

PUBLIC HEALTH

Plain packs 'may deter smokers'

POST REPORTERS

The government should consider imposing plain packaging on tobacco products to discourage smoking and stop enticing new smokers, said Prakrit Vathesatogkit, executive secretary of the Action on Smoking and Health Foundation Thailand.

Dr Prakrit said the 2017 Tobacco Control Act has paved the way for such a decree to be enacted. Section 38 states that the display of the exterior label on packets of cigarettes must satisfy the criteria set out by the relevant minister.

He indicated that if left to the minister's discretion, the criteria could be amended to make plain packaging mandatory.

The government could easily emulate Australia, which has already introduced such a policy, he added.

Dr Prakrit said it would not be difficult or time-consuming changing the law.

There are clear examples, evidence and plenty of information available in Australia and other countries, which confirm that plain packaging is an effective way of reducing smokers, he said.

Yesterday, the foundation co-organised a session attended by experts including Jonathan Liberman, director of the McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer in Melbourne.

Mr Liberman said the plain packaging design, which went into effect in Australia in 2012, had a direct impact on advertisements.

Research has found that the labelling and visible features on tobacco packaging can influence young people to take up smoking, the centre director said.

Passing a law to regulate the labelling or packaging of cigarette packs would just be a first step, however, with other proposed measures including an ad ban and tax hike on tobacco products.

Mr Liberman said over 10 countries are drafting a law for plain packaging on tobacco products.