



# Boost to plain packaging

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## **Boost to plain packaging-More countries are adopting the tough measure in order to curb tobacco consumption**

- This year 2019, Thailand and Saudi Arabia will join a growing club of nations introducing plain packaging of tobacco products.
- They are the first in the Asian and Arab regions, respectively, to adopt the tough measure in order to curb tobacco consumption — from September in Thailand, and May 1 in Saudi Arabia's case
- In December 2012, Australia became the first country to introduce plain packaging following the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) guidelines.
- It has also been implemented in France and the United Kingdom (both 2016), Norway and Ireland (both 2017) and New Zealand and Hungary (both 2018).
- It will be implemented in Uruguay (2019) and Slovenia (2020). The move is under process or being considered in 14 more countries.
- Plain packaging standardises the appearance of tobacco products. Other than brand and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style, it prohibits the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information.
- Besides increasing the effectiveness of health warnings, the idea is to reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products, with no scope for using packaging to advertise and promote consumption.
- With the legal hurdle to tobacco control being cleared, one is optimistic that countries, including India, which were undecided, can take steps to introduce similar legislation.
- In India, tobacco is the cause of about one million deaths annually.
- In April 2016, India increased the size of graphic pictorial warnings, by 85%, on the packaging of tobacco products (both front and back).
- The percentage of users in India who thought of quitting because of such warning labels increased sharply to 62% (cigarette), 54% (bidi) and 46% (smokeless tobacco users), according to the Global Adult Tobacco

Survey 2016-2017, when compared with the survey results of 2009-2010.

- Likewise, tobacco use among those aged 15-24 years showed a six-percentage point reduction (18.4% in 2009-10 to 12.4% in 2016-17).
- The number of tobacco users dropped by eight million. Along with higher taxes and large pictorial warnings, plain packaging can serve as a tool to deter new users and prompt existing users to quit.

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