

SHUTTERSTOCK

SHADOW LINES

Schisms appear as recreational drugs on campuses fray tempers, though drone delivery may still be a flight of fancy

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New Delhi, 20 September

It is not too big a shock to hear about students on university campuses in big cities using recreational drugs. The shock is how glib some of these conversations are.

Of the several students *Business Standard* spoke to during visits to institutions, through social media interactions, on the phone and on email, some say it is the "worst kept secret" on campuses. Some others say it is not out of line with what you would expect from a bunch of 18 to 22-year-olds. Still others go to great lengths to

describe the many different drugs being used, paste to dry powder. A few "enlightened" ones speak about the "efficient yet informal economy and supply chain".

A young woman who studied at a well-known university in Delhi says she saw her mates growing weed next to their hostel rooms. Some students were known to be specialists in drying the leaves and making them consumable.

Drugs on drones?

The issue of drugs on university campuses blew up when Sanjeev Bikhchandani, noted entrepreneur and

investor, spoke about it on social media. Interestingly, this was not his primary theme.

Bikhchandani's post on X, formerly Twitter, is entitled "The problem of title inflation", and focuses on the lofty titles student bodies give themselves. It is only after expending 389 words — there are 487 in the post — that he mentions "substance abuse". He cites it as an instance where the "Student Government" at Ashoka University, in spite of its exalted title, has had little to say or do.

Ashoka, which sits on the edge of the National Capital Region in Sonapat, Haryana, has emerged in recent years as one of the most prominent private

universities with well-regarded public intellectuals occupying important offices. It has also been in the thick of a few controversies and not all of the well-regarded public intellectuals are still associated with it.

"The 'substance abuse' was accused a life of its own, not least because Bikhchandani is one of Ashoka's founders.

"From what I have heard this is a growing problem at Ashoka. I have heard stories of deliveries of drugs by drones and room delivery in the hostels," says Bikhchandani in his X post. "I hope these stories are apocryphal."

They probably are. *Business Standard* could not elicit a response from the university's communication wing, in spite of repeated attempts through email, WhatsApp messages, and calls. Bikhchandani responded by saying he won't be able to discuss it. But several students currently on campuses were willing to talk about it, without being named, of course.

"Any reports of drug delivery by drones, or door-to-door deliveries, is greatly exaggerated," says a student from Ashoka.

But that is just logistics. This student does not deny consumption. "Yes, there are students who would indulge in the recreational use of marijuana or cannabis inside the closed doors of their own dorm rooms," says another second-year student.

Efficient, informal economy

Ashoka is not alone. Indian higher education institutes, especially private universities, appear to be witnessing an uptick in consumption of substances. Students across campuses in and around Delhi admit to knowing of fellow students who consume substances such as marijuana. The more forthright ones admit to doing it themselves.

They say most of the consumption is limited to organic substances, a term used to distinguish stuff like marijuana from synthetic substances such as cocaine. The latter is counted as a "hard drug" and students

NOT JUST VIDEO GAMES

- Substance consumption is mostly recreational
- Consumption is limited to organic substances
- Cannabis concentrate (charas or hash) are popular
- Students spend ₹6,000-8,000 a month for recreational use
- Those with less money use tobacco mixed with cannabis (ganja)
- Synthetic substances such as cocaine are negligible
- Kasol and Malana are popular sources of opiates and cannabis
- There seems to be no drone delivery on campuses

insist it is "next to non-existent" on university campuses.

A lot of the organic stuff is brought from the hilly regions north of the national capital and passed on to students by people outside the institutions. Kasol and Malana in the Himachal hills are popular sources of opiates and cannabis.

"It is an informal economy; efficient but still informal," says someone who was in a university till recently.

Delhi and its adjoining areas have seen a number of private universities rise to prominence in recent years. Their fee structure is such that they draw mostly students from families with healthy incomes. They also believe in recreational expenses, which are not always confined to video games.

There is a distinct buying pattern. Students from well-off families prefer cannabis concentrate, usually called "charas" or "hash" in India. The monthly expenditure on these substances comes to ₹6,000 to ₹8,000 for a regular but recreational consumer.

Those who cannot afford to spend this money, settle for tobacco mixed with cannabis, or ganja.

"Historically speaking, we saw an uptick in ganja or charas consumption through the 1970s and the early 80s in the aftermath of the Beatles' India tour, the popularity of psychedelic rock, and "flower power" in the West," says a former professor of History at a Delhi college.

With universities at the forefront of cultural exchange, students came in touch with the ideas and art associated with American bluesgrass music and the songs of, among others, Bob Dylan and Jimmy Hendrix.

Responding to a Quora thread on the prevalence of drugs, many former and current students at India's higher educational institutes said, "It isn't out of line with what you would expect from a bunch of 18 to 22-year-olds staying far away from home among curious and like-minded individuals. There's not much stopping you from trying that first sip/smoke."

Students take up nicotine and marijuana to "loosen up" and connect with their peers on campus. Some say smoking ganja with friends makes them "less inhibited and promises nights you will probably remember and cherish for the rest of your lives".

But it can be a short and quick journey from recreation to addiction, and worse.

A Hyderabad-based therapist, who has worked with college students between 18 and 25 years of age, says the predominantly recreational usage of drugs on campus has all the signs of what she calls "gateway drug abuse" — entry points into more worrisome things.

"There is an increasing pressure of competition, not just in the curriculum but also in assimilating with the college crowd, especially when you are staying on campus. The propensity to experiment is also high. These are the perfect conditions to amp up both the dosage and frequency from recreational to habitual to addictive," she says.

A young man who was on a campus till last year reports that his friends, under the influence, claim to experience heightened sensory perceptions. Apparently, they feel the world is going around in slow motion and see a path to higher creativity.

Little do they know it can be a rapid descent into something else.

Students across campuses in and around Delhi speak of fellow students who consume substances such as marijuana; the more forthright ones admit to doing it themselves

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Public Notice for Compulsory Delisting of equity shares of Companies in terms of Regulation 32 (3) of SEBI (Delisting of Equity Shares) Regulations, 2021

In terms of Regulation 32 (3) of SEBI (Delisting of Equity Shares) Regulations, 2021 ("Delisting Regulations") and as per rules made under Section 21A of the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956 and the Rules, Bye-Laws, and Regulations of National Stock Exchange of India Limited ("the Exchange"), NOTICE is hereby given that the Exchange proposes to delist undermentioned company as the said company have, inter alia, made out grounds for delisting of the securities, i.e., the trading in the securities of the said company has been under suspension for more than six months on account of non-compliance with various provisions of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 and various circulars issued by SEBI/Exchange in this regard.

The Exchange has issued show cause notices to the company at the last known address and registered email address as per the Exchange records, asking the said company to SHOW CAUSE as to why the equity shares of the Company should not be compulsorily delisted from the Exchange. The list of the company along with their last known address as per the Exchange records, are given below:

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* Addresses available as per the records of the Exchange.

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 1. the delisted Company, its whole-time directors, person(s) responsible for ensuring compliance with the securities laws, its promoters, and the companies which are promoted by any of them shall not directly or indirectly access the securities market or seek listing of any equity shares or act as an intermediary in the securities market for a period of ten years from the date of such delisting.
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 - b. the promoters, whole-time directors, and person(s) responsible for ensuring compliance with the securities laws, of the compulsorily delisted Company shall also not be eligible to become directors of any listed company till the exit option as mentioned in clause (a) is provided.

* In terms of Regulation 33 of Delisting Regulations,

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2. The recognised stock exchange shall form a Panel of expert valuers and from the said Panel, the valuer(s) for the purposes of sub-regulation (1) shall be appointed.
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4. The promoter(s) of the Company shall acquire the delisted equity shares from the public shareholders by paying them the value determined by the valuer, within three months of the date of delisting from the recognised stock exchange, subject to the option of the public shareholders to retain their shares.
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Any person who may be aggrieved by the proposed delisting may make representation, if any, to the Delisting Committee of the Exchange in writing within 15 working days of this notice i.e. on or before October 13, 2023.

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The company is directed to update the details of the promoter/director of the company on or before October 13, 2023. The promoter/director of the above listed company is also called upon to contact the Exchange immediately on the above telephone nos. and email address.

Place : Mumbai
Date : September 21, 2023

For National Stock Exchange of India Limited



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