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## CURRENT AFFAIRS



Date –12-April 2025

# DRUG TRAFFICKING: A GROWING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME

### WHY IN THE NEWS?

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has said that the Modi government is mowing down drug cartels with full might. In a social media post lauding the efforts of agencies, Mr Shah said that in his vision to build a drug-free Bharat, the country's agencies have launched massive operations strangling drug cartels and seized 30.4 kilograms of methamphetamine tablets worth 24.32 crore rupees while arresting three people in Assam. He added that the government's offensive against drugs will continue with ruthless force. The Home Minister congratulated the Narcotics Control Bureau, Assam Police, and the CRPF on this breakthrough.

### UNDERSTANDING DRUG TRAFFICKING IS AN ORGANIZED CRIME.

- 1. Definition & Nature:** Drug trafficking is the illegal production, transport, and sale of narcotics. It functions through organized criminal syndicates with transnational operations.
- 2. Organized Crime Nexus:** Deeply linked with terrorism, arms trade, money laundering, and human trafficking. Involves a hierarchy of producers, transporters, dealers, and financiers.
- 3. India's Strategic Location:** India lies between the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran) and the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand), making it vulnerable as a source, transit, and destination.
- 4. Social & National Impact:** Results in addiction, rising crime, youth vulnerability, and a major public health burden. Funds insurgency and weakens national institutions through corruption.
- 5. Enforcement & Legal Framework:** India enforces the NDPS Act, 1985, with key agencies like NCB, DRI, BSF, and state police. The global collaboration includes UNODC and Interpol.
- 6. Challenges:** Porous borders, cyber and dark web networks, crypto payments, lack of coordination, low convictions, and poor access to rehabilitation services.

### DRUGS TRAFFICKING AS A THREAT TO INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

- 1. Terror Funding:** Drug money is used to finance terrorist groups and insurgents, especially in border regions like Punjab, J&K, and Northeast India.
- 2. Cross-Border Smuggling:** India's porous borders with Pakistan, Myanmar, and Nepal are exploited by drug cartels, often in collaboration with hostile state actors.
- 3. Internal Instability:** Drug addiction leads to youth radicalization, social unrest, and rising crime rates, weakening social cohesion.
- 4. Undermining Institutions:** Corruption in law enforcement and politics due to drug money erodes governance and institutional integrity.

- 5. Insurgency Links:** Northeast insurgent groups are known to engage in drug trafficking to fund operations, worsening regional conflicts.
- 6. Economic Drain:** Public health costs, reduced productivity, and criminal justice expenses create a long-term economic burden on the state.
- 7. Cyber & Dark Net Threats:** Modern trafficking uses the dark web and cryptocurrencies, posing digital security challenges and weakening traditional policing.

**DRUGS TRAFFICKING INDIA'S VULNERABILITY**

- 1. Geostrategic Location:** India is sandwiched between the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan–Pakistan–Iran) and Golden Triangle (Myanmar–Laos–Thailand) — two of the world’s largest illicit drug-producing regions.
- 2. Porous Borders:** Long, poorly monitored borders with Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh allow easy smuggling of narcotics.
- 3. Insurgent & Terrorist Nexus:** Drug trafficking funds insurgent groups in the Northeast and extremist networks in Punjab and Kashmir, linking drugs with national security threats.
- 4. Coastal & Maritime Gaps:** India’s extensive coastline (over 7,500 km) lacks adequate maritime surveillance, making it vulnerable to sea-based drug trafficking.
- 5. Transit & Destination Country:** India is not just a transit route but increasingly a consumer market, especially for synthetic drugs and opioids.
- 6. Dark Web & Tech Abuse:** The use of darknet markets, encrypted apps, and crypto payments enables anonymous trafficking beyond traditional surveillance.
- 7. Weak Enforcement & Coordination:** Fragmented coordination between state and central agencies, shortage of trained personnel, and low conviction rates weaken enforcement.

**LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL MEASURES**

Category	Measures/Institutions	Details
Legal Framework	NDPS Act, 1985	Prohibits production, sale, possession, and use of narcotics; prescribes severe penalties.
	Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988	Enables preventive detention of repeat offenders and drug traffickers.
	Controlled Substances Order, 2013	Regulates the manufacture and trade of precursor chemicals used in narcotics production.
	Money Laundering Prevention Act (PMLA)	Targets financial aspects of the drug trade, allowing asset seizures and confiscation.
	Extradition & MLATs	Facilitates international cooperation for arrest, prosecution, and extradition of drug offenders.
Institutional Mechanisms	Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)	Coordinates drug law enforcement across India and handles inter-state trafficking cases.

Category	Measures/Institutions	Details
	<b>Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI)</b>	Tracks and curbs international narcotics smuggling through ports, airports, and customs.
	<b>Border Security Force (BSF)</b>	Guards India's land borders (e.g., India-Pakistan, India-Bangladesh) against drug smuggling.
	<b>Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN)</b>	Regulates legal opium cultivation and monitors illicit diversion of opium for illegal trade.
	<b>State Anti-Narcotics Task Forces</b>	Special units at the state level focused on tackling local drug trafficking issues.
	<b>National Investigation Agency (NIA)</b>	Investigates drug-terrorism links and handles high-priority drug-related national security cases.
	<b>International Collaborations</b>	Cooperation with <b>UNODC, INTERPOL</b> , and neighbouring countries for intelligence-sharing.

### CHALLENGES IN COUNTERING DRUGS TRAFFICKING

- 1. Porous Borders:** India shares long and poorly monitored borders with countries like Pakistan, Myanmar, Nepal, and Bangladesh, making cross-border smuggling easier.
- 2. Geostrategic Location:** Positioned between the Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle, India is a prime route for drugs produced in these major illicit drug regions.
- 3. Corruption:** Corruption in law enforcement and political circles undermines effective drug control and enforcement efforts.
- 4. Use of Technology by Traffickers:** Drug traffickers exploit the dark web, encrypted apps, and cryptocurrency for anonymous transactions, evading traditional surveillance methods.
- 5. Weak Enforcement at Local Levels:** Limited resources, training, and coordination among local authorities reduce the effectiveness of drug enforcement at grassroots levels.
- 6. Drug Demand and Addiction:** Rising demand, particularly among youth, fuels both drug consumption and trafficking, complicating efforts to reduce both.
- 7. Terrorist and Insurgent Nexus:** Drug trafficking funds terrorist organizations and insurgency groups, complicating counter-narcotic efforts and national security.
- 8. Lack of Rehabilitation Programs:** Insufficient and ineffective rehabilitation programs prevent proper treatment and reintegration of drug users into society, leading to high relapse rates.
- 9. Underreporting & Social Stigma:** The social stigma surrounding drug use and underreporting of drug-related crimes results in inadequate data and an incomplete understanding of the problem's magnitude.
- 10. Limited International Cooperation:** While some cooperation exists, inconsistent coordination between India and neighbouring countries, as well as globally, delays effective action against international trafficking networks.

## WAY FORWARD

- 1. Strengthen Border Surveillance:** Enhance border security and technology-based surveillance to prevent cross-border smuggling. Use drones, satellite monitoring, and electronic fencing to secure vulnerable borders.
- 2. International Cooperation:** Foster stronger cooperation with neighboring countries and international agencies like INTERPOL, UNODC, and SAARC for intelligence-sharing, joint operations, and tackling global trafficking networks.
- 3. Enhanced Enforcement and Training:** Invest in training law enforcement agencies at the state and local levels to improve their capabilities in drug detection, investigation, and prosecution.
- 4. Improved Drug Addiction Rehabilitation:** Expand and improve rehabilitation centres and social reintegration programs to address the root causes of addiction and ensure long-term recovery and reduction in recidivism.
- 5. Legislative Reforms:** Introduce stronger laws and amendments to the NDPS Act to ensure faster trials, harsher penalties, and greater accountability for law enforcement agencies.
- 6. Use of Technology for Monitoring:** Leverage artificial intelligence, data analytics, and blockchain to track and dismantle online drug trafficking operations and disrupt networks using the dark web and cryptocurrencies.
- 7. Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch widespread public awareness and education campaigns targeting youth to reduce the demand for drugs and address misconceptions about drug use.
- 8. Target the Financial Networks:** Focus on money laundering operations linked to drug trafficking by tightening laws around financial transactions, crypto-regulations, and asset seizure.
- 9. Community Involvement:** Involve local communities in combating drug trafficking by building trust with law enforcement agencies, encouraging community policing, and creating support networks for vulnerable groups.

## CONCLUSION

Drug trafficking remains a significant challenge to India's national security, public health, and socio-economic stability. Despite a robust legal framework and institutional measures, the porous borders, deep-rooted corruption, and the increasing use of technology by traffickers make the problem complex and multifaceted. The impact of drug trafficking extends beyond addiction, fueling terrorism, insurgency, and organized crime while also draining national resources. However, with the right strategies and sustained efforts, India can address these challenges effectively. Strengthening border security, enhancing international cooperation, improving rehabilitation programs, and leveraging technology for surveillance and monitoring can go a long way in combating the drug trade. Holistic measures, focusing not only on enforcement but also on prevention and rehabilitation, are key to breaking the vicious cycle of drug abuse and trafficking.

**Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985:**

1. It allows for preventive detention of habitual drug offenders.
2. It provides for the regulation of controlled substances used in the manufacture of narcotic drugs.
3. It does not apply to the cultivation of opium for medical purposes.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

**Answer: A**



### MAINS QUESTIONS

Q. Drug trafficking poses a serious threat to India's national security, youth, and social fabric. Critically examine the challenges in combating drug trafficking and suggest a comprehensive strategy to tackle the menace. (250 words, 15marks)

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