excise revenue is a very narrow vision in terms of economic development, rather, calculating the loss due to alcohol consumption is more effective. This is what is currently used in developed countries and their method is to gradually reduce the country's usage by introducing the correct tax systems.

Due to inadequately implemented alcohol and tobacco taxes, the Government has lost hundreds of billions of dollars that could have been charged on cigarettes in only the last five years. So far, the Excise Department has not proposed to the Ministry of Finance a proper scientific tax policy to properly recover the tax revenue that the country loses. As a result, Alcohol and tobacco companies clearly benefit.

According to the Excise Ordinance, all legal conditions such as the nature of the place of sale, to whom it should be sold, the time of delivery, etc. are being violated by online orders. The proposal made to the Ministry of Finance by the relevant department itself knowing that such a violation is taking place is quite astonishing. This raises clear doubts as to whether the Excise Department is motivated to violate the Act applicable to its own department due to possible ulterior motives.

Section 31 of the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act No. 27 of 2006 prohibits the sale of alcohol and cigarettes to persons under the age of 21 and the officers of the Excise Department are authorized officers under that Act. Accordingly, the Excise Department has once again violated a law applicable to it by the proposal made to the Ministry of Finance. It is a shame that a government department is acting in such a careless manner.

In view of the above, it is very clear that the proposal made by the Excise Department to the Ministry of Finance is an illegal, negligent and unethical act. This is because both the Excise Act and the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act No. 27 of 2006 need to be amended in order to implement their proposal.

The proposal made by the Excise Department to the Ministry of Finance can create new problems both to the government and the public, as only a very limited number of people in the country have the ability to buy alcohol online, and these groups are more likely to sell the alcohol bought under this scheme in a retail capacity.

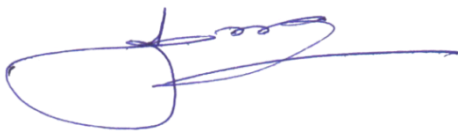
There are a very small number of people in our country who bring alcohol into their homes and use it so this raises the suspicion that there is a motive to create a culture that increases alcohol consumption at home. At the same time, alcohol companies have the opportunity to promote alcohol use among children and young people.

The decline in purchasing power during this time has motivated a considerable number of alcoholics to reduce or stop the use of alcohol, which has reduced a variety of social problems, including domestic violence, as observed by many communities and corroborated by subsequent studies. In such a situation, the Excise Department's interest in supplying alcohol to the home raises clear doubts as to who they represent.

Scientists have repeatedly pointed out that alcohol use increases the spread of the Covid virus, reduce human immunity, and reduce the effectiveness of vaccines; the proposal made by the Excise Department to the Ministry of Finance in such a precarious situation is astonishing.

In light of the foregoing, the Excise Department's recommendation to the Ministry of Finance is illegal, creates social and family difficulties, and expands Covid, which is the country's worst problem at the moment, and should never be done by a responsible department at a time like this. Therefore, the Alcohol and Drug Information Centre urges the responsible parties, including the government, to conduct an investigation into the suspicious behaviour of the relevant officials. The Alcohol and Drug Information Centre cordially urges scholars, professionals, religious leaders and all citizens who love the country to take necessary steps to prevent this dubious proposal of the Excise Department from being implemented.

Thank you

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'P' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Pubudu Sumanasekera

Executive Director