

Tobacco company to market 'smokeless' cigarette

By KARI BARLOW
Staff Writer

R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. soon will begin test-marketing its new Premier cigarette, a so-called "smokeless cigarette," said David Fishel, vice president of public relations for RJR in Winston-Salem. According to Fishel, the new cigarette will heat a flavor capsule instead of burning any tobacco.

"It will carry the same health warnings as other cigarettes. The

composition of the smoke is a lot simpler. The aroma is different," Fishel said. Test-marketing will begin in October.

While the new cigarette will address a number of the social aspects of smoking, many health organizations and anti-smoking groups are voicing opposition.

"We don't think there is any safe cigarette. There is no such thing as a safe dose of carcinogens," said

Athena Mueller, general counsel for Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). Even though the Premier cigarette will emit less visible smoke, gases such as carbon monoxide are still present, she said.

"We are concerned that it is misleading to those who have never considered smoking, particularly youngsters," said Eleanor Blackwell, director for the Research Triangle region of the N.C. American Lung Association.

The Food and Drug Administration, which has never before held jurisdiction over cigarettes, has not decided whether to monitor Premiers, said FDA spokesman Michael Shaffer.

"They (the FDA) don't have a position on harmfulness. There are some organizations that have petitioned the agency to regulate cigarettes," said Shaffer. The FDA is meeting with those organizations and expects to have a position soon,

Shaffer said.

"We have been urging the FDA to recognize tobacco as a drug," Mueller said. "I don't say that there is a deliberate desire to deceive. I think there is some implied message. Everything implies this is an improvement. Otherwise, why do it?"

The cigarette will make its debut in St. Louis, Phoenix and Tucson in early October, Fishel said. The cigarette was not chosen to debut in North Carolina because of the

already large market for Reynolds cigarettes.

"Here in North Carolina, we have an unusually high share of the market in comparison to the rest of the country," he said.

Marketing for the cigarette will target mature smokers over the age of 25.

"It doesn't address every issue of the smoking-health controversy, but it goes a long way in addressing a lot of the issues," Fishel said.

Soviet trial focuses attention on corruption in government

From Associated Press reports

MOSCOW — Officials plied Leonid Brezhnev's son-in-law with cases of wine, rare fruit and huge bribes, prosecutors alleged Monday in a corruption indictment so long that its reading caused a judge to nod off.

The trial of Yuri Churbanov and eight co-defendants began Monday before a three-judge military tribunal. It is giving Soviet citizens an unaccustomed glimpse of intrigue and high living in the Kremlin.

Five young soldiers from the Interior Ministry, where Churbanov once worked, guarded the nine defendants. The news agency Tass said the eyes of the senior guard, who appeared to be about 20, "open wide each time the figure of another bribe is mentioned."

Interest is high. An elderly woman, asked why she was waiting outside the Supreme Court, said: "We came because we wanted to know where our kopeks were going."

Churbanov married Galina Brezhnev in 1971 when her father

was running the Kremlin, which he did for 18 years.

She has been ill and did not attend Monday's session but plans to come later "to give moral support to her husband," who could be sentenced to death, said Churbanov's lawyer, Andrei Makarov. She probably will testify.

Official media reported extensively on the trial, which is expected to last about two months.

In the indictment were details of charges that Churbanov, 51, accepted bribes totaling 656,883 rubles (\$1.04 million) while serving as first deputy interior minister. That is equivalent to more than 270 years' pay for the average factory worker.

The indictment, apparently based on interrogation of the accused, was so lengthy that the prosecutor and one judge fell asleep at one point.

It said co-defendants were among those who bribed Churbanov and the gifts to him included a valuable carpet, two

china tea sets, regular supplies of wine, cognac, pomegranates, grapes and other hard-to-find fruit flown to him via the Soviet airline Aeroflot from Uzbekistan.

Those items and money came from top officials in the republic, in Soviet Central Asia, including some of the eight co-defendants.

Churbanov also requested and received construction materials from the Interior Ministry and the Defense Ministry provided by men from military construction units to build him a summer house, the indictment said.

He was quoted as saying gift-giving was merely a sign of friendship in Uzbekistan.

Authorities say Churbanov was the central figure in a web of embezzlement and bribery extending from Uzbekistan to Moscow.

His trial is considered part of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's effort to separate his leadership from the cronyism and corruption of the Brezhnev years, 1964 to 1982. It signals that officials will be held strictly accountable and corruption will not be tolerated.

Congress expected to act on medical waste problem

From Associated Press reports

WASHINGTON — With uncharacteristic speed, Congress is expected in its final weeks to create a new law to combat what has become one of the biggest and most emotional problems of the summer of '88 — medical waste that has invaded and shut down some of America's favorite beaches.

Intense pressure from outraged citizens has driven Congress to hold a series of public hearings, including one this week on Long Island's Jones Beach, and at least one measure and maybe more will be passed before the legislative year ends, lawmakers and environmental activists predicted.

Navy medical debris washed up on Carteret County beaches in North Carolina last month, but officials said there was never any danger of infectious disease.

N.C. Gov. Jim Martin has said the Navy was prompt and cooperative in cleanup efforts, and he doubted the Navy would face any state action for littering.

Separate measures to create a waste tracking system and to establish specific criminal penalties for medical

waste dumping passed the Senate before the August recess. Similar measures are pending in various House committees.

"With all the publicity this has gotten, these will sail right through," said John Catena, a science group policy analyst at the Oceanic Society, a national environmental group that focuses on coastal problems.

"The fact that you had one of the hottest summers in 50 years and tens of millions of people... were unable to make use of the public beaches really drew the issue right home," said Andy Kass, a researcher at the National Resources Defense Council in New York.

Rep. Bruce Morrison, a Democrat who represents part of the Connecticut coast along the Long Island Sound, said another reason for the unusual speed on Capitol Hill is the clarity of the issue.

"There's no reputable other side of the issue," said Morrison. "No one can excuse the presence of medical waste in the ocean and the only way it can get there is from illegal dumping... There's not a lot of technical debate here. We know what we can

do. Let's do it."

Environmentalists concede that the medical waste problem poses much less of a long-term health threat than other issues plaguing the nation's coastal waters, such as sludge dumping, that have languished in Congress for years.

"In terms of long-term survival of the ocean, it's not a serious problem. In terms of impact on people's lives, it is," said Andrew Palmer of the American Oceans Campaign, another activist group.

Catena said medical waste simply is "a much more visible issue. When it closes your beach down, that makes a lot more rumblings."

Many environmentalists see a silver lining in the dirty syringes, vials, bandages and other hospital debris that has washed ashore from Massachusetts to the Gulf of Mexico.

Palmer said public outrage over medical waste has been transferred to other less well-known but potentially more dangerous coastal pollution problems.

"We're seeing it already, and I think that's being translated to Congress," he said.

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