

ANDAMAN DAILY

News & Views from Andaman and Nicobar Islands

by **NICOBAR TIMES**

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Tobacco Use Rampant Among Minors in Andaman and Nicobar Islands as COTPA Enforcement Lags



Tarun Karthick

Campbell Bay,
12 November 2024

A recent Dental Screening and Awareness Camp held at Govt. Senior Secondary School in Oralkatcha, Baratang, has highlighted a growing concern: tobacco use is alarmingly prevalent among minors in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Conducted under the National Oral Health Programme (NOHP), the camp screened 258 students for oral health issues and substance abuse. Shockingly, 19 students were identified as regular users of tobacco, with two diagnosed with pouch keratosis—a precancerous condition linked to smokeless tobacco use.

Pouch keratosis, or tobacco pouch keratosis, results from chronic irritation caused by smokeless tobacco, such as chewing tobacco or snuff. This condition leads to white patches on the inner cheek or between the teeth and gums, placing these minors at heightened risk for oral cancer in the future.

The findings of this screening

highlight a deeper problem: the widespread use of tobacco among young people in the Islands. In urban and semi-urban areas, cigarette smoking is common among minors, while in rural areas, many youths habitually chew tobacco-laden paan. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2019-2021, tobacco use rates in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands rank among the highest in India, with 59% of men and 19% of women over age 15 regularly using tobacco products.

Despite these figures, enforcement of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA) of 2003 remains weak. Although authorities often claim to conduct checks on tobacco sales near schools, violations persist. COTPA prohibits the sale of tobacco within 100 yards of educational institutions, yet shops in close proximity to schools continue to openly sell these products. From Diglipur in North Andaman to Campbell Bay in Nicobar, enforcement appears minimal.

In the capital, Sri Vijaya Puram, hundreds of shops operate within the restricted zones, selling

tobacco freely and often to minors—an additional violation of COTPA, which strictly forbids the sale of tobacco to individuals under 18. Minors in Sri Vijaya Puram can reportedly buy cigarettes and tobacco products without any restriction and hesitation, while in rural areas, tobacco-laced paan remains widely accessible to young users.

The lack of rigorous implementation of COTPA across the Islands poses serious public health risks, potentially paving the way for a “dark future”. If tobacco use among youth continues unchecked, the long-term consequences will be severe: increased health issues, the spread of tobacco-related diseases, and an excessive burden on the local healthcare system.

It is imperative for the concerned authorities to take immediate and robust steps to curb this growing problem. A concerted effort to enforce COTPA provisions can not only protect the health of young residents but also ensure a healthier future for the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Government Establishments Lag Behind in UPI Adoption in A & N Islands



Tarun Karthick

Campbell Bay,
12 November 2024

Despite India's sweeping digital payments revolution, government-operated establishments across the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are lagging in adopting UPI (Unified Payments Interface) as a payment option, particularly in rural regions. While UPI has gained widespread acceptance across the nation and even in the country's remote areas, cash remains the preferred payment method at many government services and businesses on the islands.

The Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation Ltd. (ANIIDCO), which manages petrol pumps and wine shops throughout the region, reflects this gap. For instance, UPI payments are accepted at the ANIIDCO petrol pump in Goal Ghar, Sri Vijaya Puram, yet Campbell Bay and other rural areas often lack this option. Similarly, ANIIDCO wine shops, even in urban locations, seldom offer UPI payment despite being equipped with modern POS devices capable of processing digital transactions. The absence of clear UPI acceptance signage at these outlets further adds to the uncertainty for customers.

State Transport Services (STS), responsible for operating bus services across the islands, also continues to rely solely on cash transactions for local ticket purchases. This stands in contrast to the convenience offered in metropolitan cities like New Delhi, where commuters can buy bus and metro tickets through UPI on the One Delhi

App, built over the ONDC platform.

Another prominent example is the STARS e-Ticketing Portal for purchasing ship tickets online. Although the portal previously offered a UPI payment option, it was removed for undisclosed reasons and has yet to be reinstated, leaving travellers without the ease of UPI payment for purchasing ship tickets.

The reluctance to adopt UPI within local government establishments stands in stark contrast to the Government of India's active promotion of UPI payments on a global stage. UPI, celebrated as a flagship innovation in India's digital payment landscape, has become integral to daily transactions for countless Indians, reducing reliance on cash and enhancing transaction convenience.

Despite the visible success of UPI across the country, where even remote regions have embraced the system, the islands' government departments and public services have been slow to integrate it into their operations. This slow adoption of digital payments is not only a hindrance to convenience but also sends mixed signals as the central government showcases UPI to international dignitaries as an example of India's technological advancements.

To align with India's digital-first vision and enhance public convenience, government departments and establishments in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands should expedite the integration of UPI payment options across all services.



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Childhood Pneumonia Remains Leading Cause of Under-Five Deaths in India; SAANS Campaign Launched to Combat Crisis



Rohit Kumar
Sri Vijaya Puram,
12 November 2024

Childhood pneumonia continues to be the top infectious killer among children under five in India, contributing to 17.5% of under-five fatalities nationwide. In response, the

government has launched the SAANS (Social Awareness & Action to Neutralise Pneumonia Successfully) Campaign, a nationwide initiative aimed at strengthening healthcare systems and raising awareness about pneumonia

prevention. Running from November 12, 2024, to February 28, 2025, the campaign carries the tagline "Pneumonia nahi, toh bachpan sahi," underscoring the importance of a pneumonia-free childhood.

The campaign launch coincides with World Pneumonia Day on November 12, 2024, an observance dedicated to accelerating efforts against childhood pneumonia. This year, the focus is on promoting awareness around

the protection, prevention, and treatment of the disease, with an emphasis on early identification and encouraging parents and caregivers to seek timely medical care. Key goals include educating the public about the crucial role of Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine (PCV) and highlighting the impacts of indoor and outdoor pollution on respiratory health. Through the SAANS Campaign, the government aims to foster health-promoting

behaviours across communities, working towards reducing childhood pneumonia mortality to fewer than 3 per 1,000 live births by 2025. Community health workers, ANMs and ASHAs, will play a crucial role in identifying cases early and facilitating immediate intervention. The public is urged to support health workers in these efforts, helping to secure a safer and healthier future for India's youngest citizens.

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31 Women Complete SBI-RSETI General EDP Programme in Sri Vijaya Puram



Tarun Karthick
Campbell Bay,
12 November 2024

The State Bank of India Rural Self Employment Training Institute (SBI-RSETI) in Sri Vijaya Puram successfully concluded a six-day General Entrepreneurial Development

Programme (EDP) on 11th November 2024, aimed at empowering 31 women sponsored by the Directorate of Industries. The training, which began on November 4, culminated in a closing ceremony attended by notable officials and trainers who encouraged the participants to

pursue their entrepreneurial goals.

The event was presided over by Mr. Ajit Anand, Deputy Director of Industries, who was joined by Mr. Rathinder Nath, IPO from the Directorate of

Industries, Mr. Ummar Farooq, Chief Manager of UTLBC, and Mr. C. Raj, Director of SBI-RSETI.

In his address, Mr. Ajit Anand commended SBI-RSETI for delivering high-quality training to the participants and encouraged them to venture into

their own businesses. He assured the trainees that the Directorate of Industries and associated banks would provide full support to help them succeed in their entrepreneurial pursuits.

Mr. Ummar Farooq, Chief Manager at UTLBC, spoke about the significance of self-employment, highlighting key steps to becoming a successful entrepreneur. He advised participants interested in establishing small enterprises to register under the PM Vishwakarma

a government scheme offering easy credit access and lower interest rates.

Several trainees shared their experiences from the six-day programme, noting the boost in self-confidence they gained and expressing optimism about launching their entrepreneurial journeys. The programme is part of SBI-RSETI's ongoing efforts to promote self-employment and provide skill-based training to empower individuals, particularly women from rural areas.

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Draft ICRZ Plan for Little Nicobar Island Released for Public Review and Feedback



and maps are available in various offices, including the Chairman's Office, ANCZMA (Chief Secretary, A&N Administration), Member Secretary's Office, ANCZMA [APCCF (CRZ&FC)], Van Sadan, Haddo, Deputy Commissioner (Nicobar), Assistant Commissioner (Nancowry), Divisional Forest Officer (Nicobar Division), Member Secretary (Pollution Control Committee), Director (Tribal Welfare), Director (Tourism), and the Tribal Council (Little Nicobar) for public review and submission of claims, objections, and suggestions.

In this regard, concerned stakeholders have requested to submit their comments, suggestions, and details of existing or proposed projects, along with master plans for present and future development within a 10-year timeframe, if any, within 30 days from the date of this press release to the office of APCCF (CRZ&FC), Van Sadan, Haddo, Sri Vijaya Puram, or via email at apccf-crzfc.an@and.nic.in or apccf.crzfc@gmail.com.

When submitting suggestions and comments, stakeholders may refer to the provisions of the ICRZ Notification, 2019, available on the websites mentioned above.

Tarun Karthick

Campbell Bay,
12 November 2024

Andaman & Nicobar Administration had assigned the task of preparing the Island Coastal Regulation Zone

(ICRZ) Plan for Little Nicobar Island to the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai, in accordance with the Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) Notification, 2019.

NCSCM has submitted the Draft

ICRZ Report, ICRZ Map, and Coastal Land Use Map for Little Nicobar Island for further processing as per the provisions of the ICRZ Notification, 2019.

The ICRZ report and maps are now available on the websites of the

A&N Administration (<https://andaman.gov.in/>) and the Department of Environment & Forest, A&N Administration (<http://forest.and.nic.in/>).

Soft copies of the draft ICRZ report

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DC N & M Andaman Reviews Progress of PRAYAS, ICDS, and Kuposhan Mukht Panchayat Abhiyan



and address gaps in implementation, urging all departments to work towards achieving set targets within the stipulated time frame.

In particular, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the need for more active participation from students and encouraged DEOs to gather feedback from them. He also called for organising sessions based on student demand to ensure better engagement with the initiatives. Under the 'Kuposhan Mukht Panchayat Abhiyan,' special attention was drawn to children who have been malnourished for over six months, emphasising the urgency of addressing this issue.

Mr. Meena further underscored the critical role of ACs and departmental officers in conducting local-level reviews and field visits to ensure continuous monitoring and better outcomes of these initiatives. He called for sustained efforts at the grassroots level to ensure the success of these important programs.

Tarun Karthick

Campbell Bay,
12 November 2024

The Deputy Commissioner of

North and Middle Andaman, Mr. Panchayat Abhiyan' on 11th November 2024. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioners (ACs), District Education Officers (DEOs), and Child Development Project Officers (CDPOs).

Mr. Meena commended the significant progress made thus far in these initiatives, noting the importance of inter-departmental coordination to maximise their impact. He stressed the need to identify



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Dakshata Initiative Launched to Enhance Maternal and Newborn Care in A&N Islands



Director of the Directorate of Health Services (DHS), gracing the event as the chief guest. Dr. Antony handed over certificates to the participants and emphasized the importance of providing quality care in labour rooms to ensure better pregnancy outcomes. She also highlighted the significance of cascade training at the local level and the follow-up of cases in labour rooms to maintain high standards of care.

In the program's inaugural session, Dr. Avijit Roy, Joint Secretary (RCH-II), and Dr. M.K. Saha, Professor and Head of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, addressed the participants. Dr. Roy encouraged the trainees to take the program seriously to improve healthcare quality in labour rooms and reduce maternal and infant mortality rates.

Dr. M.K. Saha, along with Ms. Ruby Varghese, Nursing Officer at Dr. R.P. Hospital, Mayabunder, and Ms. Privina, Nursing Officer at G.B. Pant Hospital, served as resource persons for the hands-on training sessions.

Tarun Karthick

Campbell Bay,

12 November 2024

Aiming to improve the quality of

Maternal and Newborn Care, the Dakshata initiative, launched by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, was inaugurated on 7th November 2024 in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. This program focuses on enhancing care during the intra and

immediate postpartum period. A three-day training program for Nursing Officers, titled "Dakshata – Training Programme to Improve Maternal and Newborn Care," was held from November 7 to 9, 2024, at the Directorate of Industries Conference Hall in Sri Vijaya

Puram. The training aimed to equip healthcare professionals with the necessary skills to deliver improved care in labor rooms.

The training concluded on 9th November, with Dr. Suja Antony,

A total of 12 Nursing Officers from various health institutions participated in the training, which aims to equip them with the skills needed to make a meaningful impact on maternal and newborn care in the region.



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