

# A STUDY ON THE ANTI-SMOKING MEASURES ADOPTED BY THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN MALAYSIA, 1982

LEKHRAJ RAMPAL

## SUMMARY

*Anti-smoking measures, adopted by local authorities before the guideline on the ban of cigarette advertisement and anti-smoking campaign launched by the Government, are limited in scope and area. The activity is limited mainly to a ban on cigarette advertisements in theatres. Legislative measures are instituted only in the City Council, Municipal Councils and 2 of the 20 district councils surveyed. There is an awareness among several local authorities on the need for an increase in anti-smoking activities but action is lacking. A population of 7.4 million people live in areas controlled by the local authorities. The local authorities are expected to play a more active role along with other Government departments following a directive in August 1982 from the Chief Secretary to the Government.*

## INTRODUCTION

Cardiovascular diseases are among the leading causes of mortality and severe morbidity in most developed countries. Since the late seventies this is also being seen in many developing countries. Cigarette smoking as a risk factor in the causation of heart diseases has been widely accepted.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Smoking also increases the risk of lung cancer and respiratory infections. Smoking is probably the largest single preventable cause of ill health in the world.<sup>5</sup> The aim of this paper is to record some of the anti-smoking measures adopted by the local authorities in Malaysia.

Lekhraj Rampal, MBBS, MPH, FRSH.  
Senior Medical Officer of Health,  
Health Office, Kelang,  
Malaysia.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study covered the City Council of Kuala Lumpur, 13 municipal councils (Majlis Perbandaran) and 20 district councils (Majlis Daerah) throughout Malaysia. A Local Authority is defined in the Local Government Act. No. 171, Laws of Malaysia, as any city council, municipal council or district council, as the case may be and in relation to the Federal Territory it means the Commissioner of the City of Kuala Lumpur appointed under Section 3 of the Federal Government Act. The material for this study was derived from a survey conducted in the form of questionnaires. This survey was conducted before the guideline on the ban on cigarette advertisement and anti-smoking campaign was issued by the Chief Secretary to the Government of Malaysia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I shows that there are 89 local authorities with a population of 7.4 million people. The mean population varied significantly between the 3 main types of local authorities.

TABLE I  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION BY  
TYPE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY, MALAYSIA

S. No.	Type of Local Authority	Total Number	Mean Population	Total Population
1.	City Council	1	937,817	937,817
2.	Municipal Council	16	212,812	3,404,985
3.	District Council	72	42,304	3,045,874
	Total	89	83,019	7,388,676

Source: Population and Housing Census of Malaysia, 1980, Local Authority Areas: Population, Households and Living Quarters;  
Issued by Department of Statistics, Malaysia, K.L.

## COVERAGE OF SURVEY

Table II shows that the survey covered the City Council of Kuala Lumpur and 13 (81%) of the municipal councils and 20 (28%) of the district councils in Malaysia.

## BAN ON SMOKING IN THEATRES (CINEMA HALLS)

Table III shows that there was a ban on smoking in the City Council (100%) and in 11 out of the 13 (85%) of the municipalities. Only 2 (10%) out of the 20 district councils surveyed had gazetted this law. This difference between municipalities and district councils is significant. In one (7.5%) of the municipalities (new townships) there is no theatre at present. The current laws/by-laws enforced in the City Council of Kuala Lumpur and in most municipalities were gazetted between 1972 - 1978. The banning of smoking in theatres' by-laws were gazetted in the District Council of Teluk Intan in 1977 and Kuala Muda in 1980.

## PENALTIES FOR SMOKING IN THEATRES

Table IV shows the frequency distribution of the maximum penalties in the 14 local authorities where there is a ban on smoking in theatres. The maximum penalty for smoking in theatres in local authorities where there is a ban ranged from \$200/- to \$2,000/-. The mode is \$500/-. In the municipalities of Pulau Pinang and Seberang Perai, the maximum penalty is \$2,000/- or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding one year or to both such fine and imprisonment. In the District Council of Kuala Muda, Kedah, the maximum penalty is \$500/- or to a term of imprisonment not exceeding 6 months. In the Hilir Perak District Council, Teluk Intan, the maximum penalty is \$500/-.

## BAN ON SMOKING ADVERTISEMENTS IN PUBLIC/PROMINENT PLACES

A ban on smoking advertisements in public or prominent places exists only in two municipalities and one district council.

## BAN ON DISPLAY OF SMOKING ADVERTISEMENTS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Only 1 out of 13 municipal councils and 6 out of the 20 district councils surveyed disallow the display of smoking advertisements on public transport. Two of the local authorities had expressed that they had no power on this matter.

**TABLE II**  
NUMBER OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES SURVEYED BY TYPE

S. No.	Type of Local Authority	Number Surveyed	Total in Malaysia
1.	City Council	1	1
2.	Municipal Council	13	16
3.	District Council	20	72
Total		34	89

**TABLE III**  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITY BY "BAN ON SMOKING IN THEATRES"

S. No.	Type of Local Authority (L.A.)	Ban on smoking in cinemas		No. Ci- nema in L.A.	Total
		Yes	No		
		No. (%)		No. (%)	No. (%)
1.	City Council	1 (100)	0 (0)	0 (0)	1
2.	Municipal Council	11 (84.6)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)	13
3.	District Council	2 (10)	18 (90)	0 (0)	20
Total		14 (41.2)	19 (55.9)	1 (2.9)	34

**TABLE IV**  
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES BY MAXIMUM PENALTIES FOR SMOKING IN 14 THEATRES, 1982

S. No.	Type of Local Authority	Maximum Penalties (14 Theatres)			
		\$200/-	\$250/-	\$500/-	\$2,000/-
1.	City Council	—	—	1	—
2.	Municipal Council	1	1	7	2
3.	District Council	0	0	2	0
Total		1	1	10	2

## NO-SMOKING SECTIONS IN RESTAURANTS

District Council, Kuala Muda was the only one among all local authorities surveyed (including municipalities) which indicated that in their local authority there were restaurants with "No Smoking Section".

The response to the statement: "Any proposals or suggestions pertaining to Anti-smoking measures adopted by the local authorities" indicated that there was awareness among several local authorities for the need to impose a ban on cigarette

advertisement in television, public transport such as buses and taxi and also public places. There was a suggestion from one of the local authorities for the need "to gazette uniform by-laws for future implementation throughout all local authorities".

## DISCUSSION

Primary prevention of Cardiovascular disease can be achieved by reducing this risk factor.<sup>6</sup> The substantial revenue (more than 200 million dollars) derived from tobacco through import and export duties has not prevented the Federal Government of today from discouraging the people at large from smoking. This survey shows that in the past the anti-smoking activities carried out in the local authorities have been limited. Anti-smoking measures adopted by them will have a 'ripple effect' and reach a substantial population. In August 1982, the Chief Secretary to the Government issued a circular to all Government Departments giving guidelines on the ban on smoking advertisements and on anti-smoking campaigns. This was issued after the Federal Government had banned smoking advertisements on radio and television programmes. This step by the Government has been taken with the view of controlling and preventing diseases associated with smoking.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the Director General, Ministry of Health, Datuk (Dr.) Hj. Abdul Talib bin Latiff for permission to publish the paper and the Presidents of all local authorities who have kindly participated in the survey. My thanks are also due to Miss Annie Hwang and Mr Hashim bin Abd. Majid for typing the manuscript.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1</sup> Cummins R O *et al.* Smoking and Drinking by Middle-aged British men: effects of social class and town residence. *B.M.J.* 1981, 283, 1497-1502.
- <sup>2</sup> National Heart Foundation of New Zealand. Coronary Heart Disease. *A Progress Report*, 1976, 59-67.
- <sup>3</sup> Oh W. Presentation of Acute Myocardial Infarction in Cosmopolitan Singapore. *S'pore Med. J.* 1975, 16, 2, 82-88.
- <sup>4</sup> Stamler J *et al.* The problem and the challenge. The Hypertension Handbook. *Merck Sharpe and Dohme*. 1974, 3-27.
- <sup>5</sup> Mahler H. Smoking or Health. The choice is yours! *World Health*, Feb. - March, 3, 1980.
- <sup>6</sup> Wilhelmensen L. Primary and Secondary risk factors for coronary heart disease: Their role in prevention. *Med. J. Malaysia.* 1977, 31, 296-300.