

## Zirakpur becomes centre for sale of illegal foreign cigarettes

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MOHALI: With the Mohali health department failing to check the sale of banned imported cigarettes, Zirakpur has become the hub of such cigarettes. The administration has failed to act on guidelines issued under Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA, 2003).

The guidelines make it mandatory for cigarette packs to have a statutory warning, price and proper brand name but illegal packs being sold in markets don't come with the statutory warning or print rate.



Jaswant Singh of the NGO, Care Foundation, which is working to discourage use of cigarettes, said that Zirakpur has been emerging as a hub of illegal imported cigarettes and a crucial route to Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

Jaswant Singh said, "Trade insiders believe that besides Mohali, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Ludhiana and Jalandhar are the main transit points of imported and cheap Indian brands of cigarettes routed from Delhi. Attractive packaging without any statutory warnings draw youths. So far, Mohali administration has failed to check the sale of banned imported cigarettes which is causing major losses to the government taxes."

Two years ago the excise department lay siege in Mohali and found that many shops were selling imported smuggled cigarettes evading tax causing huge loss to the government. But thereafter there were no checks leading to the inflation in selling such banned products.

According to officials, the seized cigarettes are generally smuggled from countries like China, Malaysia, South Korea and Indonesia to evade taxes and sell them in Delhi and other major cities. Whereas cigarettes produced and packed in India have to adhere to specified health warnings, both in pictorial and text formats, to discourage the smokers.

**Source:** <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chandigarh/zirakpur-becomes-centre-for-sale-of-illegal-foreign-cigarettes/articleshow/91435880.cms>