



January - March 2021

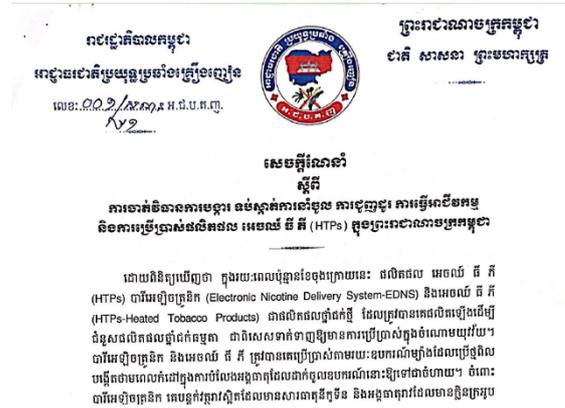
SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE ASEAN REGION:

Cambodia: HTPs Banned

17 March 2021: The Royal Government of Cambodia issued a *Circular on measurement to prevent and avoid importation, trafficking, sale, and use of tobacco heated products (HTPs)* banning HTPs effective immediately. The [circular](#) reinforces the [2014 circular](#) banning shisha and electronic cigarettes.

Advertisements for HTPs have been found on social media providing information on how these products can be obtained in Cambodia. This is a tactic tobacco companies use to introduce these new products into the country and then lobby governments to legalise them.

Kudos to Cambodia Movement for Health in providing technical assistance towards this policy. Congratulations to Cambodia and tobacco control advocates for this achievement. The ban on HTPs works towards ensuring all effort is made towards reducing risks and protecting public health during the pandemic. Shisha and vape products were banned in 2014.



Thailand: Mahidol University announces policy to reject funding from TI and its network

18 March 2021: [Mahidol University](#) on Healthy University Day held a press conference, 'Health Promotion Network, Mahidol University, rejects research funding and support from tobacco industry' where prominent tobacco control advocates and academics explained the importance of this policy.



Mahidol University President announced, “Mahidol University does not cooperate with the tobacco industry and its network in conducting any activities. The university therefore takes this opportunity to invite all universities in Thailand to show their decision not to cooperate with TI as well.”

The Director of the ASEAN University Network- Health Promotion Network (AUN-HPN) stated, “This year, the network explained that the tobacco industry attempted to provide misleading information to the public. Besides putting out inaccurate information on smoking and e-cigarettes to students, academics, researchers in institutes and universities, the tobacco industry targeted young people by offering grants to support student activities, study visits, and research projects.”

Responding to the AUN-HPN director’s statement, SEATCA has materials to assist universities in the ASEAN region to establish and strengthen tobacco free policy, in particular, rejecting all forms of grants provided by the tobacco industry.

WHAT IS THE TOBACCO/VAPING INDUSTRY UP TO IN THE REGION

- 1. Tobacco industry increased its cigarette business in the ASEAN region:** In 2020, while the COVID-19 pandemic rattled economies across the globe, the tobacco industry continued its business as usual. Transnational tobacco company, Japan Tobacco International (JTI) for example increased cigarettes sales in Cambodia, Malaysia and the Philippines.
- 2. Tobacco related CSR activities escalated during COVID-19 pandemic:** TI has stepped up its CSR activities across the ASEAN region during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 related CSR activities since [April last year](#), especially in countries with big cigarette markets, were observed in the [Philippines](#), Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Myanmar. TI has focused on approaching the medical professionals/ organizations by donating medical equipment and money.
- 3. ENDS/HTP front groups more vocal across the region**

New pro-vaping voices have popped up in ASEAN pushing for the recognition of ESD [Electronic Smoking Devices – ENDS and HTPs]. They are from varying backgrounds – journalists, academics and lawyers. One thing common to all of them – they do not declare who is funding their activities and research, if indeed they are funded at all.

 - **Mis-using consumer rights argument to legalize vape products:** Pro-electronic smoking devices (ESD) groups are using the “consumer’s right to choose” argument to promote the products.
 - **Politicians mobilized to support the legalization of ENDS/HTPs:** In Thailand, even politicians were found to be pro-ESD. A few politicians asked the government to revise tobacco control policies to accept ENDS and embrace a ‘smoke-free society’. Their interpretation of ‘smoke-free’ is to allow vaping.
 - **Attacks against those who want to ban e-cigarettes:** In the Philippines, the FDA has come under scrutiny when congress representatives [filed a resolution](#) calling for an [investigation](#) into its funds simply because their funder advocates for a ban on e-cigarettes.
- 4. Entertainers are promoting vaping:** Without a comprehensive ban on advertising, promotions, and sponsorships (including cross-border and online promotions), the youth are susceptible to the industries' aggressive marketing ploys like those found in Vietnam and Malaysia. A Vietnamese singer, [Cuong Seven](#), was singing the virtues of vaping in his music video. In Malaysia, [Amir Hasan](#) became a Warner Music Malaysia singer after his video singing while vaping went viral on social media.

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