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70% of 3,000 Surveyed Policemen Consume Tobacco

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MUMBAI: Nearly 70% of 3,000 policemen surveyed during 2014 consumed tobacco, showed a survey conducted by the Cancer Patients Aid Association (CPAA). The NGO also found that 35% of these policemen had started developing precancerous conditions.

CPAA officials said that camps were organized at Naigaon, Dindoshi, Worli, Marine Drive, Tardeo, Malabar Hill, BKC and Dadar police stations as a part of the research. While doctors screened each policeman, counsellors briefed them about the ill-effects of tobacco use.

When questioned about the reason for consuming tobacco, most junior officials cited work-related stress as the primary factor. Erratic duty hours and the need to stay awake during night shifts compelled them to consume tobacco, they said.

But CPPA executive director Anita Peter, who conducted the research, pointed out that many young policemen hailed from smaller towns. "Senior policemen told me that these young officials more often than not hailed from smaller towns where they were exposed to tobacco at an younger age," she said, adding that tobacco is easily available and cheap.

To commemorate World No Tobacco Day, which is celebrated on May 31, the CPAA, along with police commissioner Rakesh Maria, will launch Tobacco Free Mumbai Police Station on May 22 at the Police Club, Azad Maidan. Police officers who have given up tobacco will be felicitated.

The CPAA had conducted a similar study on BEST drivers and conductors in 2013. "We thought why not do the same for the police? After all, these are the men who work 365 days simply to protect us. Tobacco brings with it a number of illnesses, which tamper with their personal and professional lives. This is a small way of giving back to them in return of the services they render," said Peter.