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No tax on beedi irks public health experts

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STAFF REPORTER

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Though the State Budget 2015-16 has proposed to hike taxes on cigarette and other tobacco products, public health experts are disappointed that beedi has escaped the tax net.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday proposed to increase value-added tax (VAT) on cigarette and other tobacco products to 20 per cent from 17 per cent currently. However, beedi remains untaxed.

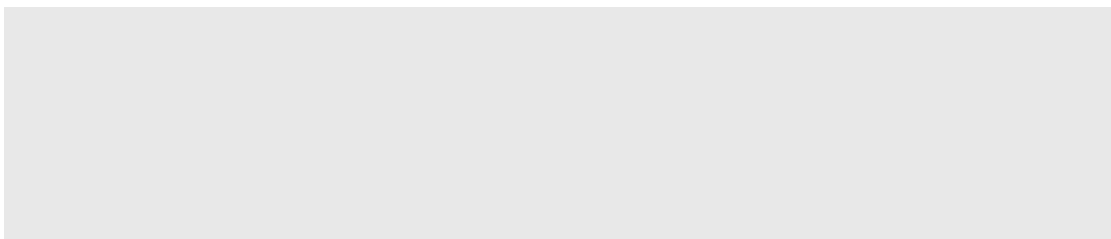
Six States

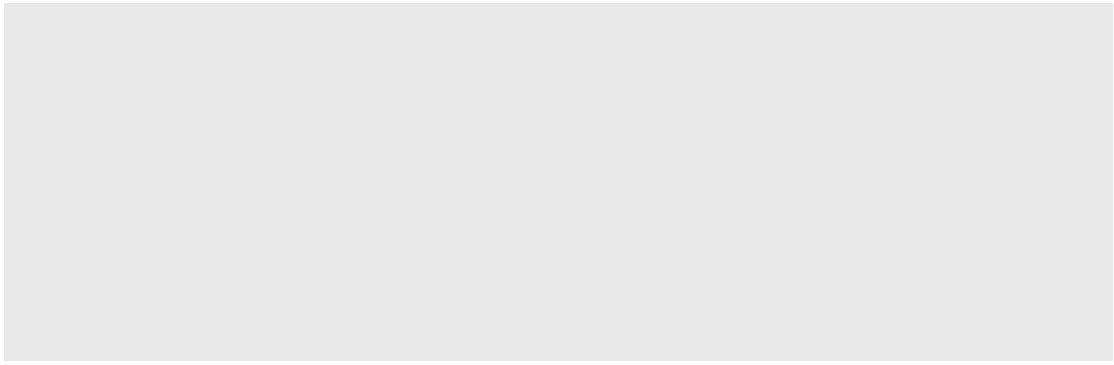
“Karnataka is among the six States in the country that has zero per cent VAT on beedi. Neighbouring States have up to 22 per cent tax ... we have lost an opportunity (in the budget) to increase tax on beedi,” said U.S. Vishal Rao, oncologist.

The results


According to the Institute of Public Health, taxing cigarette and beedi equally will prevent product switching and result in additional revenue for rehabilitation of beedi workers — a majority of whom are in the coastal districts of the State — as well as treatment of cancer and associated diseases.

For instance, says the institute, Kerala’s 14.5 per cent tax on beedi has resulted in additional revenue of Rs. 15 crore; while, Rajasthan’s 65 per cent tax on tobacco products has generated Rs. 900 crore and reduced beedi consumption by 6.2 per cent.





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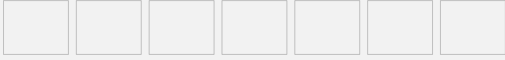
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