

News analysis

India: advocates hit back at smokeless industry

Tobacco control advocates in India who have been active for more than two decades, together with a few ageing colleagues from the west, will remember the sweat and toil of trying to kick-start a self-sustaining and viable Indian tobacco control movement in the 1980s. The switch-back ride from optimism to disappointment, the new dawns and false starts, the workshop sessions shouted against noisy air conditioners, the sheer hard work, heat and dust of it all – in those days it seemed an impossible dream to reach the present situation. However, there is now a real will at federal government level, led by one of the world's most outstanding health ministers, and many skilled, experienced and well informed health advocates constantly monitoring developments and lobbying for progress. India is a very different place now, a fact recognised by its successful bid to host the next world conference on tobacco and health.

Among the more visible evidence of change recently was an incident on the front line of the ongoing battle for comprehensive tobacco control legislation. Unlike most big tobacco consuming nations, India's biggest health problem comes from the much greater amounts of tobacco consumed orally, in several forms, than is smoked in cigarettes. In addition, the ubiquitous bidis, the cheap, hand-rolled, traditional smoking products, cause massive damage to the health of the poorest sections of this vast country. In the past, cigarette manufacturers have not been averse to implying in their marketing communications that Indians who suck or chew tobacco, as well as bid-smokers, should trade up to the higher "quality" offered by cigarettes. In the old days, advertisements portrayed cigarette smokers typically as successful, better paid and more educated members of the burgeoning new middle-class, the millions of consumers being swept along

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in the country's incoming tide of economic prosperity.

Thus, while other countries have to contend mainly with resistance to public health progress from the big cigarette companies, India faces additional foes – the formidable smokeless tobacco and bidi industries, both, especially bidi manufacturers, armed with the political bludgeon of far higher employment numbers than the ever more capital intensive cigarette manufacturers.

Predictably, therefore, the union (federal) health ministry's efforts to implement new tobacco product labelling rules are being constantly countered by a wide range of tobacco industry opposition. The arguments may be exactly the same ones familiar the world over – that it will take at least 6 months to import new printing cylinders and fit them to their machines, for example – but the numbers bandied about on the employment argument are much larger than in most countries.

So it was that in March, the bidi industry stepped in with an aggressive advertising campaign demanding "justice". In particular, it asked politicians to drop the proposed requirement of a skull and crossbones to be printed on all tobacco packaging, including bidi wrappers – in fact, a highly creative and neat solution to the problem of conveying the true risk of tobacco to illiterate users. It also demanded that tobacco control measures be "practical" (for which read

ineffective) and protect employment in the industry; and that the two-thirds increase in excise duty on bidis proposed in the federal budget for 2007–8 be withdrawn. The ad played the employment case to the full, highlighting the huge numbers of tribal people employed growing the trees whose leaves are used as wrappers for bidis, as well as the large number who hand-roll them, mostly women (but without mention of children – bidi production is often a family affair).

At this point, ACT-India, one of the members of the Advocacy Forum on Tobacco Control (AFTC), a loose network of organisations working on tobacco control for the past half decade, realised it was time to fire back with a like for like

Sadly, they speak of justice when tobacco kills

10 lac
Indians every year

The All India Bidi Industry Federation has appealed to the Members of Parliament to save jobs, reduce excise and do away with pictorial warning on bidi packs

However the facts that need to be told are:

All tobacco products are toxic - bidi is the most toxic of all. Higher taxes on Bidis will reduce consumption and save lives.

Bidi smoking is causing a very large number of deaths and disease among poor and underprivileged men in India. Bidi workers, especially women are exploited and suffer from numerous health problems.

The public has the right to know the dangers associated with bidi smoking and it is clearly the manufacturers' responsibility to inform.

*Tobacco is the only consumer product that kills when used exactly as per the manufacturer's instructions

Some more startling facts

44 lac heart disease cases every year

39 lac lung disease patients every year.

2 lac cancer cases every year

Rs 27,761 crore loss in care of related diseases

Issued in public interest by **ACT India** on behalf of the **Advocacy Forum for Tobacco Control.**

Arise! Combat against Tobacco - India.

WE SEEK JUSTICE

ALL INDIA BIDI INDUSTRY FEDERATION

Makes Public Appeal to Hon'ble Members of The Parliament to **Save Bidi Industry** from its Impending Closure And Avert Consequent **Unemployment** of

Over **80,00,000 Bidi Workers** mainly Women

1,50,000 Tobacco Growers

20,00,000 Tribals Employed in Plucking Tendu Leaves

by initiating full time debate in both the houses of the Parliament to discuss following burning problems faced by Bidi Industry.

The Federation strongly desires that

- Mandatory printing of picture of skull & cross bones, dead body and child on oxygen be done away with as being harsh requirement.
- The Federation is not against Tobacco Control Act but desires that the Act and the Rules should be practical and should protect employment of bidi workers and tendu leaves pickers till alternative employment opportunities are created for them.
- Whopping 66.67% increase effected in the basic excise duty on bidis in the Union Budget for 07-08 be withdrawn as this is highest increase.

AIBIF ALL INDIA BIDI INDUSTRY FEDERATION
177/2, Dhule Patil Road, Pune-411001.

India: when the bidi industry ran newspaper advertisements trying to persuade politicians to dilute proposed tobacco control legislation (above), health advocates responded.



India: this man in his 30s has been chewing paan masala since he was 11 years old. [photo: Gemma Vestal]

ad of their own. In lightning time, they came up with a counter advertisement in the *Hindustan Times*, one of the leading newspapers in the capital, New Delhi, and in another well respected paper in Mumbai. Their ad, like that of the manufacturers, made prominent use of some large numbers, but in this case, they measured the horrific figures for mortality and morbidity caused by tobacco in India. Large bullet points told of 4.4 million new cases annually of tobacco induced heart disease, 3.9 million from lung disease, and 200 000 from cancer. Total tobacco-induced mortality was prominently announced in the stark headline, "Sadly, they speak of justice when tobacco kills 10 lac (1 million) Indians every year".

By happy coincidence, or kind editorial placement, the same page in the Delhi paper reported a speech by an international cancer expert, predicting that cancer cases would double by 2030. Best of all, there was also a picture of a skeleton holding a cigarette in its hand, something the near-empty coffers of the health advocates could not have run to even if they had thought of it; but years of effort to educate journalists, among other opinion formers, may be paying off at last. The outcome of the government's struggle is awaited, but in the meantime, it is clear that when trying to do the right thing, it can draw on the support of a well coordinated tobacco control movement

USA/World: more powerful version of Legacy Tobacco Documents Library

In May, the University of California, San Francisco Library and Center for Knowledge Management released a completely redesigned version of the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library (LTDL) website. The

new website is based on an updated technology that allows full text searching across all 7.6 million previously secret tobacco industry documents (40.6 million pages) in the collection. In addition, LTDL contains two other unique collections: DATTA (depositions, testimony, and opening and closing statements from tobacco-related trials) and Multimedia (links to over 460 videos that can be viewed online at the Internet Archive website).

In addition, all 72 fields of indexing data (metadata) used by one or more of the tobacco companies are now directly searchable and researchers can create Boolean queries of unlimited length. The full text search capability allows researchers to find many more documents. For example, searching on "World Bank" yields 1777 documents on the old Legacy site and 32 813 on the new site; searching on "Enstrom" yields 1921 documents on the old site and 3654 on the new.

Other features include query terms highlighted in results, simplified page navigation, sorting by document date, page count, Bates number and date added to industry site, and proximity word searching.

The popular "bookbag" function, which allows users to save a document's metadata and email or download the records, has been expanded to include the capacity to annotate each entry in the book bag.

Since the Legacy Tobacco Documents Library was launched in January 2002, the size of the collection has grown from 24 million pages to its current 40.6 million pages, and the DATTA and Multimedia collections have been added. During that time, users have accessed more than 19.3 million pages.

There will be continual additions of new features over the next year and searchers are encouraged to use the *Questions or Comments?* link on each page to send comments and suggestions.

The LTDL was created with the support of the American Legacy Foundation and the scanning of the documents to create the full text searchable format was supported by the National Cancer Institute.

The URL for the new site remains the same as the old one: < <http://legacy.library.ucsf.edu> >.

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Smokefree Partnership launches Global Voices campaign

The Global Voices for a Smokefree World Campaign is being conducted in the lead-up to the second session of the Conference of the Parties (CoP-2) to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). For this meeting, government representatives from around the world will gather in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, from 30 June to 7 July 2007, to discuss the implementation of the FCTC. Among other topics to be discussed will be guidelines for the implementation of Article 8 of the FCTC, which deals with protection from exposure to tobacco smoke.

Initiated by the Global Smokefree Partnership, a new multi-member initiative to promote effective smoke-free air policies worldwide, the Global Voices Campaign seeks to gather support among policy makers for the Article 8 guidelines to be adopted at CoP-2. These guidelines will be non-binding recommendations for the implementation of Article 8 to the Parties of the FCTC – countries that have signed and ratified the treaty – and should represent the best practices necessary to protect people from secondhand smoke exposure.

The goals of the Global Voices Campaign are to mobilise non-governmental organisations' support for best-practice smoke-free air laws, to raise awareness of smoke-free issues in the media, and to build support among policy-makers for strong and effective Article 8 guidelines. The latter will also support another goal, country-level implementation of comprehensive smoke-free air laws in accordance with the guidelines.

Colleagues from around the world, both individuals and organisations, will be calling on their governments to support and implement all the provisions of the draft Article 8 guidelines, to make a healthier, smoke-free world. By signing onto the campaign, individuals and organisations signal their support of eight campaign principles, which mirror the provisions of the draft guidelines. These principles state that secondhand smoke is a significant health hazard; that there is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, nor any safe alternative to 100% smoke-free public places and workplaces; and that ventilation, air filtration systems and designated smoking areas or rooms do not protect people from secondhand smoke. They also state that everyone should be protected from secondhand smoke, and that all workers have the



right to work in smoke-free workplaces. They further state that legislation without exemptions is needed to protect people from the dangers of secondhand smoke; and that effective enforcement, implementation and monitoring provisions are necessary components of effective legislation.

Signatures supporting these aims will be presented to delegates at the COP meeting in Bangkok. Those wishing to join the Global Voices campaign can sign up at www.globalsmokefreepartnership.org/globalvoices to add their voice or to get more involved with the campaign.

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Hong Kong, China: no smoking in housing estates

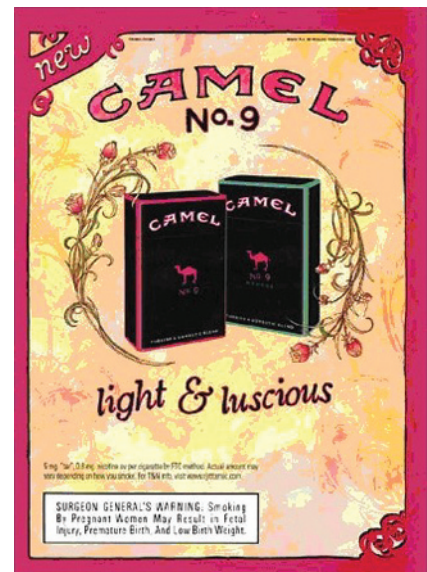
Following the implementation of the new legislation in banning smoking in almost all indoor workplaces and many outdoor areas that came into force in January (see Hong Kong, China: bad atmosphere for public health. *Tobacco Control* 2007;16:3–4), smoking has been banned in all common areas of public housing estates, except in a few small designated areas. Common areas include roads, pedestrian paths and pleasure grounds such as open areas, rest gardens, play areas and sports grounds.

Lack of well-defined boundaries at first made enforcement seem difficult, but the government's housing estates authorities decided to extend the restricted areas after obtaining the support of most tenants. A decision was taken to designate no more than five smoking areas on each estate, irrespective of its size. Bordered by yellow or white lines, each is about 5 square metres enclosing the periphery of a bench. Enforcement is likely to be effective, as tenants who break the regulations can be penalised with five points without warning under a marking scheme, which can lead to eviction if a tenant accumulates 16 points within 2 years.

The new scheme is thought to be unprecedented in public housing, and must go some way to countering earlier criticism of the government for apparently caving in to industry pressures to allow some entertainment venues to set up smoking areas.

USA: Camel for women

Among the more serious and depressing developments recently in the home country of multinational companies claiming to now be socially responsible, has been the introduction of new designs, with massive associated promotion, for Camel cigarettes. While public health workers strongly criticised RJ Reynolds (RJR) for introducing a new version of its brand that was clearly aimed at young women, financial analysts were falling over themselves to applaud the move for what they considered its potential for commercial success. The new brand, Camel No 9, was launched with a promotional campaign estimated to cost \$25–50 million. The



USA: attractive colours and design promoting the new Camel brand targeted at women.

name was described by RJR marketing executives as meant to evoke happiness – being “on cloud nine” – or the heights of style and fashion – being “dressed to the nines”. Others cited in media coverage of the launch thought it might also suggest luxury perfumes such as Chanel No 9, or romantic songs such as “Love Potion No 9”.

Advertisements for the brand—“reaching out to women,” as media writers prefer to put it—included the use of slogans such as, “light and luscious”. Colours used to adorn and promote the new brand were described by media commentators as “hot pink” and “minty-green”.

It seems that RJR may be doing in reverse what Philip Morris did decades ago when it changed the gender limitations of Marlboro, originally a women's brand, to make it as macho as the cowboy from which it later became inseparable. Conversely, Camel has been a male-focused cigarette for decades, with women only representing about 30 per cent of its customers. But women comprise up to a half of the customers for competing brands such as Marlboro and Newport. Almost half of US adult smokers are women, limiting Camel's potential without adding female appeal.

RJR is to sponsor promotional events for the new brand in large markets around the country, and push the brand in a variety of other ways, such as handing out packs at nightclubs, discount coupons, and ads in women's magazines including *Cosmopolitan*, *Glamour*, *Flaunt*, *Vogue* and *W*. Health advocates say the first two in particular will reach large numbers of young readers, and claim that

RJR is looking for initiation by girls and young women.

Aiming tobacco ads at women is a well established strategy. Documents from the internal files of US tobacco companies indicate they studied female smoking habits through research projects with names including, "Tomorrow's Female," "Cosmo" and "Virile Female." One of the most infamous moments in US marketing history was when Edward L Bernays, widely considered the father of public relations, alerted newspapers in the Spring of 1929 that women would be smoking in public during the Easter parade on Fifth Avenue, New York City, to promote "equality of the sexes". He forgot to mention that he was paid for his "torches of freedom" effort by American Tobacco, the maker of Lucky Strike.

With the tragedy of incurable diseases caused by smoking being diagnosed among women every day in the USA, and the tens of thousands of future premature deaths of American women who already smoke, it is extraordinary that a campaign like this can still take place in 2007. But despite much progress and leadership by some states, the federal government has done little over the past half century. Women will still be lured by multi-million dollar campaigns to smoke their own new Camel, relishing the "light and luscious" associations and the pink girly colours; in the future, surgeons will just have to do their best with once pink organs so needlessly destroyed by smoking – and by a most cynical example of corporate social irresponsibility.

Philippines: PM art awards

Bad news from the Philippines: Philip Morris (PM) is still running art awards, equating life-enhancing visual art and the aspirations of young artists with the manufacture and promotion of products that enhance only the wealth of PM and those involved in the terminal care and funeral industries. In the past, it sponsored the ASEAN Art Awards, covering the whole South East Asian region, a huge jamboree with events at both country and international level. It thus achieved massive feel-good publicity, portraying it as a social responsible company and giving the illusion that its eye was on higher things than the bottom line. Needless to add, the awards also bought high-octane schmoozing opportunities with government ministers and other decision makers.

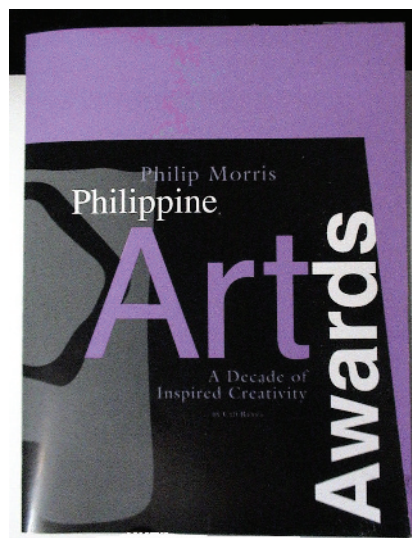
Having been resoundingly seen off after repeated and determined protests by health advocates, latterly organised on a truly international basis (see Thailand:

protest at PM art awards. *Tobacco Control* 2004;13:326), the ASEAN regional awards were quietly dropped. It seemed reasonable to assume that PM would grasp that the inappropriate association of addictive, life-destructive products with the creative arts was best forgotten. But PM does not think that way, especially in a country whose government has never been among the more vigilant proponents of tobacco control. Furthermore, where a cigarette called Philip Morris is for sale, as in the Philippines, any positive promotion of the company name also directly promotes sales of the brand.

So it was that in March, PM launched a larger and more exciting 2007 Philip Morris Philippine Art Awards (PAA) competition, complete with its own website (<http://philippineartawards.org>) and a limited edition coffee-table book called, in case anyone missed the point of the exercise, *Philip Morris Philippine Art Awards: A Decade of Inspired Creativity*.

By good fortune, a local tobacco control advocate was able to attend the big event, pick up PM's press kit, including a CD version of the book, and most importantly, distribute some information explaining what it was really all about to the assembled audience before slipping away without being challenged.

Fortunately, the event received little publicity, especially considering the amount of time and effort PM had clearly put into it. But who knows what lobbying victories were scored, and how they may translate, no doubt along with other, less public efforts, into less effective tobacco control measures in the Philippines? Such events are certain to increase in number



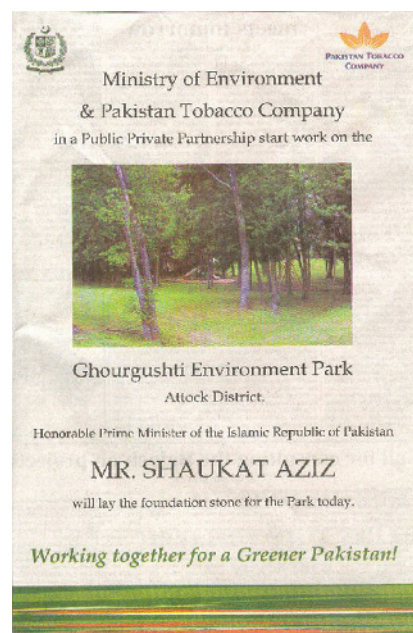
Philippines: a folder for the CD version of the Philip Morris coffee-table book promoting its art awards scheme.

and degree of sophistication as governments go through the motions of implementing the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. It is in the monitoring and exposure of such activities, often of seemingly innocent and worthy intent to the uninitiated, that public health workers will have their work cut out until tobacco companies are universally recognised as well and truly *persona non grata*.

Pakistan: BAT exploits environmental concerns

In April, national newspapers in Pakistan carried advertisements highlighting once again the strong relationship between the tobacco industry and the government. The local subsidiary of British American Tobacco (BAT) was bragging about a new park it was about to create in a joint venture with the government; and that the dignitary who had accepted its invitation to lay the foundation stone was none other than the prime minister.

Ghournushti Environmental Park, in Attock district in the north west of the country, a new monument to BAT's professed social responsibility, follows other public relations ventures such as the planting of millions of trees and—a bit of an own goal, this one—mobile clinics for patients who have suffered heart attacks and the like in remote areas (see Pakistan: weapons of mass deception. *Tobacco Control* 2004;13:7). Meanwhile, despite the government's



Pakistan: BAT's subsidiary Pakistan Tobacco Company took this ad in national newspapers to announce that the prime minister would be opening its joint venture creating a new environmental park.



assurances that it is working hard to control tobacco use, it clearly has little understanding of how the tobacco industry works. Pakistan remains one of the most exciting adventure playgrounds for young tobacco advertisers anywhere in the region.

As the prime minister was busy declaring the environmental project to be under way, tobacco control advocates were busy asking colleagues around to help. Even though local appeals have so far gone unheard, it is hope to educate decision makers in the government that accepting money from the tobacco industry is incompatible with effective tobacco control.

Chile: new health warnings

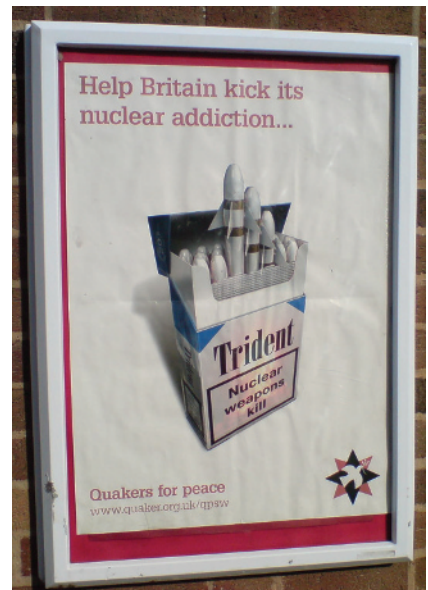
Above is an example of how the bold new health warnings look on the two main faces of cigarette packs. The uncompromising statement on the first side says “These cigarettes are killing you,” while the message on the other side tells how the unfortunate smoker pictured, Don Miguel, lost his larynx to cancer. The ministry of health has been reproducing the images in advertisements on large billboards.

Canada: youth action takes on mission impossible

In April, teenagers staged this demonstration in Mississauga and Brampton, in Ontario province, demanding that the tobacco industry stop enticing young people to smoke. The protest was part of an Integrity Campaign, which brings together Youth Action Alliances (YAAs) from across Ontario to educate the community about the tobacco industry’s manipulation techniques, such as offering flavoured tobacco and using young celebrities in marketing campaigns. YAAs are funded by the Ontario health ministry.

UK: cigarettes as the measure of destruction

In March, the government’s consideration of whether to replace the UK’s ageing Trident nuclear missiles sparked fierce political and public debate. Among those urging it to follow a more peaceful path were members of the Society of Friends, or Quakers, the Christian group with a long history of opposing war by peaceful means. The design of this campaigning



billboard using cigarettes as an accepted symbol of addictiveness and mass destruction to health, seen in the Quaker heartlands of Birmingham, allowed health advocates a moment of positive reflection on how far tobacco education has come in recent years.