



e-Cigarette

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This article is based on **Nipping it in the bud** which was published in Indian Express on 11/10/2019. It talks about the various narratives of e-cigarette ban.

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the **Promulgation of the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes** (production, manufacture, import, export, transport, sale, distribution, storage and advertisement) Ordinance, 2019.

The prohibition of e-cigarettes **includes all forms of** Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), Heat Not Burn Products, e-Hookah, and other like devices.

What are e-Cigarettes ?

- **e-Cigarettes** are battery powered devices that work by heating a liquid into an aerosol that the user inhales and exhales.
- The e-cigarette liquid typically contains nicotine, propylene glycol, glycerin, flavorings, and other chemicals.

Concerns

- e-Cigarettes usually contain nicotine which makes product addictive.
- e-Cigarettes cause health hazards for youth, young adults, and pregnant women.
- A number of metals, including lead, chromium, and nickel, and chemicals like formaldehyde have been found in aerosols of some ENDS, with concentrations equal to or greater than traditional cigarettes. These metals also work as 'tumor promoters'.
- Lack of knowledge about the negative effects of nicotine and easy accessibility of these products make the youth prone to addiction.
- These products are not registered as nicotine replacement therapy products in India.

Nicotine

- **Nicotine** is a plant alkaloid that contains nitrogen, which is found in several types of plants, including the tobacco plant and can also be produced synthetically.
- Nicotine is both a sedative and a stimulant.
- Nicotine is used as a direct substance in e-cigarettes and the content ranges up to 36 mg/mL. Although regular cigarettes too have nicotine, but it ranges between 1.2 to 1.4 mg/mL.
- Recently, Karnataka has notified nicotine as Class A poison.

Arguments Against the Ban

- The cigarettes, chewing tobacco and related products continue to be legal in India, selective banning of e-cigarettes seems to be an arbitrary exercise of executive authority.
- “Vaping” or use of e-cigarette is regarded as the **social and cultural phenomenon** that must be regulated and taxed like other “sin goods” to the point of disincentivising their use, instead of a blanket ban.
- The basis of e-cigarette promotion is its safety vis-a-vis conventional cigarettes. E-cigarettes are claimed to contain nicotine minus the carcinogens in traditional cigarettes and are promoted as safer alternatives to traditional tobacco product.
- The banning of e-cigarette also highlights the nexus between the tobacco companies and government as visible with the sudden rise in the price of shares of ITC following the e-cigarette ban.
- As seen in the case of alcohol ban, **total prohibition** does not work in many countries. The total prohibition promotes underground dark economy for the sin goods.
- Considering the economics of “**sin goods**”, e-cigarette are being seen as a huge source of revenues for public exchequers.

Argument in Favour of Ban

- Smoking-related diseases rank among the greatest public health problems of the last century. There have been 21 deaths in the past three months in the US due to vaping related lung disease. Therefore, the ban cannot be considered as the arbitrary exercise of executive power. It is simply targeted at controlling the another public health menace at its very genesis.
- The notion that vaping is a socio-cultural phenomenon can not be justified as the social evils cannot be promoted in the name of culture.
- e-Cigarettes are direct source of nicotine and even **more addictive than cocaine**. Nicotine in its pure form is potentially carcinogenic and a dose of 30-50 mg of nicotine can kill an adult human. Traditional cigarettes are the cheapest source of nicotine. Therefore, pure nicotine is a myth and not a reality.

- Globally, the cigarette business is no more lucrative and infact e-cigarette seems to be the tobacco industry's biggest hope. Therefore, the allegations regarding the nexus between industry-government does not hold any ground.
- The narrative that e-Cigarettes helps in quitting has no conclusive evidence. However, the approved drugs (nicotine tablets) under medical supervision have far better success rate. Secondly, they are far more expensive compared to medically-approved methods.
- The logic that total prohibition does not work may be true for products that have huge customer base like traditional cigarettes. e-Cigarettes have very small customer base, mostly in urban areas. The ban is likely to be effective as the consumption is at a very nascent stage.
- The idea that ban leads to loss for public exchequers is ill framed. Since, e-cigarettes are not manufactured in India, they won't lead to any revenue loss. Secondly, the public health expenditure in tackling disease emerging out of its consumption will be far more than the revenues earned as seen in the case of other sin goods.

Way Forward

- As per the second **Global Adult Tobacco Survey 2016**, India has seen the steepest decline in tobacco consumption(17%) in any part of the world. Since this decline is evident in global data, we should not allow e-cigarettes to reverse the declining trend.
- The use of tobacco can be seen as a historical mistake as its farming holds its genesis in British period and further commercialization after Independence. We now have the opportunity to correct this mistake and protect the next generation from the killer tobacco industry and its next generation evolving products. The government's decision to ban e-cigarette is the way forward towards an addiction free society.

Mains Question

Critically analyse the government's decision to ban e-cigarette.