

# BMC TOO BUSY TO IMPLEMENT BAN

PRIYANKA VORA

[priyanka.vora@mid-day.com](mailto:priyanka.vora@mid-day.com)

ACCORDING to the law, those caught smoking in public places — hospitals, amusement centres, restaurants, courts, educational institutions, libraries, public conveyances, railway stations, workplaces, shopping malls, cinema halls, discos, coffee houses, pubs and restaurants will be fined Rs 200.

However, hotel and pub owners have expressed concern over the implementation of the fine for those who fail to comply with the ban. "Only few patrons comply with the ban while others create a nuisance about it. There should be a more vigilant fining mechanism," said a hotelier

from Andheri, who did not wish to be named.

In the last two years, the civic body has collected fines amounting to a little over Rs 70,000 only.

The civic body along with FDA (Food & Drug Administration) are responsible for fining offenders for smoking in public. In their defence, civic officials blamed staff shortage and demanded more manpower to better implement the fining mechanism.

Civic officials believe that there should be a dedicated staff to punish offenders for better implementation of the ban.

"The health department is busy with various activities, especially with monsoon related ailments and swine

flu this year," said Dr G T Ambe, executive health officer, BMC.

Ambe added that the ban was well accepted by eateries as cigarettes contribute negligibly to their revenues; on the other hand, hookah parlours depend on the sale of tobacco products for their revenue and hence do not comply with the ban.

When questioned about the effectiveness of the routine inspection by the BMC at hookah parlours, Ambe said, "In the last year, our health department has been busy tackling various ailments. Besides, even if our medical officers decided to act against them, it would be difficult as the owners threaten us. We require police cooperation as well."

## THE COUNTRIES THAT HAVE A SMOKING BAN

**IRELAND:** Tough laws introduced in March 2004 banned smoking in pubs, restaurants and other enclosed workplaces with a penalty of £2,000 for the guilty.

**LONDON:** Smoking in enclosed public places was banned in England on July 1, 2007. After a year of the ban, reports claim that the cigarette sale dipped by at least six percent. **NORWAY:** Smoking stubbed out in restaurants, bars and cafes in 2004.

**SPAIN:** All workplaces including offices, shops, schools, hospitals, cultural centres, plus on public transport, became smoke-free at the start of this

year. More than 70 per cent of people backed the move. **ITALY:** Ban on smoking in all enclosed public places including bars and restaurants came in January 2005.

**AUSTRALIA:** It is forbidden to smoke in parts of Sydney's Bondi beach. Offices, airports and many restaurants and shopping malls have also been smoke-free since May 2004. **NEW ZEALAND:** Became the third country in the world to ban smoking in public in December 2004. The ban covers all enclosed places of work, including bars, clubs and casinos.