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Alifiya Khan
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AIR INHALED at a dumping ground is better than inside a restaurant where people smoke, a recent study has revealed.

Average level of particulate matter at smoking venues was 363.04 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$; a level above 301 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ is considered hazardous. Hookah parlours were the worst with 707.04 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

The study conducted by Healis Sekhsaria Institute for Public Health during March-April also revealed that out of the 50 eateries—pubs, restaurants, hotels, hookah parlours, bars—surveyed over one-third of them are yet to implement the ban.

On October 2, 2008, the health ministry had announced that the ban on smoking in public places would be implemented strictly and offenders would have to pay Rs 200.

"Venues with seating capacity of over 30 were visited. We found that the violation of smoking ban was maximum in country liquor bars; about 80 per cent were found to have smokers. Nearly 75 per cent hookah parlours visited didn't follow the ban," said Dr P.C.



Gupta, director of Healis. Though not a single restaurant was found to display the customary warning sign in the desired size as required by law, their compliance to the ban was better.

However, the most telling figures were those of the air quality at these smoking places, added Gupta.

"This is bad news especially for passive smokers. Second hand smoke contains 4,000 toxic chemicals," said Dr Surendra Shastri, head of department of preventive oncology, Tata Memorial

Hospital.

In a separate survey, volunteers found that restaurants in the island city had fared better compared to those in the suburbs.

"We try to convince our members but there is resistance as business is lost. Customers go to restaurants that allow smoking. Sometimes they eat and step out for a smoke and don't return. Yet we are supporting the ban," said Narayan Alva, president, Association of Hotels and Restaurants of Mumbai.

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