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You can dial 100 to report smoking ban violations

The control room will alert police stations or patrolling vehicles

DHNS

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Those in the habit of smoking in public places, beware. For, soon public can dial 100 and lodge a complaint against those found smoking in public places in violation of the existing ban. Acting on the complaint, the police would trace such violators and fine them.

At a recent meeting of the Home department, it has been decided to allow public call the police control room (100) to lodge complaints against anyone violating provisions of smoking ban.

Based on the call details, the control room staff would alert the jurisdictional police station or patrolling vehicles such as Hoysala, who in turn would initiate action against violators. A circular in this regard will be issued in a week, said an official from the Home department.

According to section 4 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), smoking in public places is an offence. As per the National Tobacco Control Act, if someone is caught smoking in a public place, he or she has to pay a fine of Rs 200.

As defined under 3(l) of COTPA "public place" means any place to which the public have access, whether as of right or not, but does not include any open space. In addition, smoking is also prohibited at open spaces that are visited by the public such as open auditoriums, stadiums, railway stations and bus stops.

Pragathi H, who is into advocacy for tobacco control in the State, welcomed the move by the Home department and said the department should provide more staff and related training to the police so that they are well-equipped to understand the law and its implementation.

Smoking ban and other violations of COTPA are already included in the monthly crime report of the Police department and, with the control room number 100 being open for public, the law would be implemented more effectively, she added. However, smokers have a problem with the implementation of the rules.

"The smoking ban in public places has become a tool for cops to harass smokers. It is right to fine those caught smoking in public place. But, not all cops are giving receipts for the fine they are collecting," said Samarth R, a resident of Basaveshwarnagar.

A senior official from Home department said anybody can lodge complaint to the higher authorities if he or she was being harassed.

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