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Cigarettes to Lose Essential Commodity Status

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Summary of the Report:

Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury MP, the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Environment, Forestry and Climate Change, has recently proposed 'The Control of Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2021' demanding to remove cigarettes from the list of essential commodities in order to reduce the risks of health hazards of the public as well as risk of COVID-19 infections.

The proposed amendment bill was sent to the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs which and later forwarded to the Ministry of Commerce for consultation with concerned stakeholders. The Ministry of Commerce held a meeting on the issue on 2 November and formed a sub-committee there.

However, claiming anonymity, numerous officials of the Ministry of Commerce have informed the reporter that tobacco companies have already started lobbying with high officials of the Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Law, and other concerned government offices. To thwart the amendment process, these lobbyists are also promising incentives and long-term benefits to these officials and their family members, raising doubt about whether these attempt to amend the law will be successful.

The original report published in Bengali: <https://www.bd-pratidin.com/city/2021/11/10/710215>