

- [Home](#)
- [Bangalore](#)
 - [Cover Story](#)
 - [Crime](#)
 - [Civic](#)
 - [Other](#)
 - [Elections](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
 - [Bollywood](#)
 - [Hollywood](#)
 - [Reviews](#)
 - [Lounge](#)
 - [South Masala](#)
- [Videos](#)
 - [sectionhomelist](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Sports](#)
 - [Entertainment](#)
- [Photos](#)
 - [Entertainment](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Sports](#)
- [Sports](#)
 - [Cricket](#)
 - [Football](#)
 - [Tennis](#)
 - [Others](#)
- [News](#)
 - [State](#)
 - [India](#)
 - [World](#)
 - [Business](#)
- [Opinion](#)
 - [Ask the Sexpert](#)
 - [Sunday Read](#)
 - [You](#)
 - [Code 560](#)
 - [Others](#)
 - [Views](#)
 - [Food](#)
 - [Teen Spirit](#)
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 - [Videos](#)
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- [Crime](#)

- [Civic](#)
- [Other](#)
- [Elections](#)
 - [News](#)
 - [Photos](#)
 - [Videos](#)

[Bangalore](#)

- [Cover story](#)
- [Crime](#)
- [Civic](#)
- [Others](#)

[Entertainment](#)

- [Bollywood](#)
- [Hollywood](#)
- [Reviews](#)
- [Lounge](#)
- [South Masala](#)

[Videos](#)

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- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Entertainment](#)

[Photos](#)

- [Entertainment](#)
- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)

[Sports](#)

- [Cricket](#)
- [Football](#)
- [Tennis](#)
- [Others](#)

[News](#)

- [State](#)
- [India](#)
- [World](#)
- [Business](#)

[Opinion](#)

- [Ask the Sexpert](#)
- [Sunday Read](#)
- [You](#)
- [Code 560](#)
- [Others](#)
- [Views](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Teen Spirit](#)
- [Blogs](#)

[Others](#)

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- [Trending Today](#)
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- [Home](#)
- /
- [Bangalore](#)
- /
- [Other](#)
- /
- Airport violating anti-tobacco norms, says health crusader

Airport violating anti-tobacco norms, says health crusader

Hetal Vyas / Updated: Mar 12, 2014, 02:00 IST

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Complains of heavy smoke density and indirect advertising of tobacco products

The Kempegowda International Airport (KIAL) of Bangalore may have earned accolades for its world-class amenities and smooth operational abilities, but a city-based anti-tobacco crusader has accused the authorities of violating the Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.

In his written complaint filed with the airport authorities, Dr Upendra Bhojani, Faculty, Institute of Public Health (IPH) has cited various violations of COTPA at the domestic and international terminals of Bangalore airport.

He said his visit to the airport on February 25 revealed that the designated smoking area in the domestic terminal (in boarding areas, past security checkpoints) had no functional air-ventilation system. There was heavy smoke inside, and he didn't notice any functioning ventilation system, Bhojani said.

He said the designated smoking area at KIA does not comply with the rule that it 'is physically separated and surrounded by full height walls on all four sides'. He also attached a photo showing that the entrance doors are not of full height and leave a gap between the floor and the doors.

Bhojani, who has been fighting against use of tobacco products in Karnataka along with his team at IPH, said he had complained to the BIAL authorities on two occasions between December 2013 and February 2014 about violations of COTPA.

He said he noticed violations of advertisement rules (section 5 of the COTPA) in the domestic departure terminal. He pointed out that in a reputed brand outlet at the airport, there are backlit advertisement boards giving the name of a cigarette brand by ITC. "As per the law this constitutes the indirect form of advertisement of tobacco products as the shirts and the cigarettes share the same brand, ITC," he said.

The cited violations of section-4 and section-5 carry a penalty of up to Rs 200 for first violation for section-4 and a penalty of up to Rs 1,000 or imprisonment up to 2 years (first violation) and even stricter penalties for subsequent violations.

When contacted, the KIA spokesperson via email replied: "As a conscientious airport, KIA has adopted certain measures and steps to ensure that all four smoking lounges at the airport are in accordance with smoking rules and regulations at a public place. At KIA, we take passive smoking very seriously and have taken additional measures to ensure that the air quality at the airport is of high standard.

"State of the art technology from Europe has been installed to avoid passive smoking. The smoking lounges have been tested thoroughly and ensure standard compliance. Harmful tar, nicotine and particles that cause passive smoking are all captured in the filters and the air is cleaned."

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