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**THIS STORY IS FROM OCTOBER 31, 2012**

## ãDrive against tobacco soonã

PTI / Oct 31, 2012, 04:53 IST

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PATNA: With more than half of Bihar's population consuming harmful tobacco and its products, the state government, which imposed a ban on gutka early this year, has decided to launch a vigorous drive against its sale. "Special squads will be constituted at state and district levels comprising officials from police, health and education to catch people selling or consuming cigarette and tobacco products," deputy chief minister [Sushil Kumar Modi](#) told reporters. Bihar had imposed a ban on gutka in May this year. He said an awareness drive would be organized in schools across the state on November 9 against the consumption of tobacco and its products.

He would soon convene a meeting of hotels and restaurant owners in Patna to inform them that they would also be penalized if someone was found smoking or consuming tobacco on their premises. Modi, who attended an international conference against tobacco in New York early this month, reeled out figures to show that the problem had assumed dangerous proportions in the state and the country. According to a survey, Bihar was at the sixth position after five Northeastern states nationwide to have a large section of people consuming cigarette, bidi, tobacco and gutka, Modi said and added Bihar is one of the 16 states which had banned gutka so far.

The deputy CM announced that he would work as an activist against tobacco consumption and demanded that the Centre order a nationwide ban on it instead of states doing so. To discourage the consumption of tobacco and products made out of it, [Bihar government](#) had increased tax on them from 13% to 20% in 2012-13. "This will be further raised," Modi, who is also state's finance minister, said.

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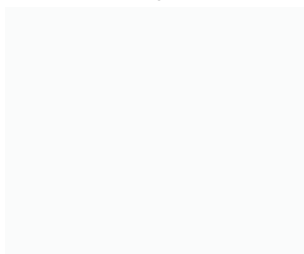
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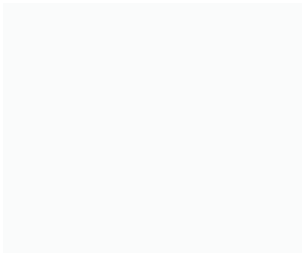
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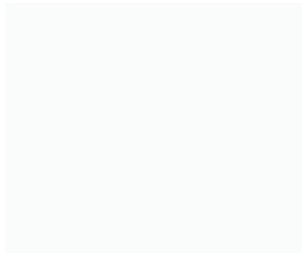
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