

France decides to tackle cigarette butt pollution

The city of Paris picks up 350 tonnes of cigarette butts every year. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

France will force tobacco companies to help end the scourge of cigarette butts that litter streets and contaminate water, unless they take voluntary action in the next three months, a government minister said on Thursday.

The city of Paris picks up 350 tonnes of cigarette butts every year despite wall-mounted ashtrays and the threat of a 68 euro (\$80) fine for anyone caught throwing one on the street. "If no effective commitments are proposed by September, the government will force the industry to get involved in the collection and elimination of its waste," Junior Environment Minister Brune Poirson said.

The Ministry estimates 30 billion butts are thrown away in France every year, of which more than four in 10 end up on beaches, in forests, rivers and the sea. A single filter can contaminate hundreds of litres of water because of the chemical substances it contains, and can take more than a decade to decompose, he said.

The government has not said what measures it might impose, but one official said a mandatory recycling scheme was an option. "The Ministry will not be brutal on the method, but will be firm on the objectives. Pollution is major, so the commitments cannot be minor," the official said.

British American Tobacco said it would work with the government to educate smokers, and distribute pocket ashtrays. But it rejected new taxes.

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Mandatory segregation and recycling of plastic waste must be implemented before it is eventually phased out

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