

CABINET APPROVES BAN ON E-CIGARETTES

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

The sub-inspector has been designated as the authorised officer to take action under the ordinance. The Central or State governments may also designate any other equivalent officer(s) as authorised officer for enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance.

The Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance, 2019, was recently examined by a Group of Ministers (GoM) following directions from the Prime Minister's Office. In the draft ordinance, the Health Ministry had proposed a maximum imprisonment of up to one year along with a penalty of Rs. 1 lakh against first-time violators.

E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that produce aerosol by heating a solution containing nicotine, which is the addictive substance in combustible cigarettes.

Complete prohibition

The Minister noted that as per data the misuse of e-cigarettes is very high among students. The Union Health Ministry had earlier issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories to ensure that Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), e-cigarettes, heat-not-burn devices, vape, e-sheesha, e-nicotine flavoured hookah, and devices that enable nicotine delivery are not sold (including online sale), manufactured, distributed, traded, imported and advertised in their jurisdictions.

Union Health Secretary Preeti Sudan had also written to the Commerce Secretary to block the entry of a U.S.-based company manufacturing vaping devices like e-cigarettes, into India stating that "if not prevented, [it] could undermine the efforts taken by the government towards tobacco control."

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) too had cautioned against the growing use of e-cigarettes citing studies which noted that use of e-cigarettes could have adverse effects on humans, which include DNA damage, carcinogenic, cellular, molecular and immunological toxicity, respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological disorders, and adverse impact on foetal development and pregnancy.

The Association of Vapers India (AVI), an organisation that represents e-cigarette users across the country, slammed the government's move, terming it 'a black day' for 11 crore smokers in India who had been deprived of safer options.

"The government may be patting its back for banning e-cigarettes but this is a draconian move considering the risk to the health of crores of smokers," said Samrat Chowdhery, AVI director and harm reduction advocate.

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