

US bans bidis made by Indian tobacco company (Update)

February 21 2014, by Kerry Sheridan

US regulators on Friday banned four types of small cigarettes known as bidis made by an Indian company, marking the Food and Drug Administration's first-ever oversight action against a tobacco product.

Bidis are small, hand-rolled cigarettes that contain tobacco wrapped in leaves from a tendu tree, and may come in various flavors.

US authorities say bidis contain levels of nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide several times greater than normal cigarettes.

The FDA move applies to four varieties made by Jash International, which a regulatory spokeswoman described to AFP as an Indian company with headquarters in Illinois.

The ban came about because the products were found to be substantially different from existing tobacco products on the market as of 2007, and did not meet new regulatory requirements, the FDA said.

"This means they can no longer be sold or distributed in interstate commerce or imported into the United States," the FDA said in a statement.

The order applies to Sutra Bidis Red, Sutra Bidis Menthol, Sutra Bidis Red Cone, and Sutra Bidis Menthol Cone.

Stores' existing inventory may be subject to seizure without further

notice, the FDA said.

"Companies that continue to sell and distribute these products in the United States may be subject to enforcement actions by the FDA."

Asked for comment, a sales representative for Jash International told AFP a spokesperson would not be available until next week.

- Risk of nicotine addiction -

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has warned that bidis contain higher levels of nicotine, tar and carbon monoxide than conventional cigarettes.

"Smoke from a bidi contains three to five times the amount of nicotine as a regular cigarette and places users at risk for nicotine addiction," said the CDC website.

Two percent of high school students and 1.7 percent of middle school students smoke bidis, according to a 2011 CDC survey.

The FDA was granted authority to regulate tobacco products in 2009 as a result of the Tobacco Control Act, signed into law by President Barack Obama.

The law is aimed particularly at curbing smoking among young people.

"Historically, tobacco companies controlled which products came on and off the market without any oversight," said Mitch Zeller, director of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products.

"But the Tobacco Control Act gave the FDA, a science-based regulatory agency, the authority to review applications and determine which new

tobacco products may be sold and distributed under the law in order to protect public health."

The Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids commended the FDA, describing the order as "one of the most important enforcement actions the FDA has taken."

"Today's action sends a strong message to tobacco companies that the FDA will seriously enforce this critical provision of the law, which is aimed at preventing manufacturers from introducing products that are even more harmful, addictive or appealing to children," said a statement by the group's president, Matthew Myers.

Some 18 percent of people in the United States smoke. Tobacco use kills 480,000 Americans each year and is the nation's leading cause of preventable death.

© 2014 AFP

Citation: US bans bidis made by Indian tobacco company (Update) (2014, February 21) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-02-bidis-indian-tobacco-company.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.