

Germany introduces ban on smoking in public transport, federal buildings

01/09/2007

BERLIN: A ban on smoking in German trains, other public transport and federal buildings took effect Saturday –the latest piece in an expanding patchwork of smoking restrictions in the country.

The new law, which provides for fines ranging from 5 to 1,000 (nearly US\$7 to US\$1,365) for offenders, also features a ban on cigarette sales to under-18s –raising the age limit from the previous 16. .

The ban applies to buses, trains, aircraft, ferries, taxis and federal facilities such as ministries, labor offices and federal courts. When lawmakers approved the legislation in May, they extended the plan to cover both houses of parliament and the German president's offices.

"We are doing something here that is already the case in America, in France, in England," railway operator Deutsche Bahn AG's chief executive, Hartmut Mehdorn, said this week. "And if it works well there ... then it will work in Germany too."

However, as with other such laws in Germany, the ban allows for special rooms to be set aside for smokers –falling short of near-total bans on smoking in enclosed areas taking hold elsewhere in Europe.

So, while Deutsche Bahn's trains are now smoke-free, smoking areas have been set aside at 330 of the country's busiest stations. In addition, businesses in rented premises at stations –such as restaurants –will be covered by different local laws.

The federal government's hopes of banning smoking in public have been dented by the fact that the constitution hands much of the authority to states in one of Europe's more nicotine-friendly countries.

A patchwork quilt of regulations is being introduced gradually. Three states imposed partial bans on Aug. 1, covering places such as restaurants, hospitals, schools and state offices, and more are set to follow.

Source:

<http://www.iht.com/articles...>

