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Make students take anti-drugs vow, report campus abuse: UGC to univs

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KOLKATA: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has asked higher education institutions to take anti-drug declarations from students during admission, entailing them to agree to not only refrain from using and distributing recreational drugs, tobacco and alcohol on campus, but also to report to the authorities any such activity they notice. The UGC, in its notice, has urged the institutes to implement the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA), a central government scheme launched in 2020 to curb drug use across the country. The idea behind the undertaking from students is to create awareness and sensitise campuses, as college- and university-level students are particularly vulnerable to experimenting with - and becoming addicted to - drugs. The aim

is to take action through the involvement of teachers, NSS volunteers and students' clubs through regular interventions and activities discouraging substance abuse.

WEEDING IT OUT

➤ Students to give anti-drug use declaration during admission



➤ Students to promise not to use drugs on campus

➤ Students to also vow to alert authorities if they see drug abuse on campus

The UGC notice asks higher education institutes to make students promise to refrain from using, being under

the influence of, possessing, furnishing, distributing, selling or planning to sell or possess alcohol, tobacco or any narcotic substance on campus. Each student should also promise to report to the authorities and "cooperate with them" on any "irregular behaviour" in relation to such drug use on campus.

Drug addiction was "a major challenge in many Higher Educational Institutions, with numerous cases of youngsters getting addicted to substance abuse," according to the notification the University Grants Commission (UGC), adding, "the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)... coordinates and monitors all aspects of drug abuse, prevention, assessment of the extent of the problem, treatment and rehabilitation of users, dissemination of information and public awareness."

College principals and university registrars welcomed UGC's effort to curb drug addiction, but some were apprehensive whether signing declaration forms would genuinely make any difference. Similar declarations against ragging and harassment are taken from students, but those were still prevalent on campuses, the sceptics said.

"The students can sign declaration forms but will they follow the terms? We have enhanced security measures on campus like patrolling, there are banners saying consumption of drugs and alcohol on campus is a punishable offence, but there are still people engaged in such activities," said Jadavpur University registrar Snehamanju Basu, adding, "The change needs to come from within. Having said that, there will definitely be some students who take such declarations seriously."

Presidency University registrar Debajyoti Konar said students were "quite sensitised" in this matter and authorities were also strict. "However, any appropriate guideline framed by any regulatory body will help the university take a more practical approach."

"Awareness programmes are a necessity and should be organised," said Lady Brabourne College principal Siuli Sarkar. Indranil Kar, the principal of Surendranath College, said he would add an anti-drug declaration form during admissions but felt it would not change anything. According to Asutosh College principal Manas Kabi, the approach should not only be restricted to colleges and universities. Families, too, had a huge role to play to stop youngsters from abusing drugs off campus, he felt.