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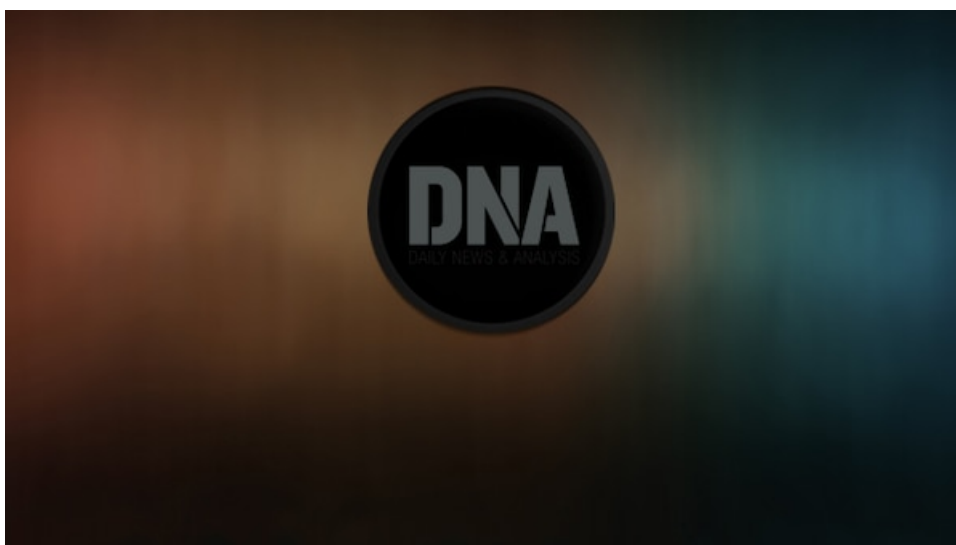
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### **Ahmedabad takes first step to be a gutkha-free city**

The city and the state are gearing up to implement the gutkha ban that comes into effect from today.



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The city and the state are gearing up to implement the gutkha ban that comes into effect from today. Most gutkha vendors across Ahmedabad have managed to sell their stock but not everyone is optimistic that the ban will be effective. In fact, some are looking forward to selling the product in the black market, as this is likely to earn them a higher profit.

Meanwhile, few betel shops have stopped accepting gutkha from distributors for some days now. "I stopped keeping stock from Saturday itself," said Narsinh Gurjar, who owns a pan shop in Satellite, on Monday. "As a result, I don't have a single sachet (of gutkha) with me," he added.

But some paanwalas admit that if demand persists even after the ban, they will continue to sell the gutkha sachets. "I have exhausted my stock (of gutkha) but I know customers will come and demand for it despite the ban. If this happens, I will continue to sell it," said vendor Hanif Khan of Paldi.

Hanif's fellow vendor in Maninagar believes that the ban will not affect his business. "I know of the ban, but I also know that the demands will still be same," said the vendor, who did not wish to be identified. "In fact, the ban will spur black marketing of gutkha, leading to better profits in the coming days," he added. "Gujarat being a dry state doesn't mean that liquor isn't available here. Prohibition has simply made the bottles more expensive. The same will be the case with gutkha."

However, not everyone believes that the gutkha ban will lead to its black marketing. "Unlike liquor, black marketing of gutkha will not be as profitable. Gutkha is dirt-cheap when compared to alcohol resulting into not so impressive margins, if sold in the black market.

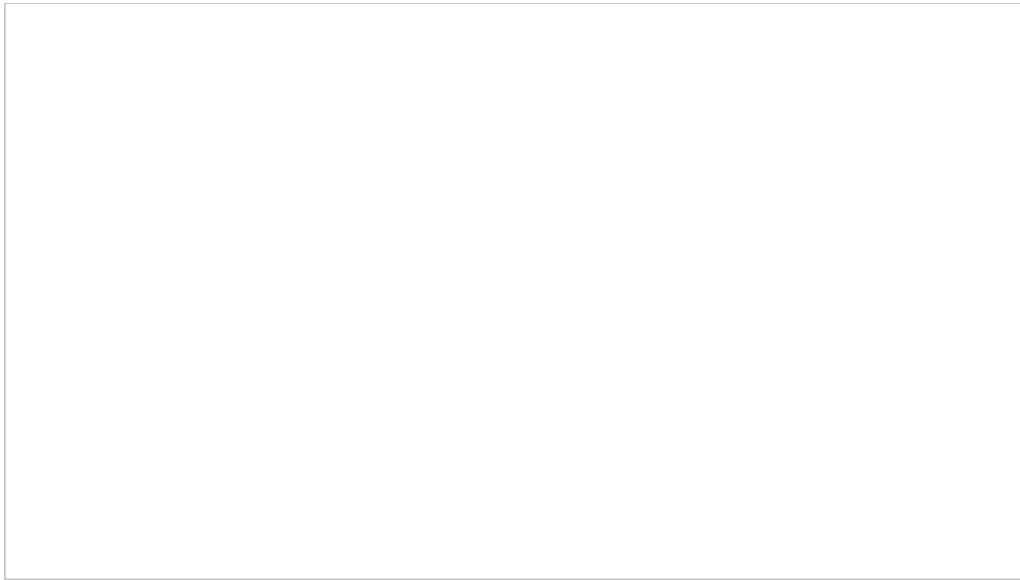
"Moreover, the ban if effectively implemented will halt the supply chain. With no supply, how can there be demand," said Mayur Trivedi, state coordinator of STEPS programme. Implementation of the ban will depend on political will, he added.

The ban, effective from today, was announced by CM Narendra Modi during his Independence Day speech in Junagadh. According to a notification issued by the state government on September 3, the ban is on sale, storage and distribution of gutkha. Any violation of the ban will attract a penalty of upto Rs5 lakh or at least six months imprisonment. There is however no mention about any punishment on consumption of gutkha.

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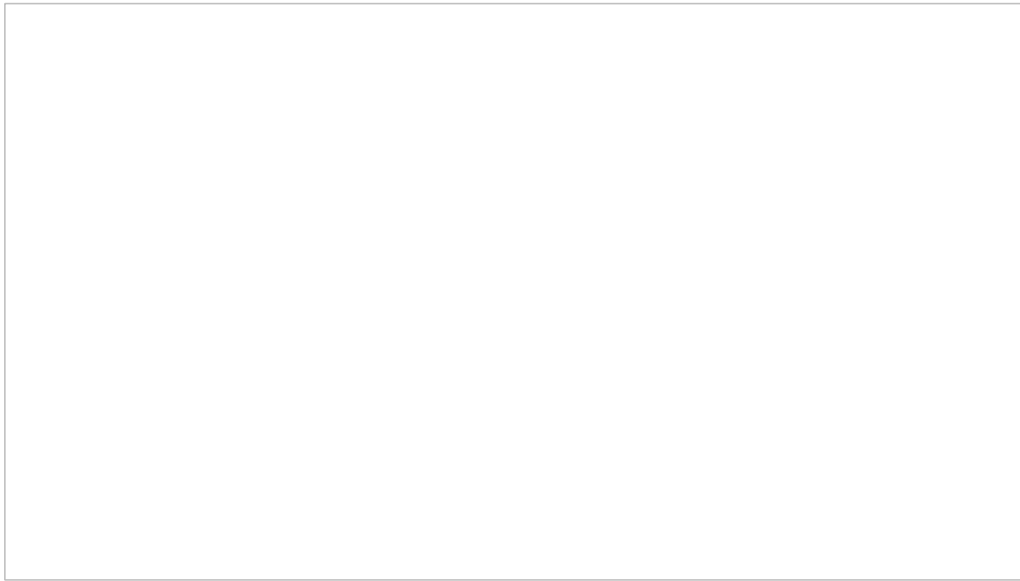
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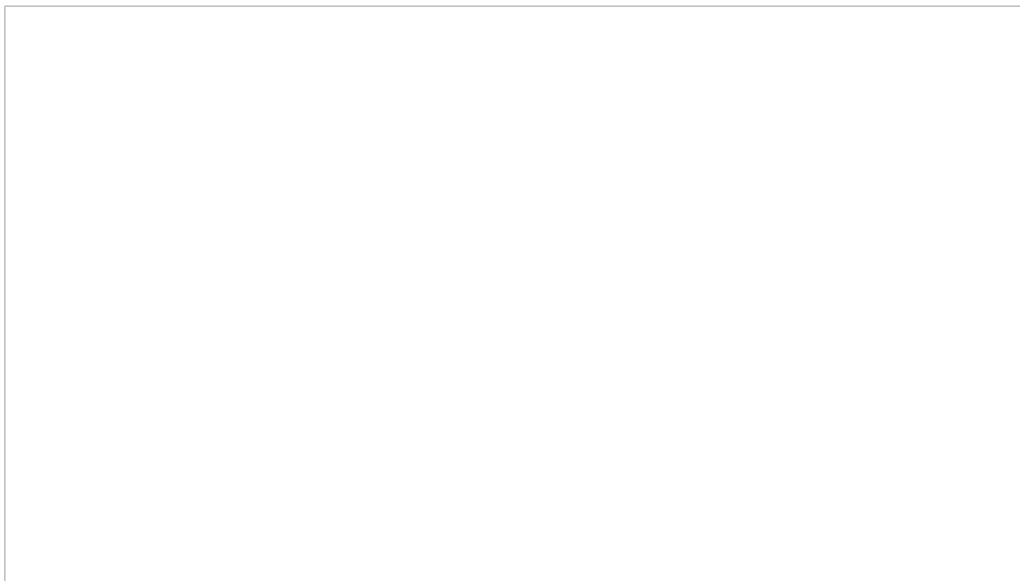
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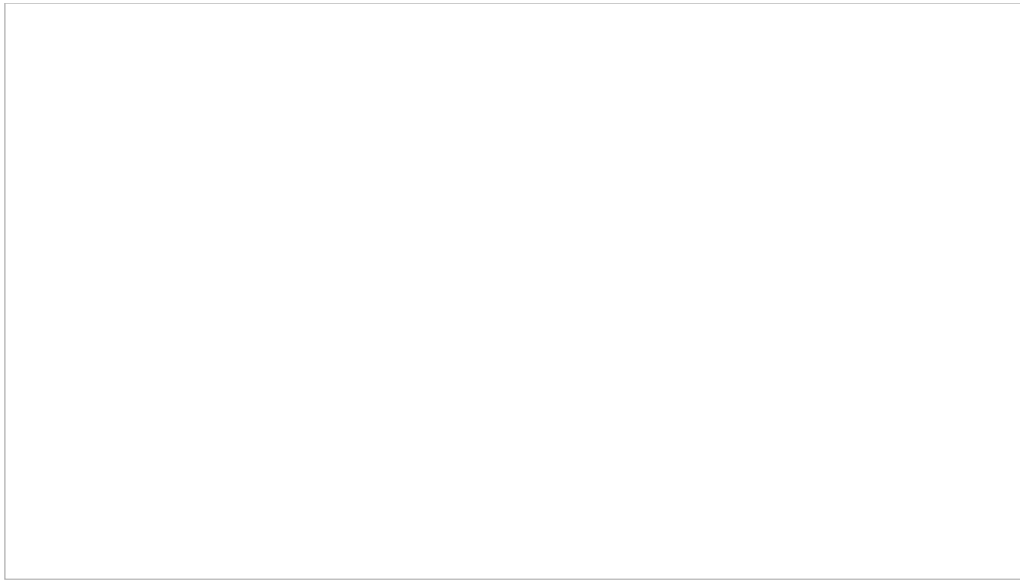
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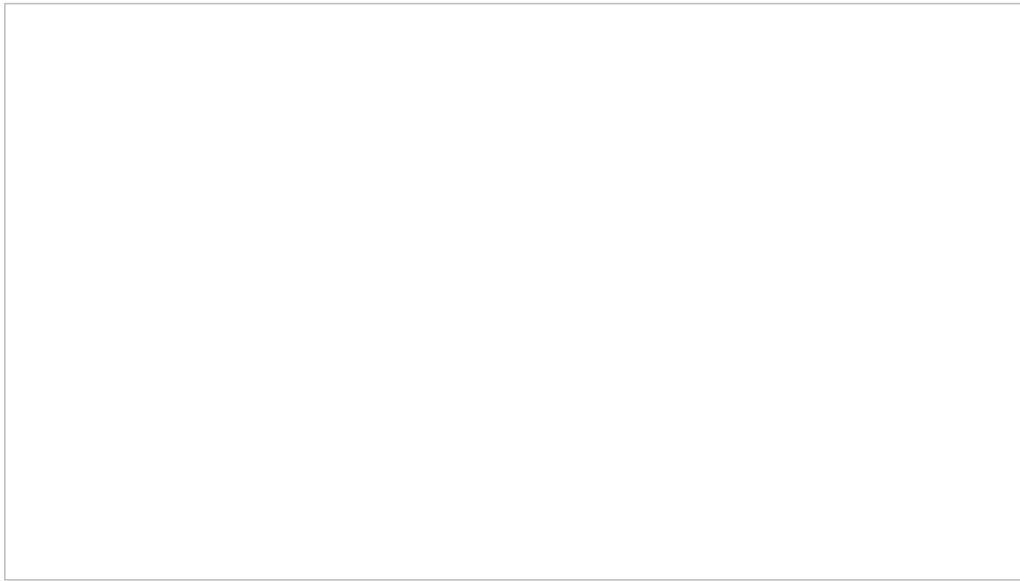
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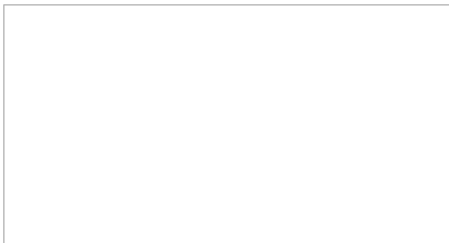
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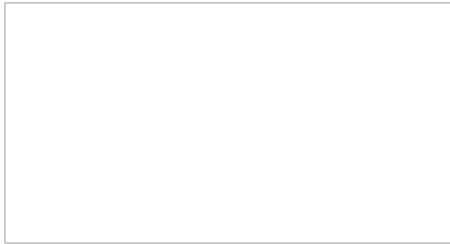
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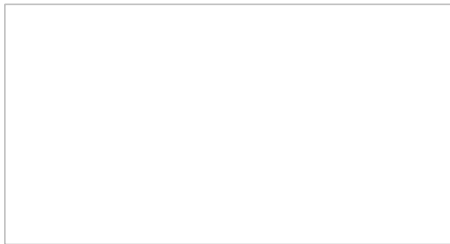
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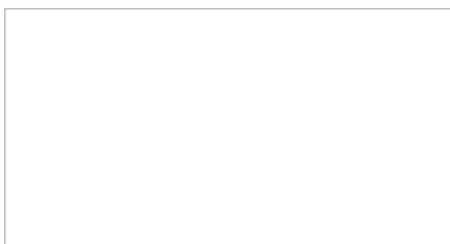
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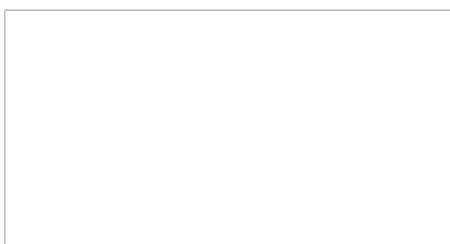
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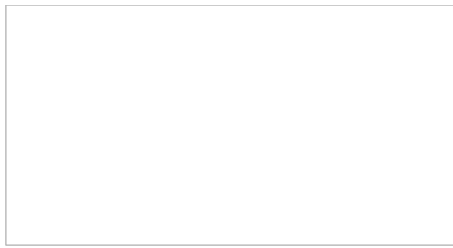
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