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After gutka, government may ban hookah, e-cigarette

We don't know what's sold in the name of hookah: Health minister

DHNS

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Å The State government is considering banning hookah and electronic cigarettes, Minister for Health and Family Welfare U T Khader said here on Wednesday. Two years ago, the government had banned gutka.

â€œWe do not know what is sold in the name of hookah. Young children are falling prey to this. We are thinking of having a ban on hookah,â€ he said after releasing the findings of a study on the impact of the gutka ban in select states. He said there would be a ban on e-cigarettes, too.

The ban on gutka, though, has been largely unsuccessful as flavour tobacco and pan masala are freely and legally available in separate sachets. Gutka is nothing but flavour tobacco and pan masala mixed together.

Khader said the government would ensure that flavour tobacco and pan masala sachets were not available at one place. â€œOn one hand, we spend crores of rupees on research to find drugs to treat cancer and on the other, we pay just Rs two to buy gutka,â€ he said.

The minister said a positive change following the gutka ban was the availability of quality areca nut (supari). â€œEarlier, areca nut rejected by foreign countries would be sold here. Now, its quality has improved,â€ he said.

Khader also underscored the need for stringent rules on the sale of medicines. Earlier this month, pharmacists staged a nationwide protest against the sale of medicines online. â€œTake cough syrup for instance. It can do good if taken in the prescribed dose. Overdose can lead to adverse reaction,â€ he said and warned of cancelling the licence of pharmacists selling medicines without prescription.

A study conducted jointly by the Institute for Global Tobacco Control of Bloomberg School of Public Health at Johns Hopkins University and the World Health Organisationâ€™s (WHO) India office surveyed 1,001 current and former gutka users in the country.

In Karnataka, the survey was conducted in Bengaluru and Mangaluru. It found that 80 per cent of the participants wanted an extension of the ban to other forms of smokeless tobacco. The study also noted that 64 per cent consumers had given up cigarette consumption following the ban on gutka.

Gutka ban

90 pc of the participants said they gave up gutka consumption after the ban.

60 pc retailers favour extending the ban to other forms of chewing tobacco.

90 pc retailers said that after the ban, they started selling twin packs (pan masala and flavour tobacco separately).

Only 7 pc outlets displayed a board saying tobacco would not be sold to minors.

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