CLAIMS

1. Apparatus (1) for keeping packages (17) containing smoking articles ready for sale and/or for temporarily displaying the packages (17) to a customer (11), the apparatus (1) comprising:

a rack (11) carrying a plurality of receptacles (14) each adapted to contain a predefined number of the packages (17) in such a manner that the packages (17) can be taken out from the respective receptacle (14) one after the other;

a cabinet (2) being adapted to house the rack (11) and having an access aperture (5) to access the rack (11), the receptacles (14) and the packages (17) therein;

the rack (11) being mounted within the cabinet (2) so as to be rotatable about an axis of rotation (A) at least in a first direction of rotation (R); and

the rack (11) and the cabinet (2) being arranged in such a manner that, in an initial angular position of the rack (11) none of the receptacles (14) is accessible from an outside of the cabinet (2) through the access aperture (5) for taking out a package (17) from any receptacle (14), an accessible subset of the receptacles (14) being accessible only after rotation of the rack (11) in the first direction of rotation (R) to a delivery angular position or to one of several delivery angular positions of the rack (11), the accessible subset being dependent on the angular position (a) of the rack with respect to the cabinet (2).

2. Apparatus according to claim 1,
characterized in that the axis of rotation (A) is oriented along a vertical direction (V) of the cabinet (2).

3. Apparatus according to claim 1 or 2,
characterized in that the rack (11) comprises a helical surface (12) on which the receptacles (14) are disposed.

4. Apparatus according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that each receptacle (14) is provided with an opening (16) which enables packages (17) contained in the receptacle (14) to be taken out therefrom, the receptacles (14) being arranged on the rack (11) with their openings (16) facing outward, preferably radially outward, from the axis of rotation (A).

5. Apparatus according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the receptacles (14) are arranged on the rack (11) in a plurality of levels (15a-15e).

6. Apparatus according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the receptacles (14) are arranged on the rack (11) in such a manner that a sector (21) of the rack (11) is left devoid of receptacles (14) along the entire longitudinal extent of the rack (11), the sector (21) preferably extending through an angle (β) of between 60 degrees and 180 degrees when measured in a plane normal to the axis of rotation (A), and in particular in that the sector (21) is oriented towards the access aperture (5) when the rack (11) is in its initial angular position.

7. Apparatus according to at least one of the preceding claims, characterized in that the apparatus (1) further comprises an openable and closeable door (6) adapted to cover the access aperture (5) in a closed position of the door (6) in order to essentially prevent the rack (11) from being seen from the outside of the cabinet (2).

8. Apparatus according to claim 7,
characterized in that the door (6) is arranged so as to be pivotable from its closed position about an axis parallel to or coinciding with the axis of rotation (A) of the rack (11) in order to uncover the access aperture (5) and enable access to the receptacles (14) on the rack (11), the door (6) being

essentially contained within the cabinet (2) when the access aperture (5) is fully uncovered.

9. Apparatus according to claim 7 or 8, characterized in that the door (6) is coupled to the rack (11) so as to be rotated in common with the rack (11), the door (6) covering the access aperture (5) in the initial angular position of the rack (11).

10. Apparatus according to claim 9, characterized in that the door (6) is coupled to the rack (11) in such a manner that, in the closed position of the door (6), the door (6) is enabled to be pushed radially inward towards the axis of rotation (A), preferably against a force generated by an elastic means coupling the door (6) and the rack (11), so as to enable the access aperture (5) to be subsequently uncovered by rotating the rack (11) from the initial angular position in the first direction of rotation (R).

11. Apparatus according to claim 7 or 8, characterized in that the door (6) is rotatably mounted to the cabinet (2) and in that a pivoting motion of the door (6) is coupled to the rotation of the rack (11) about the axis of rotation (A) by means of a transmission, in particular by means of a gear mechanism or a linkage.

12. Apparatus according to at least one of claims 7 to 11, characterized in that the door (6) and the rack (11) are arranged and coupled in such a manner that, when the door (6) is opened, the rack (11) assumes a first angular position immediately after the access aperture (5) is fully uncovered and in that the rack (11) is rotatable from the first angular position about the axis of rotation (A) in the first direction of rotation (R) until it reaches a final angular position, in which the access aperture (5) is still fully uncovered, the first angular position and the final angular position each

corresponding to a respective one of the delivery angular positions of the rack (11).

13. Apparatus according to claim 12, characterized in that the apparatus (1) further comprises a biasing means, in particular a spring means, which is arranged so as to enable the rack (11) to be rotated against a force or torque generated by the biasing means in the first direction of rotation (R) by an operator, the biasing means being adapted to induce a rotation of the rack (11) in a second direction of rotation (R') opposite to the first direction of rotation (R) when the rack (11) is released after having been rotated.

14. Apparatus according to claim 13, characterized in that the biasing means is adapted to return the rack (11) to the initial angular position when the rack (11) is released after having been rotated to the delivery angular position or one of the delivery angular positions, or in that the biasing means is adapted to return the rack (11) to the first angular position when the rack (11) is released after having been rotated to the final angular position or to any angular position between the first angular position and the final angular position.

15. Apparatus according to at least one of claims 1 to 11, characterized in that the apparatus (1) further comprises a biasing means, in particular a spring means, which is arranged so as to enable the rack (11) to be rotated against a force or torque generated by the biasing means in the first direction of rotation (R) by an operator, the biasing means being adapted to induce a rotation of the rack (11) in a second direction of rotation (R') opposite to the first direction of rotation (R) when the rack (11) is released after having been rotated.

16. Apparatus according to claim 15,
characterized in that the biasing means is adapted to return the rack ~~(11)~~ to the initial angular position when the rack ~~(11)~~ is released after having been rotated to the delivery angular position or to one of the delivery angular positions,
or in that the rack ~~(11)~~ is rotatable from a first angular position corresponding to one of the delivery angular positions about the axis of rotation ~~(A)~~ in the first direction of rotation ~~(R)~~ until it reaches a final angular position corresponding to another of the delivery angular positions, wherein the biasing means is adapted to return the rack ~~(11)~~ to the first angular position when the rack ~~(11)~~ is released after having been rotated to the final angular position or to any angular position between the first angular position and the final angular position.