

To ban or not to ban: Health ministry in a fix over e-cigarettes

Three committees set up by union health ministry have asked the government to ban the device.

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The union health ministry is unable to decide whether to ban e-cigarettes completely or either to regulate its sale and purchase like other cigarettes. Around four months ago, three committees were formed by the senior officials of health ministry which has already passed the directives to ban the e-cigarettes completely.

However, the ministry is yet to decide whether the ban be imposed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, or under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003, or it should be prohibited under The Poison Act, 1919.

An electronic cigarette is a hand-held electronic device that tries to create the feeling of tobacco smoking. An official on the condition of anonymity told Mail Today, "We have submitted our report to the government in the August. Then in September, a high level meeting was called upon and it was decided for the total ban of e-cigarettes." He said it has been four months and the file is pending. "Still, it is yet to decide which 'act' should be considered to ban e-cigarettes."

A senior member of the committee told Mail Today, "Studies from the US indicated that e-cigarettes developed more smoking habits in young and adults. The idea of e-cigarettes failed in there. So, it is not good at all." "Most of the e-cigarettes contain some percentage of nicotine which can cause cardiovascular disease, lung complication, kidney disorder and other health issues. Initially, it was started as a substitute for normal [cigarettes](#) (tobacco cigarettes), but it has developed as a gateway for smoking habits in adults. Also, it is expensive," said Dr Ambuj Roy, cardiologist at AIIMS.

Recently, union health minister JP Nadda informed the Rajya Sabha that few advisories for healthcare are still pending. He said the government has got the report framed by three committees and accordingly it will decide what action should be taken on this.

According to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey report from 2009-10 to 2016-17, shows an increase of one year in the age at initiation of both smoking and smokeless tobacco use from 18.9 years among daily smokers aged 20-34 years. The survey also found 55 per cent of smokers planning or thinking of quitting smoking.

Elaborating about hazardous effects of e-cigarettes, Dr SK Arora, head of the Delhi State Tobacco Control Cell said, "They contain pure nicotine in chemical form which creates high toxicity and users becomes unaware. Gradually, he develops a habit. It can cause cancer, affects brain and other body organs."

Source: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/health-ministry-fix-over-e-cigarettes/1/1117868.html>