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Stamp out smoking on campus, IT/BT firms told

DHNS

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To ensure that the 2,000-odd IT, BT and ITeS companies comply with the Tobacco Control regulations, the State IT, BT and S&T department wants these companies to up the ante in checking smoking by employees on the campuses.

In addition to putting up boards and signages as per Section 4 of Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act 2003 (Cotpa), the department has asked the companies to spread awareness by organising "flash mobs" and including tobacco control activities in the company's corporate social responsibility budget.

V Manjula, principal secretary to the department, issued a circular to five associations, including Nasscom, on October 26. These associations have to forward the circulars to all the companies urging them to take up "tobacco control" as one of the agendas.

She has stated that tobacco is one of the world's leading preventable causes of death and disability, killing more than 10 lakh people in India annually, and that about 2 per cent of the State's population is exposed to harmful effects of passive cigarette smoke, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

As per Section 4 of the Cotpa act, smoking is banned in all public places across the country, to protect passive smokers from health hazards.

When contacted, Ashok Pamidi, Nasscom regional head, said that a majority of the IT companies were already implementing the specification in "spirit and in action".

"There are a few companies that have created smoking zones. But otherwise, there is complete tolerance in a majority of the companies. They have even tied up with hospitals where employees are educated about smoking and chewing tobacco." He said that Nasscom would put up the circular on its portal to educate the companies.

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