BioSpectrum
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

# CM Vijay declares war on synthetic drugs in Tamil Nadu

15 May 2026 | News

**The anti-drug campaign represents more than a governance initiative**



The rise of actor-turned-politician C. Joseph Vijay, popularly known as Thalapathy Vijay, as the Chief Minister (CM) of Tamil Nadu marks a major political transition in the state's governance. After leading Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) to electoral success in the 2026 Assembly elections, Vijay assumed office with a strong emphasis on law and order, youth welfare, and social reform. Among the first decisions of his administration, the crackdown on narcotics and synthetic drug circulation has emerged as one of the government's most urgent priorities.

Immediately after taking oath at Chennai's Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium, Chief Minister Vijay on May 10 signed three major policy files that reflected his government's immediate priorities. These included the rollout of 200 units of free electricity for domestic consumers, the creation of the "Singappen" special rapid response police force for women's safety, and the launch of a major "Drug Free Tamil Nadu" initiative through the formation of dedicated Anti-Narcotics Task Force units across all districts. The inclusion of the anti-drug mission among his very first executive decisions highlighted Vijay's determination to make Tamil Nadu a drug-free state. The move signalled that the new administration views the drug menace not merely as a policing issue, but as a social emergency threatening the future of Tamil Nadu's youth.

**A Growing Drug Crisis in Tamil Nadu**

Tamil Nadu has witnessed a sharp rise in narcotics-related crimes over the last few years. Official enforcement data reveal that NDPS cases in the state increased dramatically from 1,252 cases in 2020 to 2,590 cases in 2022, while arrests crossed 10,000 during the same period. Although cannabis continues to dominate seizures in terms of quantity, authorities are increasingly alarmed by the rapid growth of synthetic and designer drugs.

The most worrying trend is the explosion in synthetic drug circulation. LSD, which stands for Lysergic Acid Diethylamide, is a powerful synthetic hallucinogenic drug that alters perception, mood, and sensory experiences. Commonly sold in the form of blotter papers or "acid tabs," LSD has emerged as a major concern among enforcement agencies because of its growing popularity among college students and urban youth.

LSD was originally synthesized in 1938 by Swiss chemist Albert Hofmann and is known for causing hallucinations, distorted thinking, panic attacks, and severe psychological effects. In India, LSD is classified as an illegal narcotic substance under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

Tamil Nadu authorities have reported a dramatic increase in LSD seizures in recent years. LSD blot seizures rose from just 99 blots in 2021 to nearly 3,905 blots in 2024, signalling the rapid spread of synthetic narcotics in urban networks. Investigations by enforcement agencies have also uncovered clandestine laboratories involved in manufacturing methamphetamine, ketamine, and LSD using imported chemical precursors such as pseudoephedrine and ephedrine.

Unlike traditional narcotics, synthetic drugs pose a more dangerous challenge because they are easier to manufacture, highly addictive, and difficult to detect. They are increasingly penetrating urban college campuses, nightlife circuits, and even school environments. Law enforcement officials believe Tamil Nadu's strong transport connectivity, ports, and urban consumer market have made the state vulnerable to interstate and international trafficking networks.

**New Government's 7-Point Anti-Drug Framework**

Recognizing the seriousness of the threat, the Vijay-led government introduced a comprehensive 7-point Anti-Drug Action Plan aimed at dismantling narcotics networks and reducing drug consumption among youth.

The government's strategy includes:

- Continuous surveillance of drug offenders and organized syndicates
- Monitoring of encrypted digital platforms used for drug transactions
- Intelligence-driven raids and targeted enforcement operations
- Interstate and inter-district narcotics tracking
- Strict enforcement of the NDPS Act
- Rehabilitation and counselling support for addicts
- Large-scale awareness campaigns in schools and colleges

At the heart of this initiative is the appointment and deployment of a massive Anti-Narcotic Task Force structure across Tamil Nadu. The government has ordered the establishment of 65 specialized Anti-Narcotic Task Force units across police districts and commissionerates. Senior police officials, inspectors, sub-inspectors, and head constables are being specifically assigned to these dedicated units to strengthen intelligence gathering, surveillance, and field enforcement against narcotics networks. These task forces are expected to function as rapid-response enforcement teams focused on identifying traffickers,

dismantling synthetic drug supply chains, and preventing the spread of narcotics among youth. These units are expected to function as rapid intelligence and enforcement teams dedicated specifically to narcotics control.

The Chief Minister has also ordered direct monitoring of anti-drug operations through the Home Department, reflecting the administration's intention to maintain political oversight over enforcement activities.

**Special Focus on Synthetic Drugs**

A defining feature of the new government's policy is its explicit focus on synthetic drug consumption. Previous anti-drug drives in Tamil Nadu largely concentrated on cannabis and alcohol abuse. However, the Vijay administration has acknowledged that the future threat lies in chemically manufactured narcotics such as methamphetamine, MDMA, LSD, ketamine, and pharmaceutical opioid misuse.

Synthetic drugs are particularly dangerous because they target younger demographics and spread rapidly through social media influence, online dealers, rave culture, and peer networks. Enforcement agencies have found that many transactions now occur through encrypted apps and digital payment systems, making conventional policing inadequate.

The government's strategy therefore combines cyber surveillance with intelligence-based enforcement. Special teams are expected to monitor online trafficking channels, darknet marketplaces, and courier networks suspected of transporting synthetic substances.

Authorities are also planning stronger coordination with central agencies such as the Narcotics Control Bureau and interstate police units to intercept precursor chemicals entering Tamil Nadu through ports and logistics chains.

**Multi-Department "Drug Free Tamil Nadu" Mission**

The anti-drug campaign is not limited to policing alone. The state government has launched a broader "Drug Free Tamil Nadu" mission involving 11 government departments, including Health, School Education, Higher Education, Social Welfare, Youth Welfare, Rural Development, and Information & Public Relations.

This multi-sectoral approach recognizes that addiction is both a law-and-order issue and a public health challenge.

The Education Department has become a central pillar of the campaign. One of the most significant preventive initiatives under the "Drug Free Tamil Nadu" mission is the establishment of Anti-Drug Clubs in schools, colleges, and technical institutions across the state. These clubs are designed to function as student-led awareness and prevention platforms aimed at identifying early signs of substance abuse and promoting a culture of drug-free campuses.

The Anti-Drug Clubs will organize awareness campaigns, counselling sessions, seminars, street plays, social media outreach, and peer-support activities focusing especially on synthetic drugs such as LSD, methamphetamine, MDMA, and pharmaceutical substance abuse. Teachers, NSS volunteers, student coordinators, and trained counsellors are expected to work together in identifying vulnerable students and encouraging early intervention.

The state government has also planned district-level and state-level training programs for Anti-Drug Club coordinators and volunteers. Master trainers are being appointed across School Education, Higher Education, and Technical Education departments to standardize awareness modules and prevention strategies.

Officials believe these clubs are important because synthetic drug consumption is increasingly spreading among teenagers and college students through peer pressure, nightlife culture, social media influence, and online trafficking networks. The clubs are therefore expected to act not only as awareness centres but also as community surveillance and youth engagement platforms.

To encourage participation, the government is considering recognition and awards for institutions that actively implement anti-drug activities and demonstrate effective prevention outcomes. Authorities hope that sustained student involvement will help create a long-term social movement against narcotics in Tamil Nadu.

The government believes educational institutions are critical battlegrounds in preventing synthetic drug addiction among adolescents and young adults.

In 2025-26, the Tamil Nadu Finance Department allocated approximately Rs 1.5 crore specifically for training anti-drug volunteers, master trainers, and awareness coordinators under the initiative. Training modules are being prepared for schools, colleges, technical institutions, and women's self-help groups.

The government's emphasis on awareness reflects growing concerns that academic pressure, unemployment, urban stress, and peer influence are pushing vulnerable youth toward substance abuse.

**Public Health and Rehabilitation Measures**

While the Vijay government has adopted a tough enforcement stance, it has also acknowledged the need for rehabilitation and treatment.

Tamil Nadu already operates limited de-addiction and opioid substitution therapy (OST) programs through health institutions and NGOs. However, experts argue that rehabilitation infrastructure remains insufficient compared to the scale of addiction.

The government is therefore expected to expand counselling centres, mental health support systems, and rehabilitation programs, especially for students and first-time users. Public health officials are advocating for stronger integration between hospitals, schools, social welfare agencies, and law enforcement authorities.

Experts warn that punitive policing alone cannot solve the synthetic drug crisis. Long-term success will depend on reducing demand through awareness, counselling, family support systems, and youth engagement programs.

**Challenges Ahead**

Despite the ambitious framework, the government faces several challenges.

First, Tamil Nadu lacks a comprehensive state-wide survey on illicit drug consumption, making it difficult to accurately measure the scale of addiction. Current data are largely based on seizures and arrests, which reflect enforcement activity rather than actual prevalence.

Second, synthetic drug trafficking networks are highly adaptive and technologically sophisticated. Darknet sales, encrypted messaging apps, and interstate courier systems create enforcement difficulties that require specialized cyber capabilities.

Third, rehabilitation capacity remains limited, especially in rural districts. Without sufficient treatment infrastructure, many addicts risk returning to substance abuse even after police intervention.

Finally, experts stress that social and economic factors such as unemployment, migration stress, educational pressure, and social isolation continue to fuel drug dependency among youth.

**A Political and Social Test**

For Chief Minister Vijay, the anti-drug campaign represents more than a governance initiative — it is a defining political test of his leadership. His administration has framed the issue as a battle to protect Tamil Nadu's younger generation from a growing synthetic drug epidemic.

The success of the "Drug Free Tamil Nadu" mission will depend on whether the government can sustain coordination between police, health departments, educational institutions, and local communities over the long term.

If effectively implemented, the campaign could become one of the most significant public health and law-enforcement reforms undertaken in Tamil Nadu in recent years. But if gaps in enforcement, rehabilitation, and data collection persist, the synthetic drug crisis may continue evolving faster than the state's response mechanisms.

The coming years will determine whether Vijay's government can transform its strong political messaging into a durable and evidence-based anti-drug model for the state.

Narayan Kulkarni

narayan.kulkarni@mmactiv.com