

countless workplaces in Japan still lack any clean air protection. When it comes to tobacco smoke pollution, Japan's governmental authorities remain stubbornly on the sidelines, avoiding the enactment of mandatory and comprehensive clean indoor air laws contemplated by Article 8 of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its implementation guidelines.

The 16-month rise from 3% to 50% of taxis being smoke-free reveals how a popular tobacco control policy can emerge in Japan, even in a sector which, aside from smoke-free banners flown over a mere handful of vehicles, had seemed impervious to change. It shows that clean air policies are economically viable and that they can be implemented with high levels of compliance. Clearly, the Japanese public is ready. With the taxi example as a guide, decision makers in both the public and private sectors should step forward to give the public more of what it wants and deserves.

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JAPAN: REVOLUTION BESIDE THE STREETS

In addition to taxis, Japan is showing not only rapid progress but some of the world's best practice at implementing smoking restrictions at street level; to be precise, some 40 cities and districts have now banned smoking in outdoor public



Japan: signs painted on the pavement surface remind walkers not to smoke in streets where smoking is prohibited.

areas such as pavements on its famously busy city streets. The bans are clearly signposted and small areas are commonly designated, such as areas outside convenience stores and other expedient locations, as the only places within designated smoke-free zones where people can smoke.

In Japan, world leader in politeness and good manners, regulations prohibiting street smoking enjoy widespread public support and compliance is high. Chiyoda, a business district of Tokyo, has 40 000 residents but during the day the population expands to around one million. Officials in the district have issued 40 000 infringement notices for smoking in smoke-free areas in the past 4 years, fining people the equivalent of US\$20 if they are caught smoking on smoke-free pavements.

PAKISTAN: MORE GIRLS SMOKING

It is distressing how often studies of girl's smoking rates in countries previously protected by cultural and religious factors are finding results well on the way to catching up males of comparable age. Just a decade or two ago it was still assumed by most people in Pakistan that it was not even worth trying to measure schoolgirls' smoking as it was negligible. However, as often illustrated in this Journal, international tobacco companies, led by British American Tobacco (BAT), have let loose the might of their practically limitless promotional budgets in Pakistan, seeking to hook their next generation of regular smokers—the youth market—knowing that they could look forward to recruiting increasing numbers of girls. Girls increasingly have joined the general youth market being exploited by multinational and local companies, at least in the cities, where they have been exposed to promotions in the streets, discos and on televised pop music shows.

So it is no surprise, though of great concern, that in a recent study of Karachi senior school girls with a mean age of 15 years, some 16% had tried smoking and 6.4% smoked at least once a month (*Int J Tuberc Lung Dis* 2007;11:1366–71). This is around half the rate of Pakistani boys and higher than girls' rates reported in 13 of 18 Indian cities, as well as higher than in Indonesia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka and other south Asian countries covered by the global youth tobacco survey. BAT's corporate social responsibility propaganda does not mention whether it is planning to underwrite the medical care and funeral costs of all the extra female patients of smoking-induced disease in Pakistan in the future.

EUROPE: AGREEMENT ON REDUCING CIGARETTE FIRES

On 29 November 2007, European Union (EU) member states overwhelmingly endorsed plans to draw up proposals for a standard to combat the leading cause of home fire fatalities each year. It will require tobacco companies to sell only self-extinguishing (reduced ignition potential (RIP)) cigarettes. The decision by member states in the General Product Safety Directive committee will start the process of bringing the EU in line with many other legislatures such as Canada and the 22 US states that have implemented the American Society for Testing and Materials standard. The European Commission, the EU's secretariat, will take a formal decision on the mandate for a standard early in 2008. Following the decision, Arlene McCarthy, a member of the European parliament, stressed that this victory "would not have been possible without the help of the campaigners and all the organisations that signed up to the EU RIP Alliance".

In addition, because of concerns about how long it might take to develop a European-wide standard, the UK government announced that it was committed to seeing fire-safer cigarettes as the standard for all cigarettes, bought and sold, as quickly as possible. Although the standard setting process was likely to take several years, the government said it would shortly be consulting on the



Japan: targeting young women. A new brand being promoted in Japan by Philip Morris is Noire, which is clearly aimed at upwardly mobile and stylish young women. It uses black and pink in an appealing Japanese design. Some commentators say the design aims to appeal to the "darker side" of its target audience, linking in with some of the cultural shifts and influences taking place in Japan. Noire packs come with an attractive attachment resembling a designer make-up kit, which is actually a small receptacle for butts. This appeals to popular support for reducing street litter, a big issue in Japan. Pavements and other outdoor areas in cities where there are bans on public smoking in the streets are notably clean.