

PATNA: The state government has decided to effectively implement the provisions of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) in seven districts of Patna, Munger, Vaishali, Darbhanga, Samastipur, Bhojpur and Katihar. Quoting the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) at a workshop on Monday, principal secretary of health department, Amarjeet Sinha, said Bihar has the highest number of tobacco consumers (54 per cent of the state population) in the country. Members of the State Tobacco Control Coordination Committee (STCCC) discussed various steps for the effective implementation of the Act. Apart from its other provisions, the Act banssmoking in public places and prohibits the sale of tobacco and other related products within 100 yards of any educational institution.

"There is urgent need to enforce COTPA at district level, in coordination with NGOs and government departments like health, education and police," Sinha said. "Anti-tobacco squads should be formed at district level for carrying out surprise raids and slapping fine on the spot," he said. Village and Sanitation Committees will be formed at grassroots level to spread messages regarding ill-effects of tobacco, he added. Addressing the workshop, state programme officer of Bihar Health Society, N K Mishra, said, "DMs are expected to call monthly meetings of

said. Village and Sanitation Committees will be formed at grassroots level to spread messages regarding ill-effects of tobacco, he added. Addressing the workshop, state programme officer of Bihar Health Society, N K Mishra, said, "DMs are expected to call monthly meetings of their respective district health committees to check the use of tobacco at public places. As per the Union health ministry direction, the required information would be sent to the state health society. Particulars of the meeting would also be sent to state home department which will forward it to the superintendents of police concerned to discuss it in their monthly crime meetings." Noted surgeon Dr. A A Hai said 40% of the male cancer patients were suffering from oral cancer. Dr. Ravindra Kumar, who represented the Central government, explained the various practices being followed in other states to check the use of tobacco. Apart from various officials of education, health, and police departments, NGOs like Socio-Economic and Educational Development Society (SEEDS) and HRIDAY also participated in the workshop.

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