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Japan says NO to smoking, first dip since 1965

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Singapore:Ã?Â A survey conducted by Japan Tobacco has revealed that smoking rates in the country have fallen by 20 percent for the first time, since 1965.

Growing health consciousness and hefty taxation on tobacco products would have resulted in the decline, said experts. The survey was conducted in May, a month after Tokyo raised sales taxes for the first time in 17 years, pushing up the price of cigarettes, alcohol and other consumer goods.

The survey covered 32,000 people aged 20 and above. The smoking rates for men fell by 30.3 percent. For women, the rate dropped by 9.8 percent, for the first time. The estimated number of smokers stood at 20.59 million, down by 1.36 million.

According to Japan Tobacco, the smoking rate peaked at 49.4 percent in 1966, when the rate stood at 83.7 percent for men and 18.0 percent for women, the highest figures on record.

The overall figures put Japan at par with the United States, where the Centers for Disease Control estimated that some 18.1 percent of the adult population smoked. Japan Tobacco said that public campaigns and ageing society of Japan too would have contributed in lowering the smoking rates.