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Tobacco Items Still On Sale In City

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 **THIS STORY IS FROM NOVEMBER 12, 2014**

Tobacco items still on sale in city

[Banjot Kaur Bhatia](#) / TNN / Updated: Nov 12, 2014, 23:31 IST



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Patna: The state government announced a [ban on smokeless tobacco products](#) in the state on November 7, but they are still being sold. Now the state government has decided to form three-tier task forces to implement the ban from next week. The state government has asked traders to transfer their stocks of tobacco products by November 28 to other states. However, speaking to TOI, [food safety commissioner](#) cum [health secretary](#) Anand Kishor clarified it is illegal to sell smokeless tobacco products in this window period. It is only meant for transportation. "From next week crackdown will start on those found selling these products," he said. Asked why it has not started yet, he said, "Firstly, it was important to create awareness that such a ban has been announced, because you do not expect a common seller on roadside to know this. That's why the department has been issuing advertisements to this effect. From next week, you will see action happening."

However, Deepak Mishra, executive director of [Socio Economic Educational Development Society](#), said, "The window period should have been shorter to prevent blackmarketing on a huge scale." The task force will be formed at district, subdivision and block levels. Apart from the officials of food safety wing, they will comprise officials of local administration and police. Kishor conceded the strength of food safety wing is not enough to implement the ban. At present, it has 14 food inspectors and four divisional officers. He said, "We will recruit more at the earliest."

divisional officers. He said, we will recruit more at the earliest.

On the other hand, people associated with the trade are up in arms, saying it has rendered them jobless all of a sudden. According to official sources, the government used to collect over Rs 50 crore annually from smokeless tobacco. Mishra said, "The total business in these products is of Rs 100 crore monthly." Traders lament the government did not ponder over creating alternate livelihood. Vineet Kumar, who plans to file a writ in Patna high court in this regard, said, "Over 5-6 lakh people are directly or indirectly associated with this business. By a rough estimate, roadside vendors in Patna itself are more than 8,000." Then there are hawkers, mini wholesalers, wholesalers and distributors. Though large-scale production of these products does not take place in Bihar, there is a zarda factory at Muzaffarpur. Khaini, of course, which is not banned, is produced on a large scale. Zarda used to come to the state from Kanpur, Lucknow, Delhi and Varanasi. Farmers grow paan leaf in Hajipur and surrounding areas. However, traders say with zarda and flavoured supari being banned, the consumption of leaves will fall. Supari also used to come from southern states, Nepal and Myanmar. However, health secretary Anand Kishor said, "As of now, creating alternate livelihood is not on our radar. Those engaged in the trade will have to do so on their own." Experts say none of the state governments who have banned them has come out with an alternate livelihood policy. Mishra says "The Union health ministry had planned a meet with Union commerce and agriculture ministers to discuss the issue but it has been postponed."

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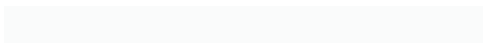
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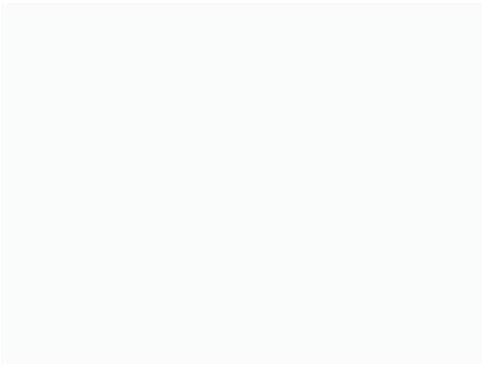
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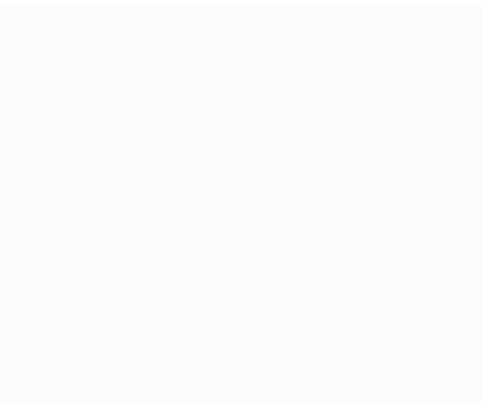
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