

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS**

**RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 390**

TO BE ANSWERED ON THE 22ND JULY, 2026/ ASHADHA 31, 1948 (SAKA)

DRUG TRAFFICKING CASES IN PUNJAB

390 # SHRI TARUN CHUGH:

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has observed the use of darknet, encrypted communication applications and cryptocurrency-based transactions in drug trafficking cases detected in Punjab;

(b) if so, the measures being taken to identify and disrupt such trafficking networks;

(c) whether any trend of the use of digital platforms in cross-border drug trafficking and distribution networks has come to light; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to strengthen cyber, forensic and technical capabilities for investigation?

ANSWER

**MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
(SHRI NITYANAND RAI)**

(a) Instances of the use of digital platforms by drug traffickers have come to notice during investigation of drug trafficking cases by Narcotic Control Bureau (NCB). Investigations have revealed increasing use of digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Snapchat, Zangi and social media platforms by organised drug trafficking syndicates operating in Punjab and adjoining States for coordinating procurement, transportation, concealment

and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Anti-Narcotics Task Force, Punjab has reported that the use of cryptocurrency and virtual digital assets has also been noticed for transferring drug proceeds and concealing the financial trail. However, privacy-oriented cryptocurrencies and foreign-based exchanges may make identification of the actual sender and receiver difficult.

(b) In such matters, the relevant digital devices are seized and subjected to forensic examination during investigation. NCB adopts a technology-driven investigation strategy by integrating digital forensics, financial investigation and conventional intelligence to identify and dismantle drug trafficking networks. Detailed forensic examination is done for seized electronic devices. Extensive use is made of specialised intelligence and investigation platforms including National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID), Multi Agency Centre (MAC), Financial Intelligence Network Exchange (FINEX), Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) tools, National Integrated Database on Arrested Narco-Offenders (NIDAAN), Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS), Chitarkhoj and Punjab Artificial Intelligence System (PAIS), along with telecom and financial intelligence databases, for link analysis, identification of criminal associates and inter-State/inter-agency coordination. Close coordination is maintained with cyber forensic laboratories, telecom service

providers, financial institutions and other Central and State law enforcement agencies, and assistance of concerned technical agencies and service providers is sought, wherever required.

(c) During investigation of cases by NCB, use of digital platforms in cross border drug trafficking and distribution networks has come to notice. Digital platforms are being used for communication and coordination among traffickers, recruitment of carriers, sharing of live locations, exchange of photographs and videos of consignments, coordination of deliveries and payments, and maintaining links between suppliers and receivers. Instances of misuse of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) to conceal identities and facilitate trafficking activities have also been noticed. Digital and technical analysis is undertaken to identify the wider network and inter-State/cross-border linkages, wherever indicated. Use of mobile phones by incarcerated traffickers to remotely coordinate drug trafficking activities through associates outside prisons has also been observed.

(d) The following steps have been taken to strengthen cyber, forensic and technical capabilities for investigation: -

(i) NCB has engaged cyber experts to enhance its capability to investigate darknet-enabled drug trafficking and cryptocurrency-based transactions.

- (ii) NCB has conducted several capacity-building programmes in collaboration with the United States-Drug Enforcement Administration (US-DEA) and Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU), Gandhinagar, for officers of NCB and other Drug Law Enforcement Agencies (DLEAs) to strengthen capabilities in cyber-enabled narcotics investigations, digital forensics, darknet monitoring, cryptocurrency investigations and investigation of technology-enabled drug trafficking.**
- (iii) A Task Force on Darknet and Cryptocurrency has been set up under the Multi Agency Centre (MAC) mechanism to facilitate intelligence sharing, monitor emerging trends and modus operandi, and strengthen coordinated action against technology-enabled drug trafficking.**
