

## ABOUT US

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# TOM TOM ENGLISH

私に手を振る人がいた。

煙を払う仕草だった。

A person was waving at me.

He was waving away my smoke.



## Smoking Ban?

### VOCABULARY

**rift =**

A serious break in friendly relations; a crack, split or break in something

**blanket ban =**

A total and complete ban, that covers the target like a blanket

**dividend =**

A sum of money paid regularly by a company to its shareholders

### Read the article overleaf and discuss these questions:

1. Do you smoke? If so, how many per day? If not, have you ever been a smoker? Was it easy to quit?
2. What do you think of the latest proposal to ban smoking in indoor public places bigger than 30 metres? Do you agree with it? Disagree with it? Why?
3. Do you agree that Japanese people really are considerate of others"? How about smokers in Japan? Are they considerate of others? Why? Why not?
4. Smokers: Do you think you are a considerate smoker? Why? Why not?
5. Non-smokers: Do you think smokers should have a right to smoke in public?
6. Why do you think Japan is so far behind the rest of the world on this issue? Do you agree with Mr. Hasegawa?

### VOCABULARY

**eatery =**

Restaurant, cafe, or other place where food is served

**lax =**

Not strict enough, not severe enough, or not careful enough

**rung =**

A step on a ladder

**segregated =**

set apart, isolated, divided; kept apart

Tokyo risks being one of the unhealthiest Olympic Games hosts in years, as an anti-smoking law exposes deep **rifts** over tobacco tax revenue, personal freedom and the dangers of passive smoking, which kills thousands of Japanese each year. There is pressure on the Japanese capital ahead of the 2020 Summer Games, including from the IOC, to follow Rio in banning smoking in all public places to create a healthy sporting environment. But an initial proposal for a **blanket ban** on smoking indoors across Japan was opposed by pro-smoking politicians, restaurateurs and Japan Tobacco, which is 33% state-owned and paid the state \$700 million in **dividends** in 2015. The health ministry scaled back its plan, to allow smoking indoors in spaces around 30 square metres as long as adequate ventilation is installed.

Opponents say this will still hurt Japan's many **eateries**, restrict individual freedom, and dent tobacco tax revenues - which topped 2 trillion yen in 2014-15. Natsuko Takami, who runs a pub smaller than 30m, fears losing money as she can't afford new ventilation, and could be fined 500,000 yen if a customer lit up. The smoker could be fined 300,000 yen. "I think people would stop coming. Being able to smoke and drink helps reserved Japanese open up" The ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) health committee won't meet ministry officials, saying the revised bill is too strict. The committee chair, Naomi Tokashiki, acknowledges there should be a law that protects against second-hand smoke, but says Japan's cultural emphasis on good manners and sensitivity to others should suffice: "I believe Japanese people really are considerate of others. It's more important for us to trust people than enact a really repressive law."

Not so, say health authorities, pointing to 15,000 deaths a year from second-hand smoke, mostly women and children. "It's not a question of manners, we're looking at the impact on health. We've allowed people independence, but the situation hasn't changed. Something more is needed" said a ministry official who declined to be named.

Fifty years ago, around half of Japanese smoked. That's now dropped to 18%, and smoking areas have been dramatically restricted, but smoking laws vary from city to city and from ward to ward. Penalties are low and enforcement **lax**. A 2003 law "encourages" restaurants and other public areas to separate smoking and non-smoking areas, but there is no penalty for non-compliance. Smoking is still possible on the grounds of schools and hospitals, though not inside, and there is a cigarette vending machine in a health ministry annex.

Japan ranks bottom globally in anti-smoking regulations according to the World Health Organization. The revised proposal would raise Japan to the second-lowest of four **rungs**. The WHO has teamed up with the IOC to guarantee smoke-free Games venues, though IOC Vice President John Coates has said the body can't force a ban beyond the venues and the Olympic Village. Brazil passed a **blanket** indoor smoking **ban** before the Rio Olympics, and bans were in place for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Sochi had only a limited city ban for the 2014 Winter Games, but an extensive national ban was introduced soon after. Beijing had a limited, temporary ban in 2008, but enforcement was patchy. It passed a tougher ban in 2015, when it hosted the athletics World Championships.

The issue could affect Japan's image as it looks to attract more tourists. Many travelers from developed countries are used to smoking being banned indoors. "A recent newspaper described Japan as a 'paradise for smokers,' and I'm sure it wouldn't want that title," said Douglas Bettcher of the WHO. "It's not a good impression to give... as Japan is preparing and investing so much for the 2020 Summer Olympics."

Many politicians have proposed a temporary smoking ban for the Olympics, says Toshiharu Furukawa, an LDP lawmaker and a doctor who supports an indoor ban. "It's true that tobacco is a very important tax resource", he said. Some of those lawmakers "are smokers, but some are backed by farming groups that produce tobacco, or by tobacco companies."

Japan Tobacco spokesman Masahito Shirasu says the company shares concerns about passive smoking, but the health ministry's proposal is too strict. The National Food and Drink Association favours having establishments display stickers showing if they are non-smoking, **segregated**, or allow smoking - letting customers decide. "Only 18 percent of people may smoke, but the percentage of smoking customers in smaller restaurants is much higher - nearly half, and we must take care of them" said Tetsuro Kojo, head of the association.

Public opinion varies. A poll by Asahi Shimbun found that 64% supported the revised proposal, while Sankei Shimbun found only 37% in favour. Kazuo Hasegawa, a 46-year-old non-smoker diagnosed with lung cancer in 2010, believes pressure related to the Olympics is essential for achieving a ban. "The tobacco issue is something that can't really be solved in a Japanese manner. Without outside pressure, Japan won't move on this."