

# Worldwide news and comment

## SINGAPORE/WORLD: TRADE FAIRS SHUNNED

Singapore is the latest country to see a major tobacco trade fair cancelled. The official reason given by organisers was lack of government commitment, however it is likely the threat of civil society action played a part, given a rising tide of protests. World Tobacco Asia 2014 had originally been planned for April in Jakarta, Indonesia, but was relocated to Singapore and rescheduled to November after the Inter-tabac Asia Trade Fair planned for February in Bali was cancelled abruptly under orders of the provincial governor following international protests.

Daily Singapore broadsheet the Straits Times had slammed the event being held in Singapore in an editorial published on 26 May. It described as 'absurd' Singapore being the site of the fair, given the country had successfully hosted the World Conference on Tobacco or Health in 2012, and the government's commitment to reduce smoking prevalence to below 10% by 2020.

The trade journal *Tobacco Journal International* published an upbeat interview with World Tobacco Sales Manager Colin Case on 5 May 2014, in which he described Singapore as "...the ideal place ... Just about everyone we've spoken to is very happy with the move (from Jakarta)... we expect another great event." His optimism was in stark contrast to the curt article published in the same publication just 6 weeks later on 17 June, which announced the event had been 'cancelled due to a negative government response.' A World Tobacco representative was quoted as stating: "From here forward such an event in Asia looks less likely than ever"—welcome news in a region which bears a huge health and social toll from tobacco.

The cancellation leaves a decreasing number of options for tobacco trade fairs, most of which are likely to face strong international criticism. The city of Dortmund, Germany will host an Inter-tabac Europe in September 2014. It will be the subject of a protest campaign by German organisation

Forum Rauchfrei, which spearheaded the successful campaign against Bali Inter-tabac in February. Forum Rauchfrei spokesman Johannes Spatz has suggested there is a domino-effect. Tobacco trade fairs had been cancelled in Istanbul and Moscow in 2013 and the Bali, Jakarta and Singapore events in 2014. "Tobacco trade fairs won't find their place in this world anymore," Spatz says.

Upcoming fairs listed on the World Tobacco website include North America (Richmond, Virginia in May 2015), Middle East (Dubai, April 2016), and Europe (Hamburg, Germany in November 2016). Hosting these events will put these countries at odds with the global health community, and would be a striking failure of political leadership, given the increasing resistance of low and middle income countries to accommodating tobacco industry trade fairs. The Dubai event can expect a particularly strong global backlash, with the United Arab Emirates hosting the World Conference on Tobacco or Health 2015 in Abu Dhabi.

## UK: LIFESAVING QUIT CAMPAIGN AWARDED

A major integrated mass media campaign in North East England to raise awareness that one in two long term smokers will die early from a tobacco related cause has generated thousands of responses and earned two national advertising awards.

FRESH—Smoke Free North East's 'Don't be the 1' TV advert won the Grand

Prix prize (outstanding) and gold for TV/Cinema commercial at the prestigious Roses Creative Awards—beating off competition from major international commercial brands. It ran in February and March across TV, radio, cinema and digital, and triggered 13 900 responses via Facebook adverts and over 9000 website visits.

Deliberately upsetting, the television advert highlighted the reality faced by the families and children of smokers suffering from a terminal illness. A street survey of 500 smokers carried out before the campaign found 9 out of 10 underestimated the 50% risk of early death. Nearly half believed the risk was between 1 in 10 and 1 in 20. When told the true odds, 65% said it worried them.

A post campaign survey to evaluate awareness and behaviour change found 31% who saw the advert, around 92 600 smokers, took some form of quitting-related action. It led to a 125% increase in smokers correctly identifying the 1 in 2 risk, with 63% of smokers reporting they felt more concerned and 57% of smokers saying they felt more likely to quit after seeing it.

Fresh worked with a 47-year-old former smoker, who had been diagnosed with terminal small cell lung cancer, and who was widely interviewed across TV and radio news to add to the call for smokers to quit.

Ailsa Rutter, Director of Fresh, said: "We have advocated over many years for the power of health harms adverts. However, we found there was appallingly low

YouTube AU



## Don't be the one

**Figure 1** A heart-rending scene from the FRESH—Smoke Free North East 'Don't be the 1' advert.

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