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Illicit Drug Supply and Covid-19: UNODC

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Why in News

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 'Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia: Latest Developments and Challenges'. Recently, the (UNODC) released a report on

- **Covid-19 lockdowns** statistical reduction in drug seizures, without a real change in terms of supply. According to this report, induced and movement restrictions may lead to an initial but
- In other words, Covid-19 is unlikely to have any effect on illicit drug supply.

Key Points

- **Shifting of Priorities: pandemic threaten the efforts to strengthen drug prevention and treatment** Rearrangement of governments' priorities and resources to tackle the could programmes.
- **No Direct Correlation: Not every fluctuation would be a direct or indirect consequence** in terms of drug seizures, prices, drug-related arrests or deaths in the coming months of the outbreak.
- **Quick and Flexible Response: flexibility to respond raised risk levels** Active organised crime groups have shown to shortages of supplies and have on certain trafficking routes.
- **Local Capacities: Methamphetamine** Main synthetic drug of concern in the region, (also called), was manufactured, trafficked and consumed without the need for globalised supply chains.

Indian Context

- **amphetamine-type stimulants** India reported a substantial increase in seizures of (ATS), most of which are suspected to be meth.

- **Golden Triangle routes crossing India.** Growth in trafficking of meth from the overland to Bangladesh, with some
 - **Golden Triangle rural mountains of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.** The represents the region coinciding with the
 - **Southeast Asia's main opium-producing oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America.** It is region and one of the
 - **maritime trafficking routes across Indian territorial waters.** Use of from Myanmar along the Andaman Sea, some of which

The reasons behind the spike are:
- **Golden Crescent in the west Golden Triangle in the east.** India is in the middle of two major illicit opium production regions in the world, the and the

Golden Crescent

- This region of South Asia is a principal global site for opium production and distribution.
- **Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.** It comprises

Challenges

- **Easy Borders:** The borders are porous and difficult to control in the lower Mekong region so cross-border movements in many places are not significantly hindered by Covid-19 measures.
- **Evolving Ways of Trafficking: containerised trafficking, couriers body-packing have reduced come up with other ways** The methods of and due to shutting down of borders and trade. However, dealers might limiting the impact of reduced trade.
- **Limited Control: limited government control Golden Triangle,** There is in the trafficking would continue at high volumes.
- **Unaffected Supply: source chemicals through direct diversion from industry** The supply of precursor chemicals is not likely to be disrupted because major organised crime groups and not diversion from illicit overseas trade channels.
- **Lowest Price Level: surge of supplies. increased its affordability** The price of meth has dropped to the lowest level in a decade with the This has in turn and, therefore, use.
- **Increased Crime: reduce the disposable income result in increased crime.**
 - Street dealing of drugs might be significantly impacted and altered due to movement restriction and social distancing.
 - Changed methods to access drugs and economic hardship might of some drug users, and

- **Additional Risks:** Vulnerable populations of drug users may be exposed to additional risks as funding is re-prioritised, access to programmes and services becomes difficult and activities of treatment providers are hampered as they are dealing with the pandemic.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

- **19972002.** Established in and was named UNODC in
- **United Nations International Drug Control Program Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office at Vienna.** It acts as the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention by combining the (UNDCP) and the
- **World Drug Report.** UNODC publishes the

Way Forward

- **efforts national, regional, and international level analyse methods and trends** Additional would be required at the to carefully to understand changes to drug markets in the wake of the pandemic.
- **methods or procedures must be institutionalised** Moreover, to deal with illicit drug supply, their usage in order to ensure that fight against this menace is not compromised in face of a pandemic or any other crisis.

Source: TH