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Russian Smoking Crackdown Means Cigarettes Won't Return to Kiosks

By The Moscow Times

September 23, 2015



Street kiosks were barred from selling tobacco products on June 1 last year.

The government has opposed plans to renew sales of cigarettes at Russia's newsstands, despite the pleading of print media editors who hoped tobacco would lure more people to kiosks and boost newspaper sales, the Kommersant daily reported Wednesday.

Street kiosks were barred from selling tobacco products on June 1 last year, as part of a crackdown on smoking that saw the practice banned in cafes, restaurants and other public places in 2013.

However, the prohibition came into force just as the Russian economy began to slow and advertising revenue for newspapers and magazines shrank, leading the editors-in-chief of newspapers Rossiiskaya Gazeta, Moskovsky Komsomolets, Komsomolskaya Pravda and Argumenty i Fakty to write a letter to President Vladimir Putin earlier this year requesting the return of cigarettes to the kiosks, according to Kommersant.

But ministers will rebuff proposed legislative amendments that would legalize sales of cigarettes in kiosks where the sales of periodicals account for more than 50 percent of turnover, Kommersant reported Wednesday citing government documents.

Ministers said the economic justification for the plan was unclear and that cigarette sales at newsstands would undermine efforts to protect people from exposure to tobacco smoke, the paper reported.

Around two-fifths of Russian adults smoked last year, according to data from the World Health Organization — though Russia's Health Ministry has claimed that number is falling. The Russian Press Distributors Association, a lobby group, has said that selling cigarettes at newsstands raised sales of periodicals by 20-30 percent, the Vedomosti newspaper reported in June.

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