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Centre urged to ban 15 pan masala brands

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PATNA: The state government has urged the Centre to ask Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) to cancel the licences of 15 'pan masala' brands in which adulterants like magnesium carbonate and nicotine were found by National Tobacco Testing Laboratory (NTTL) at National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research. In a letter sent to Union health secretary Preeti Sudan on Saturday, state health department principal secretary Sanjay Kumar wrote, "On testing the samples of different brands of pan masala in the state food testing laboratory, all the samples of different brands were found to contain magnesium carbonate in contravention of FSS regulations. Based on the lab analysis test reports, we have banned the manufacture, storage, transportation and sale of 15 pan masala brands, including Rajnigandha, Rajniwas, Supreme, Pan Parag, Bahar, Bahubali, Rajshree, Raunak, Signature, Sir Gold, Shikhar, Vimal, Kamla Pasand, Pashan and Madhu."

The state government had imposed a blanket ban on sale of 15 pan masala brands after magnesium carbonate substance was found in them on August 29. The samples of several pan masala brands were later sent to the NTTL. The sample reports, which were received by the department on September 21, confirmed presence of nicotine in several pan masala brands.

According to the report of NTTL, Rajnigandha, Supreme, Kamla Pasand, Rajshree, Rounak, Signature and Madhu contain 0.042%, 0.186%, 2.26%, 0.163%, 0.208%, 0.046%, 0.151% and 0.155% of nicotine, respectively.

According to experts, pan masala itself is carcinogenic and addition of nicotine makes it more addictive and poisonous.

Deepak Mishra, executive director of the Socio Economic and Educational Development Society (Seeds), said tobacco prevalence in Bihar – both smoke and smokeless – is 25.9%. "Ban of pan masala brands will reduce cases of oral cancer," he added.