

GMC not likely to succeed in handling its responsibility?



Comments 1



Daya Nath Singh 19 October 2009 13045 views

It is more than a year, when use of tobacco products and smoking were banned in the public places throughout the country. Though a few law abiding people have made it their habit in their life, the 'young generation' has accepted it as a challenge to 'defy the laws'. A number of organizations are working to publicize the harm caused by the use of tobacco, but the results do not seem to be effective. Most of the people have taken it as a 'fashion to ignore the laws', even if those are beneficial for their health and wealth. Under the circumstances, it is very important for the administration to be strict in the matter of implementing the rules framed under the law.

Recently, a sensitization meeting for officials cum discussion on tobacco control initiative and future action plan by Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC) was held in the chamber of GMC joint commissioner, Ratul Barman. The meeting was held in collaboration with National Tobacco Control Programme, Assam and Voluntary Health Association of Assam, a NGO. The participants discussed about the various provisions of the Tobacco Control Acts, with special reference to those related to enforcement drives by GMC. Dr Banajit Choudhury, Chief Health Officer, GMC, who has been associated with National Tobacco Control Programme, Assam in its tobacco control drive for quite long time, informed the gathering about the constitution of a 'task force' with GMC and State's tobacco control cell personnel. He also informed about its visit to approximately 100 public establishments like hotels, restaurants, eateries, discos, bars, libraries, cultural halls, public buildings etc; for monitoring and compliance of the smoke-free law and providing them reference material - the COTPA. The Assam Act 'Prohibition of Smoking and Non smokers' Health Protection 1999', notifications and signage guidelines. The NTCP personnel informed about the follow-up action taken in this regard. Dr Choudhury also spoke about health hazards and social trends/implications of tobacco use. Other participants also aired their views. Later on it was decided that the GMC would be taking the following actions:

The GMC would advertise in news papers about the ban on sale of tobacco products to and by minors (Sec 6(a), sale of tobacco products within 100 meters of educational institutions (Sec 6b) and ban on prominent advertisement of tobacco products and publish sample of mandatory signage. It will also select some educational institutions to implement Sec 6(b) in the first phase and conduct raids near some selected educational institutions for violation of Sec 6(b). Include anti-tobacco laws in terms and conditions section of all future GMC trade license (currently a seal directing compulsory display of No Smoking sign is included in trade license for hotels and eateries). It has to issue anti- tobacco message in property tax forms and receipts also.

No doubt, these actions have already been taken in papers, but since those are ineffective, it requires some 'hard step' to be taken. In most of the public buses, it is observed every day, while driving the vehicle the driver smokes and if any passenger objects, he or she faces rude behavior of bus employees. Nobody is found to support the right things and other passengers remain silent spectators. Similarly, a number of shops dealing in tobacco products are doing brisk business in front of or very close to educational institutions and nobody dares to 'quarrel or oppose' the 'undisciplined tobacco users'. There are a number of laws as use of mobile phone while driving, obey the traffic rules, etc; but those are not followed by the people because not action is taken by the authorities against them for unknown reasons.

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