

group's strong interest in a meeting. It appeared that efforts to arrange meetings with government officials and snus-friendly Swedish parliamentarians had been unsuccessful, perhaps in part because of the approaching summer holidays. The visitors were able instead to have a full morning's meeting with Swedish doctors, a health-friendly Swedish parliamentarian and a youth representative from Sweden's Non-smoking Generation national youth anti-tobacco programme. Also present at the "harm reduction by snus" information and discussion session, held at the famous Karolinska University Hospital, were representatives of BAT and ARTH.

BAT has made it clear that it wants to get into the snus market, with South Africa a major target. Swedish health advocates, knowing that the visiting South African delegates might be meeting only pro-snus advocates from the tobacco industry, were glad to have been able to invite them to a meeting. Perhaps it may have served as a vaccination against any excesses of those who may later have put commercial interests before a balanced, science-based examination of the complex topic they were studying.

Belgium: retail incentives are child's play

The British tobacco company Imperial Tobacco has been supplying Belgian retailers with an unusual gift with which to reward their loyal customers, presumably to encourage them to buy even more of the company's cigarettes. It is illegal to supply free gifts with tobacco products but so far giving a supply of gifts to retailers, to be handed out to customers at their discretion, has not been challenged by the government.

However, instead of something that might be suitable mainly for smokers themselves, Imperial Tobacco has gone for something rather more homely or at least more appropriate for homes with children. It is a game called Jenga, which normally costs €15–18 (US\$21–26). Jenga is a game of physical and mental skill marketed by Hasbro, which describes itself as a worldwide leader in children's and family leisure time entertainment. Players of the game first build a tower from 54 wooden blocks, then take turns to remove them one by one from a layer other than the top one, placing them on top until the tower collapses. The player who caused the collapse is the loser.

By contrast, when children play the game of smoking, the loser is the one who keeps taking the cigarettes, which can



Belgium: Jenga, the game supplied by BAT to Belgian retailers to reward their best customers and a pack of its Bastos cigarette brand.

cause the eventual collapse of the lung and other organs. This is why tobacco companies say they do not want children to start smoking. But while Jenga is described as suitable for children aged 6 years and above, its packaging has the same colours as Bastos, a leading Imperial Tobacco cigarette brand in Belgium. Whatever can Imperial Tobacco be thinking of?

Canada: health workers agree next targets

Canada has long been a world leader in tobacco control, especially with its early triumphs on banning virtually all promotion and its subsequent triumph over a furious tobacco industry in pioneering graphic health warnings illustrating diseases caused by smoking. One might assume that by now, Canada has done it all. However, tobacco control leaders meeting at their annual conference in Edmonton, Alberta in September took stock of progress to date and focussed on the one major area still requiring attention. It is the need for total protection from second-hand smoke in all public places and in the workplace. The conference duly set targets for achieving this, as well as for reducing overall tobacco consumption.

Around 700 delegates agreed a national position summary and target list, the Edmonton statement, calling for Canada to become the second smoke-free country in the Americas (after Uruguay) by the end of 2008. They set a target to reduce Canada's overall smoking prevalence to 12% by 2011. The statement also challenged the government to fulfil its obligations under the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and to make

Canada a global exemplar of tobacco control by fully meeting all its FCTC obligations, in every province and territory, by 2011. The statement has been sent to the Canadian minister of health and to all the provincial and territorial governments.

Thailand: planning ahead

Last year, 2006, ended with new restrictions on smoking in public places in Thailand, including in transport stations, public parks, at bus stops and in telephone booths. Although there are some places where smoking is still permitted, 36 specific types of location have had smoking prohibited or restricted. There has been heightened activity for smoke-free places through world no tobacco day and the second conference (COP 2) of the parties of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) took place in Bangkok in the summer. Thailand's Dr Hatai Chitanondh was selected as the new conference president to preside over COP 3, to be held in South Africa in 2008.

Despite impressive achievements in 2006 and 2007, next year promises new opportunities, with smoking cessation and tobacco control research the areas likely to get special attention. While Thailand has made rapid tobacco control progress through legislation and regulatory policies, it has been unable to take advantage of the restrictions on public smoking or the research information available because of a lack of infrastructure for population-based cessation and science-based collaborative research.

Fortunately, the new Thai health professionals alliance against tobacco brings prospects for progress in these areas. Aided by the new tobacco control research and knowledge management centre of Mahidol University, this alliance of nine health professional groups has been working to build capacity in these areas. Plans are under way for a national smoking cessation "quitline" system. In addition, new opportunities for nicotine and tobacco research are on the horizon through the first Asian regional conference of the Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco, SRNT Bangkok 2008, scheduled for 28–31 October.

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USA: still welcome in the community

Despite suffering revelations that might have driven other companies out of



Norway: these cards, each of which has an actual shirt cuff or pocket stuck to them, were left in restaurants and other hospitality venues in Norway this summer, to consolidate publicity about the recent ban on smoking in such locations. Their printed messages note how the garments have been in the venue for some time, yet do not smell of tobacco smoke, inviting the finder to consider what a big difference the ban has made to such premises.

business, big American tobacco companies still seem to feel as strong and confident as ever in their traditional heartlands. One indication is that they still rub along happily in the feel-good world of corporate charitable giving, and few seem to see the irony of their executives associating with groups whose work includes picking up the pieces from disease and premature death caused by tobacco.

Latest in the weird world of tobacco company munificence is the case of the

chief executive of Reynolds American, Susan Ivey. She is a real high flyer, one of few women bosses in *Fortune* magazine's list of America's largest corporations. She previously held the top post at Brown & Williamson, having been director of marketing in China for British American Tobacco. She is running the 2007 United Way campaign, a national network of more than 1300 local organisations doing community work, and heads a campaign trying to raise more than \$18 million.



Sri Lanka: this board above a shop in a rural area of Sri Lanka says, "We have stopped selling cigarettes for the sake of you and your children."

The focus of United Way's work is currently education. One of Ms Ivey's more laudable goals, when she is not working on increasing her company's 30% market share, is to involve more women as donors, and no doubt as recipients of good education, too. However, it seems unlikely that effective education about the true facts and figures of tobacco use, especially among young women, will be a feature of any aspect of her work.

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