

NEWSLETTER

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# Fewer people opt for drug demand rehab, but number of addicts may belie figure

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AS the number of drug seizure cases continues to increase in Kerala, the latest data by the ministry of social justice and empowerment shows that the number of addicts availing benefits under the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR) in the state declined in 2021-22 compared to previous years. Kerala had only 4,887 drug addicts as per the scheme in 2021-22 while it was 6,642 in 2017-18.

Though alcohol continues to be most prevalent substance abused among the people of the country the data shows that there is a growing use of synthetic psychotropic drugs, mainly MDMA, among people. Experts say the data on beneficiaries under the NAPDDR scheme does not reflect the exact number of addicts in Kerala as over 60% of them remain elusive because even their close family members aren't aware of their addiction.

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Febin Baby, criminologist

chemical drugs like MDMA have increased drastically in the state. Every abuser is becoming a trafficker adding new abusers. The situation is alarming," said Indian Criminology and Forensic Science Association president and criminologist Febin Baby.

As per the NAPDDR data, Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of beneficiaries (48,929 in 2021-22) followed by Orissa (31,931), Assam

(25,986) and Rajasthan (22,103). The data shows that Kerala had 6,642 beneficiaries in 2017-18 but the number fell to 3,892 in 2018-19, 4,134 in 2019-20, 4,239 in 2020-21 and 4,887 in 2021-22. "The beneficial scheme under NAPDDR includes livelihood support to those who have come out of addiction after successfully completing de-addiction programme in registered centres," said a senior excise officer.

Febin Baby said only a multi-pronged strategy encompassing various stakeholders can bring down the number of drug abusers in the state. "Once people identify a drug abuser, the person is treated scornfully by everyone as an addict. This gives the person freedom to continue as a drug abuser fully knowing that the society has rejected him/her. Instead of treating a drug abuser with disdain, one should try to help by taking him or her to a counsellor. Proper and wise involvement of society is a must to deal with this menace," he added.

As per the figures presented in the assembly on August 31 by Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, 16,128 drug-abuse related cases were registered in Kerala till August 22 this year which was more than 4,650 cases registered in 2020 and 5,334 cases in 2021.

Head of the Department of Criminology and Police Science, Febin Baby's article was featured in Express News Service.



A meeting of the Head of the Departments was convened on 13 September 2022.