

# War on Drugs

June 24, 2022

## Manifest Pedagogy:

Drug Addiction is a global menace, and it should not be seen as a flaw in one's character, but as an ailment that any other person could be struggling with. Therefore, the stigma associated with drug abuse needs to be reduced. Society needs to understand that drug-addicts are victims and not criminals.

In News: The Canadian government has decided to allow the province of British Columbia (BC) to decriminalize the possession of a small amount of illicit drugs for 3 years on an experimental basis.

The pilot project begins from Jan 31, 2023. With rising overdose deaths in the province, it is hoped that by eliminating criminal penalties, there will be a reduction of fear and shame for users that need medical help.

Placing it in Syllabus- Health and Security Challenges- Organized Crime

## Static Dimensions

- What is the 'war on drugs'?
- Major Reasons for Drug Abuse
- Impact of drug abuse

## Current Dimensions

- Status of drug abuse
- Worlds' Response to the menace of Drugs
- India and Drug Abuse
- India's Response to Drugs

## Content

What is the 'war on drugs'?

- In 1971, then US President Richard Nixon held a press conference and declared drug abuse, public enemy number one. He said that “a new, all out offensive” was required, that would be “worldwide” in nature.
- Ten years earlier, the UN had passed the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs which sought to prohibit the production and supply of various substances through international cooperation.
- This marked the beginning of a global campaign to eradicate the use of illicit drugs and its production, called the ‘War on Drugs’.
- At the heart of this campaign lay the notion that prohibition of drugs would reduce consumption.
- By criminalizing drugs and initiating harsh punitive action against people involved in the use, production and dissemination, the world would effectively be rid of drugs.

### **Major Reasons for Drug Abuse-**

- Peer Pressure to consume drugs to get their approval.  
Eg.- Students
- Lack of social support, sense of loneliness, despair, depression
- Stress in life- Overburdened lifestyle
- Feel good factor- Immediate effect may be a sense of relaxation and comfort.
- Easier access and being trapped in the vicious cycle of drugs.
- Traumatic events- The economic downturn caused by the global pandemic may drive more people to substance abuse or leave them vulnerable to involvement in drug trafficking and related crime.
- Culture- Party culture where consumption of Drugs is found to be cool and celebrated
- Media Influence- Shown in movies and celebrities themselves consuming drugs have a negative impact on the

common people.

- Family History- Parents themselves drug abusers.

### Impact of drug abuse-

- It has aggravated the crime scenario in India. Persons dealing with narcotic drugs are instruments in causing the deaths of innocent and vulnerable victims.
- Other impacts like losing job, financial troubles, sexual abuse, accidents and injuries, legal consequences, etc.
- Causes irreversible damage to one's mental and physical health.
- Person loses confidence in life, becomes a liability for society.

### Status of drug abuse-

- In data collected by the **United Nations, global consumption of opiates, cocaine and marijuana increased by 34.5%, 27% and 8% respectively**, between 1998-2008.
- In a 2018 report by the International Drug Policy Consortium (IDPC), it was stated that **between 2008 and 2018, drug related deaths had increased globally by 145%**.
- There has also been a steady increase in mass incarceration and disproportionate punishments.
- **1 in 5 prisoners worldwide are arrested for drug offenses, of whom 83% are in prison for drug use or possession for personal use.**

### Worlds' Response to the menace of Drugs-

- **International Treaties and Conventions to Combat Drug Menace:**
  - United Nations (UN) Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)
  - UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971).
  - UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic

## Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (1988)

- UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) 2000

- **The UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND)** – It is the central policy-making body for the UN drug control system, which meets on an annual basis
- Over the past few years, several countries have been turning away from prohibitionist drug strategies and are introducing alternative policies instead.
- There has been a shift in attitude around the world towards marijuana, with many believing it to be less harmful than imagined before. **Uruguay and Canada** for example, legalized the recreational use of marijuana in 2013 and 2018, respectively.
- Others have tried to decriminalize drug use by removing criminal sanctions against different illicit substances by prescribing specific amounts. E.g. In 2001, **Portugal** changed the status of illegality for possession of drugs for personal use from criminal to administrative. Rather than facing arrest, users, it was decided, would be given a warning, a small fine or will be taken to a doctor or social worker for treatment and harm reduction.
- **Canada's British Columbia (BC)** declared a public health emergency due to skyrocketing drug overdose deaths. Over 9,000 people have died of overdoses in BC since 2016. Now, the province wants to experiment with legalizing personal use of all drugs for 3 years. While the illicit substances will not be legalized, adults possessing a total amount of 2.5 gm of cocaine, methamphetamine, opioids and MDMA will not be arrested, charged or have their drugs seized.
- **Ukraine** has approved a draft bill to legalize cannabis use for medicinal purposes to help its citizens fight “a massive increase in psychological harm and distress”.
- **Thailand** legalized cultivation of marijuana in an

attempt to turn cannabis into a cash crop. With its well developed medical tourism industry and tropical climate ideal for growing cannabis, Thailand is trying to make a splash in the market for medical marijuana.

The [International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking](#), or World Drug Day, is marked on 26 June every year to strengthen action and cooperation in achieving a world free of drug abuse. Theme for 2022- *“Addressing drug challenges in health and humanitarian crises”*

### **India and Drug Abuse-**

- According to a report by the **United Nation Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**, India is **one of the major hubs** of illicit drug trade ranging from age-old cannabis to newer prescription drugs like tramadol, and designer drugs like methamphetamine.
- The money from the drug trade is used to finance terrorism, human trafficking, illegal businesses etc.
- India lies in the middle of two major illicit opium production regions in the world, the Golden Crescent in the west and the Golden Triangle in the east which makes it a viable hub of the illicit drug trade.
  - **Golden Triangle**: It includes the regions of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand and is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.
  - **Golden Crescent**: It includes Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan and is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.
- As per the report **Magnitude of Substance Use** in India released by All India Institute Of Medical Science (AIIMS) in 2019-
  - Around **5 crore Indians** reported to have used cannabis and opioids at the time of the survey (conducted in the year 2018).

- It has been estimated that there are about **8.5 lakh people who inject drugs**.
- Of the total cases estimated by the report, more than half of them are contributed by states like **Punjab, Assam, Delhi, Haryana, Manipur, Mizoram, Sikkim and Uttar Pradesh**.
- About **60 lakh people** are estimated to need help for their opioid use problems.

### India's Response to Drugs-

- In India, drug consumption or possession is a criminal offence.
- **The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985** is the main legislation dealing with drugs and their trafficking.
  - Currently, the NDPS Act only adopts a reformatory approach towards addicts.
  - It gives addicts immunity from prosecution and imprisonment (if found guilty) if they volunteer to undergo treatment and rehabilitation.
  - However, there is no provision for relief or exemption for, say, first-time users or recreational users.
  - Section 27 of the NDPS Act prescribes imprisonment of up to a year or a fine of up to Rs 20,000, or both, for consumption of any narcotic drug or psychotropic substance. It makes no distinction between addicts, first-time users and recreational users. (This was the section invoked in the recent arrest of actor Shah Rukh Khan's son).
  - Critics of the Act point out that while the NDPS requires law enforcement to target drug trafficking, it is the end-users who are affected more.
- **SIMS (Seizure Information Management System) Portal:** For digitization of pan-India drug seizure data, the MHA

launched an e-portal called 'SIMS' in 2019 for all the drug law enforcement agencies under the mandate of NDPS Act.

- **The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)**– It is vested with the power to charge individuals in cases related to the illegal use and supply of narcotics.
- **Nasha Mukh Bharat Campaign**
  - Awareness generation programs in University Campuses, Higher Education institutions, and schools.
  - Building capacity for service providers
  - Focus on Treatment facilities in Hospital Settings.
  - Identification of dependent population and community outreach.

### Way Forward-

- The drug menace is an outward sign of systemic social, cultural, economic, and political aberrations. As the problem is systemic and multidimensional, the remedy must also be systemic and multifaceted.
- By showing compassion for victims of drug users and refraining from treating them as criminals, we can lessen the stigma associated with drug problems.
- Government should promote awareness in this area with the help of civil society organizations.
- Strict implementation of the law.
- Chapters on drug addiction and methods to combat it should be added to the school curriculum after it has been amended.
- Enhancing the infrastructure for healthcare and rehabilitation to ensure that drug addicts receive high-quality care and can rejoin society.

### Mould your thought-

1. Highlight the factors responsible for the existence of Drug menace in the world with special focus on India. Discuss the measures taken at the Global level to fight the menace.

**Approach to the answer-**

- Explain the gravity of the problem
- What is war on drugs?
- Factors responsible for the problem.
- Steps taken across the world
- Conclusion