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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE NARCOTICS CONTROL BUREAU (NCB) IN INDIA

Abstract

This research paper critically examines the role and functions of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) in India under the NDPS Act, 1985. The study analyses the historical background, legal powers, enforcement structure, intelligence functions, seizure operations, cyber-drug trafficking, international cooperation, and judicial perspectives. The paper also evaluates statistical trends related to drug seizures, arrests, and trafficking routes using analytical charts and comparative diagrams. The research concludes that while the NCB has strengthened anti-narcotics enforcement in India, challenges such as darknet trafficking, international smuggling routes, and rising synthetic drug networks continue to threaten public safety.

Keywords : NCB, NDPS Act, seizure operations, cyber-drug trafficking, international cooperation, judicial perspectives

Introduction

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is India's central law enforcement and intelligence agency responsible for combating drug trafficking and substance abuse. Established in 1986 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, the agency coordinates with state police, customs, DRI, CBI, and international organisations to prevent narcotics-related crimes. The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) is India's central law enforcement and intelligence agency responsible for combating drug trafficking and substance abuse. Established in 1986 under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, the agency coordinates with state police, customs, DRI, CBI, and international organisations to prevent narcotics-related crimes.

Drug trafficking is one of the fastest-growing transnational crimes in the world. India's geographical location between the

"Golden Crescent" (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) and the "Golden Triangle" (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) makes it highly vulnerable to illegal drug trafficking networks. Increasing drug consumption, organised criminal syndicates, darknet markets, and cross-border smuggling have intensified the need for a specialised enforcement agency.

The Narcotics Control Bureau was established on 17 March 1986 under Section 4(3) of the NDPS Act, 1985, to coordinate anti-drug operations throughout the country.

Historical Background

The rise of transnational drug trafficking during the 1970s and 1980s led India to adopt stronger narcotics laws. Following international conventions and increasing domestic trafficking concerns, the NDPS Act, 1985, was enacted. The NCB was established to ensure the coordinated implementation of the law. The rise of transnational drug trafficking during the

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India enacted the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, to consolidate and amend laws relating to narcotic drugs. The Act replaced older legislation, such as:

1. Opium Act, 1857
2. Opium Act, 1878
3. Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930
4. To enforce this law effectively, the Government created the NCB in 1986.
5. UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988

Research Methodology

The study is analytical and doctrinal in nature. Both primary and secondary sources have been used. Secondary data includes government reports, NCRB reports, UNODC publications, judicial decisions, law journals, and Ministry of Home Affairs data. Comparative analysis and graphical interpretation are used for better understanding. The study is analytical and doctrinal in nature. Both primary and secondary sources have been used. Secondary data includes government reports, NCRB reports, UNODC publications, judicial decisions, law journals, and Ministry of Home Affairs data. Comparative analysis and graphical interpretation are used for better understanding.

Legal Framework

The NDPS Act, 1985, is the primary legislation regulating narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in India. The law criminalises the production, possession, sale, transport, import, export, and consumption of prohibited narcotics. The NCB derives powers of search, seizure, arrest, investigation, and coordination under the

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Constitutional Perspective

Drug trafficking impacts Article 21 rights relating to life and public health. The State has a constitutional responsibility under Article 47 to improve public health and to prohibit harmful intoxicating substances, except for medicinal purposes. Drug trafficking impacts Article 21 rights relating to life and public health. The State has a constitutional responsibility under Article 47 to improve public health and to prohibit harmful intoxicating substances, except for medicinal purposes.

Functions of NCB

The main functions of NCB include intelligence gathering, investigation of narcotics offences, coordination among agencies, destruction of illegal drugs, international cooperation, monitoring precursor chemicals, conducting awareness campaigns, and assisting in prosecution under NDPS laws. The main functions of NCB include intelligence gathering, investigation of narcotics offences, coordination among agencies, destruction of illegal drugs, international cooperation, monitoring precursor chemicals, conducting awareness campaigns, and assisting in prosecution under NDPS laws.

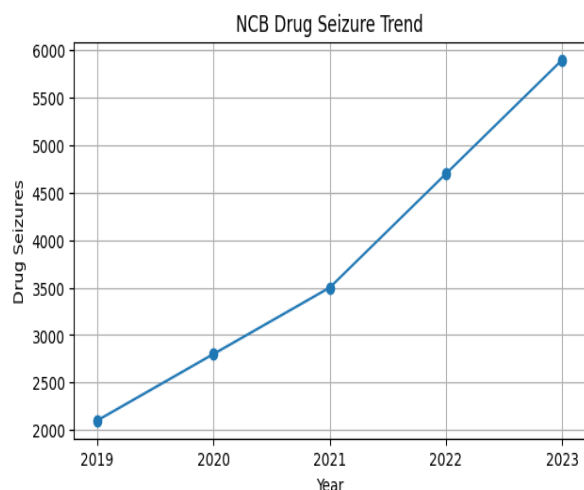
Drug Trafficking in India

India is geographically located between the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, making it vulnerable to international narcotics trafficking. Heroin, cannabis, methamphetamine, synthetic drugs, and cocaine trafficking have increased due to organised criminal networks. India is geographically located between the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle, making it

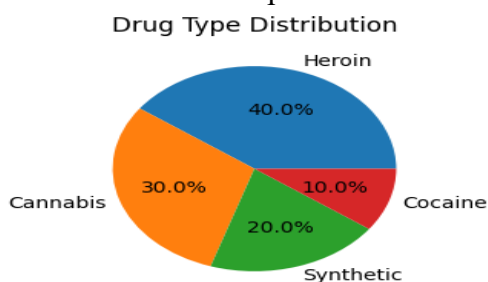
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Data Analysis and Interpretation

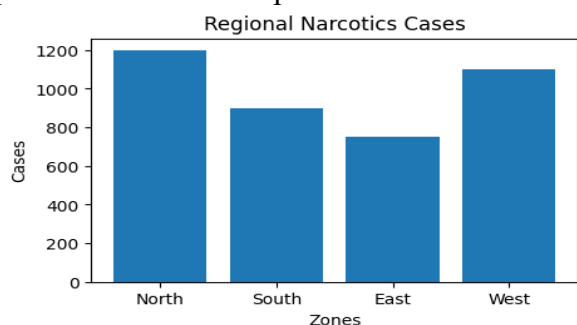
The following charts and diagrams provide a graphical representation of narcotics seizures, regional cases, and enforcement trends in India.



Interpretation: The chart highlights important trends in narcotics control, seizure growth, and enforcement patterns under NCB operations.



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International Cooperation

NCB works closely with Interpol, UNODC, SAARC member states, customs agencies, and border security forces to combat cross-border trafficking. Information exchange and intelligence sharing remain essential in anti-drug operations. NCB works closely with Interpol, UNODC, SAARC member states, customs agencies, and border security forces to combat cross-border trafficking. Information exchange and intelligence sharing remain essential in anti-drug operations.

Cyber and Darknet Crimes

Modern narcotics trafficking increasingly uses encrypted messaging apps, cryptocurrencies, and darknet marketplaces. These technologies make tracing transactions and identifying traffickers more difficult.

Judicial Interpretation

Indian courts have interpreted NDPS provisions strictly due to the serious social impact of narcotics crimes. Landmark cases have emphasised procedural safeguards while also recognising the need for strict enforcement. Indian courts have interpreted NDPS provisions strictly due to the serious social impact of narcotics crimes. Landmark cases have emphasised procedural safeguards while also recognising the need for strict enforcement.

Challenges Faced by NCB

The agency faces multiple operational challenges, including limited manpower, corruption, cross-border smuggling, political pressure, synthetic drug production, online drug sales, and rehabilitation gaps. The agency faces multiple operational challenges, including limited manpower, corruption, cross-border smuggling, political pressure, synthetic drug production, online drug sales, and rehabilitation gaps.

Findings and Observations

The study reveals that narcotics trafficking has become more technologically advanced and internationally connected. NCB operations have expanded significantly, but preventive awareness and rehabilitation mechanisms still require strengthening. The study reveals that narcotics trafficking has become more technologically advanced and internationally connected. NCB operations have expanded significantly, but preventive awareness and rehabilitation mechanisms still require strengthening.

MADHYA PRADESH AND REWA DISTRICT

Madhya Pradesh has emerged as an important transit and trafficking region for narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Central India. Districts such as Mandsaur, Neemuch, Indore, Bhopal, and Rewa have witnessed increasing narcotics-related activities in recent years. Rewa district and the Vindhya region have experienced a rapid increase in codeine syrup abuse, ganja trafficking, and pharmaceutical drug misuse among youth populations.

According to verified 2025–2026 enforcement reports from Operation Prahaar in the Vindhya region, more than 705 NDPS cases were registered, and 1,142 accused persons were arrested. Authorities seized over 75,000 bottles of illegal codeine cough syrup, approximately 2,773 kilograms of ganja, and more than 4 lakh intoxicating tablets and capsules. The total seizure value exceeded ₹5.38 crore.

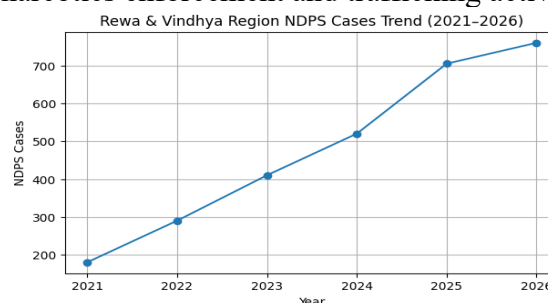
Police authorities in Rewa stated that sustained narcotics operations reduced illegal cough syrup circulation by nearly 80 per cent. However, the black-market value of codeine bottles reportedly increased to ₹1000 per bottle during intensive crackdowns. This reflects the continuing demand and organised nature of narcotics trafficking in the region.

The study concludes that the Rewa district requires stronger public awareness

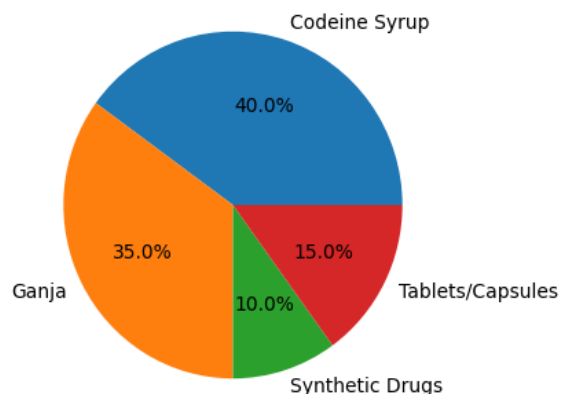
campaigns, educational intervention, rehabilitation infrastructure, and coordination between local police, NCB, NCORD, and health departments.

CHARTS AND ANALYSIS

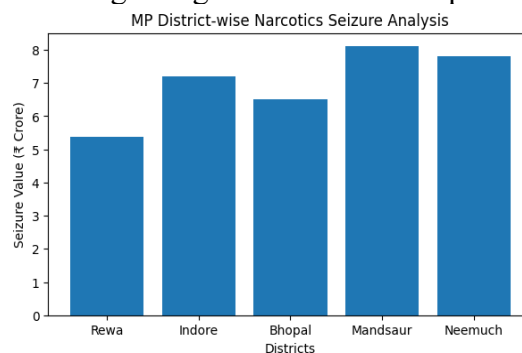
Interpretation: The chart shows a continuous rise in NDPS-related cases in Rewa and Vindhya region between 2021 and 2026, reflecting increasing narcotics enforcement and trafficking activity



Drug Abuse Pattern in Rewa Region



Interpretation: Codeine syrup and ganja constitute the major forms of substance abuse in Rewa district according to regional enforcement patterns.



Interpretation: Comparative analysis indicates that districts such as Mandsaur, Neemuch, and Rewa have

become important narcotics enforcement zones in Madhya Pradesh.

CASE STUDY – 01

Name of the Drug: Opium & Poppy Straw
NCB Zonal Unit: Indore Zonal Unit Qty.
Seized: 10.286 Kg Opium 7.220 Kg Poppy Straw
Total Arrest: 03 Persons

On 20.01.2023, NCB, Indore Zonal Unit received secret information that three Indian nationals had hidden a huge quantity of illicit Opium and Poppy Straw along with them at Khalsa Punjab Dhaba, Vil- Mundli, Mandsaur-Neemuch Highway, Mansour. On 21.01.2023, NCB Indore Zonal Unit effected a seizure of 10.286 kg Opium & 7.220 Kg Poppy Straw at Khalsa Punjab Dhaba, Vill-Mundli, Mandsaur-Neemuch Highway, Mansour, Madhya Pradesh. Based on recovery and their confessional statements all 03 persons were arrested on 21.01.2023 for violation of section 8/15/18/25/27A and 29 of the NDPS Act, 1985 (as amended). u Further, immediate interrogation revealed that two packets of illicit opium were hidden in Bada (Plot) opposite the residence of the main accused in Vil- Mundli. Swift and immediate action of the NCB team led to the recovery of another two packets of illicit opium. Subsequently, all three accused were arrested on 21.01.2023.

CASE STUDY-02

Name of the Drug: Heroin NCB Zonal Unit: Chandigarh Zonal Unit U Based on secret information, the NCB-Chandigarh team led by Sh. Amanjit Singh, Zonal Director, NCB-Chandigarh, apprehended one person. with 20.326 Kg of Heroin on 15.11.2022. Further in the follow-up of seizures, affected by the arrest of 20 persons. u 02 kingpins of international Drug syndicates were arrested at Jaipur International Airport while they were attempting to leave the country for Sharjah, UAE on 24/11/2022. The investigation to date has revealed that this group was smuggling Heroin from 03 primary routes, i.e. Mundra Port, Gujarat, ICP Attari Punjab and through J&K. The

kingpin has admitted of importing more than 2000 Kgs of Heroin from these 02 Customs Port and from J&K. u Cover consignments used at Mundra Port Gujarat, ICP Attari Punjab were high value cargo so that suspicion/red ages do not arise. Total 2000 kgs. heroin was manufactured from these tainted products at Ludhiana & Muzaffarnagar, UP. Though imports were from Afghanistan, payments totalling 40 K USD approx. made to account in Wells Fargo Bank, New York. u A Pakistani national is the main handler/supplier abroad. u Initially, the Complaint against the seventeen persons was filed on 12.05.2023, and later, a Supplementary Complaint was filed against all the 20 accused persons on 22.12.2023 after a thorough investigation and sufficient evidence on record. Qty. Seized: 20.326 Kg Heroin Total Arrest: 20 Persons

CASE STUDY-03

Name of the Drug: Cocaine NCB Zonal Unit: Mumbai Zonal Unit Qty. Seized: 5 Kg Cocaine Total Arrest: 02 Persons

In pursuance of active intelligence follow-up pertaining to international drug tracking, based on specie input, a Bolivian lady 'X' was identified to have arrived from Sao Paulo to Mumbai via Dubai by Etihad airlines on 12.10.2023, along with a drug consignment and was staying at a pre-booked hotel in Khetwadi, Mumbai. Immediately, a team was constituted, which proceeded to the hotel and set up a discreet search operation. u Upon confirmation about the presence of the lady, the team intercepted her, who was with another lady, 'Y', a Bolivian national. Upon preliminary questioning, no satisfactory reply was given by the duo, after which a search of their belongings was made, during which a total of 05 Kgs of cocaine was recovered from the baggage of both ladies. The drugs were guilefully concealed among non-suspicious items, such as undergarments, clothes, toothpaste, cosmetic tubes, soap, footwear, and a makeup kit. The drugs were carefully

concealed in the form of powder, liquid & paste which could be easily planted among regular items. u During interrogation, they revealed information about their handler and stated that in order to minimise suspicion of anti-drug agencies, they opted to travel from Dubai to Mumbai by Etihad Airways. They revealed that they crossed over to Brazil, received the consignment and parted ways for the travel. In an evasive manoeuvre, they boarded lights from different cities in Brazil. Both arrived in Mumbai and were changing their locations frequently. When the NCB team intercepted them, they were in preparation to check out of the hotel.

CONCLUSION

The analytical study concludes that narcotics trafficking and substance abuse have emerged as serious socio-legal and public health concerns in Madhya Pradesh, particularly in Rewa district and the Vindhya region. Verified 2025–2026 data demonstrates a significant increase in NDPS cases, codeine syrup trafficking, and organised narcotics networks.

The Narcotics Control Bureau, along with state police and local enforcement agencies, has intensified anti-drug operations and intelligence-based crackdowns. However, the study reveals that enforcement measures alone cannot eliminate narcotics abuse. Rehabilitation, awareness programmes, educational intervention, and socio-economic reforms are equally important. The study further concludes that the Rewa district requires stronger institutional coordination, cyber monitoring, youth awareness campaigns, and improved rehabilitation centres to effectively address the growing narcotics problem. Modern drug trafficking methods involving encrypted communication and interstate supply chains require advanced technological and forensic support.

Finally, the research emphasises that the role of the Narcotics Control Bureau will continue to expand in future due to evolving

drug trafficking techniques and increasing international criminal networks. A balanced approach combining strict law enforcement, constitutional safeguards, public health policies, and community participation is essential for long-term narcotics control in Madhya Pradesh and India.

The Narcotics Control Bureau plays a crucial role in protecting Indian society from the harmful effects of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Strong coordination, technological modernisation, legal reforms, and international intelligence sharing are essential for improving narcotics control. The study concludes that enforcement alone is insufficient without public awareness, rehabilitation, and socio-economic intervention. The Narcotics Control Bureau plays a crucial role in protecting Indian society from the harmful effects of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Strong coordination, technological modernisation, legal reforms, and international intelligence sharing are essential for improving narcotics control. The study concludes that enforcement alone is insufficient without public awareness, rehabilitation, and socio-economic intervention.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen cyber surveillance against darknet drug markets.
2. Increase border monitoring technologies.
3. Conduct awareness campaigns in educational institutions.
4. Improve rehabilitation infrastructure.
5. Provide advanced forensic support to NCB.
6. Increase international cooperation.
7. Strengthen financial intelligence monitoring.
8. Amend laws to address modern synthetic drug challenges

Final Observation

The survey indicates that public awareness regarding the role and functions of the Narcotics Control Bureau is improving, but significant challenges remain in controlling drug trafficking and substance abuse. Strong enforcement of the NDPS Act, public participation, awareness campaigns, and rehabilitation measures are essential for creating a drug-free society and strengthening the effectiveness of the NCB.

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QUESTIONNAIRE APPENDIX

1. Are you aware of the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)? Yes / No
2. Do you know the main functions of the NCB? Yes / No
3. Are you aware of the harmful effects of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances? Yes / No
4. Do you think drug abuse is increasing in India? Yes / No
5. Have you ever attended any drug awareness programme? Yes / No
6. Do you know about the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985? Yes / No

7. Do you think the NCB is effectively controlling drug trafficking in India? Yes / No
8. Are strict punishments necessary for drug traffickers? Yes / No
9. Do you believe drug addiction is a major social problem among youth? Yes / No
10. Do you think rehabilitation centres are important for drug addicts? Yes / No
 - Drug Trafficking
 - Cross-Border Smuggling
 - Drug Abuse Among Youth
 - Lack of Public Awareness
