PRINT MEDIA ANALYSIS

FACTSHEET | ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION CENTRE (ADIC)

October 2026



Introduction

Since 2005, ADIC conducts daily surveillance on print media and produce a monthly analysis of references regarding alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, heroin and other drugs (ATOD) occurring in selected print media in the three mediums – Sinhala, Tamil and English. This "Print Media Analysis" leads to monitoring and identifying the prevailing/ current trends and patterns related to alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, heroin and other drug reporting. It also identifies the current attitudes and the behavior of the media and media personnel with regard to ATOD. The current fact sheet is an analysis of three Sinhala newspapers during the month of July.

Newspapers analyzed **182**

Sinhala	93
English	58
Tamil	31

Newspapers Monitored

Monday to Saturday		Sunday
Divaina . Dinamina . Lankadeepa	Sinhala	Sunday Divaina . Sunday Lankadeepa . Silumina
Daily Mirror . Daily Ft	English	Sunday Times
Virakesari	Tamil	Sunday Virakesari

Methodology

All editions of the selected newspapers published during the month are reviewed in full. Every news item or article relating to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs is identified and a thematic analysis is conducted. The identified content is categorized into 6 themes as specified below. The content is then analyzed by newspaper and category, and articles of particular significance are selected and highlighted as key observations.

Thematic Categories

Prevention – Improve correct knowledge on ATOD, its industries and effective prevention

Promotion - Glamorizing the substance, industry image building, surrogate advertising, social beliefs, unfair privileges and promotion through prevention.

Positive policy – Supporting implementation and formulation, of ATOD control policies.

Negative policy – Undermining formulation & implementation of ATOD control policies

Law enforcement - Legal actions taken by the authorities when ATOD related laws & regulations are violated

Non Category – Specifically does not include policy, prevention or promotion of any drug but it provides information on ATOD through words or pictures.

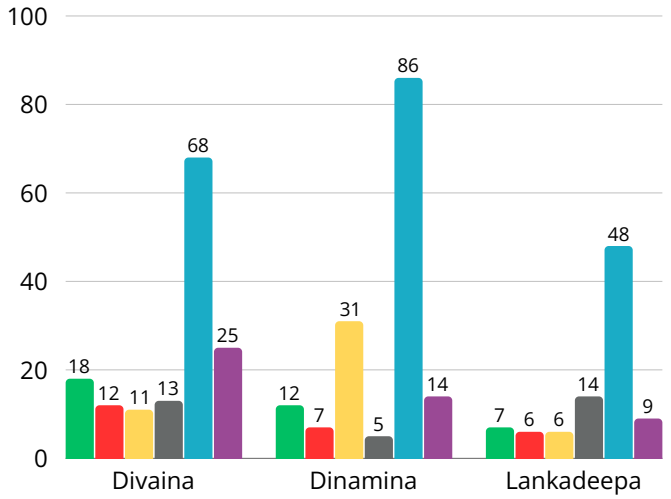
PRINT MEDIA ANALYSIS

FACTSHEET | ALCOHOL & DRUG INFORMATION CENTRE (ADIC)

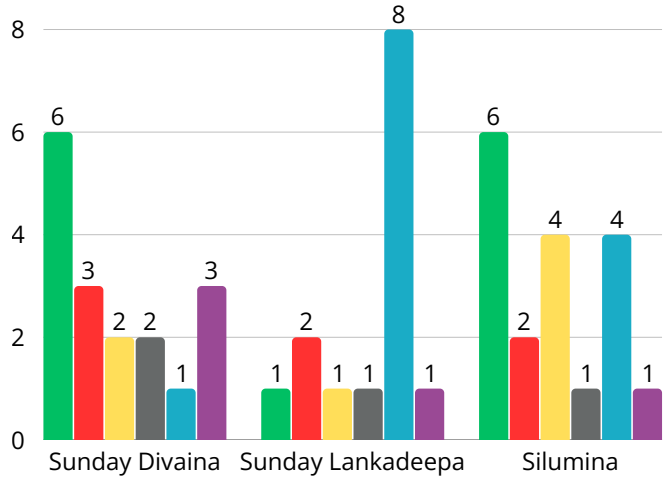
October 2026

Classification According to Newspapers

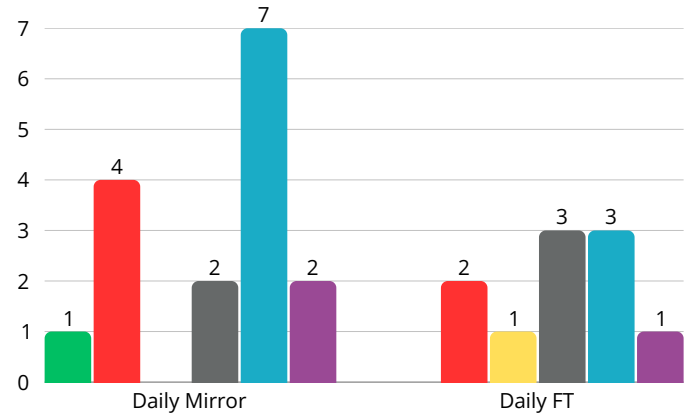
Monday to Saturday Sinhala Newspapers



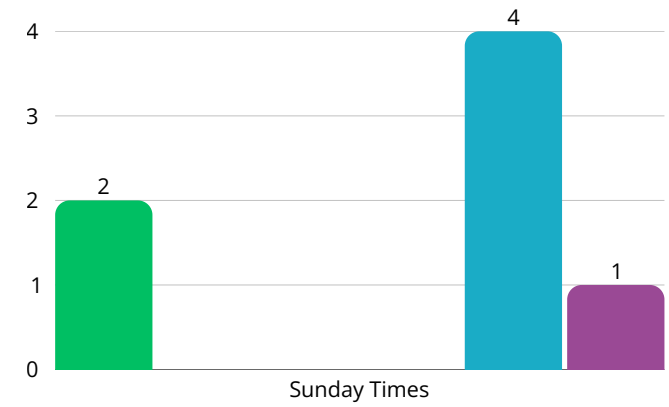
Sunday Sinhala Newspapers



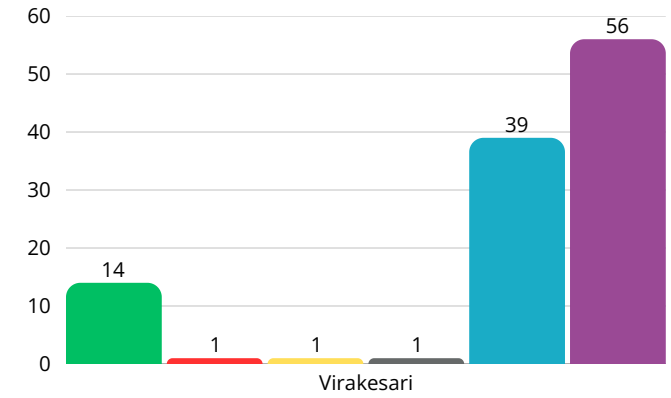
Monday to Saturday English Newspapers



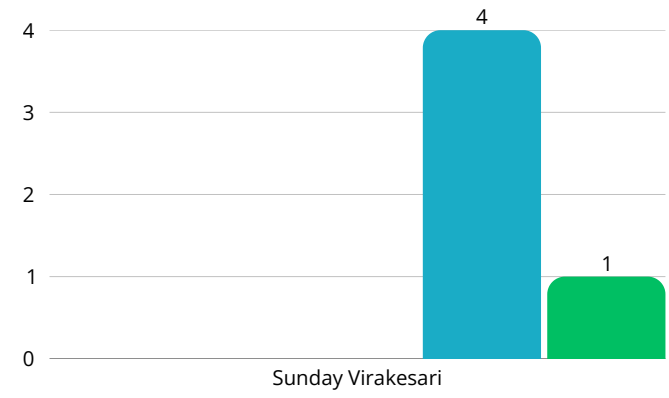
Sunday English Newspapers



Monday to Saturday Tamil Newspapers



Sunday Tamil Newspapers



Prevention | Promotion | Policy - Positive | Policy - Negative | Law Enforcement | Non-Category

KEY OBSERVATIONS



අත්තනෝමතික බදුකරණය

රටට හා සමාජයට සෘණාත්මක බලපෑම් ඇතිකරන්නක්

> *"These alcohol industry arguments are used to influence policymakers and the public, particularly during the budget-making process. "*

On 3rd of October, an article in *Divaina* featured commentary from British American Tobacco (BAT) Head of Fiscal Policy Prashanth Karunasen, arguing that high cigarette taxes lead to consumers being driven towards the illicit tobacco market and negatively impact government revenue. The World Health Organisation's benchmark of tobacco taxes at 75% of the retail price is framed as excessively high, emphasising on Ceylon Tobacco Company's contribution to government revenue and livelihoods and farmers. This has been identified as a negative policy article since it provides tobacco industry representatives media space to attack evidence-based fiscal policies, sensationalising it using headlines including phrases like "arbitrary taxation". Contrary to these industry arguments, research by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) clearly identifies corruption, border control weaknesses and weak enforcement as the main possible reasons for illicit tobacco trade to flourish, rather than increases in taxation.

> *"Historically, alcohol price decreases have not proven effective against illicit alcohol trade."*



ප්‍රමිතියෙන් යුතු මත්පැන් හදා අඩු මිලට දිය හැකි කෙනෙක් ආවොත් සලකා බලන්නම්

සුරාබදු කොමසාරිස් ජනරාල්

An article in *Divaina* quotes the Excise Commissioner General stating that if any manufacturer comes forward capable of producing "quality alcohol at a low price" while paying the mandated excise duty, the department would consider granting manufacturing approval as a measure to curb illicit alcohol consumption. Promoting low-cost legal alcohol to combat the illicit market from a purely fiscal perspective without taking into consideration the health and social repercussions of alcohol consumption is questionable. First off, there is no safe level of alcohol consumption (WHO, 2023). Regardless of the type of alcoholic beverage, whether it is soft or hard, legal or illicit, the contents of any alcohol is harmful to the body. Increasing the affordability of alcohol increases the likelihood of earlier initiation among youth, expanding the overall consumer base as a result. Secondly, reducing liquor prices is not an effective strategy to control illicit alcohol use. It can only be controlled through strengthening the police and the Excise Department to take necessary actions. In 1995, the Finance Minister reduced beer prices by more than 50% in an effort to control illicit alcohol, but it only resulted in increased beer usage and no solution for the illicit alcohol issue. Further, consumers of illicit and legal alcohol come from vastly different demographic groups, making price fluctuations unlikely to cause a major shift towards cheaper alternatives.

KEY OBSERVATIONS



On the 16th of October, Rockland Distilleries organized the "Rockland Mix Masters - Corporate Edition", a competitive mixology and cocktail-making tournament at ITC Ratnadipa. 12 leading non-alcohol corporate entities in Sri Lanka participated in this competition. Prior to the event, participants were provided with mixology training sessions. The venue prominently displayed Rockland's company emblem and tagline during the event. By organising a branded corporate cocktail competition, alcohol culture becomes embedded into executive and corporate domains. **Section 36(1) of the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act, No. 27 of 2006 explicitly forbids alcohol manufacturers from sponsoring educational, sporting or social events, which this event violates**. By involving top corporate entities of the country in an event which normalizes recreational alcohol consumption as a "team-building" activity, Rockland Distilleries attempt to create goodwill within the corporate sector while circumventing legal restrictions on alcohol promotion and advertising.

Further, Rockland Distilleries launched the inaugural "ICON Awards" at Cinnamon Grand Colombo, with the tagline "Celebrating those raising the bar in Sri Lanka's wine culture." The event introduced multiple award categories with Rockland branding and media coverage by the digital lifestyle platform Pulse. Through such marketing, they aim to solidify "wine culture" as part of a sophisticated Sri Lankan lifestyle while exaggerating the value of alcohol in culinary and tourism sectors. Hotels and restaurants are also incentivised to expand the types of alcohol they provide through an industry-sponsored awards platform. **This event contravenes Section 36(1) of the NATA Act, which prohibits alcohol manufacturers from sponsoring social events.** By camouflaging substance promotion as tourism and hospitality industry awards, alcohol manufacturers seek to expand their market while creating cultural associations with alcohol.



References:

- **Insitute of Policy Studies Sri Lanka (2025).** ***Illicit Tobacco Trade: Evidence-Based Insights*****. PolicyInsights.**
- **National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol Act, No. 27 of 2006**
- **World Health Organization (2023).** ***No level of alcohol consumption is safe for our health*****.**