



Maldives bans smoking for younger generations

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The Maldives has banned young people born on or after 1 January 2007 from smoking tobacco, becoming the only country in the world to enforce a nationwide generational tobacco prohibition.

The archipelago's health ministry announced on Saturday that it would be illegal for younger generations to use, buy or sell tobacco within the country.

The ban "reflects the government's strong commitment to protecting young people from the harms of tobacco", the ministry said.

Ahmed Afaal, vice chair of the archipelago's tobacco control board, told BBC World Service's Newshour programme that the country's general vaping ban last year had been a "good step towards a generation of tobacco-free citizens".

The new ban "applies to all forms of tobacco, and retailers are required to verify age prior to sale", the health ministry said, adding that it aligned with the Maldives' obligations under the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

According to the UN's health body, this convention "provides a global response to a global problem – namely, the tobacco epidemic".

Mr Afaal said the country's crackdown on vaping had been an important first step because "these new stylish gadgets are tactics of the industry to approach the younger generations to uptake addictive processes, which definitely harms their health".

Last year, the Maldives made it illegal for anyone to import, sell, possess, use or distribute electronic cigarettes and vaping products, regardless of age.

Tourists coming to visit the Maldives' islands will also have to adhere to the law, but Mr Afaal argues the smoking ban will not have a detrimental impact on tourism.

"People don't come to the Maldives because they're able to smoke. They come for the beaches, they come for the sea, they come for the sun, and they come for the fresh air," he added.

Quoting tourism data, Mr Afaal argued that despite the new regulations there had been no tourist cancellations and the number of arrivals had grown in the past year.

"We're projecting more than 2m [tourists] in the next year," he said.

Plans by New Zealand to pass a generational smoking ban were scrapped in 2023 after a new government took power.

The move was seen as a blow to [many health experts](#) and [Māori people in particular](#), who have one of the highest smoking rates.

Last year, the UK's then-Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, had hoped to introduce a law that would ban young people born on or after 2009 from smoking.

A new version of [the legislation](#), introduced by the current government, has passed through the Commons and is now at the committee stage at the House of Lords - nearing its last hurdles before it gets royal assent.

Source:

www.bbc.com/news/articles/crex3154l8jo