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Gutka ban a farce?

Bangalore Mirror Bureau / Updated: Oct 29, 2015, 04:00 IST

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What emerged two years after the gutka ban in the state is that most of the gutka consumers are purchasing the necessary ingredients separately and mixing their own gutka. Chewing tobacco and pan masala are separately available which are then reportedly combined by the user. This, of course, nullifies the gutka ban. "Around 90 per cent of retail stores sell twin packs of chewing tobacco and pan masala separately which is widely consumed by the users despite the ban," said the survey conducted in 2014 by Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health's Institute of Global Tobacco Control and the World Health Organisation in collaboration with Centre for Communication.

The state health minister, UT Khader, released the factsheet on Wednesday in the city and said he was happy to know that the ban had seen some progress. "I will ensure that statutory display boards against tobacco are installed in every store. If we find out if there are sales of gutka in the state, stern action will be taken," the minister said.

Khader also assured that he would discuss the issue of 'twin packs' with CM and in the legislative assembly.

The 2014 study was conducted in two districts of Karnataka: Bengaluru and Mangaluru. It was done with current and former gutka consumers and tobacco product retailers to determine the impact and effectiveness of gutka ban.

Alarming, Around 22 per cent of tobacco shops were located within 100 yards of the educational institutions. What was alarming was, only seven per cent of outlets obeyed to the statutory warning board and display the declaration: Sale of tobacco products to minors is prohibited. Most of the sellers reportedly sell tobacco to the children.

Key findings of the JHU study

* After the ban, most gutka users report purchasing ingredients separately and combining/mixing their own gutka * Of the respondents, 92 per cent reported that they gave up the habit because of the ban * Cost of pre-packaged gutka increased after prohibition * There was virtually no retail outlet where pre-packaged gutka was on display * More than one-quarter of tobacco product retailers said they had been approached post-ban by a supplier to continue selling pre-packaged gutka. * Nearly 66 per cent of the retailers said that gutka was not being manufactured. * About 58 per cent of the retailers sell smokeless tobacco products and 92 per cent sell smoked tobacco products * 90 per cent retailers were in the favour of the ban

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