



Prohibition on the Sale of Single Cigarettes

Prelims: Cancer, Tobacco, Single Stick Cigarettes, Gutka, Health, WHO.

Mains: Prohibition on the Sale of Single Cigarettes and its Implications.

Why in News?

Recently, the [Parliamentary Standing Committee](#) on Health and Family Welfare has recommended a ban on the sale of single sticks of cigarettes, in its report about Cancer **Management, Prevention and Diagnosis**.

What is the Need for Imposing a Ban?

- **Cancerous:**
 - Oral [cancer](#) accounts for the highest proportion of cancer cases in the country.
 - Tobacco consumption accounts for **nearly 50% of all cancers, collectively referred to as tobacco-related cancers.**
- **Singles Stick are more Alluring:**
 - Single sticks are more economical to **acquire than a full pack of cigarettes.**
 - A ban on single-stick sales will compel **a potential consumer to buy the entire pack which may not be particularly economical, thus curbing potential experimentation** and the scope for regular intake.
 - Moreover, a potential ban will also mean that the **consumer would have to carry around the packet.**
- **Some Reports concern over Usage:**
 - The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) has observed that all forms of tobacco are harmful, and there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco.
 - It also states that **smoking cigarettes is the most common way of tobacco use worldwide.**
 - The medical journal, [Lancet](#) noted in June 2020, that by 2030, 7 million of annual deaths from smoking are expected **to be from low and middle-income countries.**
- **Highly Addictive:**
 - Nicotine in tobacco products is highly addictive, and without cessation support only 4% of users who attempt to quit tobacco consumption will succeed, according to the WHO.

What are the Key Recommendations?

- **Containing the Sale of Tobacco:**
 - National Health Policy (2017) endeavors a **relative reduction in current tobacco use by 30% in 2025**, making it imperative that the **government take effective measures to contain the sale of tobacco products.**
 - To this effect, it recommends that the government prohibit the sale of single sticks of cigarettes and lay stringent penalties and fines on offenders.
- **Abolishment of Smoking Areas:**

- The government should abolish all **designated smoking areas in airports, hotels and restaurants** in addition to encouraging a smoke-free policy in organizations.
- **Revive Tax Increases:**
 - India has the lowest prices for tobacco products and thus making them more accessible and it must be looked at to increase **taxes on them**.
 - The revenue acquired from additional taxation can be **used for cancer prevention and awareness**.
- **Prohibition on Gutka:**
 - Sought a ban on gutka and pan masala alongside a **prohibition on their direct and indirect advertisement**.
 - This is based on the observation that, in India, **more than 80% of tobacco consumption is in the form of chewing tobacco** with or without areca nut, aggressively marketed as a mouth freshener.

How Efficacious Can a Ban Be?

- **Not Feasible Pan India Ban:**
 - It is not practical to enforce a pan-India ban on the sale of loose cigarettes. It's not feasible at all **because of the scale of such small shops and stalls that sell cigarettes and tobacco products**.
- **May Create Routes for Illegal Cigarettes:**
 - Only 8 % of the total tobacco is consumed as legal cigarettes. The remaining is consumed through **29 tax evasion-prone products such as bidis, chewing tobacco, khaini and illegal cigarettes**.
 - According to Euromonitor International, the volume of illegal cigarettes in India was **estimated to be at 26.8 billion sticks in 2021**. In fact, India is the **4th largest illicit cigarette market** in the world.
 - Banning things **only leads to taking the illegal route to acquiring them**. And some of the cigarettes in the illegal market may be of even inferior quality thereby **causing more damage to the well-being of an individual**.
- **Absence of vendor Licensing Regime:**
 - Nonetheless, the proposed move will reduce consumption and sales, but the ban will not be very effective if the vendor licensing regime is not instituted.
 - The government must also **consider instituting vendor licensing**.
 - Because cigarettes would not be available everywhere, **the potential for recurrence of the consumption would be reduced**.

What are the Tobacco Control Measures in India?

- **International Convention:**
 - Governments adopt and implement the tobacco control provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).
 - It is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO.
 - It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005.
- **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:**
 - Replaced the Cigarettes Act of 1975 (largely limited to statutory warnings- 'Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health' to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It did not include non-cigarettes).
 - The 2003 Act also included cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.
- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), 2008:**
 - Objective: To control tobacco consumption and minimize tobacco consumption related deaths
 - Activities: Training and capacity building; information, education, and communication (IEC) activities; tobacco control laws; reporting survey and surveillance and tobacco cessation
- **Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2020:**
 - It was mandated that the specified health warning shall cover at least 85% of the principal

display area of the package.

- Of this, 60% shall cover pictorial health warning and 25% shall cover textual health warning.

▪ **mCessation Programme:**

- It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation.
- India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government's [Digital India initiative](#).
 - It uses two-way messaging between the individual seeking to quit tobacco use and programme specialists providing them dynamic support.

▪ **Prevention and Control of Pollution Act of 1981-** Recognized smoking as an air pollutant.

▪ **Cable Television Networks Amendment Act of 2000-** Prohibited the transmission of advertisements on tobacco and liquor in India.

▪ **The Government of India has issued regulations under the [Food Safety and Standards Act 2006](#)** which lay down that tobacco or nicotine cannot be used as ingredients in food products.

▪ 31st May is observed as '[World No Tobacco Day](#)' every year to spread awareness about the deadly effects of tobacco consumption.

Way Forward

- There is a need for comprehensive tobacco control policy, accessible and affordable **cessation services strengthening the implementation of COTPA**, alternative opportunities for people engaged in tobacco cultivation, processing and manufacturing.
- The proportion of buying loose cigarettes decreased with increased levels of education and awareness. Enhancing public awareness through campaigns, educational programs in schools, strong and prominent graphic health warnings.

UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Which of the following are the reasons/factors for exposure to benzene pollution? (2020)

1. Automobile exhaust
2. Tobacco smoke
3. Wood burning
4. Using varnished wooden furniture
5. Using products made of polyurethane

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only
(b) 2 and 4 only
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Ans: (a)

Exp:

- Benzene (C₆H₆) is a colorless, flammable liquid with a sweet odor. It evaporates quickly when exposed to air. Benzene is formed from natural processes, such as volcanoes and forest fires, but most of the exposure to benzene results from human activities.
- The main sources of benzene pollution in the environment include automobile exhaust, industrial sources, **Tobacco smoke, wood burning and fuel evaporation from gasoline filling stations. Hence, 1, 2 and 3 are correct.**
- Some industries use Benzene to make other chemicals that are used to make plastics, furniture etc., they are not the direct sources of Benzene pollution. **Hence, 4 and 5 are not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Q2. Which one of the following groups of plants was domesticated in the 'New World' and introduced into the 'Old World'? (2019)

- (a) Tobacco, cocoa and rubber
- (b) Tobacco, cotton and rubber
- (c) Cotton, coffee and sugarcane
- (d) Rubber, coffee and wheat

Ans: (a)

- New World refers to the Americas, which was discovered by Christopher Columbus during his voyage attempt to India. Old World continents during 15th century included Asia, Africa and Europe.
- **Tobacco is one of the most important cash crops in American farming** and is native to the North and South American continents. It first became known to the Old World when European explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries saw it being used as a medicine and as a hallucinogen by native Americans.
- Natural rubber trees originated in Southern America and from there it was introduced to the Old World. The cocoa tree is also native to the Amazon Basin, which was introduced to the Old World from New World.
- Cotton and Wheat were found in the Indus Valley Civilization. So both these crops were native of the Old World.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

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