

4. Global Cooperation Need for Drug Menace – Security

Union Home Minister Amit Shah called for a uniform global legal framework, intelligence sharing, and coordinated international action to combat the growing menace of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism.

1. Background

Drug abuse represents grave threat to public health, societal well-being, and national security globally, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah calling for uniform global legal framework, intelligence sharing, and coordinated international action to combat growing menace of drug trafficking and narco-terrorism. According to 2019 report by AIIMS and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, over 16 crore Indians consume alcohol with 5.7 crore requiring medical help, more than 2.3 crore people use cannabis and opioids, about 1.08% of 10–75-year-old Indians approximately 1.18 crore people use sedatives through non-medical, non-prescription use, and inhalants are concern particularly among children and adolescents with higher prevalence of use 1.17% compared to adults 0.58%. Reasons for drug menace in India include geographical location with India lying close to Golden Crescent including Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan which is principal global site for opium production and distribution, and Golden Triangle including Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand which is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region, with easy cross-border smuggling in states like Punjab, Manipur, and Assam enabling drug inflow. Youth vulnerability through peer pressure, stress, unemployment, and curiosity makes youth susceptible to drug use, while weak enforcement with inadequate surveillance, corruption, and overburdened agencies hinders effective control. Easy availability through online platforms, local peddlers, and pharmacies makes drugs more accessible, while social disintegration including broken families, isolation, and lack of community support increases addiction risks. Impact of drug abuse includes economic impact lowering productivity, increasing healthcare costs, and weakening human capital, health impact causing mental disorders, spreading HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, and leading to physical deterioration, social impact disrupting families, fuelling domestic violence, and resulting in social isolation and stigma, and national security impact with drug trade fostering narco-terrorism, organized crime, and youth involvement weakening national integrity. Steps taken include Indian initiatives such as Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 prohibiting production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs prescribing penalties, Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan launched in 2020 creating awareness about ill effects promoting drug-free India, Anti-Narcotics Task Force at state level strengthening drug law enforcement, DarkNet Monitoring Cell under Narcotics Control Bureau tracking online drug sales, Kashi Declaration as five-year roadmap for drug-free India signed during Youth Spiritual Summit in Varanasi, and national goal of achieving Drug-Free India by 2047.

2. Menace of Drug Abuse in India

Scale of Problem

According to 2019 report by AIIMS and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, drug abuse affects significant proportion of Indian population across age groups and socioeconomic categories.

Alcohol – Over 16 crore Indians consume alcohol, with 5.7 crore requiring medical help for alcohol-related problems indicating widespread abuse and dependency.

Cannabis and Opioids – More than 2.3 crore people use cannabis and opioids creating addiction and health complications.

Sedatives – About 1.08% of 10–75-year-old Indians approximately 1.18 crore people use sedatives through non-medical, non-prescription use indicating misuse of pharmaceutical drugs.

Inhalants – Inhalants are concern particularly among children and adolescents with higher prevalence of use 1.17% compared to adults 0.58%, affecting young vulnerable population.

3. Reasons for Drug Menace in India

Geographical Location

1. India lies close to Golden Crescent including Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan which is principal global site for opium production and distribution, and Golden Triangle including Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand which is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.
2. Easy cross-border smuggling in states like Punjab bordering Pakistan, Manipur and Assam bordering Myanmar enables drug inflow through porous borders and inadequate border surveillance.

Youth Vulnerability

1. Peer pressure among friends and social circles encouraging experimentation with drugs, stress from academic pressure, career uncertainties, and social expectations, unemployment creating frustration and hopelessness leading to substance abuse, and curiosity about drug effects make youth susceptible to drug use.

Weak Enforcement

1. Inadequate surveillance at borders, ports, and domestic distribution networks allows drug trafficking to flourish.
2. Corruption among enforcement agencies compromises investigations and allows traffickers to operate with impunity.
3. Overburdened agencies with limited resources, personnel, and technical capabilities hinder effective control of drug networks.

Easy Availability

1. Online platforms including darknet markets facilitate anonymous drug transactions and home delivery.
2. Local peddlers operate openly in neighbourhoods, educational institutions, and entertainment venues.
3. Pharmacies sometimes dispense controlled substances without prescriptions enabling pharmaceutical drug abuse.

Social Disintegration

1. Broken families with divorce, domestic violence, and dysfunctional relationships create emotional vulnerabilities.
2. Isolation from community support systems reduces protective factors against addiction.
3. Lack of community support including mentorship, counselling, and rehabilitation resources increases addiction risks.

4.Impact of Drug Abuse

Economic Impact

1. Drug abuse lowers productivity reducing workforce efficiency and economic output.
2. Healthcare costs increase through treatment of addiction, overdoses, infections, and mental health disorders.
3. Human capital weakens as addiction reduces educational attainment, skill development, and employment stability.

Health Impact

1. Mental disorders including depression, anxiety, psychosis, and cognitive impairment result from substance abuse.
2. Spreads HIV/AIDS and hepatitis through needle sharing among injecting drug users.
3. Physical deterioration including organ damage, malnutrition, and premature death occurs with chronic abuse.

Social Impact

1. Disrupts families through breakdown of relationships, neglect of responsibilities, and intergenerational trauma.
2. Fuels domestic violence with substance-induced aggression and behavioural problems.

3. Results in social isolation and stigma preventing individuals from seeking help and reintegrating into society.

National Security Impact

1. Drug trade fosters narco-terrorism with proceeds funding terrorist organizations and insurgent groups.
2. Organized crime syndicates involved in trafficking engage in violence, corruption, and destabilization.
3. Youth involvement in drug trade weakens national integrity diverting human resources from productive activities.

5.Steps Taken to Combat Drug Menace

Indian Initiatives

Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act) – Prohibits production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs and prescribes penalties for violations including imprisonment and fines proportionate to offense severity.

Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan – Launched in 2020, this campaign aims to create awareness about ill effects of drug abuse and promote drug-free India through community outreach, educational programs, and rehabilitation support.

Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) – Many states have established ANTFs to strengthen drug law enforcement at state level through coordinated action among police, excise, and intelligence agencies.

DarkNet Monitoring Cell under Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) – Tracks online drug sales on darknet markets, cryptocurrency transactions, and digital communication among traffickers.

Kashi Declaration – Five-year roadmap for drug-free India signed during Youth Spiritual Summit in Varanasi setting targets, strategies, and partnerships for comprehensive drug control.

Drug-Free India by 2047 – India has set national goal of achieving Drug-Free India by 2047 aligning with broader vision of Viksit Bharat.

Global Initiatives

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) – UNODC is at forefront of global fight against illicit drugs coordinating international drug control efforts, providing technical assistance to countries, and monitoring global drug situation. UNODC-led campaign aims to raise awareness about dangers of drug abuse.

International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) – INCB monitors global drug situation and assesses countries' compliance with international drug control treaties including Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961, Convention on Psychotropic Substances 1971, and UN Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988.

6.Way Ahead

Strengthening Global Governance

1. Countries need harmonised anti-drug laws ensuring consistent legal frameworks across jurisdictions reducing loopholes that traffickers exploit.
2. Stronger extradition treaties enable prosecution of international traffickers and money launderers across borders.
3. International institutions should develop common protocols for narcotics enforcement including investigation standards, evidence sharing, and joint operations.

Expanding Intelligence Cooperation

1. Establishment of integrated databases connecting law enforcement agencies globally for real-time information sharing on traffickers, routes, and methods.
2. Real-time intelligence platforms can improve interdiction efforts at borders, ports, and transit points.
3. Joint task forces involving multiple countries can conduct coordinated operations against transnational trafficking networks.

Enforcement with Rehabilitation

Alongside strict enforcement against traffickers and dealers, governments should focus on comprehensive approach combining supply reduction with demand reduction.

Rehabilitation – Establish accessible treatment centers providing medical detoxification, counselling, and long-term support for recovery.

Awareness campaigns – Educate public especially youth about health risks, legal consequences, and social impacts of drug abuse.

Mental health support – Integrate addiction treatment with mental health services addressing underlying psychological issues.

Youth engagement programmes – Provide positive alternatives including sports, arts, vocational training, and mentorship preventing drug experimentation.

Community Participation

1. Mobilize civil society organizations, religious institutions, and community leaders for grassroots awareness and support.
2. Establish community vigilance committees identifying and reporting drug activities.
3. Create peer support groups for recovering addicts providing ongoing encouragement and accountability.

Research and Monitoring

1. Conduct regular surveys assessing drug abuse prevalence, trends, and emerging substances.
2. Research effective prevention and treatment interventions adapting international best practices to local contexts.
3. Monitor effectiveness of policies and programs making evidence-based adjustments.

Conclusion

Growing drug menace in India poses grave threat to public health, societal well-being, and national security, with Union Home Minister Amit Shah calling for uniform global legal framework, intelligence sharing, and coordinated international action to combat drug trafficking and narco-terrorism. According to 2019 AIIMS and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment report, over 16 crore Indians consume alcohol with 5.7 crore requiring medical help, more than 2.3 crore people use cannabis and opioids, about 1.18 crore people use sedatives through non-medical use, and inhalants show higher prevalence among children and adolescents at 1.17% compared to adults at 0.58%. Reasons include geographical location with India lying close to Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) and Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) enabling easy cross-border smuggling in Punjab, Manipur, and Assam, youth vulnerability through peer pressure, stress, unemployment, and curiosity, weak enforcement with inadequate surveillance, corruption, and overburdened agencies, easy availability through online platforms, local peddlers, and pharmacies, and social disintegration including broken families and lack of community support.

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