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About 2 crore students in Bihar say no to tobacco

By [M I Khan](#)

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Sourabh Ranjan, Abhisek Singh, Talha Hussain , Anjula Anthony and Sarah Imran, are school students in Bihar who have taken a pledge against the use of tobacco.

They are five of more than two crore school students in Bihar who on Wednesday took an oath never to consume tobacco or use related products.

"About 2.2 crore students from around 2.2 lakh schools, including government and private, vowed to never use tobacco or related products in their lives," said Cancer Awareness Society National President Dr T P Sinha.

"It is a part of the Bihar government's initiative 'Pledge Day' to discourage school student from using tobacco products. A drive with a sole aim to create awareness among school students," Sinha said.

Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Sushil Kumar Modi administered the oath to hundreds of students from 30 schools at the historic Gandhi maidan in Patna, while thousands of schools hosted a similar function at their respective campuses in the state, an official of Indian Red Cross Society said.

Sinha said that students also took a pledge to deter their friends, family members and relatives from consuming tobacco.

A recent survey revealed that in Bihar several children start smoking cigarettes or chewing *guthka* from class seven. In some cases they start using tobacco after class five.

Sinha said that aim of the drive is to make school students understand the risk of using tobacco and the importance of staying away from tobacco to ensure a healthy life.

In Bihar, nearly 53.5 percent of the state's 10.5 crore population use tobacco in one form or the other, its prevalence is nearly 20 percentage points higher than the national average of 35 per cent. A smokeless tobacco product 'khaini' is a popular tobacco used by millions, followed by *guthka*.

Last year a survey by the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS India) revealed that 63 per cent males and 35 per cent females in Bihar use smokeless tobacco.

"We are happy to take the oath. It is a memorable oath with a commitment and determination to keep away from tobacco," said Abhisek Singh, a class nine student of a government run high school in Patna said.

Sarah Imran, a student of class 10 of St Joseph Convent High School said that students have decided not to use tobacco for a health life and healthy society. "It is the first step for a healthy future," Sarah said.

Abhisek, another student, said Bihar could become a model for other states for a tobacco free environment.

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M I Khan in Patna

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