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SL should ban sale of single-stick cigarettes if serious about reducing smoking prevalence: IPS

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- Nearly 107 countries have already taken steps to ban single-stick sales
- Study recommends amending SL's current tobacco legislation to enable banning single-stick sales

Sri Lanka should immediately look at banning sale of single-stick cigarettes if it is serious about reducing the smoking prevalence in the country, a new study by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) revealed.

The study notes that despite Sri Lanka's progress in implementing most of the tobacco control measures, there are some critical demand and supply reduction measures that Sri Lanka has not introduced yet.

Authored by Dilani Hirimuthugodage and Nimesha Dissanayaka, the study titled 'The Case for Banning Single Stick Cigarettes: Options for Effective Implementation' recommends that the most appropriate legislative approach for Sri Lanka is to amend its current tobacco legislation or the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act.

The implementation of the ban would have a significant impact on reducing smoking prevalence as it will likely reduce smoking among minors, lower-income groups, and the 'last mile' of smokers in the country.

Across the world, 107 countries, including those in Asia, have already taken several steps to ban single-stick cigarette sales. The most common policy adopted was to have specific laws or legislation to ban the selling of single-stick cigarettes. The case study analysis suggests that effective implementation and monitoring are important to ensure the success of, and compliance with, any ban on single stick sales.

Accordingly, the study recommends the implementation of three key reforms. The first is to introduce an amendment to the country's current tobacco policy or the NATA Act. The second is to effectively implement existing laws banning all forms of tobacco promotion, advertising, and sponsorship related to cigarettes.

Lastly, while efforts must be taken to ensure retailers are fully aware of the ban and high penalties must be considered to deter non-compliance, Public Health Inspectors (PHIs) should be empowered to monitor the ban to reduce the risk of a black market emerging.

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