

22 organizations demand ban on e-cigarette in Bangladesh



The organisations argued that the activities of tobacco companies in the production and expansion of e-cigarettes in the country may cause a serious threat to public health.

They raised the demand through a press conference held at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) in the capital on Saturday (November 25, 2023).

The organisations who jointly arranged the press conference included AID Foundation, ARK Foundation, Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance (BATA), BNTTP, Bangladesh Cancer Society, Dhaka Ahsania Mission, Development Activities of Society (DAS), Initiative for Public Health Research and Communication (IPHRC), Inter Press Network-IPN, National Heart Foundation, Tobacco Control and Research Cell and WBB Trust.

Public health experts, researchers on tobacco control and anti-tobacco activists at the press conference said that recently the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has proposed to ban the promotion, distribution, import, export and marketing of e-cigarettes in the amendment proposal of the tobacco control law. However, several multinational cigarette companies are adopting various methods to spread the new tobacco product in Bangladesh in different ways. As a result, the tobacco companies are putting the country's public health at serious risk, they added.

The speakers of the press conference also said that the British American Tobacco (BAT) has recently sent a letter to the Ministry of Commerce seeking permission to import some new international quality products citing the modern lifestyle of consumers in Bangladesh. In the letter, they said that they will sell all these products in the

Bangladesh market and later expressed their intention to produce and export these products permanently. Such efforts are of great concern for the public health of the country, they added.

Speaking at the press conference, president of Bangladesh Cancer Society Professor Dr Golam Mohiuddin Faruque said that the tobacco companies are attracting young people and smokers to e-cigarettes by using less harmful terms. E-cigarette is not less harmful, but a very harmful product, he added.

Head of Department of Epidemiology & Research of National Heart Foundation Professor Dr Sohel Reza Choudhury said that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has recommended banning of e-cigarettes in the draft of the proposed amendment to the tobacco control law. More than 150 MPs have also recommended the ban on e-cigarette. E-cigarette promotion and spread in Bangladesh has not increased much so far. In such a situation, if e-cigarettes are not reined in now, it will not be possible to control it later, he added.

Iqbal Masud of Dhaka Ahsania Mission said that cigarette companies are not only violating the law by using various organisations including the media, they are also trying to promote e-cigarettes.

BAT is secretly working to promote e-cigarettes and many e-cigarette shops in Dhaka have been found to be operating under their auspices, he mentioned.

The press conference was presided over by the founding president of MANAS Professor Dr. Arup Ratan Chowdhury. He said that despite the government's goal of building a tobacco-free Bangladesh, commitment to achieve SDGs and constitutional responsibility to protect public health, cigarette companies are violating the law in this country.

Project Manager of TCRC Farhana Zama Liza moderated the event, while Project Director of Aid Foundation Shagufta Sultana, Director of WBB Trust Gaous Pearee and Aminul Islam Bakul of DAS also spoke there, among others.

Nine-point recommendation was placed at the press conference to stop e-cigarettes in Bangladesh. The recommendations are-

- (1) Necessary measures should be taken as soon as possible to stop the import, export, production, sale, marketing, advertising and promotion of e-cigarettes in Bangladesh.
- (2) Prohibiting the use of e-cigarettes in dramas, movies and web series.
- (3) Prohibiting direct and indirect advertising of e-cigarettes, including online business sites.

(4) Prohibiting the import and export of e-cigarette products in the import policy of the Ministry of Commerce.

(5) Withdrawal of HR code product list of all such products including e-cigarettes, its devices, e-liquids, refills by the Finance Division and the National Board of Revenue ([NBR](#)).

(6) Not to allow e-cigarettes, vape or any other new addictive or tobacco-like or nicotine-containing products in Bangladesh, as directed by the Supreme Court.

(7) Investigating the secret activities of cigarette companies, institutions and individuals involved in the promotion of e-cigarettes and taking strict action against the companies.

(8) Cancellation of any trademark or registration of e-cigarette or vaping products.

(9) Making Bangladesh free of e-cigarettes by rapidly passing the proposed amendment draft of the tobacco control law.

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