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CMO Flooded With Sachets of Chewing Tobacco



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By Rashmi Belur

BENGALURU: The Chief Minister's Office has been flooded with post cards and sachets of chewing tobacco from students demanding a complete ban on chewing tobacco products in the state. The CMO has so far received over 25,000 cards and sachets.

The campaign, which was launched on July 20 in Mysuru, has now spread to Chamarajnagar and Hassan districts and aims to reach college students across the state. The Akhila Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) is spearheading the campaign.



According to those involved in the campaign, college

students have been requested to post a hand-written letter addressed to the Chief Minister demanding a ban on chewing tobacco products and stating how chewing tobacco affects one's health.

Speaking to Express, Mallikarjun, an ABVP activist who is leading the campaign, said, "We have started this campaign because we have observed that many college students get into the habit of chewing tobacco first and then switch over to other forms."

“While extending the campaign to Hassan district, we had to face some problems. The education department officials issued a circular directing college principals not to let student organisations inside the campus during college hours and also not to let the students out with them. We managed to meet students outside,” he explained.

Officials at the Chief Minister’s office confirmed that they have received the letters. Speaking to Express, an official said, “We have received over 25,000 letters and the Chief Minister has directed us to forward them to the departments concerned for further action.”

The letters have been forwarded to Health and Family Welfare, Medical Education, Agriculture and Revenue departments.

‘Schoolchildren Are Easy Targets’

Dr U S Vishal Rao, Head and Neck Oncologist at HCG Hospital in the city says, “Chewing tobacco accounts for 20 per cent of consumption of tobacco in all forms in Karnataka. It is a growing concern among all oncologists to see younger cancer patients, especially in their 20s and 30s who get addicted to chewing tobacco in a short time. It is sad that most of these patients come from poor backgrounds and they come to doctors when at a very late stage.”

“We often wonder whether it is not better to stop this rather than have health schemes for BPL families after they get such cancers. Cancer can cause financial and emotional turmoil in a family. Most of these chewing tobacco packets are freely available and sold to schoolchildren. Tobacco is a gateway to drugs and 90 per cent of drugs addicts begin with tobacco. About 15 states have banned chewing tobacco, but Karnataka is yet to act,” he said.

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