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**THIS STORY IS FROM OCTOBER 23, 2017**

## Merchants demand withdrawal of curbs to sell cigarettes, beedis

TNN / Oct 23, 2017, 23:45 IST



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Thiruvananthapuram: The retail merchants, under the banner of Kerala Vyapari Vyavsayi Ekopana Samiti (KVVES), have demanded the withdrawal of restrictions on selling [cigarettes](#) and [beedis](#) in small shops. A token strike will be organized in front of secretariat at 11am on Thursday, which will be inaugurated by KVVES president T Nazeerudheen. "If the state government fails to initiate necessary steps to meet the demand, we will opt for further agitations, including downing of shutters and a secretariat dharna on November 1," said KVVES state general secretary Raju Apsara.

There are around 10 lakh merchants as members of the organization, and 25% among them are running small shops, he said. Citing the ministry of health and family welfare circular stating that shops selling cigarettes and beedis should be provided with a separate licence and that no products other than [tobacco products](#) should be sold there, Nazeerudheen said such a decision will affect the small-scale roadside vendors in the state "who earn a living by selling other small products such as toffees, cool drinks and toiletries along with tobacco products". The decision, he said, will deny income to around 2 lakh small merchants across the state, while the big corporates and malls will exploit the situation by selling tobacco products from exclusive stalls. "This will wipe out small scale vendors from streets. We have already given memorandums to the chief minister and the chief secretary to apprise the Union government of the new rule's impracticality. But we haven't received any reply yet," he said.

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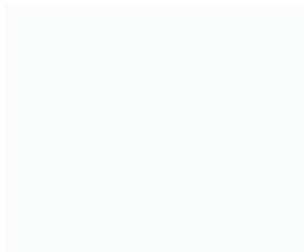
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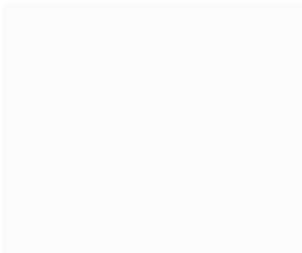
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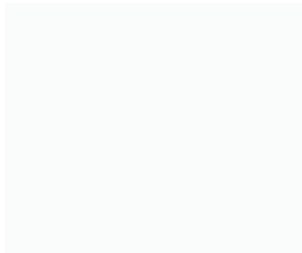
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