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## Ban smoking in prisons: KELSA

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The Kerala State Legal Services Authority (KELSA) has urged the State government to reintroduce the ban on smoking in prisons.

Smoking in jails was banned by a specific order issued on April 20, 2005. However, the State government lifted the ban in 2007.

The authority made the request after its executive chairman and sitting judge K.M. Joseph and KELSA member secretary Mohanadas visited the Kozhikode district jail and the Government Children's Home for Girls on February 2. They found to their surprise that the smoking ban order had been lifted by the government.

They pointed out that it was relevant to note that smoking in public places was forbidden by law. The premise of a jail were also a public place. Therefore, the order passed by the government was against the existing provisions of the law.

They were of the view that immediate action was needed in view of the health hazards posed by smoking on jail premises.

In fact, as a result of the earlier ban order, consumption of narcotic substance had come down considerably in jails. Now, the non-smokers were subject to passive smoking, if they were brought to jails.

The prisons in our State were populated by people from different walks of life and people with different attitude and cultural habits. It was the duty of the staff of jail to see that the welfare of the inmates was properly looked after, they said.

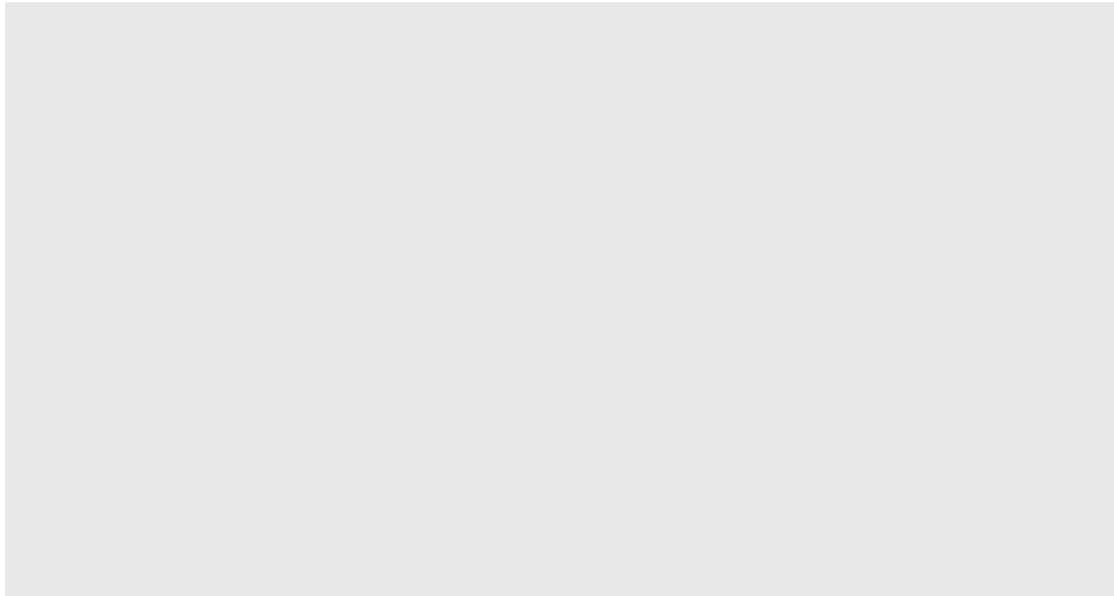
The Chief Secretary and the State Police Chief have taken up with the State government the demand for reintroduction of smoking ban on the prison premises following the intervention of KELSA.

During their visit some major drawbacks in the district jail were noticed. It found that the inmates who required urgent medical attention were not taken to the hospital even if the doctor advised. No medical officer was posted in the jail.


The visit also brought to light the inadequacies in the Government Children's Home and Observation Homes in Kozhikode.

It found that maintenance works in the children's home had not been done for the last 10 years. Compound walls of the children's home should be built immediately, they said.

The KELSA has been constituted to provide free legal services to the weaker sections of society and promote justice.



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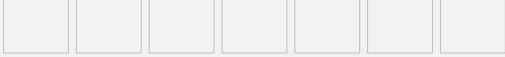
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