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NGOs flay plea to lift ban on tobacco sale near schools

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## NGOs flay plea to lift ban on tobacco sale near schools

Bindu Shajan Perappadan

NEW DELHI: Leading anti-tobacco activists from across the country including Salaam Bombay Foundation, Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health, Action Council against Tobacco and Tata Memorial Hospital have come together to strongly criticise the appeal made by some political leaders to the Government to lift the ban on tobacco sale near schools. In a joint statement, the

non-government organisations have made it clear that lifting of the ban on sale of tobacco near schools or even reducing the radius of restriction for its sale to less than the present limit of 100 metres would gravely impact children by putting them at great risk once again.

The organisations have come out in full strength after getting information that several leaders have written to the Union Health Minister asking him to take a lenient

view of Section 6 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003.

Most effective way

Salaam Bombay Foundation founder-director Padmini Somani said: "Prohibiting the sale of tobacco to children is one of the most effective ways to reduce tobacco use among kids. We

have been working with children and have seen that children themselves have managed to convince some shopkeepers along with some help to stop the sale of tobacco within 100 metres of their school. When kids are asserting their right to live in a tobacco-free world, we can't understand why some of our political leaders are not in favour of granting them this right." Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health director P. C. Gupta said: "The

Union Government has a duty to protect children. Enforcing Control of Tobacco Products Act, 2003, is an international legal obligation that must not be weakened by misguided appeals of few Parliamentarians."

Tata Memorial Hospital head of preventive oncology Dr. Surendra Shastri said: "I would like to know whether the same MPs would like ar-rack shops near the schools that their children or grandchildren attend."