

Beijing to fine \$7 for flouting smoking ban

Beijing: China's "toughest" ever smoking ban which aims to stop people lighting up during November's Asian Games will carry fines of \$7, state media said on Wednesday, a limited deterrent to smokers in one of China's richest cities.

People found smoking in offices, conference halls, elevators and certain other public spaces will be fined 50 yuan (\$7.36), though "businesses not meeting their obligations" will be fined up to 30,000 yuan, the official Xinhua news agency said, calling it "the nation's toughest smoking ban."

Guangzhou is one of Chi-

na's wealthiest cities, with a per capita GDP of more than \$10,000, so individual 50 yuan fines are unlikely to have much impact on most residents unless there are armies of enforcers combing the city.

The fines may be raised in the future though, Xinhua added. Smoking is a national pastime in China, with more than half of men indulging in the habit.

A million people die each year from smoking-related illnesses, yet China's ministry of Health only banned smoking in hospitals this May. No-smoking signs are routinely ignored throughout

the Country. -Reuters