



The Big Picture: Fighting Drug Menace

The International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is observed annually on June 26. The decision to mark the day was taken on December 7, 1987, through a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly in order to strengthen global action and cooperation to achieve its aim of making the international society free of drug abuse. The theme for 2019, **'Health for Justice, Justice for Health'** emphasises that justice and health are two sides of the same coin when it comes to addressing the problems associated with drugs.

Drug Menace in India

- In February 2019, AIIMS submitted its report "Magnitude of Substance Use in India" to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. Key highlights of the report are:
 - **Alcohol is the most abused substance in India.**
 - 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.
- More and more children are taking to alcohol consumption and the **highest percentage of children who are addicted to alcohol are in Punjab** followed by West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh.

Reasons

- **Stress Buster:**
 - Sometimes students tend to get into drugs if they are in a technical institute (medical or engineering), because of their **studies or work pressure.** Such students are generally alone and away from homes, therefore to cope up with all the stress around them, they end up using drugs.
 - Also, students coming from other states find it difficult to cope up in metropolitan cities like Delhi.
 - It is generally seen that **an unemployed youth**, out of frustration, ends up in taking drugs.
- **Peer pressure** and other psychological factors can cause teens to engage in risky behaviours, leading to substance abuse.
 - Youth can get attracted to the **glamour attached to drug taking.**
 - Sometimes also, **out of fun or in order to experiment**, a youth ends up in taking drugs.
 - When children see their elder ones consuming drugs, they also try to do the same.
- **Suffering and deprivation:** People in the lower income group who cannot have an adequate amount of food, take drugs to sleep or relax.
- **Drug subculture** that is prevalent in the country.
- **Flaws in the legal system:**
 - The cause behind drug menace is the drug cartels, crime syndicates and ultimately the **ISI**

which is the **biggest supplier of drugs**.

- **Rave parties** have been reported in the country where intake of narcotic substances is observed.
- These parties are **orchestrated by the drug syndicates** who have their own vested interests.
- Social media plays an important role in organising these parties.
- The police have not been able to control such parties.
- **Smuggling of drugs** through the states like Punjab, Assam and Uttar Pradesh which share the border with neighbouring countries.
- Normal food products like noodles, pan masala and gutka laced with drugs are sold to school and college students.
- The **African as well as the Southasian route being misused** to bring drugs into the country.

Challenges to Curb the Drug Menace

- **Legally available drugs** such as tobacco are a huge problem.
 - **Tobacco is usually seen as a gateway drug** which children take just to experiment with, and gradually they progress to alcohol and then cannabis.
- Currently, the country has more of the **young population with disposable income** where **willingness to take risk** is high. The **availability of drugs** in the country makes it a lethal mix.
- **Lack of availability of rehabilitation centres in the country is a big issue.** Also, NGOs operating de-addiction centres in the country, have failed to provide the required kind of treatment and therapy.

Way Forward

- **Voluntary process:** It is well within one's mental and spiritual powers to quit addiction. There is a **need to admit that one has a problem of drug addiction** and then s/he needs to look at the lives of such people who had been, once, through the worst period of addiction and have now come out of that.
 - At the same time, help from physicians, psychologists, as well as strong support from family, is required.
- **Stigma:** Addiction should not be seen as a character flaw, but as an ailment that any other person could be struggling with. Therefore, the stigma associated with drug taking needs to be reduced. **Society needs to understand that drug-addicts are victims and not criminals.**
- Certain crop drugs which have more than 50% alcohol and opioids need to be contained.
- **Strict action is required from police officers** at the excise and narcotics department to curb the problem of drug menace in the country.
- **Radical political decisions like that one of alcohol prohibition in Bihar may be another solution.** When people do not exercise self-control, a state has to step in, **as part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47).**
- Education curriculum should include chapters on drug addiction, its impact and also on de-addiction. Proper Counselling is another alternative.
- There is a need to **strictly implement the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.**

Drishti Input

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act

- **India is a signatory** to the **UN Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs 1961**, the Convention on **Psychotropic Substances, 1971** and the Convention on **Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988** which prescribe various forms of control aimed to achieve the dual objective of limiting the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes as well as preventing the abuse of the same.
- The administrative and legislative setup in the field of Narcotics has been put in place in the country in accordance with the spirit of the UN Conventions. The basic legislative instrument of the Government of India in this regard is the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act,

1985.

- The Act provides **stringent provisions** for the control and regulation of operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- It also provides for **forfeiture of property** derived from, or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- It also provides for **death penalty** in some cases where a person is a repeat offender.

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