

# Ban on Spitting and SLT use in Public Places



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Smokeless tobacco (SLT) products present a complex and widespread challenge to public health from prevalence, pattern and exposure, particularly in form of SLT use induced spitting in public places (most of the SLT products induce spitting). Globally, experts are divided in their opinion about the adverse health consequences of exposure to public spitting. There is historical precedence of countries imposing ban on public spitting to curb the epidemic of tuberculosis. Public notice with this effect was a common sight in US, France and England in the late 19th century and early 20th century. With the end of tuberculosis and rise in smoking, slowly, these public notices were replaced with the warning against smoking in public places.

However, several countries, provinces and cities continue to prohibit spitting in public places. Such prohibition on spitting in public places has been imposed with different intentions in different part of the world. The reasons mainly included are: for controlling communicable diseases, maintaining public cleanliness and hygiene as well as a preventive measure to reduce SLT use.

## Ban on spitting in developed countries

**United Kingdom:** In UK and several other countries, spitting in public places has been banned with the intention of controlling communicable diseases. In 1990, with the control of tuberculosis this policy has been withdrawn. However, the London Borough of Brent, in 2010, classified spitting paan/khilli paan juice as criminal damage, which is liable to a fixed penalty enforcement to maintain clean pavements.

The council officers were empowered to slap spitters with fines ranging from AUD 110 to 1100.

**Singapore:** Spitting is prohibited in coffee shops and markets, public roads, sideways and any other place that's open to the public. Any violation of the law attracts a fine of up to SGD 1,000.

## Ban on spitting in developing countries

**Nepal:** Nepal is the only country, which has banned use of any kind of tobacco products in public places. However, its compliance and impact has not been evaluated.

**Bhutan:** As part of the national cleaning campaign, a new amended rule prohibits smearing lime and spitting doma in public area. Non-compliance with the regulation attracts a penalty of Nu 100.

**China:** Hangzhou, a province in China and the host city of the year 2016, G20 summit has passed law to ban spitting and littering in public places.

**Myanmar:** There is a ban on spitting red betel juice in the streets and public places, mainly for sanitary reasons. Several establishments, to which the general public including pregnant women and young children have access to, have markedly begun posting "Kun Ta-twe Ma Htwe Ya" (spitting of saliva from chewing Kun is prohibited) stickers, together with the "no smoking" signs.

**Papua New Guinea:** Since 2013, chewing betel nut and spitting betel nut juices has been banned from the streets of Papua New Guinea amidst concerns that spitting it out is spreading tuberculosis. There is a hefty fine of up to PGK 120 for violation of the chewing and spitting ban. However, enforcement of the provision remains a challenge for the authorities.



## India

Indian Railways has banned spitting in railway properties. However the implementation remains a challenge.

Metro Rail Corporations across India have also prohibited spitting in metro properties which has worked well with greater enforcement and public compliance.

### Spitting ban under provincial legislation

- This was replicated in subsequent state level tobacco control legislation. The Goa Prohibition of Smoking and Spitting Act, 1997, The Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Smoking and Spitting Act, 2002, The West Bengal Prohibition of Smoking and Spitting and Protection of Health of Non-smokers and Minors Act, 2001, are some of the examples where spitting is banned as part of the tobacco control policies.
- The West Bengal Prevention of Spitting in Public Place Act, 2003 banned spitting in public places. Section 7 of the Act provides for a fine up to INR 200.
- Public spitting was banned in Kerala through an order in 2006, based on a High Court directive, since it posed a health threat.
- The Andhra Pradesh Prevention of Disfigurement of Open Places and Prohibition of Obscene and Objectionable and Advertisements Act, 1997 prohibits spitting.
- Recently Uttar Pradesh Government has also banned spitting in government buildings.

### Spitting ban under local (municipal) government legislation

- The Karnataka Municipal Corporations (Amendment) Act, 2013 prevents spitting in public and empowers the corporations to fine offenders INR 100 the first time and INR 200 subsequently.
- The Bombay Police Act of 1951, Section 116, prohibiting smoking and spitting in government premises in Maharashtra.
- In Telangana, the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation can pull up violators under sanitation byelaws and fine them INR 500 upwards.
- The Bihar Municipal Act 2007 makes it an offence, along with urinating or throwing garbage with a penalty of INR 200. Enforcement of the law is weak.
- A study conducted among patients attending a private dental institution in Jodhpur, India revealed that the most frequent cited reason for quitting tobacco usage was spitting and ash dropping which was embarrassing in front of others. This study provides evidence to study the effect of prohibition on public spitting and its effect on cessation of SLT use.

Public spitting due to chewing tobacco and paan (betel quid) among others is one of the grievous issues while managing public hygiene. It is considered as a leading cause behind the spread of communicable diseases like tuberculosis, swine flu, avian flu, pneumonia and gastro-intestinal diseases. Chewing tobacco increases the frequency of public spitting. People using these products not only endanger their life by using tobacco products, but also of the people around them.