

■ More than 700 people issued challans since drive launched in Feb.

Smoking in public places can land you in a spot

AGE CORRESPONDENT
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Next time you wish to light a cigarette in a public place in the national capital, think twice. You could well be issued a challan by the Delhi police that has launched an anti-smoking campaign under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA). More than 700 people have been issued challans for smoking in public places since the drive was launched in mid-February. The Delhi police is issuing challans directly for the first time under COTPA which prohibits smoking in public places, sale of tobacco



products to minors, and sale of tobacco products within 100 yards of educational institutions.

Earlier, the Delhi police was using the "Kalandra" system wherein a slip

used to be issued to the offender who would then go to a magistrate to pay the fine. "The 'kalandra' system was proving to be less effective as people often did not give their IDs

and did not turn up to pay the fine. Under the COTPA, on-the-spot fine can be levied for violations which is making it more effective," said Heena Shaikh of Sambandh Health Foundation, which has been working on tobacco control. "We have so far caught over 200 violators and challaned them. Every day, 5-7 persons are being caught and challaned by policemen in areas under East Delhi," said Omvir Singh, deputy commissioner of police (East). Mr Singh said that the police has also closed down five hookah bars in East Delhi. The North district police has issued

over 263 challans under COTPA so far, said Jatinder Narwal, DCP (North). The Southeast district police has also issued 250 challans under the campaign. Enforcing COTPA will go a long way in reducing the prevalence of tobacco usage. The police force is being trained to take action under COTPA and the campaign will continue, Mr Narwal said.

"Prevalence of tobacco users in Delhi is 24.3 per cent with an estimated 10,000 people dying every year due to tobacco-related diseases," said Mohini Daljeet Singh, CEO of Max India Foundation, which is a partner in the campaign.