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Punjab Declares Public Parks Smoke-Free Zones

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The provincial government of Punjab has declared all public parks across the region as smoke-free zones under the Prohibition of Smoking and Protection of Non-Smokers' Health Ordinance 2002. This move comes as part of a broader initiative to promote public health and protect citizens, particularly children and families, from exposure to harmful tobacco smoke in recreational spaces. The directive was formalised by the Secretary of Housing, Noorul Amin Mengal, through an official notification mandating immediate implementation.

As outlined in the order, the ban applies to all tobacco products, including cigarettes, cigars, and electronic cigarettes, within park premises. Additionally, outlets operating within park boundaries, such as tuck shops and cafes, have also been prohibited from selling or promoting tobacco items. These steps are aimed at reducing tobacco accessibility and discouraging public consumption in areas frequented by families, children, and the elderly. The order not only protects non-smokers but also aligns with national goals of reducing smoking rates through environmental deterrents.

Enforcement will involve the installation of visible 'No Smoking' signs at strategic points across all parks, coupled with active monitoring by relevant authorities. The provincial government has issued a ten-day deadline for complete compliance, urging local administrations and park management bodies to take swift action. This includes removing tobacco-related advertisements and conducting awareness campaigns to inform the public of the new rules. The emphasis on clear signage and community engagement reflects a practical approach to ensuring sustained enforcement.

The initiative marks a strong stance by the Punjab government in promoting clean and healthy public spaces. By curbing tobacco use in communal environments, the policy underscores a commitment to preventive healthcare and environmental responsibility. With increased global scrutiny on tobacco control and non-communicable disease prevention, this decision places Punjab on a progressive path. Long-term success, however, will depend on rigorous oversight and public cooperation. If effectively enforced, this smoke-free initiative could serve as a model for other provinces seeking to safeguard their public spaces and promote a healthier standard of living for all citizens.