

Counselors along with the principals will be trained on how to identify students with addiction problems: BNCA

Drop in drug abuse cases due to sealed borders and lack of supply

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As per the data from Royal Bhutan Police (RBP), they have registered 718 cases of drug abusers, 3 cases of illegal possession and 236 cases of trafficking in 2020 as of October. For 2019 they have registered 985 cases of abusers, 13 cases of illegal possession and 236 cases of trafficking in 2019.

Data showed that more than half the abusers are students, with age ranging between 15 to 20 years of age. Abusers are ones who test positive during the time of apprehension and are caught carrying a drug within the permissible quantity. Abusers are forwarded to Bhutan Narcotic Control Authority (BNCA) by police for Treatment Assessment Panel (TAP).

Director General of BNCA Sonam Dorji said that the number of abusers this year is less than what they have received in the past years merely because the borders are tightened where there is no cross border movement and since the borders are under strict surveillance.

"Unavailability of substances can be one reason. Abusing of marijuana has also been deterred due to strict monitoring of the inter-district movement. And this has hindered the movement of peddlers," he added.

Abuse happens with multiple factors, he said, however no studies were done to ascertain the main cause. Once the client is forwarded to BNCA, the counselors in TAP look at the severity of the client and accordingly send them to the compulsory drug treatment center at Serbithang. Some clients are referred to psychiatric ward for oral substitution therapy.

He said, "We receive a lot of student clients and to ensure they do not miss their

classes, we send them back to school under the guidance of counselors. However, this is only applicable for those schools who have counselors."

Most of the private and government schools do not have counselors, he said, adding that even if they have, they have not been trained on addiction counseling. To cover this gap, all the counselors should be registered with Bhutan Board of Certified Counselor (BBCC) whereby BNCA will give additional course on universal treatment counseling.

Their first target would be middle and higher secondary school. It was learnt that some of the schools tend to hide abusers as reputation of the schools would be at stake. It can be a wild fire if not addressed at the earliest, he said.

Starting in the academic year 2021, BNCA is going to launch school drug prevention program and department of youths and sports were notified on the program.

"Counselors along with the principals will be trained on how to identify students with addiction problems and on how to do an assessment. If they can do everything at school level than there is no need of referring the child outside school," he said.

BNCA is also studying on which cases to be referred and to whom.

Meanwhile, he said that a compulsory drug treatment center should be redefined and no one should be deprived of counseling.

"We have missed that out and what we are now trying to redefine is, we would want to make a person undergo counseling and ensure some of the qualities of that person is developed for social reintegration back into the community," he said.

They are planning to come up with a skilling programs

in rehabilitation center and engage them in various activities likes sports and yoga.

He said that those program would help them become someone useful whereby the society would see them the other way round rather than pointing at them for being an abuser once.

"We render help irrespective of how many times they come. They become repeated offenders and relapse because they are not in a conducive

environment. Therefore, we want to make our environment conducive, be it in school or at rehab center as that is only they way to help them. We do not want to criminalize anyone," he added.

BNCA is also looking at how to improve or strengthen parent counseling so as to change their mentality towards their addict child.

"The mentality of the parents has to be changed if they want their child to be

changed forever," he said.

"Stigmatization is one factor to relapse, however, if the mentality of the community can be changed and if a person is accepted as who he/she is, than stigmatization will never be an issue and would ultimately lead to successful recovery from addiction. BNCA is looking into every aspects to address on the abuser issue in the country," he said.

Gol releases Nu. 1.19 bn for plan activities and both countries launch Rupay

Staff Reporter/ Thimphu

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), received from the Embassy of India in Thimphu a cheque amounting to Nu. 1.19 billion for the Project Tied Assistance (PTA) on 19 November 2020. This release of funds is part of the Government of India's (GoI) assistance to the RGoB's PTA projects under the 12th Five Year Plan (FYP). Of the total commitment of GoI to the RGoB for the 12th FYP, Nu. 28 billion is allocated for the PTA projects.

These funds will be used for the implementation of five PTA projects which are blacktopping of 20 GC roads, development of industrial parks in Jigmeling, reconstruction of Wangduephodrang Dzong, Government initiated network project plan and development of urban infrastructure development in Nanglam.

Also, Prime Narendra Modi, of India, and Lyonchhen Dr. Lotay Tshering, jointly e-launched the second phase of the RuPay Card on 20th November 2020. The first phase of the RuPay Card was jointly launched by the two Prime Ministers on 17th August 2019 during the State Visit to Bhutan by the PM of India.

The RuPay card scheme is a cross-border payment initiative between Bhutan and India, which is aimed at promoting the use of low-cost digital payment solutions and digital financial inclusion.

The launch of the second phase will enable Bhutanese travellers to India to use their local bank cards in all the access points offered by the banks in India. The BNBL's RuPay debit cards will be accepted at more than 100,000 ATMs and 2 million PoS terminals in India for cash withdrawal, balance inquiry and purchases.

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TENDER NOTIFICATION

The Food Corporation of Bhutan Limited (FCBL) invites sealed Bids from reputed suppliers having valid trade license for participation in the tender of supplying Electrical & Hardware Item for the year 2021. The tender document can be purchase from Administrative Unit (HRAD) of FCBL, Head Office Phuentsholing at Non-Refundable fee at Nu.300/- (Three Hundred) only or download freely from FCBL website www.fcbl.bt.

FCBL Management