

New law to curb medicine sales on Net?

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Given the possible dangers of buying medicines over the Internet, the government is planning a new law to restrict the sale of easily available drugs that could endanger the health of citizens.

Pills for medical termination of pregnancy, tranquilisers and other narcotic drugs are easily available on some Web portals. The government has set up an expert committee and

invited suggestions from stakeholders and the general public till Monday.

Earlier in September, a subcommittee of experts met to discuss medicine sales over the Internet under the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules 1945 and decided to tighten the noose. The committee will study the practice in developed countries that have such provisions, evaluate the risks and concerns over online sale of drugs and its impact on public health before taking a call.

"Therefore, individuals, associations, trade bodies, companies... are requested to send their responses before September 28," the notice read.

In its July meeting, the Drugs Consultative Committee of the health ministry had considered the issue and set up a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Dr Harshadeep Kamble, Maharashtra FDA commissioner, to examine it further so that steps are taken to restrict such sales. Chemists and

druggists have also taken up the matter, as they fear online sales may take away their business. Lakhs of chemists plan to go on strike on October 14. They have sent letters to the PM demanding a ban on such sales. Doctors too feel the act of "self medication" and buying medicines without any prescription pose a grave risk. "To start with, the Drug Controller General may come up with certain guidelines. A law is certainly in the offing too," a senior official said.

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