

Tobacco 2nd major cause of death worldwide: report

ISLAMABAD: Tobacco is the second major cause of death world-wide and death toll is rising rapidly especially in the low and middle-income countries where most of the world's 1.2 billion tobacco users are living.

Almost 1.3 billion people currently smoke world-wide, the majority of whom live in the developing countries. Tobacco kills one in two long-term users with 4.9 million such deaths occurring each year, said a report of The Network for Consumer Protection.

It said the developing countries already account for half of all deaths attributed to tobacco. The proportion will rise to 7 out of 10 by 2025 because smoking prevalence has been increasing in many low and middle-income countries and as it continues, it will cause some 10 million deaths each year by 2020. Half of the people who smoke today, i.e. about 650 million people will eventually be killed by tobacco.

Tobacco also accounts for a large portion of the disease burden in developing countries and is currently the fourth most common risk factor for disease world-wide. Tobacco is the cause of at least 85 percent cases of lung cancer of mouth, throat, kidney, bladder and stroke

besides chronic bronchitis and emphysema.

Passive smoking is dangerous for unborn babies, children and adults. Smoking threatens the future health of children, it added.

The report revealed that globally, nearly 25 percent of all students smoke and lit their first cigarette before the age of 10. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that almost half of all the children world-wide live with smokers and are regularly subjected to second hand smoking in the home environment.

In a number of developing countries, household expenditure survey shows that low-income households spend 5 to 15 percent of their dispensable income on tobacco. Many poor households spend more on tobacco than on healthcare or education, it added.

In Pakistan, the government has withdrawn the Statutory Rules and Orders (SRO) on designated smoking areas, imposing a complete ban on smoking at all public places to protect non-smokers from the hazards of passive smoking. After the withdrawal of the SRO, smokers would not be allowed to use tobacco in any form at any public or workplace.—APP

