

Introduction



The Government of Bahrain set up the Executive Committee headed by His Royal Highness Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, the Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Committee monitors and places measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In addition, a National Taskforce for Combating the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been set up. Tobacco control activities during this critical time include a ban on waterpipe use in public places and a national awareness campaign.

Ban on waterpipes in public places

The Executive Committee issued a decision, on 17 March 2020, closing all restaurants and cafés serving waterpipes for one month. Bahrain's Ministry of Health inspectors are ensuring that the ban is enforced, and violations are reported. The ban on waterpipes will remain in effect until further notice, however, cafes and restaurants are lobbying for the use of disposable waterpipes outdoors.

The Minister of Trade issued a decision, on 23 April 2020, to ban delivery of all tobacco products including waterpipes. The decision was issued to combat cafés which were continuing to deliver waterpipes to homes. This decision was supported by a number of penalties such as closing down the cafés and imposing hefty fines for violators. In an incident published in newspapers, a café was violating the ban and its owners were fined 9000 Bahraini Dinars (around USD 25 000) in addition to an initial bail amounting to 2000 Bahraini Dinars (around USD 5000). These fines were deliberately high to set an example to other cafés. Currently, a trial is underway for the owners of another café because it was operating secretly, in addition to imposing a hefty fine.

The close collaboration between the ministries of health, interior and trade continues to enforce the anti-tobacco and general health laws in spite of most of the efforts currently being dedicated to COVID-19. Recently, the Ministry of Trade has been granted judicial powers similar to those held by the ministries of health and interior to enforce the laws.

Awareness campaigns during COVID-19



Bahrain's Ministry of Health launched a campaign based on posters showing the link between tobacco use and the transmission of the virus that causes COVID-19. To coincide with World No Tobacco Day 2020, Her Excellency the Minister of Health put out a statement on tobacco use as one of the risk factors for COVID-19.

Way forward

Current efforts are paving the way to be able to extend the ban on waterpipes beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. Dr. Ejlal AlAlawi, Head of Anti-Smoking Group at the Public Health Directorate and Focal Point of Tobacco Control at the Bahrain Ministry of Health stated: "I expect that cafés which serve waterpipes will not go back to their activities easily".

Related links

[A café fined 9000 Bahraini Dinars for violating the ban](#)

[Bahrain's Government Executive Committee introduces additional COVID-19 precautionary measures](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest updates: minister highlights Bahrain's efforts to fight smoking, preserve public health](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest updates: national taskforce for combating the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) emphasizes responsibility in following measures to safeguard the community](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) latest updates: summary of cases](#)

[HRH Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, Crown Prince, Deputy Supreme Commander and First Deputy Prime Minister](#)

[Minister of Health stresses the importance of raising community awareness to the harmful effects of tobacco use \(Al Belad\)](#)

[Minister of Health stresses the importance of raising community awareness to the harmful effects of tobacco use \(Instagram\)](#)

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