

FCTC ratification may backfire, academic warns

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Muhammadiyah deputy chairman Sudibyo Markus (from right to left), executive director of Human Rights Working Group Rafendi Djamin, program manager of Indonesia Institute for Social Development Deni Wahyudi Kurniawan, Civil National Coalition on the Tobacco Control chairman Ihdhal Kasim, and Raya Indonesia director Hery Chariansyah on Dec. 29, 2015 in Jakarta express their concerns over the government being "trapped" by the cigarette industry. (JP/Callistasia Anggun Wijaya)

The country must pay extra attention to the implementation aspects of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) before ratifying it, otherwise it will backfire on the labor-intensive industry, an international law expert has warned.

Created in 2005 to control the supply of tobacco products, the FCTC has been ratified by 180 countries. Among big cigarette-manufacturing countries such as India, China, and Brazil, only Indonesia and the US have not ratified the UN-sponsored treaty.

"Indonesia is both a producer and consumer [of cigarettes]. On one side we need to reduce the number of first-time smokers, but on the other side we still rely on the excise revenue [from the industry]," University of Indonesia international law professor Hikmahanto Juwana told *The Jakarta Post* in Jakarta on Tuesday.

A fall in the supply of cigarettes as imposed by the ratification amid a high number of smokers, he continued, would only create a black market for illegal cigarettes, either locally produced or imported.

"If that happens, a high price for cigarettes will be useless to boost the state's revenue from the excise tax," Hikmahanto said.

According to a recent release by producer Hanjaya Mandala Sampoerna, the country's illegal cigarette trade reached 11.7 percent of the total trade last year and led to Rp 9 trillion (US\$680 million) in potential state losses. (ags)

Source: <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2016/08/24/fctc-ratification-may-backfire-academic-warns.html>