

## Indonesia to add photo warnings to cigarette packs (Update)

January 10 2013, by Chris Brummitt

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(AP)—Indonesia has issued regulations that will require cigarette packets to bear graphic photographic warnings, a long-delayed measure in a country with one of the highest rates of smoking in the world.

The regulations were watered down following opposition by tobacco farmers and cigarette companies, and fall far short of those in many Western countries and other Asian markets. Billboard and television advertising remains widespread, as is sponsorship of sports and pop music events.

The law regulating tobacco was issued in 2009, but the supporting regulations fleshing it out were not signed by President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono until late December. They were posted in full on a government website late Wednesday. Tobacco companies will have 18 months to implement them.

The law bans companies from use terms such as "mild" and "light" in connection with their tobacco products, saying they are misleading. But a clause says those brands that are already registered trademarks will be unaffected, meaning that top companies with huge-selling lines will likely be able to keep selling them.

"There was lots of intervention from the companies," Tulus Bagus, from the Indonesian Consumer Foundation, said Thursday. "They are very strong."

Indonesian men rank as the world's top smokers, with two out of three of them lighting up. About 3 percent of women smoke in the country. Indonesia, with 240 million people, is the world's fourth most populous country and the fifth-largest cigarette-producing market, with an industry that employs millions.

In 2005, Philip Morris bought a large stake in Sampoerna, a local cigarette company, to expand its business in the country.

Under the new law, photos depicting the health effects of smoking must take up 40 percent of the area on the back and front of packets, less than many countries. According to the U.S. Food and Drug administration, more than 30 countries require such warnings and scientific evidence demonstrates that they encourage people to quit.

Sampoerna, whose Sampoerna Mild brand is a market leader in the country, said it was pleased to see a clause in the law specifying that people under the age of 18 were prohibited from buying or smoking cigarettes. Previously, the law said only that cigarettes were not to be sold to "young people."

Sampoerna declined further comment, saying it was studying the regulations.

Tobacco manufactures have waged an organized campaign against the laws, saying they would result in massive job losses.

"This regulation has taken into account the interests of the society without harming tobacco farmers," said Emil Agustiono, an official from the welfare ministry. "The important thing is that it will not weaken the economy."

A survey released last year by the World Health Organization and the

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 67 percent of all Indonesian males over 15 years old smoked. The sprawling archipelago ranked second overall with 35 percent of all males smoking, behind only Russia at 39 percent. According to WHO, smoking-related illnesses kill at least 200,000 people a year in Indonesia, where about a quarter of boys aged 13 to 15 get hooked on cigarettes, which sell for about \$1 a pack.

Kartono Muhammad, an adviser to the National Commission on Tobacco Control, said the introduction of photographic warnings was a major victory, but regretted that selling cigarettes individually was not outlawed. Buying single sticks from street vendors or stalls is a common practice here.

"We didn't get all that we wanted, but that is understandable, this is a process of bureaucracy and politics," he said.

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