

As a future Member of Parliament how can you develop the country by reducing the harm from tobacco use?

Tobacco smoking

Tobacco smoking is a major obstacle to the health, economic and social development of Sri Lanka. Tobacco smoking causes 55 premature deaths of Sri Lankans over 15 years of age daily, which is a loss of 20,000 precious Sri Lankan lives annually. Sri Lankans spend Rs. 400 million daily on cigarettes. The total cost to economy of Sri Lanka from tobacco is more than Rs 2,000 million each year.



The Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC) holds the cigarette production and sale monopoly in Sri Lanka. The multinational tobacco corporation British American Tobacco (BAT) owns 84.13% shares of CTC. A major portion of the profit of CTC goes to England and America every year in foreign currency.

As a candidate for the general election, we expect you will genuinely work to prevent tobacco use initiation among children and youth, free current tobacco smokers from smoking and thereby help to develop the economy of the country.

The objective of this document is to alert you to the main recommendations for reducing tobacco smoking in Sri Lanka proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and national experts. These propositions, recommendations and their importance is discussed below.

Main recommendations for reducing tobacco smoking in Sri Lanka proposed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and national experts



1. Ban sale of cigarettes as single-sticks.
2. Increase tobacco tax without letting the industry profit.
3. Implement plain packaging for tobacco products.
4. Ban tobacco sale within 100 meters of an educational institution.

Ban sale of tobacco as single-sticks.

Out of cigarettes sold in Sri Lanka, 89% are bought as one or two sticks at a time. This is an obstacle to the process of reducing tobacco smoking. Many countries do not allow sale of single sticks.

Banning sale of cigarettes as single-sticks:

- Influences users to stop their tobacco use.
- Reduces chances of children and youth experimenting cigarettes.
- Reminds users of the harms of tobacco smoking due to pictorial health warnings on packaging.
- Reduces attraction of cigarettes.

Implement plain packaging.



Plain packaging means, tobacco product packaging can only use colours, fonts and warnings stipulated by the government. Trademark and brand name must be displayed according to government regulations. This measure reduces the attraction of tobacco packaging and discourages tobacco use. Scientific research has found plain packaging to be a factor in reducing tobacco smoking in countries where this measure is currently implemented, such as, Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Ban tobacco sale within 100 meters of an educational institution.

School children are a main target of the tobacco industry. Tobacco sale around schools and other educational institutions is a common occurrence at present. According to a research conducted by ADIC, it was found there are **over 10 tobacco selling outlets within 3-minute walking distance of educational institutions.**

Banning tobacco sale within 100 meters of an educational institutions **REDUCES**

- Tobacco use initiation among minors, by decreasing easy availability.
- Exposure to tobacco industry marketing strategies.
- Minors imitating such behaviours as tobacco sale and use within the nearby shops cannot be seen.

Amendments to the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act proposed by the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol

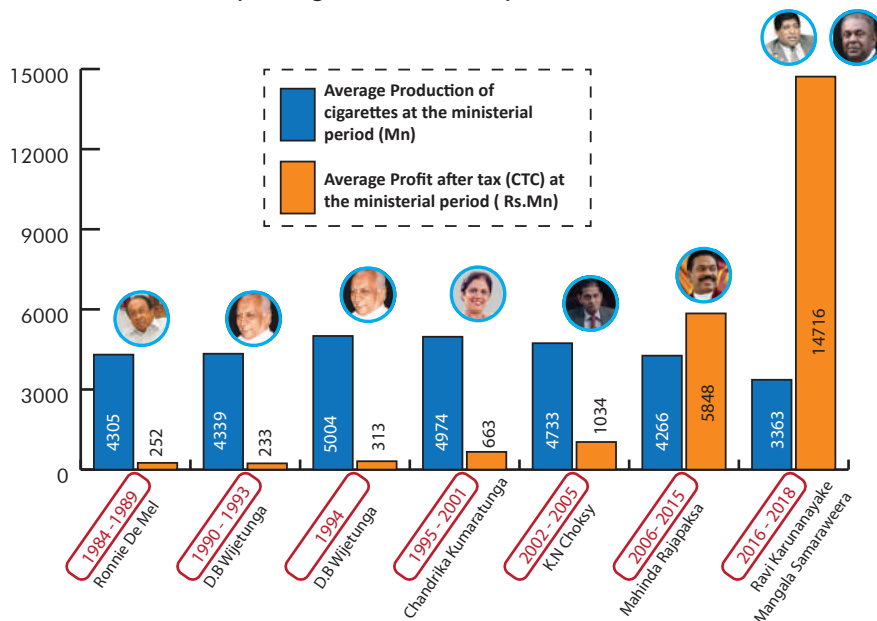
- Ban smoking in public places.
- Ban all types of advertisements which promote tobacco use including on the internet and through songs, music albums, movies, TV series, YouTube, Facebook, video discussions.
- Make the offences included in the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol, offences connizable.
- Increase the fines and duration of imprisonment for the offences included in the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol.
- Add Medical Officer of Health (MOH) into authorized officers of the Act.

Develop tobacco tax indexation.

In order to reduce tobacco smoking, increase government tobacco tax revenue and reduce disproportionate profit increases of the tobacco industry the following evidence-based measures should be adopted:

- Introduce a simple, correct tax methodology instead of the current ad-hoc tax methodology.
- Systematically, increase taxes according to the rate of inflation and per-capita income.
- Introduce equal taxes to all cigarette products.
- Strengthen tobacco tax administration and transparency to reduce tax evasion and avoidance.

The following graph depicts how the profit of British American Tobacco (BAT) has increased disproportionately due to ineffective tobacco pricing and taxation policies.



The tobacco production and sale monopoly in Sri Lanka is held by British American Tobacco (BAT) appearing as the Ceylon Tobacco Company (CTC) while owning %84.13 shares of CTC.

As Sri Lanka does not have a correct policy to decide tobacco taxation and pricing, this multinational company is getting rich at the cost of Sri Lankans. A massive amount of tax revenue which could have been collected has been given away freely to this foreign multinational company.

Implementing the above proposed recommendations will strengthen the health and economy of Sri Lankans and safeguard the interests of the public. As a candidate for the general election, you and your party have got an opportunity to enlighten the public about policies to reduce tobacco smoking. It is crucial to establish your stance on these policies, as there is a significant number of voters who will decide whom to vote to, based on this issue.