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Bihar to cut tobacco use

Burden of butt

DHNS

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Alarmed by the report that consumption of tobacco in Bihar was highest in the country, the Nitish regime has asked all the superintendents of polices (SPs) to set up anti-tobacco squads (task forces) to ensure that the provisions of "Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003" were implemented strictly.

The state government was shocked after a report showed that tobacco consumption in Bihar was 53.5 per cent against the national average of 35 per cent.

In a letter addressed to all the SPs, Bihar Home Commissioner Amir Subhani pointed out that Rule 6 of the Act, which prohibits the sale of tobacco and tobacco products to minor children, was being flouted frequently. "Nearly 70,000 untimely deaths take place annually due to cancer, heart and lungs diseases which are directly or indirectly caused by tobacco," the letter said.

The commissioner asserted that apart from health concerns, the money spent on the treatment of patients suffering from diseases caused by tobacco was far more than the revenue earned as tax from the sale of tobacco, which adversely affects the state economy.

The Home Commissioner said that starting from May, the district magistrates would convene a meeting of district health societies where district education officers should be present to discuss implementation of the Act. "Report of such meetings should be submitted to the State Health Society as well as Home Department regularly," Subhani added.

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