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Report of the International Narcotics Control Board for 2019

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Why in News

The **United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** has released the **2019 report of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**.

The report features **India among top manufacturers of illicit and licit drugs** that are smuggled to other countries and into the hands of addicts.

Global Scenario

- **Increased Smuggling of Pharmaceutical Drugs:**

Drug traffickers tend to **smuggle pharmaceutical drugs rather than illicit drugs** (e.g. hashish, heroin, etc.) because of the **more lenient penalties** imposed for smuggling of **controlled pharmaceutical drugs**.

- **Phenobarbital Drug:**

- It is one of the **most internationally traded controlled psychotropic substances**, with more than 161 countries reporting imports of the substance in 2018.
- It included on the **WHO Model List of Essential Medicines** for treating **epilepsy** (a neurological disorder).
- **China is the lead manufacturing country** of phenobarbital in **2018**, followed by India and Hungary.

- **Limited Usage of Pre-Export Notification:**

It has also been noted that countries like China, South Korea and the United States have received drugs **without pre-notification** through the PEN **Online system**.

PEN Online System

- The Pre-Export Notification (PEN) Online is developed by **UNODC/International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**.
- It is used by the Member States exporting precursor chemicals **to alert the national competent authorities in the importing country** with the details of the export transaction.
- It enables the **easy on-line exchange of information** between the Member States on shipments **(export and import) of the chemicals** required for the manufacture of illegal addictive drugs.
- The system also facilitates **electronic reply** to acknowledge receipt and notify the exporting country of clearance to export. **An electronic copy is sent to INCB by default.**

National Scenario

- **Diversion of Pharmaceutical Drugs:**

It has also noted an **increased diversion of controlled pharmaceutical precursors**, in particular **ephedrine and pseudoephedrine**, from licit to illicit channels has continued in India.

- Precursors are chemicals which are used **to manufacture narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances**.
- Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine have been notified as **'controlled substance'** in India.
- The **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985** empowers the Central Government to declare any substance as **'controlled substance'** after considering its possible use in the production or manufacture of narcotic drugs or psychotropic substances.

- **Tramadol Drug:**

- Globally most of the tramadol seized between 2013 and 2017 was reported to have **originated in India**. e.g.India was the source of **87% of the tramadol seized in Ghana in 2017**.
- Tramadol, sold under the brand name **Ultram** among others, is an opioid pain medication used to treat moderate to moderately severe pain.
- The drug is under the control of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) was established in **1997**.
- UNODC publishes the **World Drug Report**.

International Narcotics Control Board

- The International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) is the **independent and quasi-judicial** monitoring body for the implementation of the United Nations international drug control conventions.
- It was established in **1968** in accordance with the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1954.
- Its **secretariat** is located in **Vienna, Austria**.

Source: HBL