

DAWN

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Loopholes make anti-smoking law toothless

By Nasir Iqbal

ISLAMABAD, Aug 19: Not a single case of abuse of the Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers Health Ordinance has been registered since its promulgation in 2002 and cigarettes are being sold openly within close vicinity of educational institutions in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad.

"We could save our young generation from becoming victim of this menace if the smoking ordinance promulgated in 2002 is implemented effectively," Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of The Network for Consumer Protection Dr Arif Azad said in a statement. Article 9 of the Prohibition of Storage, Sale and Distribution of Cigarette prohibits sale of cigarettes near the educational institutions by stating that: "In the immediate vicinity of educational institutions, no person shall himself or by any person on his behalf, store, sell or distribute cigarettes or any other such smoking substance within an area of 50 metres from any college, school or educational institute.

The Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers' Health Ordinance 2002 that came into effect from June 30, 2003 asks for complete ban on smoking at

all public places, institutions and public service vehicles. It prohibits the sale of cigarettes to under-18 and restricts the sale of advertisements of tobacco products within 50 metres of any educational institutions.

The law, Dr Azad said, did not mention who would be the enforcing and monitoring authority of the ordinance.

Giving an example in this regard Dr Azad said cigarettes were being sold openly at five outlets within 50 meters of the Hamdard University F-8 Campus Islamabad. The campus is established on the first and second floors of a commercial place in the sector while the ground floor is occupied by stationary shops and general stores where cigarettes are sold with other consumer item.

Another example of the open violation is the pasting of posters of a newly introduced and other cigarette brands on the walls of these stores. The posters carry attractive offers of gifts for smokers only to lure the youth studying at the university. Similarly cigarettes are openly being sold within the premises of the Quaid-e-Azam University, a premier educational institution in the federal capital. Loopholes make