

## A cancer-friendly budget

Pakistanis have the distinction of smoking over 65 billion cigarettes in a year. A cigarette consists of various toxic chemicals such as nicotine, carbon monoxide and tar along with heavy metals and several carcinogens like nitrosamines, aromatic amines and polycyclic hydrocarbons. Over 100,000 Pakistanis die as a result of this poisonous entertainment and many more suffer from totally self-invited diseases.

To further enhance these statistics, the government of Pakistan has come out with a brilliant strategy that aims to institutionalize smoking related death and misery. Pakistan has generously dropped, in its latest 'cancer-friendly' budget, duties on the most smoked, third tier cigarettes from Rs.32.96 to Rs.16 per pack. This will certainly and drastically raise the number of smokers, number of deaths and the amount of profits made by the tobacco companies.

Pakistan is a signatory to the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which calls in its article 6 for "Price and Tax Measures to Reduce the Demand for Tobacco" by raising the FED by at least 75 per cent. Ironically, instead of raising the tax from Rs.32.96 to Rs.57.68, it was dropped to Rs.16 per pack. This is a state sponsored criminal and structural arrangement that would only bring gloom and destruction to millions of Pakistanis.

As if 'hand in glove' with the tobacco industry, the Pakistan government graciously extended yet another favour. The regulations require that cigarette packs ought to carry pictorial and text warning on 85 % of front and back surface. The government continues to postpone implementation of this law, so as to let the people remain ignorant and let the tobacco industry build its profits. The sane people in this country must stand up and raise their voice against what may be termed as pre-meditated budgetary murder



