

ATJFB, Ahsania Mission urge amendment to tobacco control law

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Dhaka: Members of Aviation and Tourism Journalists' Forum of Bangladesh (ATJFB) and Dhaka Ahsania Mission on January 22 urged an amendment to the tobacco control law with a view to addressing the health and environmental risks caused by smoking as well as to building a healthier society for the coming generation.

During a workshop organized by Dhaka Ahsania Mission on the amendment to the tobacco control law held at Shaheed Dr Shamsul Alam Khan Milan Hall of BMA Bhaban in the capital, members of ATJFB emphasized that the amendment to the law would reduce mortality rates due to smoking, help achieve country's SDG goals, and accelerate the formation of tobacco-free Bangladesh.

The session was chaired by Iqbal Masud, Director of Health and WASH Sector of Dhaka Ahsania Mission. In his speech, Iqbal Masud emphasized, if the draft amendment prepared by the Ministry of Health is passed, the law

will be more robust and aligned with the FCTC (Framework Convention on Tobacco Control). He also urged journalists to help influence the government through their reports.

Mohammad Shariful Islam, Coordinator of Tobacco Control Project of Dhaka Ahsania Mission presented the keynote paper. He highlighted that the current "Smoking and Tobacco Use (Control) Act 2005" allows smoking zones in public places and restaurants, causing non-smokers to suffer from second-hand smoke. As a result, the risk of heart disease increases by 85 per cent. Furthermore, 73 per cent of restaurants are displaying tobacco company advertisements at the smoking zones.

If the amended draft of the Tobacco Control Law, prepared by the Ministry of Health, is passed, smoking zones in all public places, including restaurants, will be abolished, and restrictions on the display and sale of tobacco products, as well as on e-cigarettes and tobacco companies' CSR activities, will be implemented. This amendment will address several weaknesses of the current law and align it with global standards, he claimed during his presentation.

At the event, former Chairman of BCIC Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman delivered a speech too. He urged the media representatives to play a crucial role in attracting policymakers' attention through their reports to expedite the implementation of the amendment.

ATJFB President Tanzim Anwar (Special Correspondent of BSS) and General Secretary Baten Bipul (Chief Reporter of Asian TV) also addressed the workshop.

Other attendees at the workshop included Niyaz Morshed from Maasranga Television, Imrul Kays from Dhaka Mail, Emrul Kausar from Bhorer Dak, Khalid Ahsan and Shafiullah Sumon from BTV, Altab Hossain from Jaijaidin, Rashidul Hasan from The Daily Star, Masud Rumi from Kaler Kantho, Golam Mortuza from BD News, Adnan Rahman from Dhaka Post, Sarwar Alam from Desh Rupantor, and Ahmed Tanvir Shams from The Bangladesh Monitor, among others.