

Holy smoke! Tobacco ban news for them

Arun Dev | TAN

Bangalore: Forget erecting boards, city schools and colleges are not even aware of the ban on sale of cigarettes and other tobacco products near their institutions.

A day after the Karnataka high court asked the state government to verify and initiate action against 41 educational institutions for allowing petty shops selling tobacco around their campuses, The Times of India found that heads of the institutions were unaware of any such ban.

"It's rather surprising to know that we are being scrutinized for something we were not aware of. We would have complied if we were asked to, but we were not," said Dr Ambrose Pinto, principal, St Joseph's College.

On Tuesday morning, clearly none of these institutions under the scanner was aware of the HC's directive either.

"It is clear that none of the colleges promotes tobacco. In fact, our students are engaged in an anti-tobacco campaign. We are more than happy to put up boards banning tobacco vendors. But the government cannot take action against colleges for something they are not aware of. That is not the way to deal with the problem," said Viju PD, director, student affairs, Christ University.

At a college near Usoor police station, mobile tobacco vendors did brisk business outside the premises on Tuesday, as students lined up for tobacco and short-eats. "I do not invite students to come here. Who am I to stop them from smoking?" asked Manjunath S, a shopkeeper on KH Road.

Residents say that another reason for these shops mushrooming is the number of companies in the vicinity. "These shops cater to employees working in these firms and not just students," said a resident. According to some educationists, instead of taking on schools for not displaying boards, action should be taken against those vio-



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lating rules by selling tobacco products in the periphery of the institutions. "We tried to get rid of the vendors, who turned hostile. Why did the government give them licence to sell tobacco, knowing they are located near schools?" asked K. P. Gopalakrishna, chairman, National Public Schools.

WHAT DID HC SAY?

Following a writ petition from the Cancer Patients' Aid Association, a high court division bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar had on Monday directed the government to inspect and prosecute educational institutions which do not comply with Section 6 of the Control of Tobacco Products Act, 2004 (COTPA) — prohibiting the sale of any tobacco products within 100 yards of the institution.

The rule also mandates that institutions put up boards outside their college/school premises, stating that the sale of cigarettes and tobacco products is banned in an area of 100 yards.

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STUB THE BUTT

I don't understand the concept of punch lines like 'Smoking is injurious to health.'

How many have quit after seeing these warnings?

Those who smoke will continue smoking, with or without these warnings.

Arpit Bourah | STUDENT,
ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

What about my rights?

Firstly, we're not allowed to smoke on the college campus. Now, they want to ban it around the college as well! I'm an adult and I smoke knowing fully well the consequences. I should be allowed to smoke. Why should the government act

like a dictator?

Shruthy M | STUDENT, CHRIST UNIVERSITY

The government should understand it's an addiction. Only if the person decides to stop can it be stopped. You can shut down all the cigarette shops in the city but still you'll find people smoking in some corner.

Akash Ravi | MARKETING PROFESSIONAL

I started my shop here even before the college was built. How can they ask me to move out now? I'm not asking students to come and buy cigarettes — they come here on their own. There's no compulsion whatsoever

Manjunath S | CIGARETTE VENDOR, NEAR ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

What is the college's fault if tobacco is sold around its premises? It may be an offence but how can a college stop the sale? The government should find a solution to this problem.

Berlin Lukas | PROFESSOR,
ST JOSEPH'S COLLEGE

What is the college's fault if tobacco is sold around its premises? It may be an offence but how can a college stop the sale? The government should find a solution to this problem.

V-C TOO UNAWARE
Bangalore University does not have any information on COTPA or the ban. I will not be able to comment on the issue because I not aware of this Act. We will be communicating to the institutions once we have clarity on the issue.

N Prabhudev | VICE-CHANCELLOR, BU

SMOKED OUT: According to some educationists, instead of taking boards, action should be taken against those violating rules by selling tobacco products in the periphery of the institutions