

Stubbed out at work? Not quite

Smokers Light Up In New Places

TIME NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: The no-smoking board at one's workplace does keep smokers at bay, but a new survey conducted across the globe—including India—has indicated that a majority of the cigarette-addicts simply found an alternative place to smoke.

A whopping 81% of the Indian employees interviewed said that they had found a new place to smoke ever since the ban on smoking at workplaces was implemented on October 2, 2008. On the bright side, the survey showed that 37% of the Indian employees were trying to reduce the number of cigarettes they smoked in a day.

The Global Workplace Survey conducted across 14 countries involved interviews with over 3,000 employed smokers and employers. Indian findings were in sync with the data

gathered in the UK, France, Turkey and Brazil.

With the inauguration of the 14th World Congress on Health Or Tobacco in the city on Sunday the focus is on how to kick the habit that is known to cause a slew of diseases, including cancer. On Monday, 40 CEOs will gather to discuss ways to make the workplace ban more effective.

The Indian leg of the survey showed that employers felt employees spent over 30 minutes smoking cigarettes each day. Employees, however, felt they spent only 25 minutes on cigarettes and without much consequence to the business. However, 68% of the employers surveyed felt that smoking had a negative effect on their company's financial health. In contrast, only a third of the employees felt likewise. The employers also felt that smoking-



related illnesses were among the top causes for taking an off. According to Chandrashekhar Potkar of Pfizer Ltd, which conducted the survey, "The survey found near-unanimity among both em-

ployees and employers that workplace bans alone are not enough to encourage quitting (of smoking). Both groups think every company or organisation needs to do more (than just enforce bans)."

Employees felt that employers had done little in terms of offering health support for those wanting to kick the habit. Even counselling, many said, was not offered.

Incidentally, an earlier survey conducted by Healis, a nongovernment organisation, in Mumbai and three other Indian cities had shown an overwhelming support for the smoking ban. Around 98% respondents nationwide favoured the regulations prohibiting smoking in all workplaces.

Dr P C Gupta, president of the ongoing World Congress on Tobacco or Health and the head of Healis, has underlined the need for an all-round implementation of the ban. He had said that "By next year, smoking will cause about 9,30,000 adult deaths each year in India."

That's reason enough for local governments and public bodies to implement the law on tobacco control.