

26.9 CRORE PEOPLE USED DRUGS IN 2018: UN REPORT

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Human resources, Youth, Sports and related issues

An awareness march held in Bikaner on FridayPTI

About 26.9 crore people used drugs in 2018, which was 30% more than the 2009 figure, with adolescents and young adults accounting for the largest share of users, according to the latest United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) World Drug Report.

Compared with earlier estimates from a survey done in 2004, overall opioid use in India is estimated to have increased fivefold.

Seizures of amphetamines across the world quadrupled between 2009 and 2018. The stimulant scene is dominated by cocaine and methamphetamine, and use of both the substances is rising in their main markets. Production of heroin and cocaine remains among the highest levels recorded in modern times.

While about 19 million people used cocaine in 2018, fuelled by the drug's popularity in North America and Western Europe, close to 27 million people used amphetamines the same year, the latter being the most used amphetamine-type stimulants in Southeast Asia, it said. "Use of methamphetamine in these two subregions has been expanding for two decades, according to most available indicators. Cocaine and methamphetamine can coexist in some markets by acting as substitutes for each other, so that use of one drug rises when the other goes down."

Expanding markets

A number of indicators suggest that the global market of ATS, particularly meth, is expanding. "Quantities of seized methamphetamine... reached a new record high, at 228 tonne-equivalents, in 2018," says the report.

Observing that rapid market changes were being noticed, the report said synthetics were replacing opiates in Central Asia and the Russian Federation.

Crystalline meth market has grown in Afghanistan and Iraq. In Afghanistan, meth seizures have steadily risen since 2014. The amount seized in the first six months of 2019 — 657 kg — signalled a huge leap over the previous year.

The study found that traffickers and manufacturers were using "designer chemicals" as an alternative to synthesise amphetamine, meth and ecstasy.

The report expressed concern about fewer countries taking part in joint drug operations, apparently due to budgetary problems.

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