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'Operation Kawach': Raids at 100 sites take down traffickers selling drugs to youths

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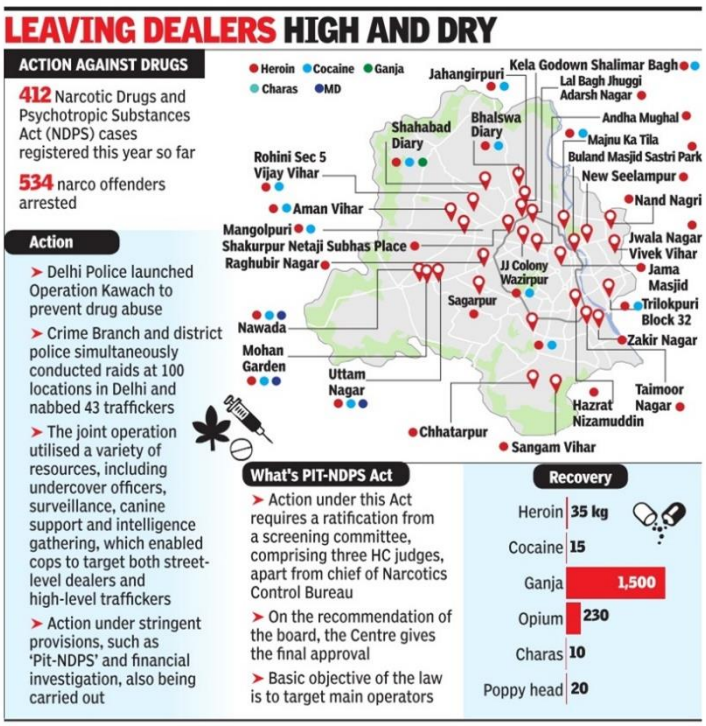
New Delhi: In the first action of its kind on drug trafficking in the city, Delhi Police's Crime Branch and police of different districts carried out simultaneous raids at over 100 locations and arrested 43 traffickers who were distributing narcotics and illegal liquor including to school and college students.

The raids were a result of Union home minister Amit Shah directing a crackdown on drug distribution in the capital. Recently, lieutenant governor VK Saxena held a meeting of the Delhi state-level committee of National Narcotics Coordination Portal (NCORD) and gave clear instructions to implement Shah's directive. A coordinated action was then planned and executed on the intervening night of May 12-13.

According to Ravindra Yadav, special commissioner (crime), the joint operation employed various resources, including undercover officers, surveillance, canine support and intelligence gathering targeting both street-level dealers and high-level traffickers. Focusing on the financial backbone of the traffickers, the cops have invoked the stringent provisions of the Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act against the arrested individuals. This Act targets the main drug operators, such as organisers, financiers and others who generally remain and operate behind the scene.



The Crime Branch began by preparing a proposal and getting it approved by the Union finance ministry's department of revenue. Invoking this Act requires ratification by a board comprising three judges headed by the chief justice of Delhi High Court. The board conducts a mini trial to determine the merits of the case. On its recommendation, the central government grants the final approval.

Police said the coordinated raids involved senior officers as well as field officers. Eighty police teams consisting of the Crime Branch's Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) and all 15 district police stations carried out the operation.

Officers revealed that ANTF, in coordination with all the district police, made ground-level surveys and zeroed in on more than 100 potential targets. During the intervening night of May 12-13, raids were conducted across Delhi and 31 drug offenders arrested in 30 Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act cases, in addition to 12 in Excise Act cases.

"During the operation named Kawach, 957.5 grams of heroin, 57.9kg of ganja and 782 quarters of illicit liquor were recovered," said a police officer. "Delhi Police has adopted a ruthless zero-tolerance approach against drugs and drug traffickers as envisaged by the Union home minister." The officer added that they had local as well as national and international drug traffickers on watch.

Operation Kawach was focused on saving youth and children from the menace of drug addiction. Through these operations, a clear message that their illegal activities would not be tolerated was sent to the people involved in the drug trade, the officer said. The cops simultaneously appealed to all sections of society to create awareness and reduce the demand for drugs. "The parents and teachers, besides the social reformers, are specially requested to sensitise the youth about the grave consequences of drug addiction," the officer said.

To check drug trafficking, ANTFs have been established across India with the mandate to bust drug trafficking syndicates and take coordinated action alongside all agencies at the units, districts and police stations. ANTF acts as the nodal agency for all narcotics-related matters and coordinates acts with the Narcotics Control Bureau.