Tobacco companies protest plan to stub out e-cigarettes

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Kolkata, 4 August

The tobacco trade has protested at the central government’s reported idea to ban e-cigarettes, following the suggestion of a committee.

Tobacco Institute of India (TII) represents a little over 90 per cent of the legal cigarette trade. An official from TII said a ban on the legal business of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) would not only jeopardise all the investments made by cigarette companies to develop such products but lead to growth of large-scale smuggling of these products.

The official said e-cigarettes, as ENDS is commonly referred to, are gaining much popularity in the global market as an alternative to the traditional product. It has led global tobacco major Philip Morris to double its stock of e-cigarettes in Japan.

“Even then, demand has outstripped the supply there. The US and UK and the European Union are increasingly adopting this product. It is still in a nascent stage in India but has immense potential,” the official told Business Standard.

An e-cigarette is a battery-operated device which burns liquid nicotine, propylene glycol, water, glycerin and flavour, without any smoke.

Global market for e-cigarettes in 2015 was estimated at $10 billion.

By 2030, it would be in excess of $60 billion.

Cigarette manufacturers in India are in the process of introducing the product under different brand names.

Philip Morris claims it has been able to convert 2.9 million smokers from cigarettes to their e-cigarette brand, IQOS. Indian tobacco major ITC has come up with Eon, an e-cigarette producing vapour and thus smoke-free.

Quoting figures from Euromonitor International and World Health Organisation, TII says the global market for e-cigarettes in 2015 was estimated at $10 billion. By 2030, it would be in excess of $60 billion.

Realising the potential, cigarette manufacturers in India are in the process of introducing the product under different brand names.

“Huge investments have been globally made to develop and market such products,” the official told this newspaper.