

B2 Smoke Free Special



Expo Turns down tobacco donation

Michael More

SHANGHAI: Organizers of the 2010 Shanghai World Expo said yesterday that they would not accept a 200 million yuan (\$29 million) donation from a local tobacco company in order to observe the promise of a "healthy and smoke-free Expo." Sources from the Shanghai World Expo Coordination Bureau said organizers have annulled the sponsorship contract with Shanghai Tobacco in deference to China's anti-smoking efforts and to maintain a healthy image at the world event.

The announcement has come in response to a week-long heated debate around China on the legitimacy of allowing tobacco promotion and sponsorship in a public event like the World Expo.

The debate was partly triggered by an earlier suggestion from a group of Chinese health experts that Expo organizers should reject the donation, which would have been a "public showcase of tobacco advertising" and a "violation of international

treaties."

Health experts cited Article 13 of the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), under which parties are obliged to undertake a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, at both domestic and international levels.

In 2003, China, the world's largest tobacco producer and consumer, signed the FCTC, and a WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control comes into force and is fully

implemented and respected. It is also wonderful news for the Shanghai Expo and is in keeping with its slogan, 'Better City, Better Life.'

But more needs to be done for China to strictly observe the FCTC and extend tobacco control,

According to government statistics, China is home to some 350 million smokers, 1 million of whom die of smoking-related diseases each year. About 54 million Chinese suffered from "passive smoking" in Shanghai.



A woman wears a gas mask to protest second-hand smoke during a performance art show in front of a Shanghai subway station in this file photo. [China Daily/Wu Kai]

Thailand pins tobacco tax

Jordan lens

Thailand, a leader in tobacco control, levied an 83.5% statutory excise on cigarettes, which in 2008 resulted in an overall tax rate of 57% of the actual retail pack price. An important feature of Thailand's tax structure is a 2% tax surcharge, collected on both tobacco and alcohol, that is earmarked for a broad agenda of national health promotion programs. The 2% excise earmark, established in Thailand's Health Promotion Foundation Act of 2001, secures funding for the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth) and promote this till the end of the day. The understanding of the taxes on the free tobacco should be instilled by the government.

England provides free tobacco treatment to all

England provides free, comprehensive tobacco dependence treatment to all. The four countries of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have a national tobacco dependence treatment service that is universally available to all smokers, mainly free of charge, through the countries' National Health Service (NHS).

In England for example, nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is available without prescription through pharmacies and in other stores (e.g. supermarkets and corner

shops). NRT, as well as other smoking cessation medications, is also available by prescription at a reduced charge. Because people with low incomes are exempt from prescription charges, all prescription medicines including NRT, Bupropion and Varenicline are free to around half of England's population, with the remainder paying a small charge equivalent to about US\$ 10 for about one month of medications.

This is an example of what is possible with a significant investment of resources.

For low- and middle-income

countries that do not have the financial resources to support implementation of a comprehensive cessation programme, there are steps that can be taken to help people quit while more comprehensive initiatives are developed as mentioned above in the case of Uruguay. An

evaluation found that treatment services disproportionately help those most in need. For additional information on services in England please refer to <http://smokefree.nhs.uk/>.

(Agencies)

