

Press Release

Speakers at the webinar

Necessity of the Implementation of National Tobacco Control Program to achieve the goal of 2040

In order to build a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040, it is important to launch a National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP) this year to ensure greater participation of non-governmental organizations and youth and to strictly control tobacco companies. To this end, besides strengthening the National Tobacco Control Cell, it is necessary to take appropriate action plan through the involvement and cooperation of the organizations working in tobacco control. Country's public health experts stated this issue at a webinar titled 'Necessity of National Tobacco Control Program' to build a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040 at 11:00 am on Thursday, July 8, 2021. Bangladesh Anti-Tobacco Alliance (BATA), Bangladesh Network for Tobacco Tax Policy (BNTTP), National Tuberculosis Prevention Association (NATAB) and Work for Better Bangladesh (WBB) Trust jointly organized the webinar on the online meeting platform 'Zoom'.

Speakers at the webinar said that despite the imposition of a 1% surcharge on tobacco products and the enactment of a health development surcharge management policy in 2017, the sector has not been able to properly spend money on tobacco control due to non-finalization of the National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP). This is seen as an obstacle in building a tobacco free Bangladesh. In this context, it is badly needed to finalize the National Tobacco Control Program to achieve the desired goals in tobacco control. At the same time, it is necessary to formulate tobacco control policy, formulate guidelines for controlling the impact of the policy and formulate tobacco cultivation control policy.

Kazi Jebunnesa Begum (Additional Secretary, World Health Department of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare) was present as the chief guest at the function. She said that, "We have proposed to the Ministry of Finance and NBR to change the existing complex tax structure." We hope to get a positive result in this case. In addition, some practical action plans will soon be adopted, with local organizations planning to activate the tobacco control task force through the NTCC and increase anti-tobacco campaigns. Besides, work will also be done to implement anti-tobacco organizations at the local level in the implementation of tobacco control laws and guidelines of the local government department. Building Bangladesh as a tobacco-free country by 2040 is not a personal task but it is the responsibility of all in the country to build a healthy nation. Efforts to make Bangladesh tobacco free will continue in the formation of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Golden Bangladesh and realization of the dream of Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Speaking as the special guest on the occasion, Hossain Ali Khandaker (Coordinator, Additional Secretary, NTCC) said, "Everyone needs to make a combined effort to discourage those who are addicted to tobacco despite knowing that smoking is harmful." Work is underway to formulate 'Roadmap' and 'National Tobacco Control Program' policies on tobacco control. If these are finalized, it will be easy to reach the desired goal of establishing a tobacco-free Bangladesh as announced by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

Md. Shafiqul Islam (Head of Programs, Vital Strategies Bangladesh) who was present as a negotiator at the webinar, said that the health care department is busy due to the Corona epidemic. But general health issues should not be avoided. In this case, tobacco control is an important task. To take these tasks forward, we need to take concerted efforts to finalize the NTCC's organogram, increase manpower and connect other organizations.

Dr. Rumana Haque (Professor, Economics Department, Dhaka University; Convener, BNTTP) said that in order to build a tobacco-free Bangladesh by 2040, it is necessary to change the existing complex tax structure and impose a specific tax on all types of tobacco products. Because, due to the current tax structure, the government is losing a huge amount of revenue. At the same time, a road map has to be prepared for the expenditure of the surcharge collected at the rate of 1% per annum.

The formation of a Health Promotion Foundation may also be included to the National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP) for the control of infectious and non-Infectious diseases.

Meanwhile, Syed Mahbubul Alam, (TA, The Union) said, the rate at which tobacco companies have benefited in the country over the last two years has made it clear that tobacco consumption is increasing at a brisk rate. As a result, the National Tobacco Control Program (NTCP) has to be implemented very soon. In addition to creating opportunities for youth to participate in the program on a large scale, financial assistance should be provided to involve local level organizations.

Saifuddin Ahmed (Coordinator, BATA) gave a welcome address at the webinar, chaired by veteran politician Mozaffar Hossain Paltu (Member, Advisory Committee, Bangladesh Awami League ; President, NATAB). The keynote address was delivered by Syeda Anonna Rahman (Program Manager, WBB Trust. The program was conducted by Hamidul Islam Hillol (Project Manager, Tobacco Control, BER, Dhaka University). Besides, more than 50 leaders and activists of various anti-tobacco organizations from different parts of the country participated in the program.

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