

Majority of drug users in South Asia from India: report

Thursday June 26 2008 08:54 IST

PTI

NEW DELHI: A majority 61.3 per cent of drug users in South Asia are from India and 17 is the average age at which Indians get exposed to alcohol, according to a new United Nations report.

India also accounts for low condom usage with only 21.3 per cent of the sample size using them while having casual or non-commercial sex. The figure was a little higher at 23 per cent for those having commercial sex.

The country also had a high of 71.8 per cent of injecting drug consumers, who are at the greatest risk of acquiring HIV, the report by the United Nations office on drugs and crime released here on Wednesday said.

The document also highlighted the trend of increasing usage of pharmaceutical drugs instead of conventional drugs like heroin and cannabis. It disclosed that 88.7 per cent of the drug users among those surveyed had heard about HIV while 72.7 of them knew that condom protects against virus.

The report was brought out under the UN programme of prevention of transmission of HIV among drug users in SAARC countries.

Highlighting the extent and nature of drug use in the South Asian region and its associated adverse health consequences, the report recommended an action plan to reduce the adverse consequences.

There was a need to strengthen the comprehensive packages of service for drug users and their partners, Denis Broun, UNAIDS country coordinator said.

The report released by the United Nations office on drugs and crime here on Wednesday also recommended that there is a need to prevent the diffusion of pharmaceutical abuse among drug addicts.

The document also stressed on the need to check the transitions from licit to illicit use of drugs and also on the transition from non-injected to injected drug use.

Injected drug use is a major causative agent of HIV transmission. Nepal is at a great risk as it tops the list of injected drug use with 92 per cent of drug users going for it while Sri Lanka presents a different picture with 93 per cent of drug users going in for non-injected heroin consumption.

Sexual risk behaviour among drug users is also a concern in this report. Drug users in the region are sexually active and have a median of two sexual partners.

Condom use with any partner is low, particularly with regular sexual partners.

New Delhi, Jun 25 (PTI) A majority 61.3 per cent of drug users in South Asia are from India and 17 is the average age at which Indians get exposed to alcohol, according to a new United Nations report.

India also accounts for low condom usage with only 21.3 per cent of the sample size using them while having casual or non-commercial sex. The figure was a little higher at 23 per cent for those having commercial sex.

The country also had a high of 71.8 per cent of injecting drug consumers, who are at the greatest risk of acquiring HIV, the report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released here today said.

The document also highlighted the trend of increasing usage of pharmaceutical drugs instead of conventional drugs like heroin and cannabis.

It disclosed that 88.7 per cent of the drug users among those surveyed had heard about HIV while 72.7 of them knew that condom protects against virus.

The report was brought out under the UN programme of Prevention of Transmission of HIV among drug users in SAARC countries.

Highlighting the extent and nature of drug use in the South Asian region and its associated adverse health consequences, the report recommended an action plan to reduce the adverse consequences.

There was a need to strengthen the comprehensive packages of service for drug users and their partners, Denis Broun, UNAIDS Country coordinator said. PTI