

Philip Morris wins small victory in Thailand

August 27 2013, by Thanyarat Doksone



Cigarette packages are displayed for sale at a shop Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. Tobacco giant Philip Morris won a temporary victory in its fight to keep larger health warnings off cigarettes for sale in Thailand. The company on Tuesday praised a court's decision to temporarily suspend an Oct. 2 government deadline requiring new labels on the dangers of smoking to cover 85 percent of a cigarette package. The requirement now is for 55 percent. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

Tobacco giant Philip Morris has won a temporary victory in its fight to keep larger health warnings off cigarettes for sale in Thailand.

The company on Tuesday praised a court's decision to temporarily suspend an Oct. 2 government deadline requiring new labels on the dangers of smoking to cover 85 percent of a cigarette package. The requirement now is for 55 percent.

Bangkok-based Philip Morris spokeswoman Onanong Pratakphiriya said such warning labels were not effective. She also said the regulation was "illogical," since it exempts cheap, roll-your-own cigarettes, which she said accounts for almost half the tobacco consumed in Thailand.

Onanong also said that a recent government survey showed health risks linked to smoking are "known universally in Thailand."

The injunction, issued by a Thai court on Friday, will stay in place, pending a lawsuit by Philip Morris and more than 1,400 Thai retailers trying to overturn the regulation. The company said it expects the legal process to take more than a year. The Public Health Ministry said it will study and likely appeal the court injunction.

About 50,000 people die from smoking-related diseases each year in the Southeast Asian nation of about 65 million people.

Nopporn Cheanklin of the Public Health Ministry's Disease Control Department said larger warnings are more effective.



A Thai vendor waits for customers behind a box selling cigarette packages Tuesday, Aug. 27 , 2013 in Bangkok, Thailand. Tobacco giant Philip Morris won a temporary victory in its fight to keep larger health warnings off cigarettes for sale in Thailand. The company on Tuesday praised a court's decision to temporarily suspend an Oct. 2 government deadline requiring new labels on the dangers of smoking to cover 85 percent of a cigarette package. The requirement now is for 55 percent. (AP Photo/Sakchai Lalit)

"The bigger the warnings are, the better we will be at preventing people from smoking," he said. Labels are meant not only to remind smokers of the risks but to prevent children from starting, he said.

"If cigarette packages are attractive, youngsters will be drawn to them," Nopporn said. "Our goal is to scare (children), so there won't be any new smokers."



In this June 26, 2013 file photo, the warning signs are printed on the cigarette packets on sale in Bangkok, Thailand. Tobacco giant Philip Morris has won a small victory in Thailand to delay plans for larger warnings on cigarette packs. The company praised a Thai court's decision to temporarily suspend an Oct. 2 government deadline for new warning labels that would cover 85 percent of cigarette packets. (AP Photo/Apichart Weerawong, File)

The lawsuit also contends the regulation is illegal because it was enacted without consulting the Thai tobacco industry—retailers, distributors, manufacturers and others—which will be most affected by the labels and suffer "potential negative consequences."

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