

Ministry of Education Organises National Workshop to raise awareness in enforcing implementation of Tobacco-Free Educational Institutions on World No Tobacco Day 2025

Stakeholders from Ministries of Education, Health & Family Welfare, Home Affairs, Civil Societies, UNODC unite to promote implementation of ToFEI guidelines

Nationwide School–Challenge on Tobacco Awareness on MyGov platform inaugurated

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Shri Sanjay Kumar, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy (DoSEL), Ministry of Education, inaugurated a National Workshop on 'World No Tobacco Day' (31st May 2025), at Rang Bhawan, Akashvani Bhawan, New Delhi. The day-long workshop saw officials from the Ministries of Education, Health & Family Welfare, Home Affairs, NCERT, CBSE, State/UTs civil societies, domain experts, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), National Service Scheme (NSS), students from educational institutes making presentations and exchange views on the subject.





Shri Sanjay Kumar launched the Nationwide School Challenge on Tobacco Awareness on the MyGov platform. The challenge, aimed at fostering student engagement in tobacco awareness campaigns, will be open for participation starting 10th June 2025. He also administered the No-Tobacco Pledge with all the participants, emphasizing the shared responsibility of educators, administrators, and communities in ensuring a tobacco-free environment for children.

Shri Sanjay Kumar, in his inaugural speech, expressed serious concern over the prevalence of tobacco use among youth and its far-reaching consequences on children's well-being and the nation's economic burden. He drew attention to the aggressive marketing tactics used by the

tobacco industry, particularly those that target vulnerable groups such as adolescents, which become the building blocks of the narrative around tobacco consumption in young minds.

Calling for a united effort to end tobacco use, he urged individuals to quit tobacco and support others in doing so. As tobacco consumption is the gateway to other higher forms of substance abuse, he appealed to schools to proactively be involved in raising awareness through School Management Committee (SMC) meetings, ensuring that parents and local communities are fully informed and involved in the movement towards ensuring tobacco-free schools.

Shri Anandrao V. Patil, Additional Secretary, DoSEL, delivered the Keynote Address by highlighting the detrimental effects of tobacco consumption, especially among young school-going children. He stressed the critical need to raise awareness at all levels to promote and prioritize student health, well-being, and nutrition as integral components of school education to educate students about the consequences of habits that can affect their long-term health.

Smt. A. Srija, Economic Advisor, DoSEL, welcomed the delegates and laid the context setting for the Workshop. She also underlined the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration to effectively implement the Tobacco Free Educational Institutions (ToFEI) Guidelines and create a safe, healthy environment for students in schools and colleges.

Shri Rahul Singh, Chairperson, CBSE, delivering the Special Address emphasized the critical importance of maintaining tobacco-free school environments. He highlighted the serious and long-term impact of tobacco use on children's health, development, and academic performance. He further elaborated on the various initiatives undertaken by CBSE to support tobacco awareness and prevention, including the integration of health and wellness modules in the curriculum, capacity building of school staff, and sustained awareness drives to empower students to make informed choices.

A video documenting the ToFEI journey from conception to impact was screened, capturing the evolving efforts of the Ministry of Education and States/UTs to institutionalize safe, healthy and tobacco-free educational spaces.

The technical sessions were structured in place across the ideation for adopting a multi-sectoral holistic approach in educational institutions in keeping the children - the future youth of the nation, away from tobacco and other harmful forms of addiction and to emphasise adopting a healthy lifestyle. In the light of multimedia sources of information/misinformation available today through internet browsing, social media, reels, e-commerce, OTT, and movies impacting upon the food consumption patterns and living style of the youth, the resource speakers of the Technical Sessions offered possible pathways that could be explored by teachers, parents, student volunteers, civil societies in conveying across the messages of healthy lifestyle.

- **Mental Health Awareness through Manodarpan and Sahyog:** Prof. Vinod Kumar Shanwal, NCERT, presented interventions under the Manodarpan initiative for early mental health support in schools.
- **School Health Programme (SHP):** Dr. Harish Kumar Meena, NCERT, elaborated on the SHP modules and their integration into the curriculum to promote lifelong wellness.
- **Role of CBSE in Student Health and Well-being:** Smt. Anjali Chhabra, Joint Secretary (Academics) CBSE, shared strategies and assessment tools to strengthen health literacy among students.
- **Monitoring Dashboard for TOFEI and NTCP:** Dr. Avinash Sunthlia, DADG, NTCP, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, demonstrated how digital tools and dashboards are being used to track compliance with ToFEI and NTCP goals in real-time.
- **Orientation on Navchetna Module (Life Skills and Drug Education):** Smt. Sreekala P. Venugopal, Director, DoSEL, introduced the Navchetna module designed for schoolchildren, focusing on life skills and drug resistance education.
- **Global Best Practices on Youth Resilience:** Shri Samarth Pathak, UNODC, discussed evidence-based approaches to build resilience among school children to prevent engagement in risky behaviours.

- **Promoting a Holistic Wellbeing Culture:** Dr. Jitendra Nagpal, Senior Consultant, Psychiatrist and Head, the Institute of Mental Health and Life Skills Promotion, stressed the need to integrate wellness education, nutrition and life-skills training into school routines to foster tobacco-free lifestyles.
- **Sharing of Best Practices:** Nodal Officers from Chandigarh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Puducherry showcased the success stories in implementing ToFEI in their States/UTs. Notable initiatives included the setting up of a live organ museum and dental health check-ups in schools to help red-flag early signs of tobacco use, the use of comic books and animated videos to engage students creatively, and the organisation of parent-teacher meetings with school counsellors to raise parental awareness. Efforts to translate and contextualise the ToFEI manual into regional languages were also highlighted, ensuring better outreach and implementation at the grassroots level. Nodal officers of Haryana and Tamil Nadu also spoke about efforts being taken in their States to raise awareness about the ill effects of tobacco usage.

Shri Ram Singh, Deputy Director, DoSEL, acknowledging the active participation of all stakeholders explained the Terms and Conditions of the School Challenge program for students to participate and upload their activities through the MyGov portal for assessment. He also called upon States/UTs to maintain efforts towards raising awareness, inter-sectoral collaboration, and monitoring to ensure that every school evolves into a safe, supportive, and health-promoting space.

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