Herbal Cigarettes

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance\ Health*

Why in News?

Recently, the IIT Gandhi Nagar - Illinois study revealed that herbal cigarettes no safer than tobacco.

- **Herbal cigarettes** – They are smoking products made from a mixture of herbs, flowers, and plant materials instead of tobacco.
- **Common ingredients** – They include, *Rose petals, Lotus leaves, Mint, Ginseng, Jasmine, Green tea leaves and Clove.***Combustion roducts** – Burning any plant material produces harmful substances such as, Carbon monoxide, Tar, Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs).

Feature	Herbal Cigarettes	Conventional Cigarettes
Tobacco	Absent	Present
Nicotine	Usually absent	Present
Addiction Potential	Lower	High
Smoke Production	Present	Present
Health Risks	Present	Present

- **Health concerns**

- **Respiratory effects** – Smoke inhalation may irritate lungs and airways.
- Long-term exposure can affect respiratory health.
- **False sense of safety** – Users may believe herbal cigarettes are harmless and increase consumption.
- **Second-hand smoke** – Can expose nearby individuals to harmful particulate matter.
- **Regulatory status –** Many countries regulate herbal cigarettes under broader smoking-product laws.
- In India, regulations may fall under provisions related to smoking products and public health measures.

Findings of the recent study

- **Emission of harmful particles** – Herbal cigarettes emitted similar or higher levels of harmful particles and oxidative compounds compared to regular cigarettes.
- They produced about 20% more ultrafine particles (linked to heart and lung disease).
- **Tested herbal products** – It contained ingredients such as basil, clove, cinnamon, mint, green tea, chamomile, and water lily.
- **Effect of tendu leaves** – Tendu leaf-wrapped herbal cigarettes showed nearly 49% higher oxidative potential, indicating a greater ability to cause inflammation and tissue damage.

Tendu (Diospyros melanoxylon), *often termed "**Green Gold**", is a Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) predominantly used for wrapping beedis (hand-rolled cigarettes).*

Reference

[The Hindu| Herbal Cigarettes]