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**Press release**

**Launching of the study report - Banning of Single cigarette sales in Sri Lanka**

The report of the study 'Single cigarette sales – Bait for the vulnerable groups,' which was conducted by ADIC, was launched on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 at Hotel Janaki, Colombo 05.

This study provides detailed information on the trend of single stick cigarettes among vulnerable groups in five selected districts in Sri Lanka. Furthermore, the study explains how single stick cigarette sales have increased use among smokers. More importantly, it exposes the tobacco company interventions and how they have continued their promotions and various incentives to maintain their customer chain well even during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through establishment of separate outlets for smoking and sharing information with the shop owners, the company continues to promote their products to the vulnerable groups within the country.

Therefore, this analysis highlights the need to establish laws to ban the sales of single stick cigarettes for tobacco control and the importance of implementing tobacco cessation programs for underprivileged groups within the country. While safeguarding the good health of the people, it is essential to guide them towards using and investing their hard-earned money intelligently, at a time where the country is facing an economic crisis. As an initiation to achieving this goal, this study will serve as a baseline to introduce new policy measures and to implement the measures which were proposed a few years back.

Sri Lanka signed the FCTC in 2003 as the first country in the Asia region and the fourth country in the world. As a result, displaying pictorial health warnings on the product was implemented in the country. The article 16 of the convention explains banning of single stick cigarettes. As the next step, Sri Lanka should implement this strategy, as the country was actively engaged in signing the convention. Also, it was clear from the study results that single stick sales causes the above-mentioned law related to tobacco use become ineffective, which brings out the need to ban single stick sales.

Furthermore, from the last budget, the tax for low-price cigarettes was reduced by 50%, which is not a scientific approach in controlling tobacco use within the country. British American Tobacco (BAT) is a monopoly which controls 84% of shares of the Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC). Therefore, as a developing country, the best strategy to be implemented at a time where the country is facing an economic crisis is, increasing the tax for cigarettes and obtain the maximum income to the government.

Alcohol and Drug Information Center

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