

Govt may bring in ordinance to ban manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes

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NEW DELHI: The Union cabinet is likely to approve an ordinance prohibiting the manufacture and sale of e-cigarettes at a meeting on Wednesday, said two people aware of the matter.

The health ministry has proposed making the production, manufacturing, import, export, transport, sale, distribution or advertisements of e-cigarettes a cognisable offence, punishable with jail up to one year or fine up to ₹1 lakh or both for the first-time offenders, and jail of up to three years and fine up to ₹5 lakh for repeat offenders. According to a draft ordinance, the storage of e-cigarettes shall also be punishable with imprisonment up to six months or fine up to ₹50,000 or both. *Mint* has seen a copy of the draft ordinance.

E-cigarettes do not burn tobacco, but use a heating element to vaporize liquid nicotine, which the user inhales. These are not licensed in India and are often marketed as products to help smokers quit, and harmless than cigarettes. According to government data, more than 460 e-cigarette brands are available in India, with various configurations of nicotine delivery and in over 7,700 flavours. Once the ordinance is issued, those holding e-cigarette stocks must declare and deposit stocks with the nearest police station.