



October - December 2021

SUCCESS STORIES FROM THE ASEAN REGION:

Cambodia: New pictorial warnings come into force

1 December 2021: New pictorial warnings on packs came into force after being postponed from August. The good news is, there are no further delays. However, the challenge is not all packs carry the new warnings. As expected, the tobacco companies are resorting to delay tactic and continue to “sell old packs until they are depleted” and not comply with the law. This tactic of partial implementation has been used previously to escape being penalized.

According to the Minister of Health Prakas (implementing regulations) [No. 013 SBK](#) on health warnings, these pictorial warnings on packs shall be changed once a year. Article 4 of the Prakas says, “Two types of Health Warning in Khmer Language and Pictorial shall be printed on tobacco products packages at the same quantity and same time.” This means the tobacco industry’s tactic of selling old packs till they are depleted violates the Prakas.

Thailand: [UN supports ban of ‘e-cigarettes’ in Thailand](#)

21 October 2021: Bangkok, Thailand - The United Nations expresses full support for Thailand’s ban of electronic cigarettes, (e-cigarettes), and urges the Government to take strong measures, as appropriate to the national context, to protect the people in Thailand, especially youth from the harms of tobacco use. An earlier statement by WHO has confirmed the need to promote smoking cessation, citing tried and tested interventions, including brief advice from health professionals, quit lines, mobile text messaging, nicotine replacement therapies and non-nicotine pharmacotherapies. The good news is, Thailand is maintaining its ban on e-cigarettes despite pressure from harm reduction groups.

Indonesia: [Jakarta moves to take down cigarette ads](#)

September/October 2021: The Jakarta Public Order Agency (Satpol PP) began taking down cigarette advertisements across the city following a new regulation signed by Jakarta Governor Anies Baswedan calling on building managers against displaying cigarette advertisements and products in their establishments. Since 13 September, Satpol PP officers across the capital have gone on unannounced inspections to minimarkets and shopping centers to enforce the new regulation. According to the Head of East Jakarta Satpol PP, his team had removed 22 cigarette billboards from public displays .

DKI Jakarta Governor's Appeal Number 8 of 2021 requires the removal of cigarette advertisements in the city and a ban on cigarette pack display. This is a long-awaited move supported by many [tobacco control advocates](#). Predictably it drew a chorus of objections from tobacco industry allies/ front groups such as Development of Economics and Finance (INDEF), the National Kretek Preservation Committee (KNPK) and the Advisory Council of the Indonesian Shopping Center Tenants Association (Hippindo).

Philippines: DOH stands alone but strong to protect public health from TI

December: Manila: Despite facing numerous challenges from various quarters, the Philippines Department of Health is standing firm as the regulator to protect tobacco control from being subverted and continues to take a position to ban electronic smoking devices. After an aggressive media campaign and lobbying by harm reduction supporters and front groups, the Senate passed the vape bill (SB 2239), which among others, will replace the FDA as the regulatory agency with the [industry-friendly Department of Trade and Industry](#).

The DOH issued a statement strongly opposing the Bill in its blatant disregard of public health, that it seeks to further expand access to vaporized nicotine and non-nicotine products. Doctors and health advocates have [opposed](#) the bill describing it as “[anti-health, anti-youth and anti-children](#)”. The DOH issued a statement saying it joins Filipinos, public health advocates, and champions of health to stay united in the goal of protecting people from harmful vapor products.

New publication:



2021 Asian TI Interference Index released

1 December 2021: Asia remains a target for Big Tobacco to grow its business and it continues to undermine tobacco control policies as found in the latest regional TI Interference Index. Even the COVID-19 pandemic did not stop the industry from interfering.

This index quantifies industry meddling in 19 Asian countries and ranks governments according to their efforts in shielding public policies. While a few countries show marginal progress, many showed deterioration in addressing tobacco industry influence, primarily due to the industry’s more aggressive tactics that capitalized on the COVID-19 situation.

This is SEATCA’s third Asian Index and the report shows while there is some good news, overall, the effort to protect health policy from industry interference is very slow.

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

1. Tobacco industry interference in tobacco control policies and regulations:

- *Philippines:* The Senate Bill 2239 (Vape Bill) will reverse the Existing laws ([Republic Act \(RA\) 11346](#) and [RA 11467](#)) to regulate electronic smoking devices (ESD) and make ESD more widely available by lowering the minimum age of access from 21 years to 18 years, allowing sales to non-smokers, allowing online marketing and sales, allowing multiple flavors that are attractive to teens, and replacing the FDA with the [industry-friendly Department of Trade and Industry](#) as the regulatory agency.
- *Thailand:* Thai Minister Chaiwut Thanakamonusorn met with [INNCO](#), a harm reduction group which is funded by Philip Morris International through the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. This meeting may violate Article 5.3 for not disclosing that the minister met with a group funded by tobacco industry for his statement that can benefit the tobacco industry.

- *Indonesia:* PT Gudang Garam, PT Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna (PMI), and PT Wismilak Inti Makmur all recorded an increase in revenue although they obtained permission to make late payment of excise duties. The Coordinating Ministry for the Economy is encouraging the domestic cigarette industry to expand and increase exports that will soon see the establishment of the [Tobacco Products Industrial Area](#) (KIHT) in Probolinggo Regency.
- *Vietnam:* 23 September 2021, Hanoi, the US-ASEAN Business Council had a successful [meeting](#) with high-level Vietnamese officials to discuss supports for Vietnam's economy and recovery during COVID-19. The President of Vietnam thanked the Business Council for International Understanding (BCIU) for accompanying with and supporting Vietnam in accessing vaccines and medical supplies serving the COVID-19 fight. In March 2021, BCIU in [partnership](#) with PMI, hosted the AFRICA: Virtual Panel Discussion on Combatting Illicit Financial Flows.

2. Tobacco industry continues with its tactics to enhance its public image:

- *Philippines:* Jaime V Ongpin Foundation Inc (JVOFI), a non-government organization which receives Philip Morris Fortune Tobacco Corp (PMFTC) sponsorship, targeted public agencies for its CSR activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. In October 2021, JVOFI, in partnership with the national police (PNP), through the [Project Virtual Bisita Eskwela \(ViBes\)](#) distributed hygiene kits to elementary school children of Ba-hay Pasacao, Camarines Sur and Palayan City, Nueva Ecija (Figure 1). [Doña Josefa Elementary School](#) is one of the recipients of computer units from JVOFI. The CSC-DOH Joint Memorandum Circular prohibits public officials and institutions from endorsing charity from the tobacco industry.

PMFTC controls more than 70 percent of the cigarette market in the Philippines and its plan is to further increase cigarettes sales.

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