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'Hookah bars create more pollution than dump sites'

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'Hookah bars create more pollution than dump sites'

Madhavi Rajadhyaksha | TNN

Mumbai: Nearly seven months after the smoking ban came into force, around 64% of restaurants, bars and pubs in the city are complying with it. While restaurants and pubs boast of cleaner air, neighbourhood hookah bars and country liquor bars where customers are still puffing away, recorded higher pollution levels than that at dumping grounds, said a group of anti-tobacco activists who are working with the civic body to ensure that the hospitality industry implements the smoking ban.

The ban on smoking in public places was brought into force on October 2, 2008 and the team went around 50 joints in the city with air monitors from March 19 to April 30. "The particulate matter (2.5 microns) in all the venues where smoking is still on despite the ban averaged to 363 Ug/m³, which is worse than the dumping grounds in Mumbai. The Deonar dumping ground for instance records 189.5 Ug/m³," said Dr PC Gupta of the voluntary organisation Healis, which conducted the survey. He said hookah bars which were openly flouting the ban, recorded levels as high as 707.04 Ug/m³, which signalled a cause for worry as tobacco smoke contains sev-

SMOKING IT OUT



- Number of restaurants/bars/pubs/hookah parlours surveyed: **50**
- While **88%** venues claimed to have implemented the ban, only **64%** actually did
- PARTICULATE MATTER**
- Restaurants: **55.36** Ug/m³
- Pubs: **58.96** Ug/m³
- Bars: **123.79** Ug/m³
- Country liquor bars: **326.56** Ug/m³
- Hookah bars: **707.04** Ug/m³
- Non-smoking venues had PM **2.5** levels of **97** Ug/m³
- No-smoking signs are not as per the size and colour specified by the government

eral carcinogens which could be hazardous even for non-smokers who are just hanging around in such places.

TOI had in March report-

ed how pollution levels in city joints had dropped by 64% after the smoking ban came into force.

Another random survey conducted by youth-volunteers showed that suburban restaurants (beyond Dadar) were lagging behind city restaurants when it came to implementation. "We also realised that a lot of suburban restaurants (45% of the 60 surveyed) had customers smoking at their entrances, a problem seen lesser in city restaurants," said Dr Surendra Shastri of Tata Memorial Hospital.

Saying the law should have come in earlier, Narayan Alva of the Association of Hotels and Restaurants (AHAR), said it saved hoteliers a lot of manpower, as waiters didn't have to make repeated trips to tables to get ashtrays, or clean cigarette butts. "As the ban isn't enforced across hotels, we do lose some business as clients go to those restaurants where smoking is still permitted," he said. AHAR has requested the civic body to rope in flying squads to whom hoteliers can complain, if they find customers who refuse to comply with the no-smoking ban.

The BMC officials who have been cracking down on errant hoteliers, also plan to distribute no-smoking signages to hotels, restaurants and pubs.