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The Federal Government has sued British-American Tobacco PLC and two other tobacco companies for N5.3tr for the alleged havoc done to underaged smokers in the country.

According to a News Agency of Nigeria report on Tuesday, the two other companies are Philip Morris International and International Tobacco Ltd.

Two affiliate companies of BAT, British-American Tobacco (Nigeria) Ltd., and British-American Tobacco (Investment), were also sued alongside the parent company.

In the suit, filed by the Attorney-General of the Federation before a Federal High Court in Abuja, government said tobacco-related products manufactured and sold by the defendants were addictive and hazardous to public health.

Specifically, government is seeking court injunction compelling the companies and their agents to stop the marketing, promotion, distribution and sale of the products to minors and under-aged persons.

The plaintiff also asked for a court order, restraining the defendants from representing or portraying to persons under 18 years any alluring and misleading image regarding tobacco-related products.

It also asked the court to outlaw the sale and distribution of tobacco products within one kilometre radius of any school. The amendment to a pleader's prayer seeks to ensure that the government can effectively enforce its ban on the sale of tobacco products within one kilometre radius of any school.

Also to be printed on every stick of tobacco are the relevant age bar requirement, the addictiveness and narcotic qualities of nicotine and the relevant mandatory health warnings prescribed by the Federal Ministry of Health.

The government demanded from the defendants N136.3bn special damages occasioned by the conduct of the companies.

It also demanded N4.8tr as anticipatory damages for the future expenses to be borne by the government in paying for the havoc the defendants had caused to public health.

In addition, government requested the court to order the companies to pay N130bn as punitive damages for the companies wrongful conduct

It claimed N250bn as restitution and disgorging of profits for unjust enrichment. NAN reported that Mrs. Maryam Uwais appeared on behalf of government when the case was mentioned before Justice Binta Murtala-Nyako on Tuesday.

The judge ordered that the defendants, who are outside the court's jurisdiction, should be served with the court summons through reputable courier companies.

BAT Plc and BAT Investments are based in England, while Philip Morris International is based in Switzerland.