

## Foreign cigarettes being sold illegally

Sale causes loss to state exchequer as no tax is being paid on the product

**Bhanu P Lohumi | Tribune news Service | Shimla, November 25**

While the Cigarette and other Tobacco Products Act 2003 (COPTA) prohibits advertisement of these products and sale without statutory warning, foreign brands of cigarettes without any bold warning are making inroads in Himachal.



The reports of alleged illegal sale of cigarettes in a clandestine manner in the state are pouring in.

The Act clearly states, “No person shall import cigarettes or any other tobacco products for distribution or sale in India unless every package bears a specified

warning, including a pictorial warning that shall appear on not less than one of the largest panels of the package.”

Further, every package containing cigarettes or any other tobacco products shall be so packed that the specified warning appearing thereon is visible to the consumer before the package is opened. However, foreign cigarettes are being sold without such warning. These are being smuggled in the state. As per an estimate, the sale of these cigarettes is over Rs 2 crore. It adds to the health hazard besides causing loss to state exchequer as no tax is being paid on these. “We are selling these as the profit margin is between 100 and 200 per cent, says a shopkeeper.

The government has already banned the sale loose cigarettes but a strict vigil is required to ensure that the provisions of various laws are not violated. The sale of cigarettes without warning is banned, says Director, Health safety and regulation, NK Lath.

“The sale of cigarettes without warning is violation of Section 7 of COPTA while displaying these calls for action under Section 4,” said official on special duty (Health safety and regulation) Dr Mahesh Jaswal, adding that the police and health inspectors make regular inspections and whenever there is complaint, action is taken.

Still the shopkeepers are selling these cigarettes due to huge profit margins as the fine is mere Rs 200 and there should be a witness as the police have to put challan in a court.

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### **High profit margin**

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**Source:** <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/himachal/foreign-cigarettes-being-sold-illegally/865946.html>