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Govt brings Tramadol under narcotics law regulation

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Tramadol, after the notification issued by the Department of Revenue under the Union Finance Ministry, will no longer be available freely over the counter in India



Tramadol, a painkiller pharma drug, has been declared a "psychotropic substance" by the Union government and its sale in the country will now be strictly monitored after the NCB said it was being internationally smuggled, and had possible supply links to the global terror group ISIS.

The Union Finance Ministry, as per data accessed by, has brought the drug under the control of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act and a gazette notification to this effect was issued on April 26.

The Finance Ministry regulates certain sections of the NDPS Act like categorisation of pharma drugs as narcotic substances.

The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), a national agency to coordinate drug law enforcement action by involving various state agencies, police and central departments, had asked the government in July last year to bring this drug under its "regulation and control" so that it could only be used for medicinal purposes and its abuse be checked.

Tramadol, after the notification issued by the Department of Revenue under the Union Finance Ministry, will no longer be available freely over the counter in India.

The latest notification will ensure that the availability of Tramadol is substantially reduced and regulated, and agencies like the NCB and police are able to keep a tab on its movement.

"Tramadol is used like codeine (another pharma drug). It is not covered under the NDPS Act, 1985. It is a schedule 'H' drug under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and can only be dispensed under the prescription of a registered medical practitioner.

"It is also not included in any of the schedules of the 1971 UN convention on psychotropic substances. Internationally, it is banned in many countries and hence is often smuggled through India," the NCB had said in its latest report released in March.

The drug, the NCB had said, "is trafficked via courier and manual means to countries like the US and Canada among others."

Official records state that huge quantities of Tramadol were seized in the country last year, including in July when over 30,000 tablets of Tramadol Hydrochloride were seized from the cargo terminal of the Indira Gandhi lnternational Airport (IGI) along with other pharma drugs.

In another instance, in October last year, the NCB seized 710 tablets of Tramadol from the house of a Lucknow-based medicine supplier. These were supposed to be illegally dispatched to the United States of America (USA).

Large volumes of this drug have been seized by the NCB and other anti-narcotics agencies in Punjab in the last few years, and it is suspected that these consignments were finding their way to the ISIS terror group-held locations after being diverted from the original overseas destination, the official said.

The Italian police last year had seized a huge consignment of this drug at the port of Gioia Tauro and it was suspected to be on its way to ISIS terrorists after reportedly being smuggled from the Indian shores, official said.

The manufacture, transport and sale of Tramadol were required to be regulated to not only affirm India's international commitment to fight drug crimes but also to wean away the youth who were abusing it within the country