



27<sup>th</sup> July 2020

Dear reader,

**Important Note on Casting Your Vote!**  
**Is your chosen candidate genuinely concerned about the wellbeing of Sri Lankan citizens?**

According to Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first global public health treaty adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco industry (TI) denotes tobacco manufacturers, wholesale distributors and importers of tobacco products. Article 5.3 of the FCTC recommends measures to protect the public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.

Tobacco kills half of its users prematurely. The death count is around 20,000 each year in Sri Lanka. Tobacco causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, sexual impotence, lung diseases and diabetes. According to the United Nations Development Programme, each year, tobacco use costs Sri Lanka LKR 214 billion in economic losses and causes substantial human development losses. Tobacco farming has many serious environmental consequences including deforestation, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion and water pollution. The waste from cigarettes leaches toxic chemicals into the environment, leading to land, water and air pollution. Despite its range of harm including the deaths directly caused by them, tobacco industry uses a wide range of tactics to attract children and youth to initiate and sustain tobacco use. Those tactics include, not only direct and indirect advertising, sponsorships and a wide range of promotions and spreading myths; but also interfering in tobacco control policies and actions by lobbying and engaging policymakers, high rank officials and politicians.

The tobacco industry agents be-friend politicians, mainly by sponsoring government activities under their ministerial portfolios or by funding politicians' election campaigns. Then the tobacco industry uses these "friendships" to sabotage development and enforcement of effective tobacco control laws, policies and activities. You may be aware that such interference arguably delayed implementation of NATA Act and Pictorial Health Warnings, thus delaying their positive impact by several years causing thousands of deaths, which could have been averted.

Standardised plain packaging, aimed at reducing attractiveness of cigarette packs, was proposed and approved two years ago by the government, but is still awaiting implementation. The proposed single stick sales ban, which would substantially reduce affordability and availability of cigarettes leading to a significant reduction in use, especially among the youth and the poor, has been blocked and is awaiting the approval from the Cabinet of Ministers for the last two years. Banning tobacco cultivation, a crop that has a seriously negative impact on fertile agricultural land and

on the farmers and their families, together with support to famers to expand or shift to alternative crops, was proposed initially in 2016. This ban has not been implemented up to today.

More details on such engagements of politicians by the tobacco industry and resulting interference in policy and other matters are mentioned in our website [www.tobaccounmasked.lk](http://www.tobaccounmasked.lk).

We believe that these examples have now given you an idea of the bigger picture of the strategy of the tobacco industry. Now, you know the importance of the actions and the decisions of the Members of the Parliament and Ministers of the Cabinet in protecting the current and future generations of people in this country, and the country itself, from the vested interests of the tobacco industry. Thus, we humbly plead you to think hard and cast your vote intelligently and responsibly and elect truly people-friendly politicians to the Parliament. Then you will have effectively contributed to protect our children from the murderous tobacco industry, their lethal product and their vested commercial interests.

Thanking you in advance for electing truly people-friendly candidates,



Dr. Mahesh Rajasuriya  
Director, CCT  
on behalf of the CCT Team