

Cannabis claim puts Rizla's nose out of joint

EXCLUSIVE

Max Daly

A mental health charity has been threatened with legal action by a tobacco giant after suggesting its king size cigarette papers were used for rolling joints.

Imperial Tobacco, which owns the Rizla brand, demanded that Rethink remove any mention of its product from a campaign calling for warnings about the mental health effects of cannabis to be put on all brands of rolling paper.

Imperial objected to the fact Rethink had singled out Rizla, the UK's biggest selling rolling paper, as an example of one of several brands that should take responsibility for warning users of the dangers of the drug. Imperial also objected, on intellectual property grounds, to the fact Rethink had doctored an image of a Rizla packet with a dummy health warning.

The legal move resulted in Rethink having to change publicity material as well as its submission to the cannabis reclassification review meeting held by the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs in February.

The decision by Imperial to threaten to sue Rethink followed a written request last year by the charity for the Bristol-based tobacco

firm to voluntarily add warnings to Rizla packets.

Imperial replied saying that "it is the role of governments to provide the general public with clear and consistent messages about the health risks to smokers that are associated with their smoking. We do not challenge these messages."

A spokesman for Imperial told Druglink: "Rizla as a brand was singled out for the total focus of a campaign about cannabis use. There was no justification for picking on a single brand. We are aware that rolling papers and loose tobacco can be utilised in connection with cannabis use."

Despite Imperial's sensitivity around the association of Rizla with rolling cannabis joints, the firm had a 2003 advert banned by the Advertising Standards Authority because it could be seen as condoning the smoking of cannabis. The advert featured the words 'Twist and burn' and a packet of Rizla papers with a turn at the end. The ASA said the phrase could be understood to refer to the drug because 'twist' was a slang term for a cannabis joint. Complaints that another Rizla advertising slogan, 'It's what you make of it', was condoning drug use were rejected by the ASA in the same year.



New Thai drug war could kill 4000

Thailand's new Prime Minister Samak Sundaravej will resurrect the country's controversial war on drugs "even if thousands of people have to die".

He said he would revive an anti-drug campaign started in 2003 by ousted PM Thaksin Shinawatra which resulted in the deaths of 2,500 people. "We will pursue a suppression campaign rigorously. There will be consequences," said Samak, elected in December.

Interior Minister Chalerm Yubamrung told parliament that the new Prime Minister would take up from where Thaksin left off. "When we implement a policy that may bring 3,000 to 4,000 bodies, we will do it," said Chalerm, a former police captain.

The National Human Rights Commission says police who carried out Thaksin's war on drugs later admitted 1,000 of those killed were innocent.

DRUGS QUOTE

"Labour's proposal is to manage drug addiction, our solution is to end it."

Shadow Home Secretary, David Davis, commenting unrealistically on a 21 per cent increase in drug offences.

"We thought he was just a passionate gardener."

A shocked neighbour after German police stormed an apartment as part of a series of raids on 200 cannabis farms

"The newspaper's editor said he was shocked by the results."

BBC reports on a survey carried out by a charmingly innocent student newspaper, which found evidence of cocaine use at the University of Exeter.

"I think it's a different way to hit drug dealers financially and that's where it will really hurt them."

Canadian Sandra Bergen, who became addicted to crystal meth and successfully sued her dealer for negligence.

"Crystal meth usage rivals crack."

The BBC gets it seriously wrong on a drug that is virtually non-existent in the UK. The headline was later changed to 'Warnings on crystal meth usage'.