

The Nation

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Smoking at public places goes unchecked

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD - Loopholes in the 'Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers, Health Ordinance 2002' giving space to violators.

Article 9 of the ordinance "Prohibition of storage, sale and distribution of cigarette", which describes that in the immediate vicinity of educational institutions- No person shall himself or by any person on his behalf, store, sell or distribute cigarettes or any other such smoking substance within an area of 50 meters from any college, school or educational institute, said a press release issued by TheNetwork for Consumer Protection.

The above mentioned law does not clearly mention that who will be the enforcing body, who will monitor the violations.

This loophole makes this section of the law futile, as there is no one to punish the violators and violations are on the rise near educational institutes in twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Is this the responsibility of Interior Ministry, city administration, Health Ministry or the Ministry of Education to monitor the violation?

Since 2002 the anti-tobacco law was promulgated, not a single case has been registered so far to punish anyone for selling smoking substance near educational institutes.

Dr Arif Azad, Chief Execu-

tive Officer, TheNetwork for Consumer Protection, said that in Pakistan many laws exist in the statute book. "It is only when these paper tigers are made to roar, and then only we can expect some genuine progress on tobacco cessation efforts", he added.

"If the 'Prohibition of Smoking & Protection of Non-Smokers Health Ordinance' promulgated in 2002 was implemented effectively, we could be able to save our young generation from becoming the victim of this evil", he maintained.

Youth is considered as the milestone in the progress of any nation and if Pakistan has to protect its youth from the hazards of smoking then there

is a dire need of a comprehensive tobacco control policy. The current legislation should be reviewed and amended according to the current needs after a National Consultation, he added.

State of Implementation Prohibition of Smoking & Protection of Non-Smokers' Health Ordinance, 2002 came into effect from June 30, 2003. The ordinance takes into account a complete ban on smoking at all public places, institutions and public service vehicles.

It prohibits sale of cigarettes to under 18 and restricts the sale and advertisements of tobacco products within 50 meters of any educational institution.