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ASIA EDITION

Thailand becomes first in Asia to introduce tobacco plain packaging

December 19, 2018 | News

The new legislative announcement on plain packaging is the latest effort of Thai government and adds to the Tobacco Control Act 2017 which enforces 20 years as the minimum age for purchasing tobacco, bans single stick sale and bans tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship



As per Thailand's new legislation, by September 2019 all tobacco products will have plain packaging. Thailand already has graphic health warnings covering 85% packaging of tobacco products. Introduction of plain packaging is expected to further boost the country's tobacco control efforts targeting the current and new users.

World Health Organization commended stronger tobacco control measures being adopted by Thailand which has become the first in Asia and the first low and middle-income country to adopt plain packaging for tobacco products.

Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh, Regional Director World Health Organization South-East Asia said, "Thailand's bold steps against tobacco – the single most important cause of preventable deaths worldwide – is commendable and reflects the country's earnest efforts in promoting health and well-being of its people."

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Plain packaging of tobacco products restricts or prohibits the use of logos, colors, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard color and font style. Plain packaging is an evidence-based policy being advocated by WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), a legal treaty that aims to protect present and future generation against the devastating health and socio-economic impact of tobacco use.

Globally, tobacco kills more than seven million people every year - up to half of its users. Tobacco use is a key risk factor for major noncommunicable diseases such as heart attack, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes. Noncommunicable diseases account for over 70% of all deaths in Thailand.

Member countries in the Region are in the forefront in the fight against tobacco with four of them listed among the top five countries globally with largest graphic warning on tobacco product packs.