

Bharat Mata Higher Secondary School is located on the main road in the bustling railway settlement area of Bilaspur city, Chhatisgarh. This road leads to railway station which is one kilometer from the school and also connects the High Court. This is very busy road with heavy flow of traffic.

The school has both English and Hindi medium, the timings of which are different. While English medium students (1096) have classes in the morning hours till 12 in the noon, Hindi medium classes (1136 students) begin at 12 in the noon. Hence 2232 students, 70 teachers and 8 administrative staff enter and exit the school campus around 12 noon in a span of 10 minutes. Many students and teachers use their personal vehicles. They are either dropped / picked up by parents or private vehicles such as auto and cycle rickshaws. To add to this traffic congestion on the already busy road, the arrival and departure of four major trains at this point of time creates further confusion resulting in chaotic traffic. The road bustles with school students, huge flow of passengers into and out of the railway station, people and to top it, VIP vehicles going to the high court.

For years this choking traffic was disturbing the school activities, causing noise and air pollution in the surrounding area and was highly unsafe to the school students. On an average about 2-3 accidents were being reported every week.

Years after going through this harrowing experience, Prehari eco club students of the Bharat Mata English medium school decided to put an end to this situation by regulating the traffic in front of their school. First, they sought cooperation from the school management, teachers and students as well. They started awareness programme by organising lectures on traffic rules to school students during the traffic week with the help of the local administration. The awareness campaign also targeted parents, auto rickshaw and cycle rickshaw drivers and teachers. There were regular interaction with students during the games period, lunch break about following the traffic rules. Eco club students even counselled cycle and auto rickshaw drivers as well as parents to park their vehicles away from the school entrance. They requested other students to persuade their parents to drop/pick them up little away from the school entrance. They physically regulated the entry and exit of vehicles at the three entrance gates of the school. Further they numbered the entrance gates, made 3 groups of students and teachers, assigned a gate entrance number to the individuals of these groups for their use, to reduce the crowd at one entrance. Parking areas were allotted class-wise to ease the congestion. Parking area was demarcated for parents, autos and cycle rickshaws.

Succeeding in their efforts, the eco club students have played a major role in disciplining over 2000



Preparing sign boards for parking areas

students. The traffic congestion near the school has reduced to a great deal due to the regulation and does not require police personnel to control the traffic now. This has reduced the noise pollution considerably allowing the classes to function without much disturbance. Traffic regulation has also helped to reduce air pollution. This also has ensured safety of younger students. Eco club students have been successful in disciplining cycle rickshaw and auto rickshaw drivers, who have started parking their vehicles in the designated areas. The club has received the first place in the Volvo UNEP Adventure Award 2007 for this initiative at the national level and fourth place at global level.

This initiative shows what the energetic young, through powerful education initiatives, can do to reduce the carbon content in the atmosphere, thereby climate change and walk the path of sustainable development.



Students interacting with the auto drivers and vehicle owners