

Smog lifts over Chinese cigarette factory

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A Chinese-owned cigarette factory with an expected annual output of two hundred million cigarettes per annum targeting markets in South East Asia, the Middle East and Latin America has been assembled and is ready to start production in the Walvis Bay's Export Processing Zone (EPZ).

A Chinese businessman by the name of Ng Yang is reported to be the owner of this factory. The factory raised concerns among local residents, given the fact that Namibia is a signatory to the World Health Organisation's Framework on Tobacco Control in 2005. Namibia also passed, although not yet implemented, an array of strict anti-smoking regulations to protect the public from second hand smoke, one of the major causes of cancer.

Others raised eyebrows over the secretive way in which the factory was assembled over several months. Informanté established that the Walvis Bay EPZ Management Company itself only has limited information regarding the project. Apparently the whole application and process to establish the factory was dealt with solely by the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Informanté ascertained this week Yang's factory is registered in a close corporation by the name of Namibia Oriental Tobacco cc. EPZ-certificate number 137 was issued to him by the Ministry of Trade and Industry on 23 February 2012.

On this certificate, the Ministry of Trade and Industry laid down strict conditions for the operations of the factory, including maintaining fencing, walls, enclosures, a verification system, and access for the customs authorities to ensure that all raw materials imported and all products manufactured are not destined for any country within the Southern African Customs Union. The factory also employs some 17 Namibian workers and is situated in the Ugab building in Walvis Bay's light industrial area.

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- 📅 March 2015 (40)
- 📅 February 2015 (144)
- 📅 January 2015 (101)
- 📅 December 2014 (96)
- 📅 November 2014 (131)
- 📅 October 2014 (192)

📅 September 2014 (149)

📅 August 2014 (163)

📅 July 2014 (238)

📅 June 2014 (183)

Yearly archive

📅 2015 (285)

📅 2014 (2110)

📅 2013 (1926)

📅 2012 (2012)

📅 2011 (1604)

📅 2010 (2002)

📅 2009 (2300)

📅 2008 (945)

📅 2007 (232)

📅 2006 (39)

📅 1999 (2)

📅 1970 (5)