

Tobacco Industry Interference (TII) Monitoring Report

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Report Prepared

Sharmin Akter and Methun Bydho

Advisor

Syed Mahbulul Alam And Syeda Anonna Rahman

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May 2020, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Prepared by: WBB Trust


Supported by: The Union

Summary : (Key issue of the report)

Tobacco use is one of the leading causes of chronic and long-term non-communicable diseases. According to the number of international studies, smokers are 14 times more likely to be infected with the coronavirus than the non-smokers. So it is important to stay away from the use of tobacco products in health protection. But the tobacco companies are continuing their subterfuge in Bangladesh even during the Corona epidemic like other countries in the world. In addition to publicity, the companies are conducting various sponsorship and incentive activities in the name of social responsibility programs to build their positive image.

WBB Trust, with the technical assistance of The Union is collecting all the information about the activities of the tobacco companies during the Corona period. During the May month very important of tax hike. In this month we are found 4 news on bidi workers lobbying regarding the tobacco taxation, three news on CSR, two news on tobacco advertisement, two news on Tobacco Companies buying Tobacco without hygiene rules of workers and one news on tobacco companies lobbying the Ministry of Industries to reject a suggested tobacco ban proposed by the Health and Family Welfare Ministry. There is another different new BAT published on 47th Annual General Meeting (AGM) through digital platform. This brief report on the activities of tobacco companies has been prepared in recent times.

TII on Tobacco Tax



Date	News and source	Evidence
08 & 9 May 20	<p>Bidi workers have demanded to reduce the existing duty on bidis in the next 2020 - 21 fiscal year. Leaders and activists of Bidi Sramik Federation have made this demand in a memorandum with the Prime Minister through Sheikh Helal Uddin, Member of Parliament of Bagerhat -01. He mentioned in the memorandum that the existing tax on bidi should be reduced, bidi industry should be given the status of cottage industry, considering the employment of 2 million bidi workers in the country, the industry needs to be sustained, the domestic industry should be sustained by imposing additional tax on multinational tobacco companies.</p> <p>Source: The Daily Janakantha Newspaper Bangladesh protidin, Newspaper</p>	 <p>বিড়ি শ্রমিকদের আবেদন</p> <p>২০২০-২১ অর্থবছরে বিড়ির ওপর বিদ্যমান করক-করসেবার দাবি জানিয়েছেন বিড়ি শ্রমিকরা। গতকালে শেখ হেলাল উদ্দিন এমপির মাধ্যমে প্রধানমন্ত্রী বঙ্গবীর আবেদন প্রদানের মাধ্যমে বিড়ি শ্রমিক ফেডারেশনের নেতা-কর্মীরা এই দাবি জানান।</p> <p>আরকলিপুরে বঙ্গা হয়, বিড়ির ওপর বিদ্যমান কর কমাতে হবে, বিড়ি শিল্পকে কৃটির শিল্পের মর্যাদা দিতে হবে। দেশে বিদ্যমান বিড়ি শ্রমিকের কর্মসংস্থানের কথা বিবেচনা করে এই শিল্পকে টিকিয়ে রাখতে হবে।</p> <p>বহুজাতিক ক্রমাঙ্কিত কোম্পানির ওপর অতিরিক্ত কর দায় করে দেশীয় শিল্পকে টিকিয়ে রাখতে হবে।</p> <p>আরকলিপুর প্রদেশের সমস্ত উৎপাদিত ছিলেন জাতি বিড়ি শ্রমিক ফেডারেশনের সভাপতি জাহাঙ্গীর মোহাম্মদ, সদস্য জিহাদুল হোসেন, আবদুল মান্নান প্রমুখ।</p> <p>বাংলাদেশ প্রতিনিধি</p>

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<p>10 May 20</p>	<p>The Rangpur District Bidi Workers' Union has threatened to take strict action if the production and sale of bidis is stopped before providing alternative employment. The workers made the threat during a human chain program organized in front of Rangpur Press Club. Recently, some prominent citizens and a Member of Parliament along with the Prime Minister and the Health Minister demanded a halt to the production and sale of bidis & the biri workers organized this human chain to protest.</p> <p>Source: ntvonline bangladesh, online newspaper</p>	
<p>11 May 20</p>	<p>The bidi workers have staged a human chain on seven-point demand to stop the production & sale of bidis without providing alternative employment, not to increase the tariff on bidis and to give the workers the opportunity to work six days a week. A separate human chain was held in front of Jessore Press Club and Tangail Press Club on Monday. Recently, some prominent citizens and a Member of Parliament along with the Prime Minister and the Health Minister demanded a halt to the production and sale of bidis & in protest of this demand, Bidi workers held a human chain program.</p> <p>Source: ntvonline bangladesh, Online news</p>	

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<p>13 May 20</p>	<p>Some pro-tobacco organizations have strongly demanded a minimum price of Rs 47 per 10 stick pack of cigarettes in the 2020-2021 fiscal year and the reduction in the tax structure of cigarettes from tier 4 to 3.</p> <p>In this case, the current 4 tier (Low, Medium, High, Premium) system of cigarette tax structure should be reduced to 3 tier (Low, High, Premium) system.</p> <p>Source: dailyprotidinerkagoj.com, Online news</p>	
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TII on CSR:



Date	News and source	Evidence
<p>12 May 20</p>	<p>Abul Khayer Group has started supplying oxygen to treat corona patients. The event was officially inaugurated on Tuesday (May 12th) at the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (BITID) Hospital in Fauzdarhat, Chittagong with the supply of oxygen cylinders. Abul Khair Group has already provided significant grants to the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to confront the Corona situation in the country. They have also provided huge amount of relief, PPE and masks to various sectors of the government including Chittagong Divisional Commissioner, Chittagong Deputy Commissioner, Police Commissioner.</p> <p>Source: Chattagram24.com, Online news</p>	
<p>16 May20</p>	<p>The multinational cigarette manufacturer (BAT) has announced that the coronavirus vaccine they discovered is ready for testing in humans. According to the BAT it has also been said that the vaccine could be tested in humans by June if approved by the drug regulators. Kentucky Bio-Processing (KBP) is working to discover the vaccine. They have said that with the help of</p>	

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	<p>qualified manufacturers & Govt. agencies, they will be able to produce 10 to 3 million doses of vaccine per week from next June. Antigens will be made by cloning a part of the genetic sequence of the corona virus. Then the antigen will be inserted into the tobacco plant to reproduce that particular tobacco plant. The corona vaccine made of using tobacco leaves is completely opposite to other products used in the health sector. The World Health Organization (WHO) has already said that cigarettes are harmful to people who are infected with the corona virus. In addition, 8 million people are dying each year for using tobacco products & most of them through cigarettes.</p> <p>Source: ntvonlinebangladesh.com, Online news bengali.news18.com, Online news</p>	
<p>17 May20</p>	<p>Kaus Mia, the owner of a Jorda company, is distributing relief in various places in the hope of establishing a reputation with the government during Corona period and the media is spreading the news fruitfully.</p> <p>Source: Bangladeshprotidin.com, Newspaper</p>	
TII on TAPS		
<p>Date</p>	<p>News and source</p>	<p>Evidence</p>
<p>10 May 20</p>	<p>An online magazine named eisomoy24.com has cleverly published various unpleasant news in favour of tobacco, including the use of the logo of BAT & the National Board of Revenue, as well as the misconduct of domestic tobacco companies by using women's smoking scenes. It's an online magazine created by the tobacco company. When Abul Maal Abdul Muhit was in charge of the finance ministry, his daughter-in-law Mantasha Ahmed had absolute control over the National Board of Revenue (NBR). Through him, the then Ghaziz officials came to an agreement with British American Tobacco to provide business facilities. Their joint decision</p>	



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	<p>brought all domestic and foreign cigarette companies under the same amount of revenue structure, which is about 4-5 times more than other companies in case of other products. According to Mantasha Ahmed's plan, Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan became the chairman of the National Board of Revenue (NBR), who was himself a director of British American Tobacco. Even his brother Kamrul Hossain Bhuiyan was working as a senior member of BAT at that time. Source: eishomoy24.com, Online news</p>	
30 May 20	<p>BATB has kept it's activities going under the name 'Exced' about '3 Steps To Be The Next Campus Ambassador'.</p> <p>Source: facebook.com, Online news</p>	<p>Applications are open for SCEED Campus Ambassador Program!!! An exciting learning journey awaits. Apply here: https://bit.ly/SCEED2020 Shortlisted candidates will be invited to take the digital interview. Deadline: 30 May, 2020 at 11:59 PM #XCEED #WeAreBATBangladesh #ABetterTomorrow © Provide permission to the user!</p> 
TII on Policy development		
Date	News and source	Evidence
20 May20	<p>The letter also sought the cooperation of the Ministry of Industry to temporarily prohibit the production, supply, marketing and sale of tobacco products by all tobacco companies to reduce the risk of Covid-19 infection and move ahead with the commitment to build a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040 as announced by the Prime Minister. In addition, the Ministry of Industries has been requested to repeal the special permits issued for the continuation of these businesses during the Corona pandemic period. Source: channel24bd.tv, Online news</p>	
TII on Tobacco Product and Marketing		

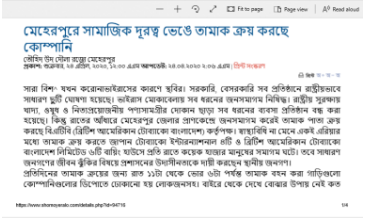

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<p>24 April 20</p>	<p>All types of public gatherings have been banned in response to the corona virus. In the interest of national security, all types of businesses except food, medicine and daily necessities have been declared closed. But the BATB authorities bought the tobacco leaves by holding a public meeting in the heart of Meherpur district in the dark of the night, beating up the law enforcement agencies. To buy tobacco in the same area without maintaining the hygiene rules, vehicles carrying tobacco at 4 Japan Tobacco International (JTI) & 6 British American Tobacco (BAT) buying houses enter the company's depot with people every day from 11 pm to 6 am. Everyone leaves as soon as the tobacco leaf bundle (80 to 100 kg bundle) is marked. A farmer in the area said fertilizers, seeds, pesticides and cash supplied by the tobacco company were deducted from the tobacco that was first given to the buying house. If tobacco is not given in the buying house, then the company won't take tobacco later.</p> <p>Source: shomoyeralo.com, Online news</p>	 <p>মেহেরপুরে সামাজিক দূরত্ব ভেঙে তামাক ক্রয় করছে কোম্পানি</p> <p>মেহেরপুরে সামাজিক দূরত্ব ভেঙে তামাক ক্রয় করছে কোম্পানি</p> <p>মেহেরপুরে সামাজিক দূরত্ব ভেঙে তামাক ক্রয় করছে কোম্পানি</p>
<p>09 May 20</p>	<p>There are allegations against several tobacco companies for buying tobacco from farmers without ensuring hygiene and social distance. In Manikganj district, several tobacco companies are buying tobacco from farmers in the open place without ensuring health protection rubric and social distance. As a result, both buyers and sellers are at serious health risk.</p> <p>Before buying tobacco, each tobacco company submitted a letter of commitment to the Manikganj Deputy Commissioner, confirming the social distance in case of purchasing the tobacco.</p> <p>Source: dbcnews.tv, Onlinenews</p>	 <p>স্বাস্থ্যবিধি না মেনে তামাক কেনার অভিযোগ টোবাকো কোম্পানির বিরুদ্ধে</p> <p>স্বাস্থ্যবিধি না মেনে তামাক কেনার অভিযোগ টোবাকো কোম্পানির বিরুদ্ধে</p> <p>স্বাস্থ্যবিধি না মেনে তামাক কেনার অভিযোগ টোবাকো কোম্পানির বিরুদ্ধে</p>

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TII on others		
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19 April 20	<p>To prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country, the Govt. has announced to ban all kinds of public gatherings and events to maintain social distance. In this situation, British American Tobacco Bangladesh Company Limited (BATBCL) has decided to hold the Annual General Meeting (AGM) through digital connection instead of attending the shareholders in person. As per the earlier announcement, the 47th Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Company will be held on Wednesday (April 22) at 10:30 am. The meeting will sanction the audited financial report for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2019 and 400% cash dividend.</p> <p>Source: corporatesangbad.com, Online news</p>	