



Govt clamps down on tobacco ads, penalises vendors

NEW DELHI, March 04, 2015 DHNS

The Delhi government acted tough on vendors recently who put up advertisements related to tobacco products during a recently conducted raid in west Delhi.

The Tobacco Control Cell and the Delhi Police conducted a special drive to clamp down on direct and indirect advertisements of tobacco items put up by the vendors. Around 60 tobacco shops were raided in Rajouri Garden, Tagore Garden, Moti Nagar, Shadipur and Patel Nagar.

“For the first time we shifted the focus to surrogate advertisements of tobacco items. Youngsters easily get lured by these advertisements and engage in smoking cigarettes or chewing tobacco when they see these advertisements,” said Dr S K Arora, Additional Director (Health) of the Tobacco Control Programme, Directorate of Health Services (DHS).

“Surrogate advertisements are also banned under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COPTA),” he added.

The department issued challans amounting to Rs 9,500 to the vendors for offences like smoking in public places and for sale of cigarettes or tobacco products to those below 18 years and near educational institutions.

To clamp down on surrogate advertisements, the department carried out panchnamas, in which court proceedings will be initiated against the violators.

“This offence can attract a fine or imprisonment as well,” said Dr Arora. In most cases, the advertisement boards are given off as gifts by the tobacco companies. So the department has now written to the tobacco companies to stop giving these as gifts.

The civic bodies like the Municipal Corporation of Delhi and the New Delhi Municipal Council have also been alerted to remove such advertisements from areas under their jurisdiction.

However, much more remains to be done to take off surrogate advertisements coming up in the electronic and print media, especially at the national level, said a senior DHS official. The Delhi Metro is another popular spot where such advertisements appear.

The first department in the city which is likely to go tobacco-free in two months now is the health department. All the state-run, Centre-run and civic-body-run hospitals and the health department offices of the Delhi government will come under this programme.

Each hospital will have a nodal officer to sensitise workers. Currently, the cell is also making different anti-smoking signages in which the details of the nodal officers will be mentioned where violations can be reported.

At a later stage, the education, transport and police departments will also be turned into tobacco-free zones.