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STF seizes illegal, imported cigarettes in Sector 22 firm

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Chandigarh: The special task force (STF) formed under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) by the UT health department, inspected the premises of a firm in Sector 22B, Chandigarh, and seized stock of imported cigarettes and tobacco products without the pictorial diagram and necessary warning were seized from a firm's office in Sector 22.

The action was initiated on the directions of UT health secretary Yashpal Garg. On May 5, Garg had directed additional secretary health, who is also the chairman of task force formed under COTPA, to bring the task force in a fully functional mode. The task force was also asked to carry out raids and issue challans of the sale of illegal imported cigarettes and illegal

tobacco products.

Last week, Akhil Kumar, additional secretary (health), reviewed the working of the task force and directed officials for survey/challans for strict implementation of rules/regulations. Accordingly, a team was constituted by Dr. Suman Singh, director health services, UT, headed by Dr Suvir Kumar Gupta, nodal officer, COTPA, comprising of drug inspector Sunil Chaudhary and Sub Inspector Om Parkash

Chandigarh Police Crime Branch, food safety officers and officials of the excise department inspected the premises of a firm in Sector 22 and recovered 85 packets of foreign made cigarettes and 44 tobacco packets. A challan under COTPA has been issued by the police department and two samples of pan masala have been collected for the purpose of quality check under FSSAI Act. Directions have been issued to the firm for not to stock/sale the cigarette and other tobacco products those do not conform to the necessary provisions of the COTPA.

Sources have revealed that many outlets in sectors 7, 8, 26, 17, 35 and 34 selling brands do not carry mandatory 85% pictorial warnings. Among the people buying these illegal cigarettes majority were youngsters. Sale of illegal cigarettes among the youth is on the rise because they come in different flavours, it is cheaper, and packaging is much attractive since it does not contain any unpleasant images on the packet covers.

The illegal cigarette packets do not carry cancer awareness images and warnings as mandated by the law.