

## 55pc of housing complex residents victims of passive smoking

*Tobacco cos allure youths with promotional gambits: studies*

### Staff Correspondent

AT LEAST 55 per cent residents of multi-unit housing complexes in the urban areas are victims of passive smoking, according to a new study released on Monday.

Common spaces like washing areas, stairs, balconies, parking and doorways are the source of second-hand smoke, according to the study titled the Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2017.

Overall 4.08 crore adults or 39 per cent of the total population are exposed to second-hand smoke in the country.

The definition of public places in the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act 2013 does not cover housing complexes though a large number of people live in them.

The study, funded by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, was done in April to November 2019 after interviewing 616 residents of government and private housing complexes across seven divisional cities.

During the survey, 50 key informant interviews were conducted among housing committee members, tobacco control activists, and fire service and civil defense officials.

The study found that 20 per cent of the respondents were smokers, but 55 per cent of them were exposed to second-hand smoke.

And 40 per cent of them were exposed to smoke in common spaces like washing area, stairs, balcony, parking and doorways.

One fourth of the respondents

were exposed to second-hand smoke at own flats, one fifth were exposed to smoke from next flats, and one tenth from next buildings.

Those who stayed at home for 18 to 22 hours per day had higher chance of second-hand smoke exposure from next flats and next buildings, compared to those who stayed at home 8 to 12 hours per day.

About 86 per cent respondents believed that second-hand smoke exposure causes serious health problems.

Almost all of the respondents—99 per cent—were in favor of smoke-free housing complexes.

Unwillingness of smoker flat-owners, fear of losing tenants and lack of proper monitoring were found to be barriers to making housing complexes smoke-free.

Presenting the findings, lead researcher Golam Kibria said that the multi-unit housing residents suffered high level of exposure to second-hand smoke in common spaces, at own flats, and from next flats.

Housing complexes should be treated as public place and a policy guideline needs to be adopted to make them smoke-free, he said.

Two other studies which were also revealed at the presentation programme at a city hotel found that tobacco companies take different strategies to promote tobacco, targeting especially youths.

The companies launch one-to-one or group campaigns, and organise corporate events, seminars, career counselling and sports events.

The companies also distribute t-shirts, lighters, caps, wristbands and free cigarettes among students during such events.

The survey found promotional activities and elements like brand materials, price list, promotional flyers and signboards, tobacco accessories and flavored tobacco advertisements at 99 per cent of tobacco selling points.

Speaking as the chief guest, Directorate General of Health Services director general Abul Kalam Azad said, 'The governments aims to make the country smoke-free by 2040.'

He said that the outcomes of the tobacco control programmes were not satisfactory despite gradual decline in the use of tobacco.