UNITED NATIONS, May 31 (Xinhua) -- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday delivered a strong message on the implications of tobacco usage and sales, saying that it not only hinders development but worsens poverty.

"Tobacco takes a pervasive, heavy toll," Ban said in a message to mark the World No Tobacco Day, which falls on Thursday. "It hinders development and worsens poverty -- tobacco and poverty create a vicious circle, it is the poor who smoke most and bear the brunt of the economic and disease burden of tobacco use."

On May 31 each year, the World Health Organization (WHO) celebrates World No Tobacco Day, highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce consumption.

Tobacco use is the second cause of death globally, after hypertension, and is currently responsible for killing one in 10 adults worldwide.

The World Health Assembly created World No Tobacco Day in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and its lethal effects. It provides an opportunity to highlight specific tobacco control messages and to promote adherence to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Tobacco use is the number one preventable epidemic that the health community faces.

The WHO has observed each World No Tobacco Day with themes to educate the international community on the constant dangers of smoking, as it promotes a healthy smoke-free lifestyle, that involves sports, fashion, and film, among many others.

Supporting the tireless efforts by the WHO, the UN chief stressed that "tobacco kills by causing cancer, heart disease, and respiratory diseases -- it is one of the leading preventable risk factors for non-communicable diseases."

In his message, Ban said that on average there is about five million people dying each year from the use of tobacco. While another 600,000 die from second-hand smoke.

He also stressed that the poorer countries are ill equipped to handle the effects produced by tobacco consumption, saying "tobacco use is growing fastest in low-income countries that are least equipped to deal with its consequences."

The secretary-general said that tobacco consumption needed to be controlled, and "tobacco control is essential to achieving our global development goals. If we do not step up our efforts to control it, tobacco could kill up to one billion people this century."
Australian Government honoured for tobacco control action

Last updated 1 Jun 2012

The Australian Government was today presented with a Global Leadership Award by three of Australia’s leading public health organisations for outstanding national and international action and leadership in tobacco control.

The Award – presented by the AMA, the Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH), and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Australia – was accepted on behalf of the Government by Health Minister, Tanya Plibersek, at the AMA National Conference in Melbourne.

AMA President, Dr Steve Hambleton, said the Australian Government won the Global Leadership Award for leading international action on tobacco over the past year.

“Australia is setting an example for the rest of the world to follow in the ongoing battle to stop people smoking and destroying their health, and is not afraid to take on Big Tobacco in the process,” Dr Hambleton said.

“This included passage of world-leading plain packaging legislation as part of a comprehensive program of initiatives.

“With welcome support from all parties, the Government pursued plain packaging despite massive and desperate opposition from the global tobacco industry.

“The Government also continued its record of investment in combating smoking, including funding through the Council of Australian Governments to address key aspects of tobacco control, not least Indigenous smoking.

“The Government banned electronic and internet advertising for tobacco, and established the Australian National Preventive Health Agency with specific funding commitments for tobacco control.

“The Commonwealth committed $100 million over four years to the Tackling Indigenous Smoking initiative.

“Further to recent tobacco tax increases, the Government recently decided to significantly reduce duty-free sales of tobacco.

“And the Government is to be commended for not accepting political donations from the tobacco industry.
“With this record, the Australian Government is rightly seen as a global leader in tobacco control and resisting tobacco industry pressures.

“The Government’s determination and commitment in its battle against Big Tobacco has prompted other governments to follow its lead, and its efforts have been widely recognised as an inspiration to the global health community.

“The AMA, ACOSH and ASH congratulate the Government on its outstanding contribution to public health,” Dr Hambleton said.

The AMA, ACOSH and ASH note that the Government’s tobacco control work is continuing, with regulation of cigarette contents and additives to be addressed in an options paper due out later this year.

Australia provides support to international tobacco control, including through:

- substantial funding for the World Health Organisation to help implement its non-communicable disease (NCD) action plan;
- funding to assist with the control of NCDs in the South Pacific; and
- support for global tobacco control through the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

The AMA, ACOSH and ASH hope that the Government will expand its efforts to improve transparency when dealing with the tobacco industry by fully implementing the World Health Organisation’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Article 5.3 Guidelines to protect health policies from tobacco industry interference.

(Source: )
Beware of cigarette promotion by tobacco industry — Liow

Posted on May 31, 2012, Thursday

KUALA LUMPUR: Society must be wary of efforts by the tobacco industry to promote cigarettes as smoking is harmful to the health and can kill.

Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said people have a right to healthy living via tobacco control and should not be in cahoot with the industry.

“Parents must be role models for children and wary of efforts targeting children as new smokers. Teenagers or students must make the right choice and not believe myths created by the tobacco industry,” he said in a message to mark World No Tobacco Day 2012 today.

The event with the theme “Tobacco Industry Interference” focuses on the need to expose policy makers and the public to efforts by the tobacco industry to interfere in the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

Liow said scientific evidence shows that exposure to cigarette smoke causes death, diseases and disabilities.

“As signatory to FCTC, Malaysia has to adopt and implement laws, executive, administrative and other methods to protect the public from exposure to tobacco smoke at work places, public places, public transport and other areas.”

The World Bank and WHO have taken effective measures to reduce the demand and supply of tobacco products in the market via increase in the price and tax.
— Bernama
Smoking kills 40,000 young people in Vietnam annually

Around 40,000 young people die due to smoking every year in Vietnam, the World Health Organization said Wednesday.

The number will increase to 70,000 by 2030 if the country does not adopt effective measures to stop smoking, WHO warned on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, May 31.

Globally smoking kills nearly six million people a year, and is one of the leading causes of death and diseases, it said.

Meanwhile, up to two-thirds of non-smokers, mainly children and women, are exposed to passive smoke at home, work places, and in public, WHO warned further.

The UN agency said the more countries keep their commitments and duties under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the more obvious the tobacco lobby's efforts to weaken such policies are.

These efforts include delaying or weakening regulations on printing graphic warnings on packs, as well as those on banning smoking in public and at work places, it said, calling for increased community awareness of this and the government’s efforts to fight such destructive efforts.

Since the framework was adopted at WHO’s annual assembly in May 2003, 168 countries and territories have signed on.
MANILA, Philippines — World No-Tobacco Day (WNTD) is observed on May 31 to encourage a 24-hour period of abstinence from all forms of tobacco consumption around the world. The day, with ashtrays and fresh flowers as its common symbol, was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1987 to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and its dangerous effects. This year's theme is “Tobacco Industry Interference,” focusing on the need to counter the tobacco industry’s increasingly aggressive efforts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

According to the WHO, tobacco use is one of the leading preventable causes of mortality. The global tobacco smoking will cause the life of nearly six million (6,000,000) people each year, of which more than 600,000 are people exposed to second-hand smoke. Unless we act quickly, it will cause the lives of up to eight million people by 2030, of which more than 80% smokers live in low- and middle-income countries.

WHO urges countries to put the fight against tobacco interference at the heart of their efforts to control the global tobacco epidemic. It encourages groups around the world – from local clubs to city councils and national governments – to organize events each year to help communities observe World No-Tobacco Day in their own meaningful way.

In the Philippines, where surveys showed 28% of Filipinos aged 15 years and above, or 17.3 million people, are smokers, the Metro Manila-wide smoking ban has been implemented in bus terminals, waiting sheds, schools, hospitals, recreational places, and inside public utility vehicles as part of a joint campaign of the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority headed by Chairman Atty. Francis N. Tolentino and Local Government Units partnership in the enforcement of an intensified no-smoking policy that coincides with the observance of the World No-Tobacco Day 2011.

In observing the World No-Tobacco Day 2012, let us show our right to health and healthy living and protect our future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental, and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke. Quit Smoking and Live Longer. MABUHAY
Today is the 25th World No Tobacco Day. The World Health Organization has chosen "tobacco industry interference" as the theme for today to expose and counter the tobacco industry's attempts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

After beating around the bush for 25 years, this year's theme hits the nail on the head and exposes the real enemy of public health. As Dr Margaret Chan, director-general of WHO, said in the keynote speech of 15th World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Singapore on March 20: "The enemy, the tobacco industry, has changed its face and its tactics. The wolf is no longer in sheep's clothing, and its teeth are bared."

As a party of WHO FCTC since 2003 and a country of 350 million smokers and 740 million second-hand smokers, China should seriously reflect its State-owned tobacco industry's interference in its tobacco control on this occasion. It is not only related to China's national image as a credible and civilized country in the international community, but also concerns the grievous public health issue caused by tobacco use.

China is constantly careful in fulfilling the commitments of various international conventions as a responsible country. But WHO FCTC is an exception. China received a Dirty Ashtray Award from the NGO Framework Convention Alliance after China's representatives made excuses for not printing warning pictures on cigarette packets at the third Conference of WHO FCTC in 2008. Six years have passed since the WHO FCTC took effect in China in 2006. There is still a long way to go for China in all fields of tobacco control to meet the requirements of the convention now.

China Tobacco, the State-run tobacco company, even carries articles on its website to tell smokers, especially young smokers, "how to smoke healthily."

The gigantic size of the smoking population in China, one third of the world's total, has basically not changed and China's tobacco production and consumption have actually been on the rise for years. Annual deaths caused by smoking are predicted to rise from 1.2 million in 2005 to 2 million in 2020.

Neither the shameful Dirty Ashtray Award, nor the horrific deaths of millions of its smokers have prompted China's tobacco industry to think again. Or it just chooses to not think on purpose and continues to sleep in its rosy, though solid, contentment and self-confidence. The tobacco industry contributed 752.9 billion yuan ($119.5 billion) in tax in 2011, about 6 percent of the annual fiscal revenue of the central government. The percentage has remained at this level for years.
Many tobacco control experts believe the central authorities have actually been taken over by the tobacco industry without considering the losses caused by tobacco use in China. The report Preventing Tobacco Use Among Youth and Young Adults issued by the Public Health Service of the US Department of Health and Human Services in 2012 suggests that about 443,000 smokers die each year in the US now and cigarette smoking costs the US $96 billion in direct medical costs and $97 billion in lost productivity annually. The cost and loss in China can be imagined accordingly.

The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention’s report suggests that China's State-owned tobacco industry actually started losing money from 1999. Today's tobacco industry is comparable to the infamous opium industry that enervated China in the 19th century. It is only lucrative for the manufacturer. Every penny earned by it comes along with its bite of people's health. Nicotine addiction, instead of creativity, is the most reliable and profitable asset for this industry.

Dependency on tobacco is engineered, especially in the case of smoking, by carefully-prepared formulations of more than 1,000 chemical and other ingredients. The tobacco industry markets a product that, unlike other legally sold goods, kills up to half of its regular users when consumed as per the directions of the manufacturer.

Its stable contribution to government's financial revenue together with its State ownership makes China's tobacco industry almost fearless of relevant legislation, policy-making and marketing. In China, the tobacco industry, as their international counterparts, undoubtedly exaggerates the economic importance of the industry to society at large and tries its best to manipulate public opinion to build a halo of respectability around it and discredit proven science.

Take legislation as an example. Past experience from abroad indicates legislation at the national level is the most effective way to strengthen tobacco control. Today, Harbin in Heilongjiang province and Tianjin municipality take the lead in enforcing China's first local smoking-control laws respectively. This milestone progress in China's smoking control legislation is proof of the retarded law-making work at the national level, which is caused by the penetration and negative influence of the tobacco industry, according to China CDC.

The decision makers in China have no excuse to ignore the fact there is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health interests.

Many tobacco control measures have been shown to be effective in curbing both the consumption and production of tobacco. Reforming the current tobacco industry and strengthening tobacco control are actually concrete steps to transform national industrial structures and realize scientific development in the long run.

Any attempts by the tobacco industry to boost its financial and social significance should be regarded as interference, which is well targeted today.

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Smoke-Free MMDA Cited Anew

By ANNA LIZA T. VILLAS / May 31, 2012, 10:33pm

MANILA, Philippines — The Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) has gotten its second consecutive annual Red Orchid Award from the Department of Health (DOH) for its strict enforcement of the no-smoking policy in government offices and state-run institutions.

The citation was given during the 3rd Red Orchid Awards held at the Philippine Trade and Training Center in Pasay City last Tuesday.

In accepting the award, MMDA Chairman Francis Tolentino said, “It has been our strict policy to prohibit smoking in our offices. We are grateful to the DOH for recognizing our dedicated effort to comply with the Civil Service (Commission) anti-smoking regulation and Republic Act 9211 (Tobacco Regulation Act).”

The MMDA was the only government agency in the National Capital Region to receive a Red Orchid award this year.

“Smoking ban should not only be limited within government offices. We should strive to achieve a totally smoke-free Metro Manila as a way to safeguard public health, which is one of our mandates,” said Tolentino.

Last year, MMDA became the first government agency cited by the DOH for promoting a 100 percent tobacco-free and smoke-free environment at its headquarters in Guadalupe Nuevo, Makati City.

The MMDA chief formally received the Red Orchid trophy, certificate, and P100,000 worth of drugs and medicines for smoking cessation or control of non-communicable diseases.

“There will be no let-up in our anti-smoking campaign, within the metes and bounds of the law,” said Tolentino.

Red Orchid awardees are evaluated based on the standards and requirements of a 100 percent tobacco-free environment such as enforcement of tobacco control policies, provision of information and education to warn people about the hazards of smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke, and delivery of smoking cessation services, among others.

Now on its third year, the Red Orchid award is the DoH’s annual search for best practices to implement the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) Article 8 or the protection from exposure to tobacco smoke.
WHO urges governments to say no to tobacco industry interference

May 31, 2012 2:52 am

GENEVA, May 30 — The World Health Organization (WHO) called on governments worldwide on Wednesday to be more vigilant against the increasingly aggressive attacks from the industry which undermine policies that protect people from harms of tobacco.

The call was made one day ahead of the World No Tobacco Day, which is celebrated with a focus on fighting against tobacco industry interference.

"In recent years, multinational tobacco companies have been shamelessly fuelling a series of legal actions against governments that have been at the forefront of the war against tobacco. The industry is now stepping out of the shadows and into court rooms," said WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan.

"We must now stand together with these governments that have had the courage to do the right thing to protect their citizens," she said.

Under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which was endorsed by 175 countries, governments are encouraged to create 100 percent smoke-free, enclosed work and public places; to inform the public of tobacco harms through large and strong pictorial warning on tobacco packages; and to ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

The tobacco industry, however, is hard at work to undermine the treaty, including taking governments to court. In fact, the governments of Australia, Norway and Uruguay are currently battling tobacco industry law suits in their national courts.

On World No Tobacco Day, WHO is releasing a technical resource paper and global brief based on 2008 guidelines for implementation of this Article of the treaty to help guide countries on ways to combat tobacco industry interference.

The paper covers a range of issues including: maneuvering to hijack the political and legislative process; exaggerating the economic importance of the tobacco industry; manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability; fabricating support through front groups; discrediting proven science and intimidating governments with litigation or the threat of litigation.

Worldwide, tobacco kills almost 6 million people every year and is one of the leading preventable causes of illness and death around the world.
WHO estimates that by 2030 tobacco will kill more than 8 million people every year, with four out of five of these deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries.

Tobacco is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases such as cancer, cardio vascular disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. (PNA/Xinhua)

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http://balita.ph/2012/05/31/who-urges-governments-to-say-no-to-tobacco-industry-interference/
Academy asks tobacco scientist to leave

Members of the prestigious body say his work on refining low-tar cigarettes contradicts international health standards, although he also has supporters

Stephen Chen
Updated on May 31, 2012

One of the country's most prestigious academic bodies, the Chinese Academy of Engineering, has asked one of its members to quit because he specialises in refining low-tar cigarettes. The request came after an orchestrated campaign opposing his membership, and ahead of today's World No Tobacco Day. Nearly 100 academics from the institute have written letters to its administrators demanding a reassessment of Xie Jianping's membership, The Beijing News reported.

Xie, 53, also has his fair share of supporters, not only fellow scientists who believe there are merits to tobacco research, but also the government, which owns and runs the nation's tobacco industry - a cash cow that generates hundreds of billions of yuan in revenue a year.

Scientists who dispute Xie's membership say his research into reducing the health hazards of tobacco by lowering tar content - which led to his being named a fellow of the academy - contradicts international health standards. The Beijing News said they also objected to Xie's membership being approved last year by a panel of environmental experts and chemists, rather than by the academy's medical and health fellows.

Wang Mengshu, a member of the academy, said the divide over Xie membership and the subsequent media frenzy has become a major headache for the academy's administrators. He said the academy's leaders had contacted Xie and asked him to consider resigning - a solution that would save the trouble of a reassessment procedure - but that Xie declined, arguing he had done nothing wrong and that there was nothing wrong with his research.

Xie, who is also vice-president of Zhengzhou Tobacco Research Institute under the China National Tobacco Corporation, could not be reached for comment yesterday.

Wang said that many of the academy's 800 members had decided not to take sides in the debate as moral standards in scientific research are not always as clear-cut. "We have many members who spent their whole lives developing nuclear weapons. Isn't research into those weapons of mass destruction more terrible than tobacco?" he said.

But Wang Longde, a former deputy minister of health, said Xie's research not only had little scientific merit, but contradicted the United Nations' Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which was signed by the government six years
ago. The treaty bans using terms such as "low harm" or "low tar" for cigarettes, as they give the public the illusion that tobacco is safe.

However, Professor Wei Fusheng, an academy member who supports Xie's work, said tobacco research was necessary. "There must be some way to minimise tobacco's negative health effects," he said.
Protect health laws from big tobacco
Shin Young-soo says we must push back against industry attempts to undermine tobacco control and health laws that target smoking

Updated on May 31, 2012

Hands off! That's what we shout when the tobacco industry tries to undermine the laws that protect people from the ravages of tobacco use, and when it misuses the treaties designed to protect trade and investment in an effort to block a novel law requiring that tobacco be sold in plain, unattractive packages.

That's what we tell an industry that tries to crush the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the landmark public health treaty that now has 174 parties covering more than 85 per cent of the world's population.

And that's what we say to a tobacco industry whose so-called "corporate social responsibility" projects are designed to buy influence and make people forget that its products cause addiction, suffering and nearly six million deaths per year.

The tobacco industry needs to keep its hands off all the protections that have been erected since science tied smoking to lung cancer, emphysema, cardiovascular disease and a host of other fatal diseases.

The industry is getting more aggressive and brazen. Tobacco giant Philip Morris recently took the unusual step of suing Australia under the country's bilateral investment treaty with Hong Kong on the grounds that Australia's revolutionary plain packaging law infringes on international trademarks.

That's why the World Health Organisation chose "tobacco industry interference" as the theme of today's World No Tobacco Day.

On this day and throughout the year, the WHO will educate policymakers and the general public about the tobacco industry's nefarious and harmful tactics so that they might be better resisted.

Doing so is in keeping with the WHO's framework convention, the preamble of which recognises "the need to be alert to any efforts by the tobacco industry to undermine or subvert tobacco control efforts and the need to be informed of activities of the tobacco industry that have a negative impact on tobacco control efforts".

We encourage everyone to join the good fight. Today, and every day, tell the tobacco industry to keep its hands off public health legislation. The industry deserves no seat at the policymaking table, its interests being fundamentally and irreconcilably in conflict with the public interest.
Tell the industry to keep its hands off the framework convention, which obligates parties to ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, to protect people from tobacco smoke, to warn people about the harms of tobacco use and to offer help to people who want to quit. The treaty is our most important tool in the fight to curtail the tobacco epidemic.

Stand by countries such as Australia that have stood up to the industry's legal intimidation. Every country has a right and a responsibility to protect its people from the enormous health and economic costs of tobacco use. Trade laws should not be abused to prolong or increase exposure to tobacco industry marketing.

Denounce tobacco industry interference with public health laws whenever and wherever you see it.

Our message to the tobacco industry is simple and direct. Hands off!

Dr Shin Young-soo is WHO regional director for the Western Pacific

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Drug for smokers to quit could be a drag on resources
Proposal to put medicine to beat addiction on the 'essential' catalogue splits the health community

Zhuang Pinghui
Updated on May 31, 2012

Beijing’s municipal Legislative Affairs Office has released draft tobacco control legislation requiring medical institutions to provide "guidance and help" for smokers.

The draft, released for public consultation last week, echoes a controversial plan first outlined by Health Minister Chen Zhu in April that would see consultations with doctors on quitting smoking covered by basic medical insurance and the drugs involved in such treatment included in the essential drugs catalogue.

While many doctors and tobacco control advocates support the plan, saying that giving smokers professional help to quit will improve public health and cut the social cost of tobacco use, others question whether it is appropriate to extend limited basic medical insurance to cover such drugs.

The mainland is the world's largest producer and consumer of tobacco, accounting for 40 per cent of cigarette sales. A Ministry of Health report in 2010 said there were more than 356 million smokers on the mainland and over a million smoking-related deaths every year.

Wang Hongzhi, a pharmaceutical industry specialist at management consultancy Allpku, said using drugs to treat smoking addiction was ineffective, as clinical
trials showed the most effective drug was only 10 percentage points more effective than a placebo. Authorities in other countries had also linked such drugs to suicidal tendencies and cardiovascular diseases, he said.

And even though such drugs are covered by basic medical insurance in some countries, such as Australia, that did not necessarily mean Beijing should follow suit as the level of social security on the mainland was much lower, he said. The full course of treatment costs more than 4,000 yuan (HK$4,899), while the premium for basic medical insurance in rural areas is about 300 yuan a year, Wang said, adding that the reimbursement level for essential drugs in rural areas was only 50 per cent.

He said that including drugs used in treating smoking addiction in the essential drugs catalogue should not be a priority, given that the mainland only extended insurance coverage to serious diseases such as kidney failure and lung cancer in March.

"The point is you can't quit smoking solely because of the drugs or willpower," Wang said. "There are many other things that need to be addressed first, otherwise it is just not an efficient use of money."

But Dr Xiao Dan, director of the smoking cessation clinic at Beijing's Chaoyang Hospital, said that extending insurance coverage should be a top priority as it was cheaper to treat tobacco addiction than to treat the cardiovascular diseases that would otherwise develop.

Xiao said that some of her patients, after hearing that the first phase of drug treatment would cost them more than 2,100 yuan, would only accept one or two packets of drugs, or none at all, saying they would rely on willpower instead.

"Smoking addiction is a chronic ailment and drug treatment is a way of treating it," she said. "The priority of basic medical insurance should be to focus on the burden on people's health, and smoking is responsible for an enormous [burden]."

Xiao also said that helping smokers quit would be good news for the 740 million non-smokers on the mainland who had to put up with second-hand smoke.

Some tobacco control experts who support the idea, such as Professor Zhi Xiuyi, director of the Lung Cancer Treatment Centre at Capital Medical University, propose a gradual approach. He said pilot programmes should first be conducted in designated cities that already have hospital-based smoking-cessation clinics, had introduced bans on smoking in public places and had higher levels of social security.

That would let doctors identify patients suffering from serious addiction and those who should be treated with drugs. "Not all patients need to be treated with drugs, and we need to have trained, experienced doctors for that purpose," Zhi said.
Jiang Yuan, deputy director of the tobacco control office at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, said extending basic medical insurance to cover smoking cessation was only a small part of tobacco control and should only be implemented after other measures, such as bans on smoking in public areas, were in place, otherwise patients would just start smoking again.

"Studies show tobacco prices, a ban on smoking in working areas and health warnings ... are the three most effective measures to encourage people to quit," she said. "We need to improve the general environment for tobacco control first."
Big tobacco firms obscuring the anti-smoking message

Updated on May 31, 2012

World No Tobacco Day today puts the spotlight on China, and not just because the mainland’s estimated 350 million smokers consume 40 per cent of the world’s tobacco. The mainland is also a case study in the theme of this year’s no-tobacco day - interference by the tobacco industry designed to frustrate anti-smoking efforts.

According to a new report by the authorities there on health development, tobacco control and preventive medicine, eight key tactics are used by the monopoly state-owned China National Tobacco Corp and its regulator, the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, to sabotage anti-smoking efforts. They range from a refusal to include graphic images in health warnings on cigarette packs, to undermining moves to raise taxes and prices, and conning the public into believing that cigarettes with less tar are less harmful and that blending Chinese herbs into cigarette tobacco makes it less harmful.

With the government trying to make health care more affordable and rolling out national insurance, the huge profits and tax revenue harvested from the tobacco industry have to be weighed against the costs of medical treatment and admissions to hospital for smoking-related diseases and lost productivity.

As Hong Kong and other places have found, price combined with education are the most effective weapons against smoking. And the most effective target is young people, before they become heavily addicted and earn enough to absorb the increasing cost.

The industry argues that it delivers a social benefit as well as a fiscal benefit, with more than 20 million farmers growing tobacco, 10 million involved in retailing it and 520,000 processing it in factories. Given that an effective anti-smoking campaign would make incremental progress, the industry would have time to gradually restructure. It is time Beijing showed the willpower to quit dependence on this deadly crop.
Uphill battle to curb tobacco giants
The state-owned tobacco monopoly is undermining national anti-smoking efforts, according to campaigners and health experts on the mainland.

Zhuang Pinghui / Updated on May 26, 2012

A man ignores a “no smoking” sign in Shanghai. Smoking is still not banned in all indoor public areas.

Anti-smoking campaigners and health experts have outlined eight tactics they say the mainland's tobacco monopoly is using to undermine national efforts to curb the spread of the addictive product.

But they are fighting an uphill battle as the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, the government agency responsible for policy and enforcing regulations, such as warnings on packaging, controls the China National Tobacco Corporation, a state-owned monopoly and the largest single manufacturer of tobacco products in the world.

"China's tobacco industry has taken advantage of its integration with a government agency to interfere and counter efforts to honour China's commitment to the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control," said Dr Yang Gonghuan, director of the National Office of Tobacco Control.

A report, released on Thursday by the Think Tank Research Centre for Health Development, the Chinese Association on Tobacco Control and Chinese Preventive Medicine Association, listed eight key tactics tobacco firms use to counter anti-smoking efforts.

For instance, companies refuse to incorporate an image into the warnings on cigarette packaging, and have undermined the drive to raise tobacco taxes and prices, misleading the public into thinking that cigarettes with less tar are less harmful.

The report also criticises the industry for downplaying the treaty's legal obligations, and whitewashing the health threat smoking and secondary smoking poses.
With 40 per cent of the world’s tobacco consumed on the mainland, cigarette sales have been the nation’s top source of tax revenue since 1987. Those earnings have grown at a double-digit pace since 2003, which is often why authorities are resistant to activists’ efforts to curb smoking.

Dr Margaret Chan Fung Fu-chun, re-elected this week as head of the World Health Organisation, denounced the tobacco industry in March as a “ruthless and devious enemy” that used its deep pockets to stymie efforts to curb smoking.

WHO has made industry interference the theme of this year’s "World No Tobacco Day", which will fall on Thursday.

China ratified a framework convention in September 2005, but missed its deadline last year to ban smoking in all indoor public areas.

The requisite legislation has not even been drafted, after which it is usually submitted for public consultation before heading to the National People's Congress.

Some cities have passed laws that are close to fulfilling the convention's obligations. For example, Harbin, in Heilongjiang, banned smoking in all public indoor areas, including workplaces.

"Tobacco companies use a wide rage of tactics, legal and illegal, to introduce, promote and sell their products," said Dr Susan Henderson, a technical adviser for the Tobacco Free Initiative with WHO.

"For instance, they falsely legitimise themselves as a responsible corporate citizen, often through sponsorships. In China, it was demonstrated by the sponsorship of schools after the earthquake in Sichuan."

Some local tobacco corporations have also established scholarships for impoverished pupils.

The report accused the China National Tobacco Corporation of misleading the public by trumpeting research that "Chinese-style" cigarettes, mixed with Chinese herbs, reduced the associated health damage.

The tobacco administration has ignored years of appeal by advocates to include images on the warnings on packaging, the report says.

The warnings that do appear are written in tiny letters and fail to specify the harm smoking causes, falling far below what the convention requires. The same brand of cigarettes, such as Chunghwa and Double Happiness, sold in overseas markets come in packaging that carries dramatic warnings that include images.

Anti-smoking advocates say the administration has hampered their powerful weapon of preventing young people from taking up smoking in the first place, by avoiding price increases and blunting the effect of tobacco tax increases by the Ministry of Finance.

Miao Wei, the minister of industry and information technology which administers the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, said in March that the ministry was still working on whether and how to increase tobacco products tax and price, and change the warnings on packaging.
The World Health Organization (WHO) on Wednesday marked World No Tobacco Day with a strong call to the public to oppose the aggressive attempts of the tobacco industry to undermine laws that protect the people from the harm of smoking.

“The tobacco industry is throwing more of its huge power and resources at the laws that protect people from exposure to tobacco marketing and smoke. Its goal is simple—to increase profits at the cost of human misery,” said Dr. Shin Young-soo, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific.

“We must resist. Denounce industry interference wherever you see it... tell Big Tobacco to keep its hands off public health,” the WHO official said.

Tobacco use is among the leading causes of preventable death, killing nearly six million people per year, of whom more than 600,000 are nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke, according to the WHO.

At least 33 percent of the world’s roughly one billion smokers are in the Western Pacific region, which includes the Philippines. The region has the highest prevalence of smoking among men. But the trend is also fast increasing among women and the youth, the WHO said.

17-M Filipino smokers

According to the Department of Health, the Philippines has approximately 17.3 million smokers. Smoking is one of the three major risk factors of cardiovascular disease, cancer and other respiratory illnesses, which make up 60 percent of all the deaths in the country.

Globally, smoking caused over 100 million deaths in the 20th century. If no urgent action is taken to control the tobacco epidemic, the annual death toll could reach one billion in the 21st century, said the WHO.

“The tobacco industry is getting more aggressive and brazen,” said Shin. “On World No Tobacco Day and throughout the year, the WHO will educate policymakers and the public about the industry’s nefarious and harmful interference with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.”
The WHO-FCTC is a global treaty signed by 174 countries, including the Philippines, which aims to curb tobacco use and its promotion.

The WHO on Wednesday noted that the parties’ efforts to meet their obligations under the treaty had sparked a “fierce counter-reaction” from the tobacco industry.

The organization cited Philip Morris International’s legal action against Australia under the country’s bilateral investment treaty with Hong Kong on the grounds that the former’s plain packaging law infringed on international trademarks.

The WHO also noted that the tobacco industry continued to amplify its “corporate social responsibility” programs, undermining public health laws and supposedly making people forget that its products cause addiction, suffering and death.

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http://globalnation.inquirer.net/38493/fight-big-tobacco-urges-who-on-no-tobacco-day
Tobacco-free approach

Tevita Vuibau (Thursday, May 31, 2012)

FIJI National University will become one of the first local tertiary institutions to be declared tobacco free when Fiji celebrates World No Tobacco Day today.

FNU will follow the examples of villages that have tobacco-free community halls on the island of Rotuma, Naqumu Village in Macuata, Ba Mission Hospital, Nabukaluka in Naitasiri and Nabila Village in Nadroga.

World No Tobacco Day is celebrated worldwide on May 31 and highlights the risks associated with tobacco use while at the same time advocating for effective policies to reduce consumption.

A statement from government said this would provide an opportunity to highlight specific tobacco control messages and to promote adherence to the World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Fiji has fully complied with the requirements of framework with the amended Tobacco Act 1998 to the Tobacco Control Decree 2010.

Fiji is also working towards increasing the font size of health warnings on cigarette packets from January 1 next year. There will also be introduction to pictorial warnings on cigarettes packets, the statement said.

The theme for this years celebrations is tobacco industry interference it will focus on countering and exposing the tobacco industrys attempts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

The statement also said those brazen and increasingly aggressive attempts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control had even attacked pictorials on cigarette packets.

For example, in an attempt to halt the adoption of pictorial health warnings on packages of tobacco, the industry recently adopted the novel tactic of suing countries under bilateral investment treaties, claiming that the warnings impinge the companies attempts to use their legally-registered brands, the statement said.

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World No Tobacco Day Takes on 'Big Tobacco'

BY SECRETARIAT OF THE PACIFIC COMMUNITY

Thursday 31 May 2012 is World No Tobacco Day and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is adding its voice to the global call for an end to 'tobacco industry interference' - this year’s theme - in global and national efforts to control tobacco.

The focus is on exposing and countering the tobacco industry's blatant and increasingly aggressive attempts to undermine the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

Jeanie McKenzie, Non-communicable Disease Adviser at SPC, says, 'Big Tobacco has constantly tried to undermine global and national efforts to reduce death and disease from tobacco, from attempting to weaken the global tobacco treaty - the WHO FCTC - to interfering with the right of Pacific countries to determine strong public health policy and tobacco legislation.

'The tobacco industry has attempted to weaken national tobacco legislation, particularly in relation to banning smoking in enclosed public places and to banning tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. It is attempting to undermine tobacco excise policies and prevent the introduction of pictorial health warnings on cigarette packets in the Pacific region. In some countries the industry has sought to establish agreements that will ensure that excise tax increases on tobacco are kept to a minimum.'

Other tobacco industry strategies to undermine advances in tobacco control include: establishing the industry as 'socially responsible' and a tobacco control 'partner' with government, stopping or weakening policies known to affect tobacco sales, funding and lobbying politicians, manipulating the media by raising doubt about scientific research, funding research and research institutions, generating front groups (e.g. smokers' rights and retailer groups), using so-called philanthropy to buy friends and social respectability, promoting ineffective strategies like youth smoking prevention programmes, and instigating litigation to challenge laws and intimidate governments.

Ms McKenzie stated, 'There is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health policy interests. Countries that are Parties to the FCTC need to be alert to tobacco industry efforts to undermine or subvert their public health policies and protect them from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law.'

SPC, in conjunction with project partners, the Framework Convention Alliance, Allen & Clarke Policy and Regulatory Specialists (New Zealand) and Auckland University (in association with Fiji National University) will be working with three Pacific Island countries on the first Pacific-based Bloomberg Initiative grant to be awarded in the region, focusing on Article 5.3 of the FCTC. The three countries to
begin this work are Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.

Some of the key recommendations of WHO FCTC Article 5.3 state that Parties should:

- limit interactions with the tobacco industry and ensure any such interactions are conducted transparently;
- reject partnerships and not accept, support or endorse any voluntary code of conduct or instrument drafted by the tobacco industry that is offered as a substitute for legally enforceable tobacco control measures, e.g. tobacco control legislation or policy;
- denormalise and regulate activities described as 'socially responsible' by the tobacco industry, including but not limited to activities described as 'corporate social responsibility';
- not accept, support or endorse the tobacco industry organising, promoting, participating in, or performing youth public education;
- establish clear rules and codes of conduct regarding conflicts of interest for government officials and employees working in tobacco control;
- refuse payments, gifts and services, monetary or in-kind, and research funding offered by the tobacco industry to government institutions, officials or employees;
- require applicants for public office positions that have a role in setting and implementing public health policies with respect to tobacco control to declare any current or previous occupational activity with any tobacco industry whether gainful or not;
- require government officials to declare and divest themselves of direct interests in the tobacco industry;
- have effective measures to prohibit contributions from the tobacco industry or any entity working to further its interests to political parties, candidates or campaigns, or to require full disclosure of such contributions;
- not grant any incentives to establish or run tobacco businesses, give preferential treatment to, or invest in the tobacco industry and related ventures.

This year Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General, alluding to the classic Virginia slims campaign - 'You've come a long way, baby' - reminded the tobacco industry that 'We've come a long way', calling the industry 'bullies' and adding, 'We must not take bullying from the industry lying down.

'Tobacco use is one of the leading preventable causes of death. Unless we act, tobacco use will kill up to eight million people by 2030, of which more than 80% will live in low- and middle-income countries.'

This World No Tobacco Day, SPC is calling on all governments to protect public health policy from tobacco industry interference in line with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Source: http://www.spc.int/en/component/content/article/216-about-spc-news/943-world-no-tobacco-day-takes-on
SUPPORT: Ministry seeks farmers' cooperation to discourage smoking among Malaysians

KUALA LUMPUR: THE Health Ministry yesterday urged tobacco planters to switch to growing crops that may help to increase the country's food production.

Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai said alternative crops should be sought to assist the ministry in discouraging smoking habit among Malaysians.

"Smoking increases non-communicable diseases and efforts should be made to reduce tobacco in the market," he said in conjunction with World Tobacco Day 2012, which falls today.

He said the subsidies for tobacco plantations had been terminated.

He added that increasing the price and cigarette tax was the most effective method as pricing was proven to have played an important role in determining the rise or fall of smokers in the country.

"The price of cigarettes has influenced children and teenagers to pick up smoking and later, becoming chain smokers."

Liow said this year's focus would be to expose manufacturers and the public to the efforts by the tobacco industry to interfere with World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Other non-pricing approaches, he said included conducting anti-smoking campaigns, services at health clinics to help smokers quit, increasing the number of non-smoking zones and the ban on tobacco promotions and advertisements.

"Parents and educators should also be role models to children."

Liow also urged private, government and non-governmental agencies and religious bodies to support the ministry's tobacco control efforts.

"Consumer associations should also play a role."

According to WHO statistics, smoking kills more than five million people annually worldwide, or one in 10 adults.
The annual death toll would increase to more than eight million by 2030 unless urgent efforts were taken to control the situation.

The National Health and Morbidity Survey 2006 showed 21.5 per cent or 2.73 million Malaysians were smokers and 33 million sticks of cigarettes worth RM8.6 million were smoked daily.

A quick online search revealed that a Malaysian adult smokes an average of 646 cigarettes annually.

Smoking is also the main cause of respiratory diseases, heart diseases, stroke and various types of cancers, killing more than 10,000 Malaysians every year.

Men in their 30s and 40s, who smoke, had a higher risk to suffer from erectile dysfunction by about 50 per cent.