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Kerala asked to ban all chewing tobacco products
 Tuesday November 19, 2013 9:03 AM, IANS

Thiruvananthapuram: A large group of people Sunday demanded blanket ban on all chewing tobacco products in Kerala after about 150 kg of such products were seized in recent raids in and around the schools here.

The demonstrators said they wanted all tobacco products not covered under the earlier laws to be prohibited by the state government.

The Indian tobacco control law - the Control of Tobacco Products Act, 2003 - by its Section 6(b) prohibits the sale of tobacco products in an area within a radius of 100 metres of educational institutions.

Kerala banned pan masala and gutka May 22, 2012, prohibiting manufacture, storage, sale or distribution of gutka and pan masala containing tobacco or nicotine as ingredients, by whatsoever name.

Police Commissioner P.Vijayan, who led the raids in the city, caught a shopkeeper selling cigarette to an 11-year-old student.

"During the raids, we could get a first-hand report on the activities of these shop-owners. The raids will continue in the coming days," said Vijayan.

Sanjay Nandakumar, an engineering student, said chewing tobacco products such as pan masala and gutka affect hostellers more as they stay away from families, with no one to check them.

"One of my friends had to shift to an independent accommodation following difficulties faced in the hostel due to the use of tobacco products. The ideal thing would be a blanket ban on all forms of chewing tobacco products across the country," Nandakumar told IANS.

Paul Sebastian, director, Regional Cancer Centre and vice chairman, Tobacco Free Kerala, said that 35 percent of the Indian population uses tobacco, of these 21 percent use smokeless tobacco.

"More than 40 percent of male cancer patients in Kerala are tobacco users. While the ban on pan masala and gutka imposed in many states of the country is welcome, a complete ban on all chewing tobacco products is the need of the hour," he said.

Smokeless tobacco use in India is among the highest in the world and more Indians use it than cigarettes and bidis combined.

According to the recent WHO global report, Mortality Attributable to Tobacco, almost two in five deaths among adults aged 30 years and above in India are caused by smokeless tobacco.

Rampant use of smokeless tobacco is associated with high prevalence of oral cancer in India, and almost 90 per cent cases are linked to tobacco.

The principal of a state owned college, Prema J., sought an awareness campaign, and called on the youth to realise the grave dangers caused by chewing tobacco products.

Annapoorna Lekha Pillai, a lawyer and TV personality, pointed out that the constitution mandates wellbeing of the people and it is important that these harmful products are completely banned in the country at the earliest.

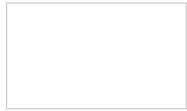
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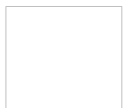
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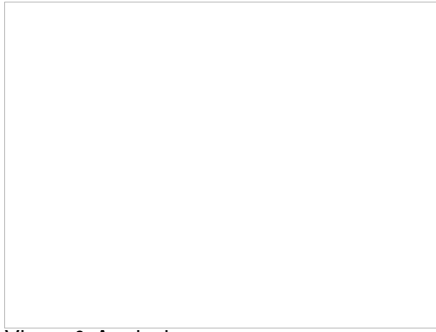
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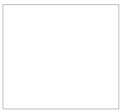
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