

## Punjab's Initiatives Against Drug Trafficking and Abuse



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Punjab is facing drug crisis exacerbated by its geographical location. The state shares a lengthy border with Pakistan and is near the “Golden Crescent,” a notorious drug trafficking route. In response to the escalating drug problem, the Punjab government has requested a one-time special assistance of Rs 600 crore from the Centre. This funding aims to establish special Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) courts for the swift handling of drug-related cases.

### About NDPS Courts

- NDPS courts are special tribunals established under the [NDPS](#) Act of 1985, which governs the production, sale, and use of narcotics.
- The establishment of these courts is crucial for expediting trials related to drug offences.
- The Punjab government marks the need for these courts to address a backlog of 35,000 cases, which could potentially increase without intervention.

### Current Case Backlog

- As of January 2025, the backlog of NDPS cases in Punjab stands at 35,000.
- Currently, it takes an average of seven years for a session court to resolve cases.
- This timeline could extend to 11 years if no action is taken.
- The Punjab government aims to establish 79 new NDPS courts to tackle this issue effectively.

### Funding and Resources Required

To facilitate the establishment of these courts, Punjab has requested Rs 60 crore annually for the next decade. This funding will be used for appointing public prosecutors and hiring necessary staff. Additionally, Punjab seeks resources under the National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse for various initiatives, including anti-narcotics operations and de-addiction centres.

### Geographical Challenges

Punjab's unique geographical position makes it susceptible to drug smuggling. The state has a 552 km border with Pakistan, with gaps in fencing that traffickers exploit. Increased border security has led to the use of drones for drug trafficking, complicating interception efforts.

### Key Facts About Golden Crescent

- The Golden Crescent is one of Asia's largest illicit opium production regions.
- The region is located at the crossroads of Central, South, and Western Asia.
- It includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.
- Afghanistan is the main producer, while Iran acts as a transit and consumer country.
- The region is infamous for organized crime activities like drug trafficking, which funds terrorism and insurgency.
- Groups such as Baloch separatists, the Quetta Shura Taliban, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps are linked to narcotics trade operations.
- Indian states like Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat are vulnerable



due to their proximity to the Indo-Pakistan border. These states are affected by drug trafficking and serve as transit routes for heroin and hashish.

### **Judicial Support and Recommendations**

In September 2024, the Punjab and Haryana High Court acknowledged the need for special NDPS courts. The Law Commission's 1997 report also pointed out the inadequacies in the enforcement of the NDPS Act, suggesting the establishment of special courts as a necessary measure.

### **Punjab's Drug Control Efforts**

Punjab has been actively combating drug abuse for several years. Since 2022, the state has registered over 31,500 NDPS cases, leading to the arrest of 43,000 individuals and the seizure of quantities of narcotics. The state has also frozen assets worth Rs 449 crore linked to drug traffickers. A comprehensive database of criminals has been created to enhance case management.