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Goonda Act to be invoked against drug peddlers: Ashok

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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

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Announcing a slew of measures to curb the growing drug menace in the State, Home Minister R. Ashok on Wednesday promised the Legislative Council of invoking the Goonda Act against drug peddlers and convening a meeting of heads of departments in the next ten days to chalk out a plan of action to contain the “drug mafia”.

In a reply to a call-attention motion of Janata Dal (Secular) floor leader M.C. Nanaiah, the Home Minister said despite government’s efforts to contain the drug mafia, peddlers were active in some parts of the State.

Recently, officials of the Excise Department seized 239 kg of ganja from a school bus and seven persons were arrested for transporting the substance.

Responding to the concern expressed by Mr. Nanaiah and others in the light of the suicide of a teenage drug addict from Padavinangadi near Bondel, Mr. Ashok said the government was aware that drugs were being smuggled into the State from Pakistan, Thailand, Cambodia, and Nepal, through Mumbai and Goa. As many as 1,578 persons have been arrested in the last four years in connection with drug peddling and 985 cases have been registered. Security along the 320-km coastal area of Karnataka had been tightened and seven police stations had been set up to contain infiltration of anti-national elements and smuggling of drugs. Meeting of departments concerned would also focus on strengthening existing laws related to transportation and distribution of narcotics, he added.

As part of an effort to crackdown on the drug mafia that operates in and around the campuses of educational institutions, those selling tobacco products within a 100-metre radius of schools and colleges will now face the music as the Education Department will file police complaints against them.

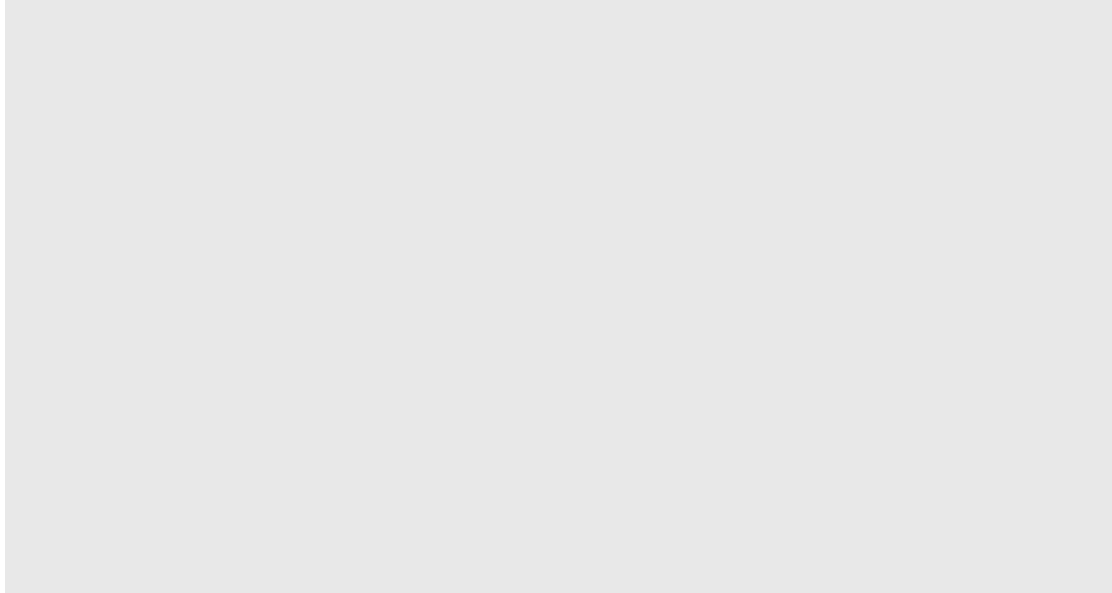
Responding to Mr. Nanaiah, Primary and Secondary Education Minister Vishweshwara Hegde Kageri said he would adopt a two-pronged approach to crush the drug mafia targeting schools and colleges.

The first would be to involve the police as the Education Department officials would file police complaints against those


violating a court order banning the sale of tobacco products within a 100-metre radius of educational institutions. The officials will also encourage parents and school authorities to file complaints against violators of the court order, the Minister said. Already, display boards had been put up near educational institutions about the ban on sale of tobacco products, he said.

The second strategy would involve inculcating “moral values” among students in a bid to mentally strengthen them, he said. He said the Education Department had a big role to play in this regard. However, he did not elaborate on the method of imparting moral values.

Mr. Nanaiah said the government should earmark a minimum of Rs. 100 crore in the State Budget towards tackling the drug menace.



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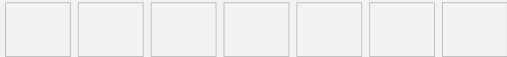
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