

DAWN

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Anti-smoking law being flouted in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD, Nov 1: Smokers are violating the ban on tobacco use at work and public places in the federal capital with impunity.

Citizens complained that after withdrawal of the statutory rules and orders, all public and workplaces have become smoke free; therefore, smoking or use of tobacco in any form should not be allowed in any public place.

They said individuals and offices were openly violating the ordinance leading to harmful effects on non-smokers.

They said full implementation of the law would help in protecting the health of the non-smokers.

By withdrawing the SRO on designated smoking areas, the government had totally banned smoking in any place of public work.

It is pertinent to mention that earlier all public and private offices were allowed to designate a separate place for smokers within the office premises with adequate arrangements to protect the health of non-smokers.

However, the permission was misused as it was seen that smokers were using places in offices other than the designated ones while many offices had failed to designate points for smoking.

The government had already declared some areas of public work as no tobacco places including hospitals, dispensaries and other healthcare establishments, educational institutions, offices, conference rooms, all domestic flights, restaurants, buses, wagons, trains, indoor stadiums, gymnasiums, lounges of airports, waiting rooms at railway stations and bus stations.

When contacted, an official of the ministry of health's tobacco control cell that makes strategies for proper implementation of the non-smokers ordinance said the withdrawal of the SRO would help the cell put strict check on the law violators with the help of the public and departments concerned.

He said a five-year strategic plan of action had been formulated by the cell with focus on awareness programme for health officials, professionals, teachers, decision makers and administrative staffs etc.

Health experts claimed that non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke at home and workplaces have 20 per cent to 30 per cent increased risk of developing lung cancer besides other health complications.

Approximately 0.1 million people die every year in Pakistan from diseases caused by tobacco. According to estimates of Pakistan Medical Society, 1.8 million youth between 10 to 24 years of age are at high risk of getting cancer and other diseases from smoking.—APP