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Enforcement of prohibition on tobacco use poor : expert

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Dr. Vishal Rao at the inauguration of Tobacco Intervention Initiative Center at the A.J. Institute of Dental Sciences In Mangalore on Thursday. Photo: H. S. Manjunath

Dakshina Kannada has shown poor performance in enforcement of provisions related to ban on smoking in public places and ban on sale of tobacco products within 100-metre radius from educational institutions, said Consultant Oncologist U.S. Vishal Rao, who is a member of State Anti Tobacco Cell.

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He was speaking on "Current trends of tobacco control in India" on Thursday as part of launching of Tobacco Intervention Initiative (TII) at A.J. Hospital Institute of Dental Sciences here. Dr. Rao said not a single case of violation of the ban on smoking in public had been registered by the police in Mangalore. Smoking in public places and sale of tobacco products in the vicinity of educational institutions were among the offences under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003. Except the road, all other places come under the definition of a public place, he added.

Dr. Rao said Union Health Secretary wrote to the Home Secretary asking for better enforcement of the Act in Karnataka. The Union Health Secretary had asked for inclusion of violations under the Act in the monthly crime report. Accordingly, directions were issued by Director-General and Inspector-General of Police to Police Commissioners and District Superintendents of Police in May.

Dr. Rao said: "While police in places like Gadag can book cases against 287 violators and collect a fine of Rs. 19,400 (between May and September), not a single case has been registered in Mangalore," he said and added that there should be better enforcement of these provisions in urban areas such as Mangalore and Bangalore. He said the Cell had been reviewing enforcement of the Act every month.

Enforcement of the ban on the sale of tobacco products in a 100-metre radius around the educational institutions in Dakshina Kannada was poor. Dr. Rao said compliance had been around 65 per cent in the district. The Deputy Director of Public Instruction had been asked to report every month to jurisdictional Police Commissioner or the Superintendent of Police about the shops that were violating this ban and ensure clearance of such shops, he said.

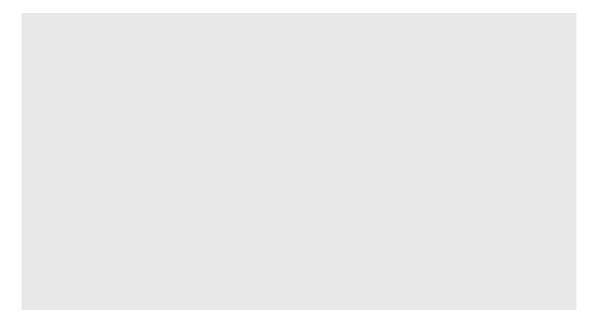
Such interventions were necessary to save lives from serious health problems caused because of exposure to tobacco.

Dr. Rao said tobacco had been a cause for 50 per cent of the number of cancer cases in the country. Cancer was being noticed in persons in the 30-40 age group, which was more because of tobacco chewing. Nearly 30 per cent of Indians were exposed to passive smoking, which was a major concern. The country had been spending about Rs. 30,000 crore every year for treating disorders resulting from tobacco, he said.

Dr. Rao said it was necessary for civic society, including the newly launched Tobacco Intervention Initiative (TII), to come forward to help the police and the municipal administration in the implementation of the Act.

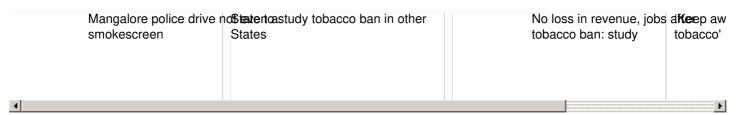
Earlier, Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer K.N. Vijay Prakash launched the TII Centre.

B. Subash Chandra, Dean of the Institute, said the TII Centre would not only look into cessation of habit of tobacco consumption but also look into after effects.





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