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KERALA

Police to act tough against violators of tobacco use rules

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STAFF REPORTER

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The district police unit has decided to take strict action against those found guilty of violating the Cigarette and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003.

A resolution in this regard was adopted at a workshop organised for police officers by Tobacco Free Kerala, a coalition of like-minded organisations, including the Regional Cancer Centre, Malabar Cancer Centre, and Kerala Voluntary Health Services. A total of 39 police officers led by district police chief M.P. Dinesh took part.

Giant killer

The officers were informed that tobacco use was a major cause of mortality and morbidity in India and Kerala. While around 1 million Indians died of tobacco use annually, the corresponding figure in the State was 19,000.

Documentaries highlighting the hardships faced by those suffering from ailments due to tobacco use were also screened.

K. Mohana Kumar, retired Deputy Superintendent of Police, explained the various sections of COTPA and the punitive measures prescribed for their violation.

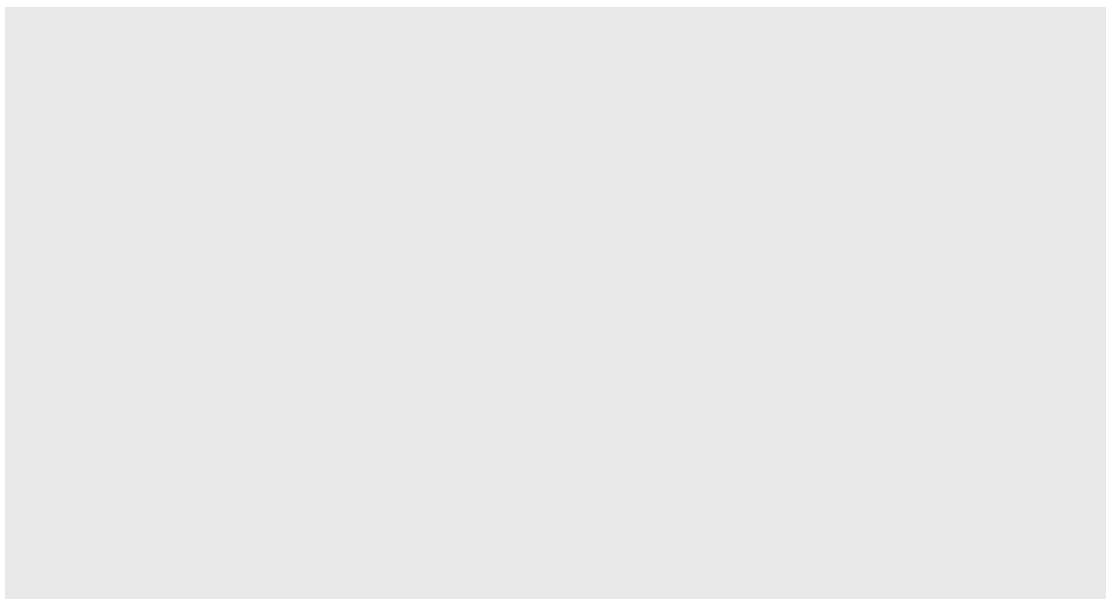
He said Section 4 of the Act prohibited smoking in all public places and specified that acts of violation could invite fines up to Rs.200.

In addition, the Act also made it necessary to put up 'No Smoking Area' signs in public places in the prescribed size and format. Educational institutions, hospitals, restaurants, and cinema halls had been included in the list of public places, he said.


Section 6 of the Act prohibited the sale of tobacco products to and by minors, and within the 100-yard (91.4 metres) radius of an educational institution.

Strict action

Addressing the gathering later, Mr. Dinesh said violators of COTPA in the district would be taken to task.



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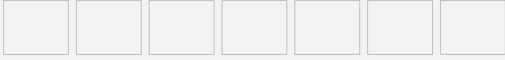
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