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## Tobacco Sellers' Association Protest Against Centre's Advisory To State Governments

*Tobacco Sellers' Association staged a protest proposing a ban on tobacco and paan shops from selling food items*

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by [BW Online Bureau](#)

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Kolkata, Oct 31 (PTI) A micro-retailers' association staged a protest against the Centre's advisory to state governments, proposing a ban on tobacco and paan shops from selling food items. The association said the suggestion if implemented, would affect the livelihood of around five lakh shopkeepers.

A protest meeting was held in central Kolkata, where shop owners sought Prime Minister Narendra Modi's intervention into the matter. "The arbitrary suggestion to disallow food items in our shops could be life-threatening for many. We request the Prime Minister to look into the matter," secretary of Paschimbango Pan Abong Tamak Bikreta Samity (West Bengal paan and tobacco sellers' association) Moley Biswas said.

The health ministry had last month sent letters to the state governments to suggest a ban on non-tobacco products such as chips, bread, eggs and biscuits in retail shops that sell tobacco. The move, as the ministry said, would prevent children from exposure to tobacco products. Biswas claimed they do not sell tobacco products to minors.

"To avoid a harmful product, you can't adopt a blanket ban on all the other products. It would inconvenience local people," he said. Naba Kumar Dhar, another member of the association, said food items account for at least 50 per cent or more of their everyday sale and the proposal could be fatal to their business. The members of the retailers' body said they will send a memorandum to the Centre and the state government, seeking an immediate withdrawal of the proposal. The retailers might have to take a legal recourse if the governments do not consider their plight, Biswas added.

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