



Chhayankan (Visual Art)

Anti-smoking legislation – train to nowhere

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India is home to approximately 195 million users of tobacco;[1] a further five million are under the age of 15 years. The mean age of initiating smoking has been found to be around 20 years;[2] the common reasons for children to smoke include peer pressure, parents that smoke, a tendency to self-harm, and viewing cigarettes as a way of rebellion and asserting independence.[3] Smoking is becoming increasingly popular among Indian children, some as young as sixth-graders.[4]

Various legislations have been passed in India to curb the use of tobacco-containing products. Cigarettes (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1975 mandates that advisory warnings be depicted on all products containing tobacco.[5] The Supreme Court of India passed a judgment on 2nd November 2001

recognizing the adverse effects of smoking and banning smoking in public places.[6] The Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003, further reinforced the legislation and prohibited advertisement of smoking, and banned sale of tobacco products to children under 18 years of age or within 100 yards of educational institutions.

Do these legislations work? Has the prevalence of smoking in India come down? Have people become aware of the harmful effects of smoking? Are our children safe from smoke now?

This picture answers some of these questions; clearly the answer is no.

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