

Proposed changes to anti-smoking law face tobacco industry's wrath

Tobacco industry will object to a proposal to ban smoking zones in hotels and prohibit advertising at cigarette kiosks as the government steps up anti-smoking efforts, two executives said on Wednesday.

India has over the years introduced tobacco controls and launched campaigns to deter its use, but enforcement of the law has been a challenge. The World Health Organization says nearly 1.35 million people die each year in India due to tobacco use.

India released draft changes to its tobacco-control law over the weekend to ban smoking zones in hotels, restaurants and airports.

The proposal also calls for increasing the minimum legal smoking age from 18 to 21. If implemented, the plan is seen hitting sales of firms such as ITC, Godfrey Phillips India and a unit of Philip Morris International which operate in the country's \$12 billion cigarette market, executives said. ITC shares fell 3 per cent while Godfrey dropped 1.5 per cent on Wednesday.

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