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### MP bans making, selling of products containing nicotine, tobacco under FSSR

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Akshay Kalbag, Mumbai

The manufacture and sale of all gutka products containing nicotine and tobacco have been banned in Madhya Pradesh with effect from April 1, 2012, under the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulation 2011.

Rule 2.3.4 of the notification, which came into effect on August 5 last year, states, "No food article shall contain nicotine or tobacco." The government of the central Indian state has become the first to impose such a ban. It also announced that anyone found selling the banned product, in any form, will be awarded a penalty of Rs 25 lakh.

The ban is the state's initiative to combat oral cancer, an epidemic that about 75,000-80,000 people from India fall prey to every year. As a matter of fact, the country has the highest prevalence of this form of the killer disease. Goa, incidentally, was the first state to ban gutka under the Public Health Act.

In a telephonic conversation with FnB News, Devendra Kumar Verma, senior food safety officer, Food and Drug Administration, Madhya Pradesh, confirmed this, stating, "We have deployed teams of food safety officers in every district of the state to ensure that no one violates the law."

"In about nine districts, we have cancelled licences and stopped issuing new ones; sealed the machinery used to manufacture these products, and confiscated pouches of gutka from vendors. On April 1, we successfully confiscated about 4-5 lakh pouches; and on April 2, the number of pouches confiscated increased fivefold," he said.

Owing to the low price of tobacco and nicotine-based gutka products; their taste, and more importantly, their easy availability, children across the country have also become a target group for vendors.

"Our officers will make sure they don't follow their elders' footsteps and become gutka addicts. Awareness campaigns are on; the response to them has been quite good. Our teams will specially focus on the vendors who sell their wares outside schools. No one can set up shops selling addictive products within 100 m of educational institutions," said Verma.

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