

# SC DISMISSES PLEA SEEKING TO INCREASE SMOKING AGE TO 21

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NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea seeking direction on increasing the age of smoking, removing designated smoking zones from commercial places and airports, banning the sale of cigarettes near educational institutions, healthcare institutions, and places of worship.

A bench headed by Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul, while declining to entertain the plea, said, "If you want publicity, argue a good case. Don't file publicity interest litigation". The plea had sought direction to increase the penalty for smoking in public places, banning the sale of loose cigarettes, creating guidelines to handle filtration of air at places that have smoking zones,

"Issue guidelines and direct dedicated ions for closing the smoking zones at airports, clubs, restaurants, hotels, public places, and even in private properties being used for commercial purposes in a phased manner so as not to induce smoking among non-smokers. Issue directions towards increasing the age to smoke from 18 to 21 years," the plea stated.

The plea filed by advocates Shubham Awasthi and Saptarishi Mishra mentioned that the sale and addiction of cigarettes in the country and such products affect citizens' right to health and that open smoking in places like airports, restaurants, and clubs in designated smoking zones influences the adolescent population wrongly to take up smoking.

"In 2018, WHO released its factsheet on the prevalence of tobacco consumption in India, and it has quoted the younger population in India as being at increased risk of cardio-vascular diseases and tobacco use, among which cigarettes are a major contributor, killing 9 million people in India, or 9.5% of all deaths in India," the petition stated.