

DAWN

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'Tax on cigarettes can help cut health bill'

ISLAMABAD, March 29: The federal ministry of sports said on Monday a recommendation to levy two per cent additional tax on cigarette packs for its use on promotion of sport activities in the country was also meant to "reduce the purchasing and consumption power in tobacco market and minimise the national health bill."

While confirming a report in Dawn on Monday titled "Minister wants funds from cigarettes for promotion of sports", a statement quoting Sports Minister Mir Aijaz Hussain Jakhrani, however, said if the suggestion to levy such a tax "violates the rules and guidelines of the treaty of World Health Organisation FCTC, then the proposal will be dropped."

The minister was quoted as saying he was cognisant of Article 13 of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) 2005 and it was during his tenure as health minister that a ban was imposed on tobacco public message. Mr Jakhrani said the latest proposal for imposition of 2 per cent tax on cigarette packs for sports promotion was made by him during a meeting of prime minister's task force on sports.

"The idea of imposing tax on cigarette packs was presented to the prime minister during a meeting last month. The prime minister directed the task force to ferret out other alternative means of revenue generation for the promotion and development of sports in country."

The ministry's statement said the proposal was to be cleared by the ministry of health and FBR and even otherwise it would be dropped if found in contravention of regulations against promoting tobacco use.—Staff Reporter