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**Bill banning
e-cigarettes gets
Parliament nod**

NEW DELHI: The Parliament on Monday put its stamp of approval on a proposed legislation that prohibits storage, sale and distribution of e-cigarettes in India due to rising concerns over such 'devices' on public health.

The Rajya Sabha passed the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes (Production, Manufacture, Import, Export, Transport, Sale, Distribution, Storage, and Advertisement) Bill, 2019, which was cleared by the Lok Sabha last week.

The bill was brought to replace an Ordinance approved by the Union Cabinet in September.

Once the law comes into effect, any commercial activity involving e-cigarettes will be a cognizable offence punishable with an imprisonment of up to a year or fine up to Rs 1 lakh or both for the first offence. For a subsequent offence, the imprisonment term will go up to three years while the fine could be jacked up to Rs 5 lakh.

Capping the debate in the Upper House, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said tobacco companies like Philip Morris, British American Tobacco, Imperial Brands and Japan Tobacco International promoted e-cigarettes to capture the market as there is a declining trend in tobacco consumption, particularly among the youth.

"Close to 96% of children between 15-29 years don't smoke. We are trying to save the 4% of our young population, which is being targeted by the tobacco companies," he said.