

NARCO TERRORISM & ORGANISED CRIME

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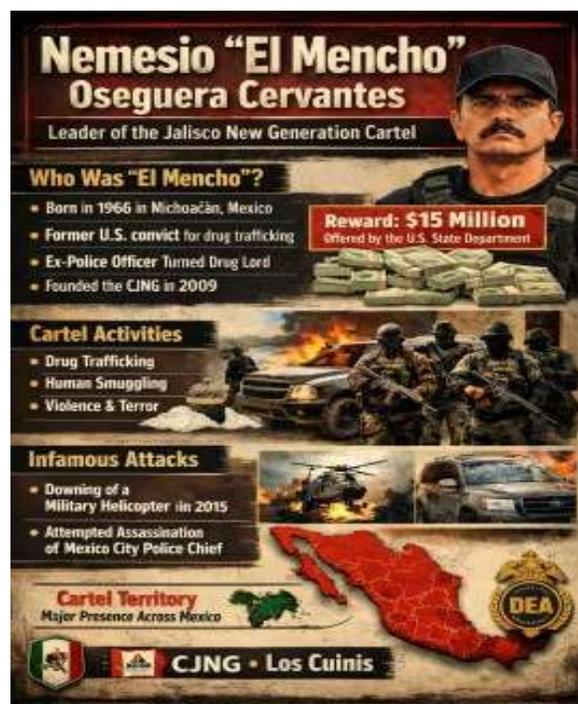
Context:

- Mexican security forces have killed a drug lord, Nemesio Ruben Oseguera Cervantes, who led one of the most powerful criminal organisations in the country, triggering a wave of violence in several areas, including the western state of Jalisco.

1. Who was 'El Mencho'?



- El Mencho was the leader of the Jalisco New Generation Cartel, which operates from the western state of Jalisco and is known for its large military-style arsenal.
- Aged 59 when he was killed, El Mencho was from the neighbouring state of Michoacan.
- It is rumoured that he was a police officer before he became a drug lord.
- He rose in the ranks of Mexico’s drug-trafficking underworld in the 1990s. In 1994, he was convicted in the US of heroin trafficking and served nearly three years in prison before returning to Mexico.



- There are plenty of stories about **El Mencho's methods of dealing with adversaries.**
- He once sent a severed pig's head in an ice chest to a Mexican lawyer as a threat, Rolling Stone magazine reported in 2015, quoting an unnamed former field agent with the **US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).**
- As **El Mencho** rose to become a **powerful drug dealer**, he began to **heavily invest in submarines**, which he used to **transport drugs from South America to the US.**
- **Annette Idler**, an associate professor in **Global Security at the University of Oxford**, told that **El Mencho's death is symbolically important** because he was **central to the Jalisco Cartel's transformation** into one of the **most powerful and globally connected criminal organisations.**



2. How did El Mencho die and what do we know about the operation?



- **El Mencho was killed by Mexican special forces** during a military operation to **capture him in Tapalpa** in the **southern part of Jalisco** on Sunday.
- **Troops** were sent in to **arrest El Mencho**, and his followers **tried to fight them off.**
- Authorities said **he was killed during the operation.**

- **Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum** said on X on Sunday that the **Secretariat of National Defence** reported the operation had been carried out by federal forces.
- **White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt** wrote on X that the **US had provided intelligence** to the **Mexican government** to assist with the operation.

3. What is known about the Jalisco New Generation Cartel?

- **El Mencho** founded the cartel in **2009** and rapidly expanded it, using **online recruitment** and **diversifying its income streams** through fuel theft, **extortion**, **timeshare scams** and **other rackets**.
- The **US has identified the Jalisco Cartel** and the **Sinaloa Cartel** as the organisations primarily responsible for **trafficking fentanyl into the country** in recent years.
- The **DEA** considers the Jalisco Cartel to be as powerful as Sinaloa, with a **presence in all 50 US states**.
- The DEA said it is active in **21 of Mexico's 32 states**.
- The **Jalisco Cartel** has become **notorious** for its assaults on **Mexican security forces**.
- In **2015**, it shot down a **military helicopter in Jalisco**.
- In **2020**, it tried to **kill then-Mexico City police chief Omar Garcia Harfuch**, who now serves as the **federal security secretary**.
- In February last year, **Mexico handed over senior Jalisco Cartel leader Antonio Oseguera Cervantes**, El Mencho's brother, **to the US**. This came days after the **US designated eight Latin American criminal** and drug-trafficking groups as **"global terrorist organisations"**, including the Jalisco Cartel.

4. What has happened since El Mencho's killing?



- Shortly after **news of El Mencho's killing** spread, **suspected cartel members** launched **coordinated reprisals** across multiple states.
- **Attackers torched convenience stores and petrol stations**, dragged trucks onto major highways and **erected flaming roadblocks**, known locally as **narcobloqueos**, paralysing cities and cutting off key routes.
- **"Panic spread among many people," Miguel Alfonso Meza, director of Defensorx**, a Mexican civil organisation dedicated to strategic litigation and the **defence of human rights**.
- The violence appeared intended to **project strength and demonstrate the cartel's reach** following the loss of its leader.
- **Violence erupted on Sunday** in at least 20 Mexican states, including **Jalisco, Colima, Michoacan, Nayarit, Guanajuato and Tamaulipas**.
- In **Jalisco** alone, more than **25 National Guard members were killed**.



5. What is Narcoterrorism?

- **Narcoterrorism** is a term coined by former Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry in 1983 to describe **attacks by drug traffickers on his police force**.
- In this context, **narcoterrorism referred to drug traffickers' attempts to influence government officials through intimidation and violence**. Drug cartel leader **Pablo Escobar** is commonly cited as having been a **narcoterrorist**.
- **Narcoterrorism refers to the intersection of drug trafficking and terrorism**, where violent actions by drug traffickers are aimed at **influencing government officials through intimidation and violence**.
 - *Narcoterrorism has been defined as an "alliance between drug producers and an insurgent group carrying out terrorist attacks".*
- Authorities credit **Escobar** for the **violent murders of hundreds of government officials and police officers**.

- In the **twenty-first century**, the term "**narcoterrorism**" is more often used to describe **terrorist organizations'** use of **international drug trafficking** to fund their operations.
- **Terror groups** such as the **Taliban, Hamas, and ISIS** have been labeled by authorities as narcoterrorists.
- Regardless of the precise definition, however, the **term narcoterrorism indicates a connection between drug trafficking and terrorism.**
- As **narcoterrorism remains a pressing global issue**, strategies to combat it **include exploring innovative solutions like mycoherbicides**, though concerns about their potential impact on **food supplies and ecosystems hinder their implementation.**

6. What is Organised Crime?

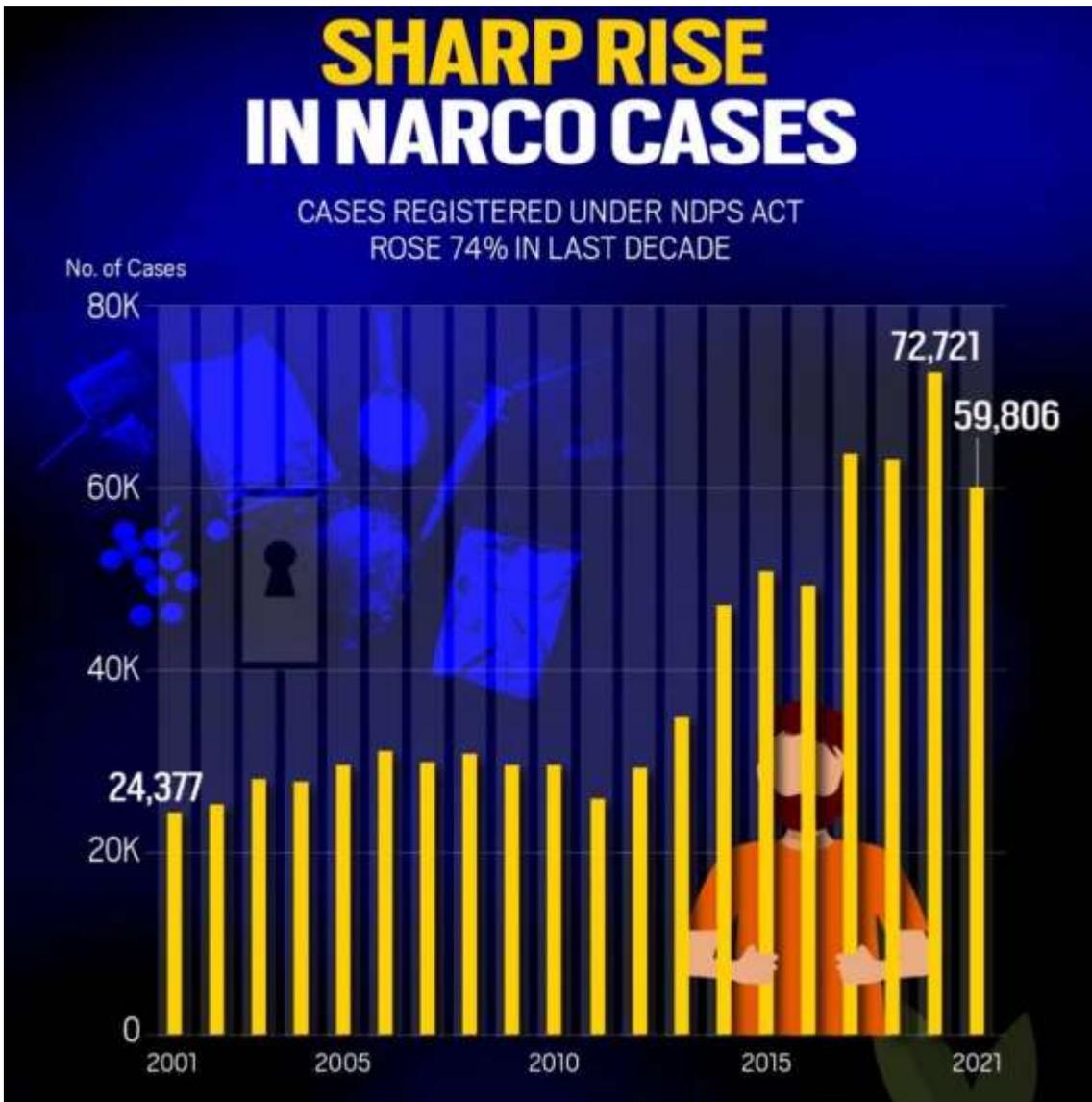
- The **realization that not a single country**, no matter how powerful, can fight organized crime across borders in isolation, led to the passage of the **United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which came into force in 2003.**
- The negotiations leading up to this **Convention caused Member States to consider the definition of organized crime** in setting the stage for international action.
- The **Convention does not contain a definition of transnational organized crime or organized crime.**
- There are many elements of **organized crime, which might not occur in every case, and might also change over time, making a specific consensus definition difficult.**
- Instead, the **Convention defines "an organized criminal group."**
 - A **precise definition is required because the Convention aims at directing policy, law, and practice in preventing and combating organized crime.**
- Under the **Convention (article 2a)**, an "**organized criminal group**" is defined using four criteria:
 - **A structured group of three or more persons;**
 - **The group exists for a period of time;**
 - **It acts in concert with the aim of committing at least one serious crime;**
 - **To obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit.**
- **Structured group** is defined in the negative:
 - as one that does not need a **formal hierarchy or continuity of its membership.**
 - This makes the definition **broad, including loosely affiliated groups without any formally defined roles** for its members or a developed structure.

7. What is the role of Organized Crime in Narco Terrorism?

Role of Organized Crime in Narco Terrorism

	Criminal Networks	Political Influence	Violence Level	Market Control	Geopolitical Impact
Money Laundering	Facilitates drug trade	Undermines governance	High	Significant	Regional instability
Weapons Trafficking	Supports narco operations	Influences policy	Medium	Dominant	International relations
Corruption of Officials	Essential for operations	Erodes trust	Very High	Monopoly	National security threat
Production and Distribution	Controls supply chain	Shapes policies	High	Significant	Global drug market

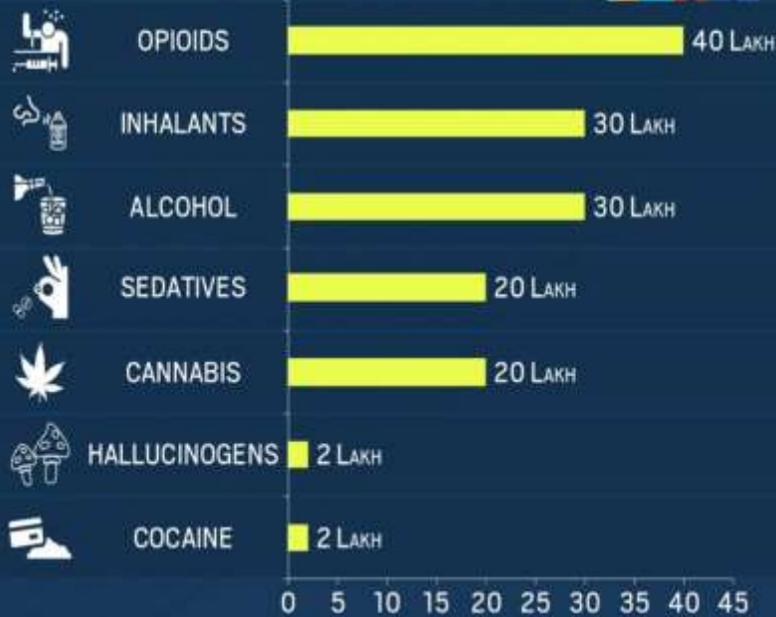
8. Highlight key statistics related to narco cases in India?



DRUGS THEY CONSUME

Drugs consumption by children
(Below 18 years)

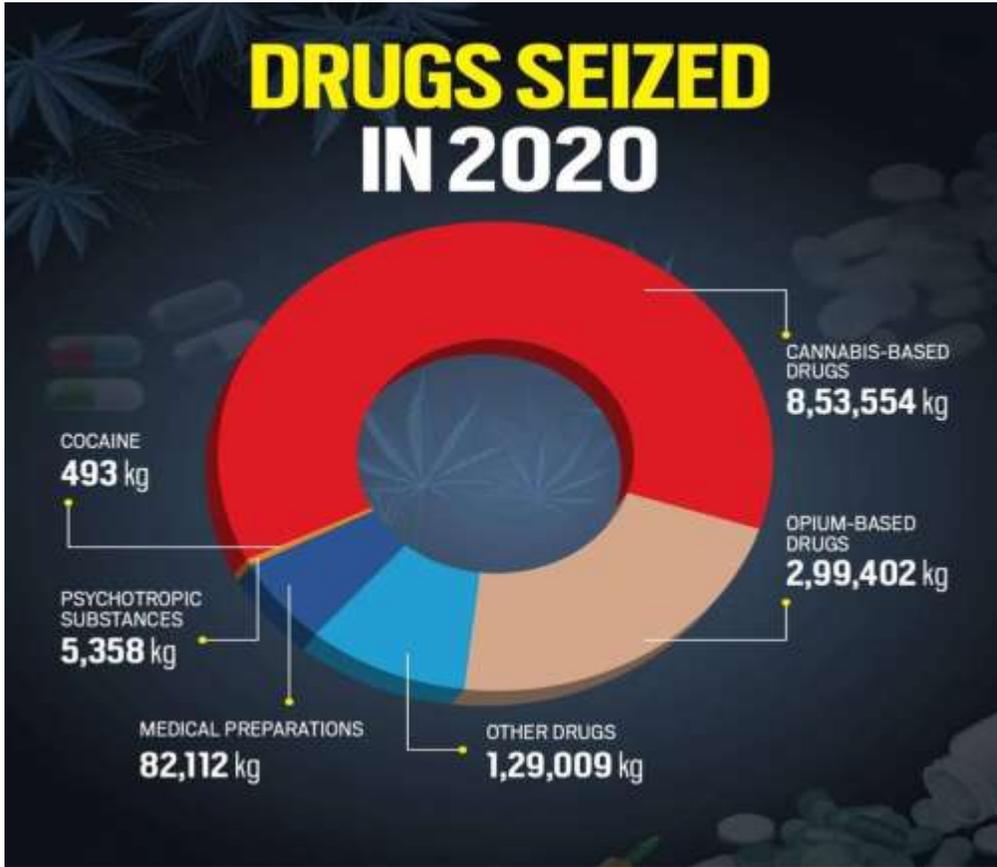
■ No. of users

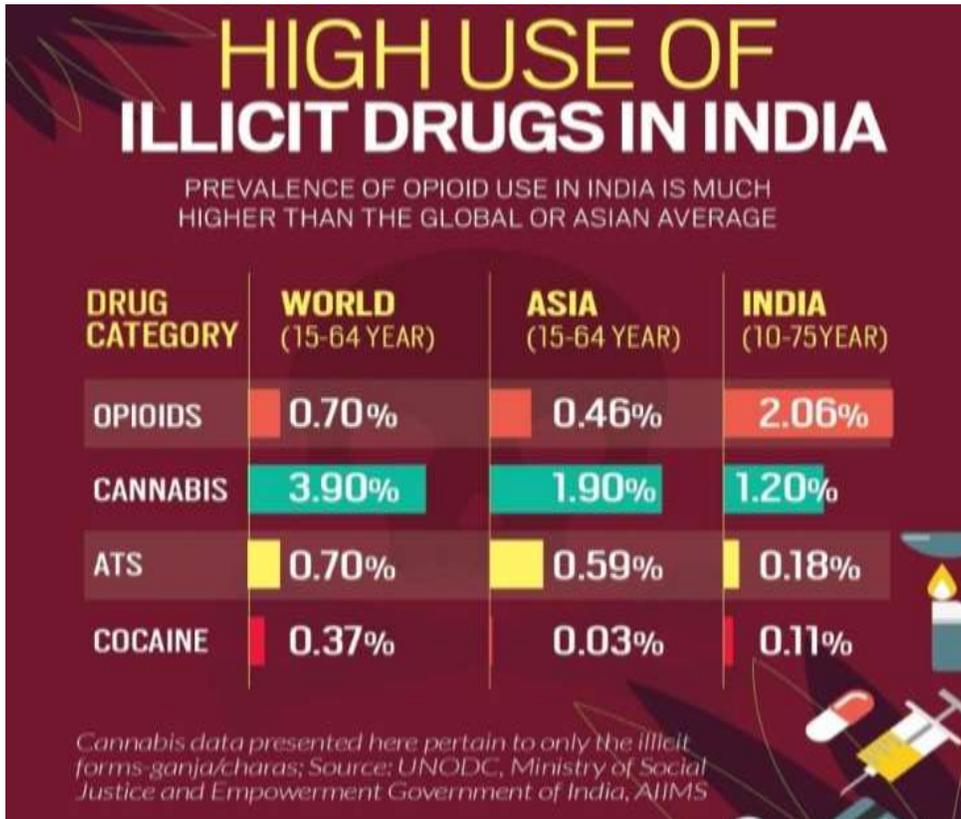


YOUNG ONES ON A HIGH

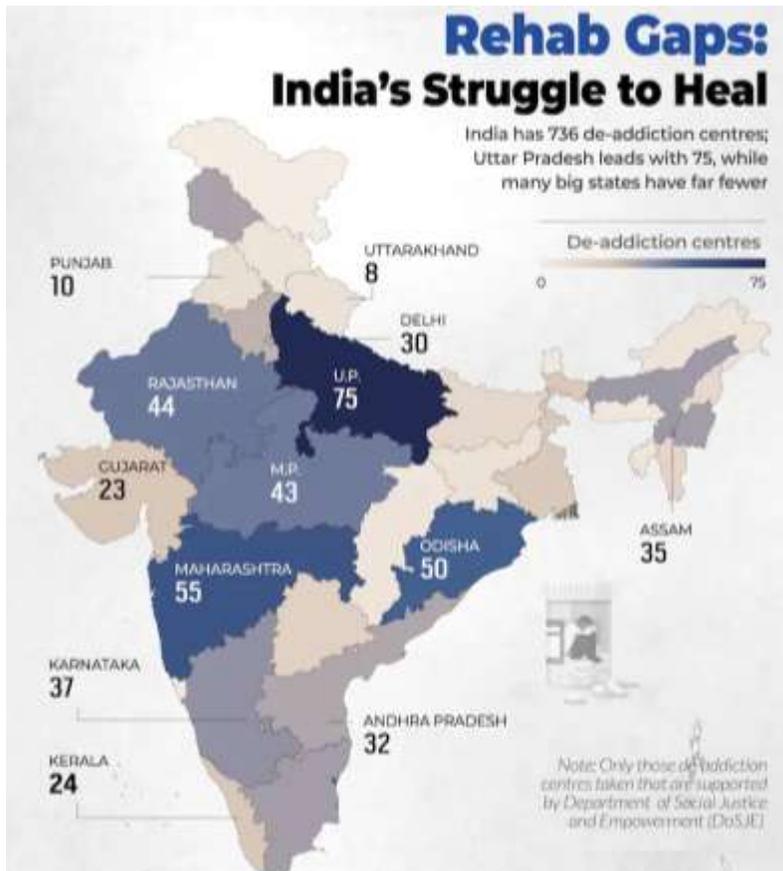
DRUG-RELATED CASES AMONG CHILDREN
MORE THAN DOUBLED IN LAST DECADE

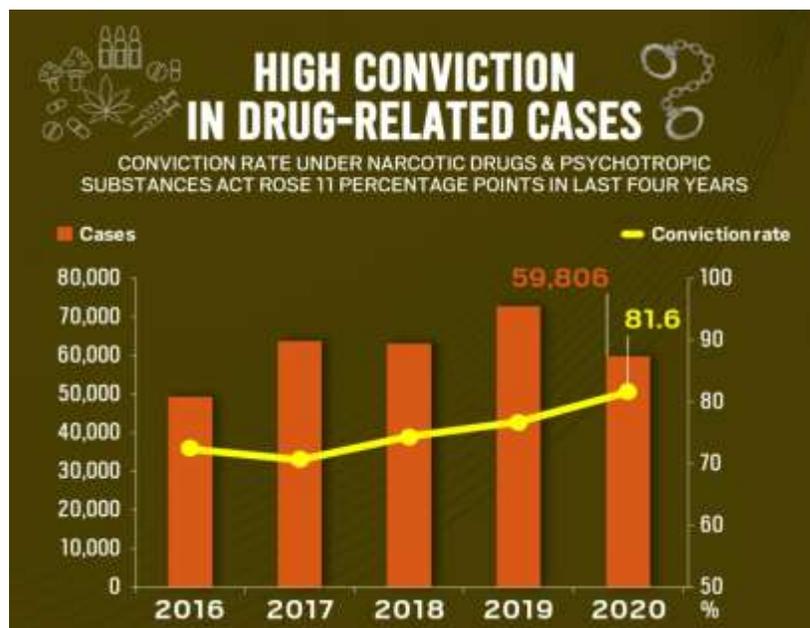
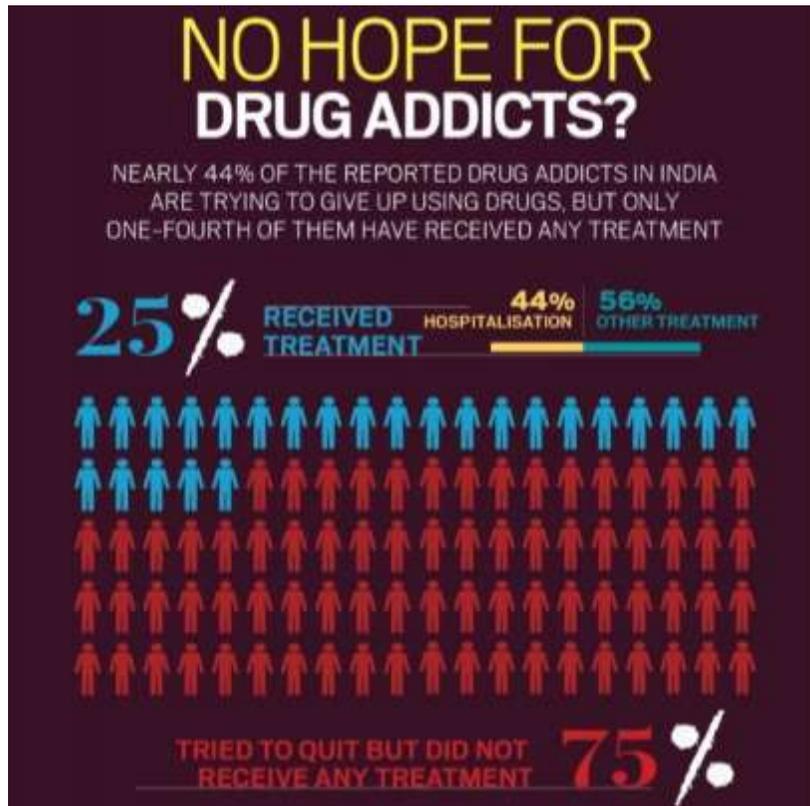






Drug	State with highest quantity of seizure
Ketamine Club/Date Rape Drugs	26kg Tamil Nadu
Heroin Causes acute transcendent state of euphoria	652kg Haryana
Hashish Higher concentrations of stimulants as compared to ganja	673kg Uttar Pradesh
Cocaine Effects include loss of contact with reality, intense feeling of happiness or agitation	7kg New Delhi
Mephedrone Meow Meow, causes euphoria	173kg
Methaqualone Sedative drug, used by the character played by Leonardo DiCaprio in 'The Wolf of Wall Street'	23,519kg
ATS (Ecstasy) Hallucinogen, heightens perceptions of colour & sound, & supposedly amplifies sensations	1,419kg Gujarat
Opium Used for making Heroin, similar effects	523kg Rajasthan
Poppy husk & poppy Starw Similar effects as opium	43,832kg
Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Used to make meth, which triggers aggressive, violent and bizarre behaviour among users	44,503kg Maharashtra
Ganja Causes euphoria (the "high" or "stoned" feeling)	78,273kg Orissa
Codeine Base for cough syrups—sedating effect	198,233 (no. of bottles) West Bengal
Tablets Of all types	1,882,840 (no. of tablets) Mizoram





9. Mention about various Narcotic Trafficking trends and routes in India?

Narcotic Trafficking trends	Explanation
India's Geostrategic Location and Narcoterrorism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India is wedged between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Golden Crescent ▪ Golden Triangle

- **There is long history of:**
 - Cross-border terrorism
 - Protracted insurgencies
 - Drug trafficking



- **Unlike other regions (where narcoterrorism is mainly profit-driven), in India it reflects a symbiotic relationship between:**
 - Terrorist organisations
 - Drug trafficking syndicates
 - Shared smuggling and infiltration routes, especially along the Western border.
 - Support from Pakistani state agencies (route reconnaissance, facilitation).

Narcoterrorism in Northeast India

Porous India–Myanmar Border

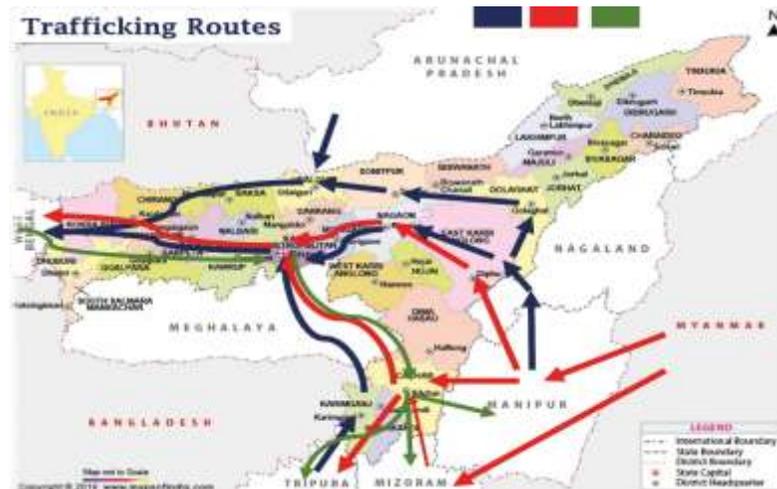
- **1,624 km porous border with Myanmar.**
- **Affected states:**
 - Arunachal Pradesh
 - Nagaland
 - Manipur
 - Mizoram
- **Key transit points:**
 - Moreh
 - Champhai
- **Insurgent Groups Involved**
 - National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak & Khaplang factions)

United Liberation Front of Asom

- **Kuki militias**
- **Funding sources:**
 - Direct drug smuggling
 - Protection money from traffickers

Post-2021 Myanmar Coup Impact

- **Myanmar military coup (2021)**
- **Civil war → lawlessness → expanded opium cultivation**
- **2023 opium production: 1,080 metric tonnes (huge surge)**
- **Increased heroin exports to India**
- **Role of:**
 - Assam Rifles (major seizures)



Link to Manipur Violence

- **Alleged nexus between:**
 - Kuki militants
 - Drug mafia
- **Narcotics factor in ethnic unrest in Manipur**

Afghan Opium Economy and Terror Financing

Afghanistan’s Role

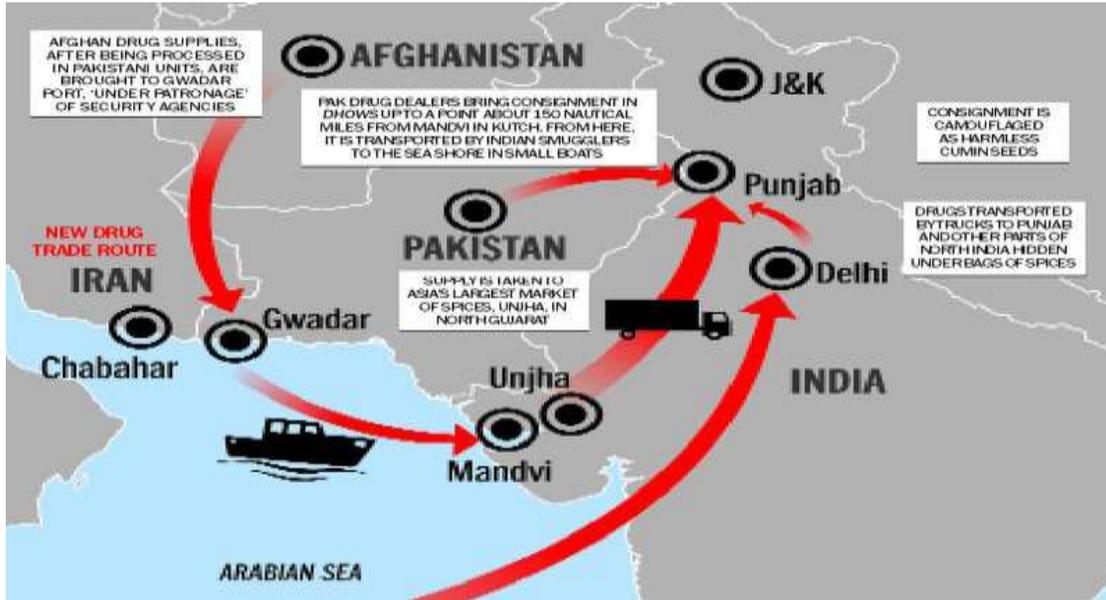
- **Afghanistan produces ~80% of world opium (2009–2021)**
- **Taliban funded insurgency using opium revenues**
- **US-led:**
 - International Security Assistance Force failed to curb production.

Taliban’s 2022 Opium Ban

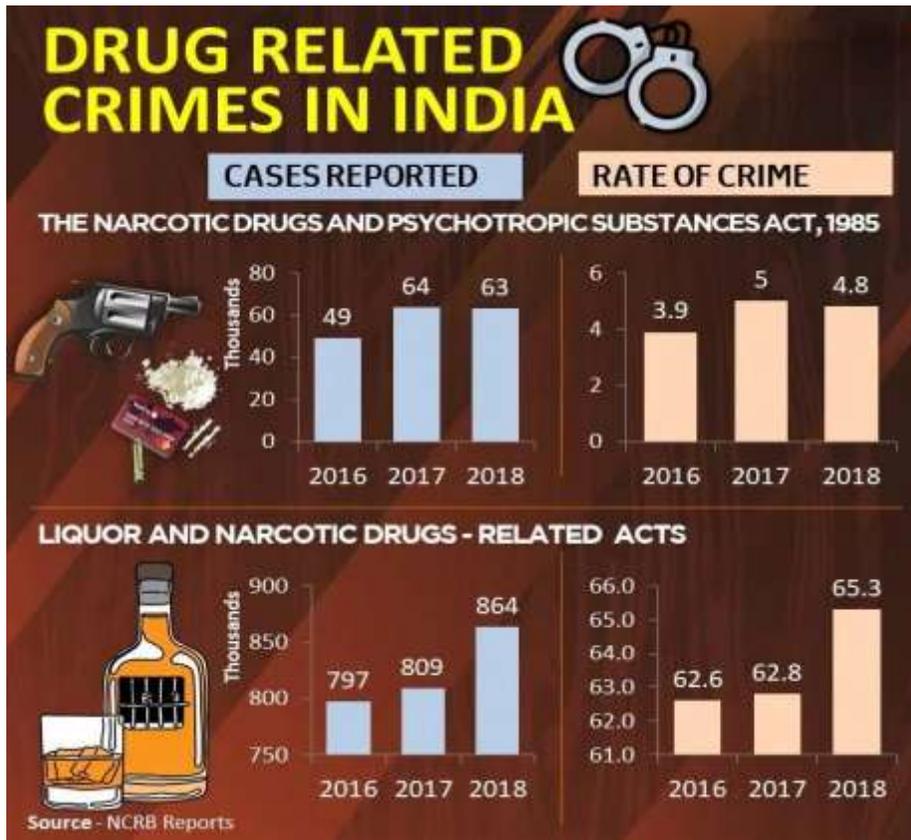
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ban announced August 2022 ● Result: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Price surge ▪ \$1.4 billion sales in 2022 <p>Shift to Synthetic Drugs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Rise in methamphetamine production ● Involvement of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Haqqani Network ▪ Trafficking links to Europe & US ● Emerging fentanyl routes
<p>Maritime Narcotics Trafficking</p>	<p>Increasing Use of Sea Routes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● South Asian countries vulnerable: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ India ▪ Bangladesh ▪ Maldives ▪ Sri Lanka ▪ Pakistan ● 60–70% drugs from Golden Crescent routed by sea. <p>Major Seizures in India</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2023: 2,826 kg drugs seized in ports/coastal waters ● Feb 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Narcotics Control Bureau ▪ Indian Navy intercepted 3,132 kg drugs (₹1,000+ crore)
<p>Emerging Technologies in Drug Trafficking</p>	<p>Aerial Drones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Used in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jordan (meth smuggling) ▪ Mexico (cartel operations) ● India: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Border Security Force ▪ 119 drones shot down in 2023 ▪ 400–500 drone sightings along India–Pakistan border

Underwater Drones & Semi-Submersibles

- 2022: Spanish police seized underwater drones from Morocco route.
- Latin American cartels use semi-submersibles.
- Potential future risk for Indian maritime security.

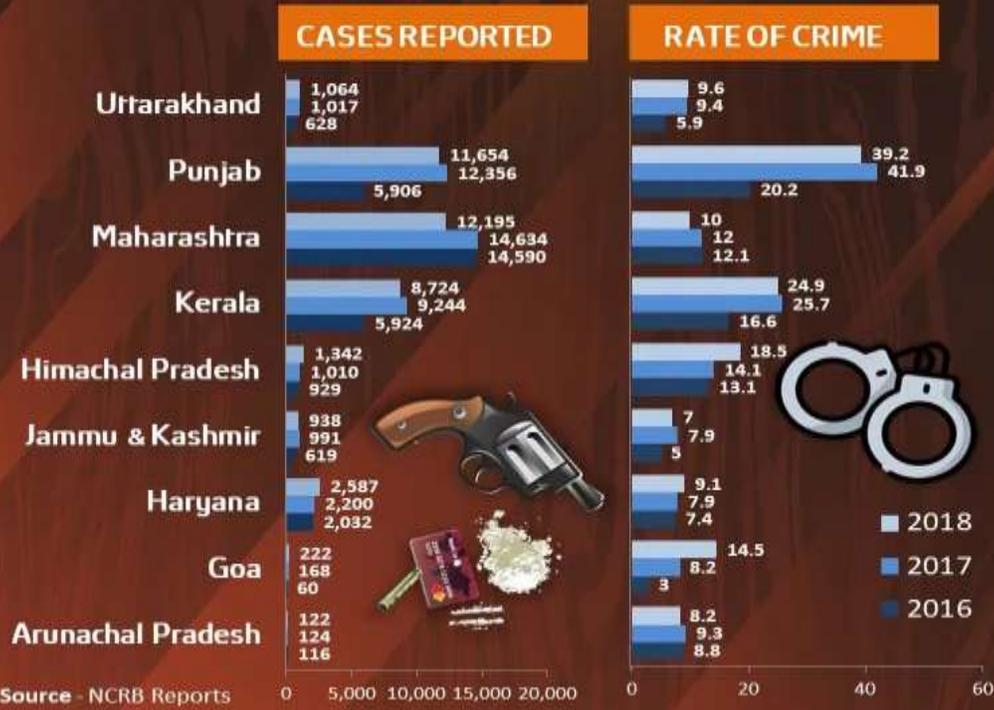


10. Highlight drug related crimes in India?



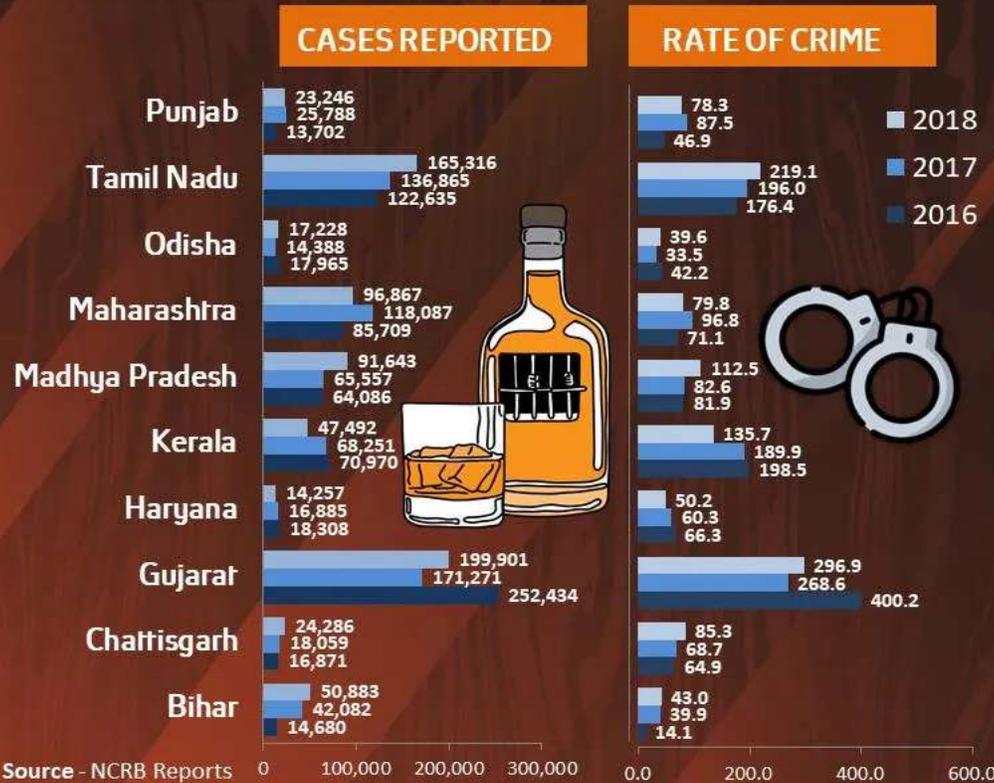
DRUG RELATED CRIMES IN INDIA

THE NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES ACT, 1985



DRUG RELATED CRIMES IN INDIA

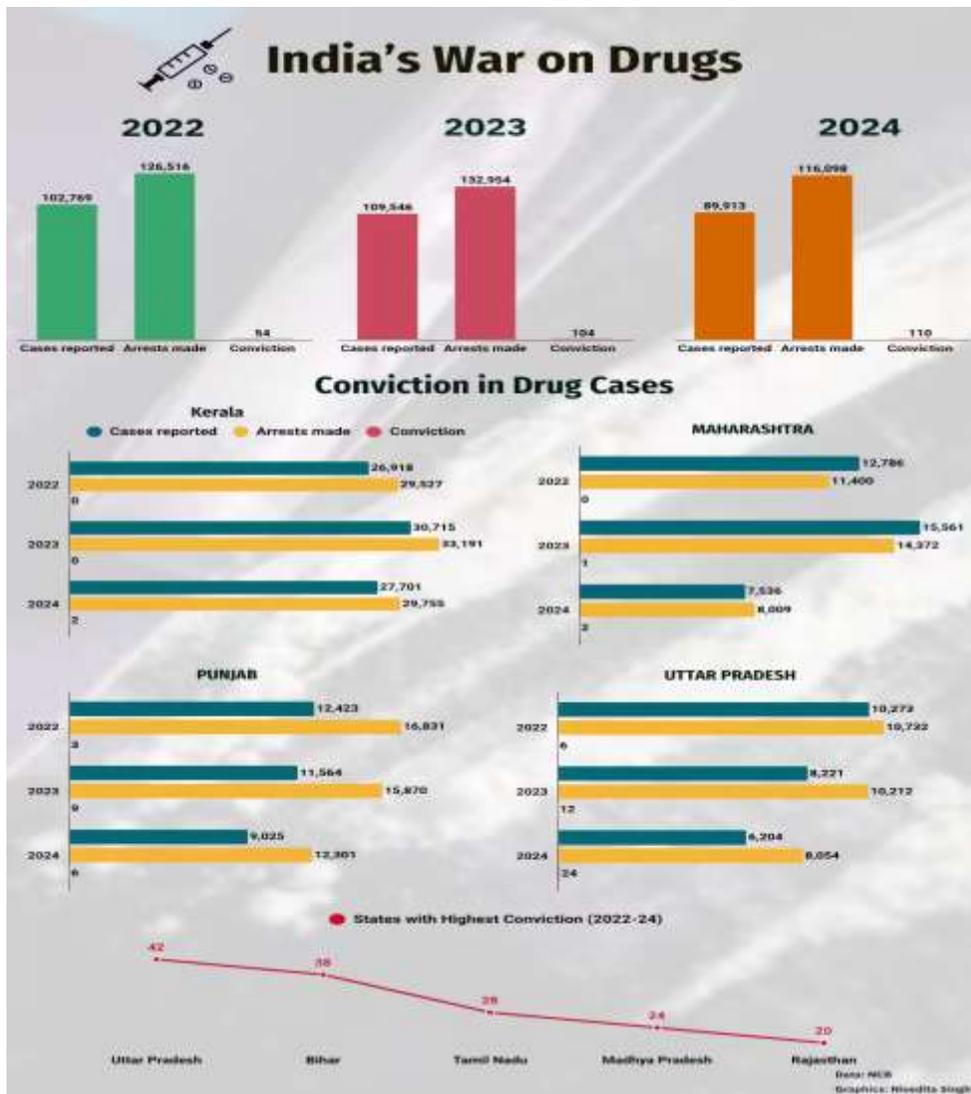
LIQUOR AND NARCOTIC DRUGS - RELATED ACTS



11. What are various challenges India is facing in Tackling Narcoterrorism and Organised Crime?

Challenges	Description
<p>Porous Borders & Geography</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India shares long, challenging borders with Pakistan and Myanmar, often passing through difficult terrain (mountains, dense forests), which facilitates the infiltration of drugs, weapons, and trained terrorists.
<p>Nexus with Cross-Border Terrorism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pakistan-based terror groups and state agencies actively use the narcotics trade to fund operations in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and Punjab, especially to circumvent international scrutiny on terror funding, such as that from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
<p>Emergence of Maritime Routes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● With increased land-border surveillance, traffickers have shifted to maritime routes in the Indian Ocean, affecting the Gujarat and western coast. ● Traffickers use small boats ("dhows") and increasingly, sophisticated underwater drones for smuggling, which are hard to detect. 
<p>Technological Advancement in Smuggling</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Terrorists are using advanced, low-cost methods like drones to drop drug consignments, weapons, and explosives across the border. ● In 2023, the BSF shot down 119 such drones on the India-Pakistan border. 
<p>The "Darknet" & Digital Economy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The use of the darknet and cryptocurrency for anonymous, untraceable transactions has made it harder for agencies to track the financing of terror through drugs.

	<p>FIG. 18 Importance of drugs and drug-related chemicals for the darknet (based on listings on the main darknet markets)</p> <p>Source: EMCDDA and Europol, Drugs and the darknet, November 2017, p. 15. Note: Based on active listings data from AlphaBay, Dream Market, Hansa, TradeRoute and iValhalla darknet marketplaces, spanning from the launch of each marketplace to 21 August 2017 (or market closure).</p>
<p>Internal Security & Corruption</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corruption among some law enforcement personnel and security forces has, in some instances, enabled drug traffickers to operate, with over 60 personnel arrested in Punjab alone between 2014 and 2018 for such activities.
<p>Low Conviction Rates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The legal process under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act often faces procedural delays, with low conviction rates in some states, reducing the deterrent effect.



12. What are various measures to curb drug trafficking and its linkages to Organised crime in India?

- The **Union government** has tried to fight this battle in the last 5 years based on the ‘**whole of government approach**’ and on the three pillars of **structural, institutional and informational reforms**.

Measures	Explanation
4-Tier NCORD (Narco-Coordination Centre) Mechanism: C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordination from Apex to District level across all stakeholders via a unified portal.
Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated teams led by senior police officers in each State/UT to implement NCORD decisions.
Joint Coordination Committee (JCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chaired by the NCB DG to monitor major drug seizures and investigations.
Empowered Border & Railway Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BSF (Border Security Force), Assam Rifles, SSB (Sashastra Seema Bal), Indian Coast Guard and RPF (Railway Protection Force) are authorized under the NDPS Act to carry out search, seizure and arrests in cases related to drug trafficking.
The NDPS Act (1985)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NDPS Act (1985) is India’s main law to prevent and control drug abuse and illegal drug trafficking. • It bans the production, sale, and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances unless allowed for medical or scientific purposes. • It provides strict punishments for violations and supports treatment for drug dependents.
Inter-Agency Joint Operations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NCB coordinates with Navy, Coast Guard, BSF, State ANTF and others for nationwide operations.
Capacity Building & Training:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing professional training provided to all drug enforcement agencies.
Darknet & Crypto Task Force:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAC-level unit focused on cyber drugs trafficking trends, monitoring, and legal updates.
National Helpline (MANAS 1933):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24×7 toll-free platform for drug-related queries and reporting.
Forensic Lab Support:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central assistance for upgrading State forensic facilities.

Maritime Security Group – NSCS (National Security Council Secretariat):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established in November 2022 to analyze and address sea-route drug trafficking.
International Cooperation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DG-level bilateral dialogues with neighbours (Myanmar, Iran, Bangladesh, etc.) focused on maritime and land drug routes.

13. What is Zero-tolerance policy towards drug abuse in India?

- The government has adopted a **zero-tolerance policy towards drugs with a focused and organised approach**.
- The Government of India has emphasised the need to turn this fight into a **Jan Andolan** by **spreading awareness among the youth and the public to achieve the vision of a drug-free India**.
- In a span of just one year, this approach has led to a significant rise in **drug seizures, arrests, and coordinated crackdowns** across the country.
- In **2024, law enforcement agencies across India**, including the **NCB seized drugs worth around ₹25,330 crore; over 55% more than the ₹16,100 crore seized in 2023**.
- In 2024, the **seizure of more harmful and addictive synthetic drugs, cocaine and pharmaceutical drugs used as psychotropic substances has increased significantly**.

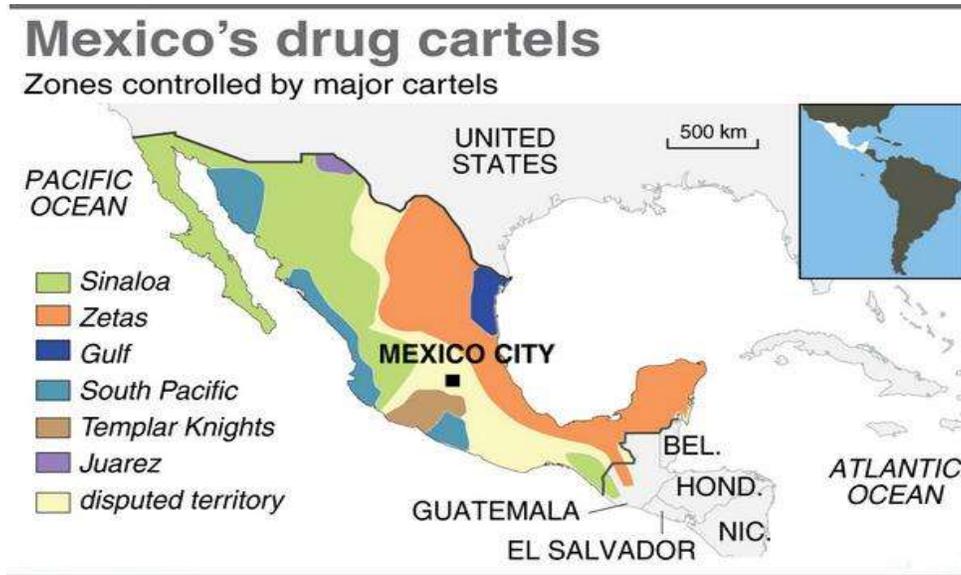
14. What is the way ahead for India?

- India has taken proactive steps to **counter narcoterrorism, but the battle ahead is long and difficult**.
 - **Terrorist organisations** rely on **drug-trafficking networks for funding**, making it vital to **disrupt their financial networks**.
 - Similarly, **drug cartels** have **persisted for decades**, showing adeptness in adapting to **clampdowns by law enforcement agencies**.
 - A **risk-mitigation approach** can help **strengthen India’s response**.
- Some additional measures in this regard can focus on **identifying vulnerabilities and loopholes that terrorist organisations and drug trafficking syndicates exploit**.
 - One measure being suggested by **law enforcement officials and legal practitioners** is strengthening the **legal mechanisms**; this would include creating a **standalone legislation for dealing with narcoterrorism**.
 - This proposed **legislation should empower the investigation agencies, fast-track prosecution (by specialist legal teams), and prescribe punishment equivalent to that meted out for terrorist acts**.
 - The **legislation** should also discard the **distinction between the intermediate and commercial quantity that works to the advantage of narco-traffickers**.

- Others have suggested amendments to the **NDPS Act**, arguing that **preventive detention under the law is inadequate; its upper limit**, which is currently **one year within special circumstances**, is **recommended to be extended to two years**.
 - Moreover, **dedicated courts staffed with public prosecutors** need to be established so that they can dispose of **narcoterrorism-related cases expeditiously**.
 - **Clear timelines** should be prescribed for **disposing of cases under the NDPS Act**.
- Experts have also suggested **decriminalising the recreational uses** of traditional narcotic substances like **cannabis**.
- Another aspect to consider is the **NIA investigations**.
 - The **agency currently investigates** eight acts under scheduled offences, such as the **Atomic Energy Act of 1962 and the Anti-Hijacking Act of 1982**.
 - The **NDPS Act** should be added to this **list of scheduled offences of the NIA** to ensure that the agency can **investigate narcoterrorism-related cases**.
- **Forensics is another area** that plays a critical role in **drug enforcement investigations and prosecution**.
 - **Forensic evidence helps build** a more **robust legal case**.
 - While the **NCB has undertaken** efforts to expand its forensic capabilities, given the rapid shift towards **synthetic drugs**, **more capacity building** is needed in **drug-identification techniques, laboratory facilities, and training**.
 - Another area that requires **capacity building** is the tracking of **suspicious transactions** to **disrupt the money-laundering operations of terrorist groups**.
 - In **tackling terrorist financing activities**, agencies need to explore the role of advanced technologies like **artificial intelligence and blockchain**.
- **International cooperation through intelligence sharing and joint operations** is also vital to disrupt the narcotics supply chain.
 - Through the **Interpol**, **India** has already proposed creating a system of **real-time information dissemination**.
 - **As transnational criminality** is a shared responsibility, the focus needs to **expand to joint operations** by coordinating with the **drug and law enforcement agencies of neighbouring states** to **interdict transnational narcotic deliveries**.
 - Rapid response at **border points** is often crucial in disrupting supply.
- Finally, with **Pakistani state agencies being found to be directly involved in narcoterrorism**, India must pursue this matter at the diplomatic level.
 - **New Delhi should provide adequate documentation to the FATF** and other global platforms, such as the **United Nations**; the aim would be to **put pressure on Islamabad**.
- **Changing tactics of terrorist organisations and drug traffickers** have exacerbated the challenge of narcoterrorism.

- While India has taken steps to respond, including strengthening **border security**, **empowering law enforcement agencies**, and **deepening international cooperation**, the **evolving nature of the drug trade necessitates** continuous vigilance and more targeted strategies.
- To effectively **combat narcoterrorism**, **New Delhi must implement a comprehensive risk-mitigation approach** with new legislation and more power to central investigating agencies.
 - This **approach demands stricter border controls**, the **disruption of the financial networks of drug cartels**, and **joint transnational operations**.
 - **Fostering closer regional and international cooperation** is imperative to stem the **flow of drugs and terrorist activities** to **safeguard India’s national security** and **secure a better and healthier future** for its citizens.

15. Highlight key drug cartels of Mexico?





AREAS OF CARTEL INFLUENCE IN MEXICO



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ORGANIZED CRIME GROUPS*			DRUG ROUTES	TRUCK VOLUME FROM MEXICO TO U.S. PER MONTH**
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sinaloa Sinaloa Federation Beltran Leyva Organization Los Mazatlecos El Chapo Trini/El Cadete 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tierra Caliente Cartel de Jalisco Nueva Generacion Knights Templar La Familia Michoacana Guerreros Unidos Los Rojos Independent Cartel of Acapulco (CIDA) Los Viagra 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tamaulipas Los Zetas Gulf Cartel (Velazquez network) Gulf Cartel gangs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → All drug traffic - - - Marijuana and methamphetamine traffic - - - Methamphetamine precursor supply lines Cocaine traffic ▨ Concentration of drug production 	<p>153,900</p> <p>17,300</p>
<p>*Some organized crime groups overlap</p>			<p>**Average monthly breakdowns of total trucks crossing into the United States in 2013</p>	

Drug cartels	Description
<p>Sinaloa Federation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sinaloa is considered Mexico’s most powerful drug trafficking organization, and its leader, Joaquin “El Chapo” Guzman, is the most wanted man in Mexico. ● The group’s domain stretches from the central west coast to the center north of the country (see map here), and it has steadily moved into the territory of other organizations. ● Its rivalry with the Juárez cartel has been the cause of much of the violence in border town Ciudad Juárez, which was the site of more than a quarter of the country’s total drug-related casualties in 2010.
<p>Los Zetas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Los Zetas is a group of former Mexican Army special forces and used to be a part of the Gulf Cartel, but broke off in 2010 after years of feuding within the cartel. ● It controls almost the entire east coast of Mexico and their territory stretches into the interior of the country in some spots (see map here). ● Los Zetas has taken a few hits since the beginning of 2011, losing territory and some of its leaders, but its operations so far seem unaffected. ● It remains in control of its strongholds in Monterrey and Nuevo Laredo and in the port city of Veracruz, according to STRATFOR. ● However, as less experienced recruits step in to fill posts left vacant after the deaths of Los Zetas leaders, the cartel could struggle. ● The cartel was responsible for the February attack on two US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement agents.
<p>Gulf Cartel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Gulf Cartel has a solid hold on a swath of the country on the northeast coast (see map here), providing both access to the US and a port for receiving shipments. ● The emergence of Los Zetas as a competing cartel and sustained government pressure has weakened the Gulf Cartel significantly, and it relies on the Sinaloa Federation’s protection to hold off the Zetas. ● The Gulf Cartel and Zetas have fought fiercely over coastal territory.
<p>Grupo Pacifico Sur (also known as Cartel Pacifico Sur)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Beltrán Leyva Organization (BLO), responsible for bringing violence to comparatively calm central Mexico, dissolved after the arrest of its leader, Sergio Enrique Villareal Barragan (“El Grande”).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In its place emerged Grupo Pacifico Sur, one of two groups formed by former BLO operatives. Hector Beltrán Leyva, a former BLO leader, created Los Zetas-allied Pacifico Sur, which controls territory along the Pacific Coast, stretching from the south almost all the way to the US border. • A rival group born from the decline of BLO was led by Edgar “La Barbie” Villarreal, who was arrested in August 2010.
<p>Vicente Carrillo Fuentes Organization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Juárez organization has been struggling to hold its footing in a war with the Sinaloa Foundation in Ciudad Juárez. • It controls a tiny bloc of territory in central north Mexico, along the US border, but it has been gradually losing control of it to Sinaloa

Principal areas of operation of Mexico's main cartels



16. What is the history of Narcoterrorism?

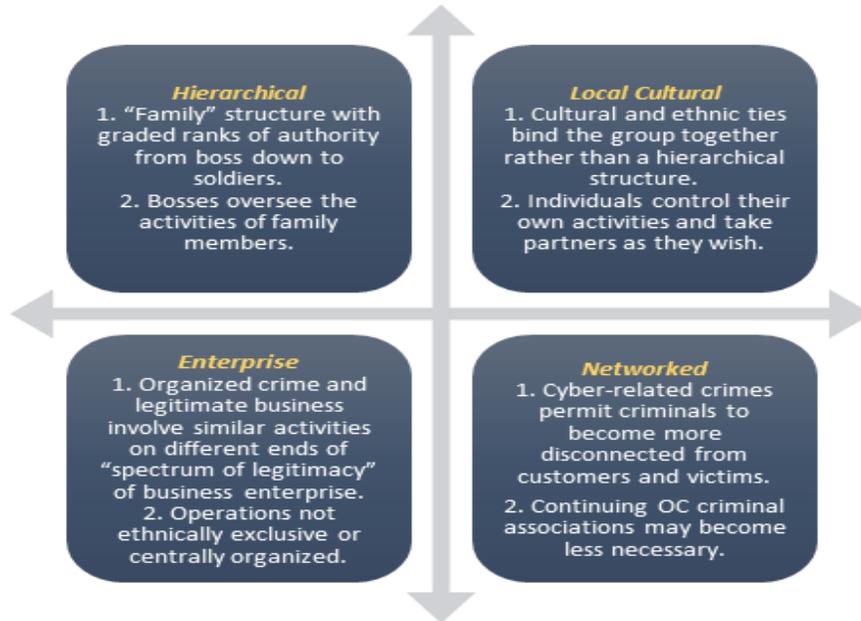
- When **drug traffickers attacked his police force in 1983, former Peruvian President Fernando Belaúnde Terry** described their actions as **narcoterrorism**.
 - However, the best-known example of narcoterrorism is **Escobar's vicious attacks on the Colombian government**.
- In the **1970s, Colombian drug traffickers routinely smuggled marijuana into the United States** in suitcases onboard commercial airliners.
- They **began smuggling small amounts of cocaine** as well—and found the sale of the drug to be **incredibly lucrative**.
 - They **produced cocaine in secret locations hidden in jungles for \$1,500 per kilo**—and sold it for \$50,000 per kilo.
 - **Escobar became the leader of this operation**, and his group became known as the **Medellín Cartel**.
- **Escobar's operation** soon purchased its own aircraft, so it could fly the drug directly into the **United States instead of smuggling it in suitcases**.
- The **Medellín Cartel** eventually became wealthy enough to purchase an island in the **Caribbean for its planes to refuel**. **Escobar's ruthlessness**, however, led to his demise. He was responsible for the murder of **hundreds of government officials and police officers**.
 - He was also **credited with the assassination of journalists and Colombian Supreme Court justices**.
- **Escobar fought with the Colombian government** and was eventually shot and killed by police.
 - Authorities labeled his crimes, which included the bombing of a commercial airliner in **1989, as narcoterrorism**.
- The **Medellin Cartel weakened after Escobar's demise**, and other drug cartels quickly emerged to take its place.
 - Among them were the **Cali Cartel, also based in Colombia, and a number of Mexican cartels**, including the **Guadalajara Cartel, the Tijuana Cartel, and the Sinaloa Cartel**; the latter was led by **Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán until his final arrest in 2016** and extradition to the **United States, where he was convicted and sentenced to life in prison**.
 - These cartels used **violence to gain power**.
 - The **Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** regularly referred to their leaders as narcoterrorists.
- A new focus on **terrorism in the early twenty-first century—and particularly after the September 11, 2001, attacks—changed the meaning of the term "narcoterrorism."**
 - The term began to be used to describe the **connection between political terrorism and organized crime**, which included drug trafficking.
 - Other crimes associated with **narcoterrorists included illegal arms trafficking, money laundering, and the movement of chemical and biological weapons**.

17. Mention the ways in which Narcoterrorism activities can be divided?

- **Narcoterrorism activities** can be divided into two types.
- First is the use of **terror tactics by drug-trafficking networks, primarily in the context of Latin America.**
 - The region has a **protracted history of drug-fuelled violence, characterised by the robust financial and organisational capabilities of drug-smuggling syndicates, which often surpass the weak institutional and drug-enforcement skills of local security agencies.**
 - The use of violence by **drug-smuggling syndicates to capture territories, control governments, and establish dominance over large territories** is a recurring phenomenon in the region.
- **Second is the phenomenon of drug production and trade by terrorist organisations as a source of funding for their activities.**
 - In **East Africa, al-Qaeda-affiliated al-Shabaab** has taxed the trade and export of **khat**, a widely used narcotic plant in the region.
 - As of **2010**, the group had raised more than **US\$500,000 in taxes on khat.**
 - In **West Africa, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb** has utilised funding from narcotics smuggling in the Sahel region.
 - In **Southeast Asia, al-Qaeda** and its affiliates, such as the **Jemaah Islamiyah**, are suspected of having benefitted from the region's thriving drug trafficking hub of the **'Golden Triangle' (i.e., Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, at the confluence of the Ruak and Mekong rivers).**
 - In **South Asia, the 'Golden Crescent' drug-trafficking hub (spanning Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran)** is one of the world's largest opium-producing regions providing the **al-Qaeda and the Haqqani Network** with benefits from the production and trade of opium.
 - The **efficiency-driven nature of these networks and the involvement of ideologically motivated members underscores the intricate dynamics of narcoterrorism.**
 - Notably, captured **al-Qaeda operatives** have often narrated that the movement's founder, **Osama bin Laden**, banned his **cadres from being involved in the drug trade as it would corrupt them.**

18. Mention various models of Organized Criminal Groups?



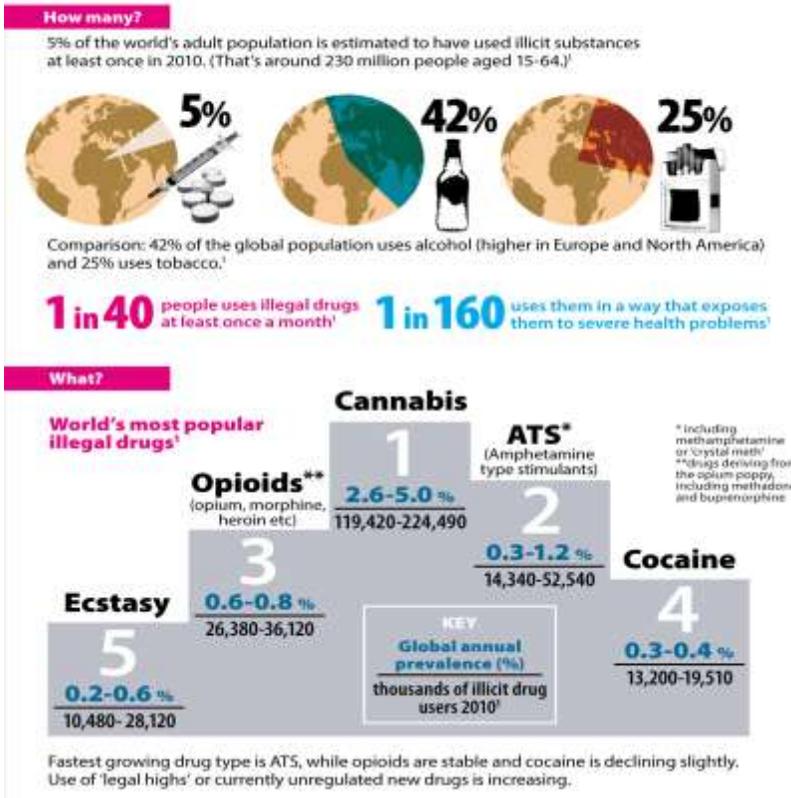


19. How does Organised Criminal Groups operate?

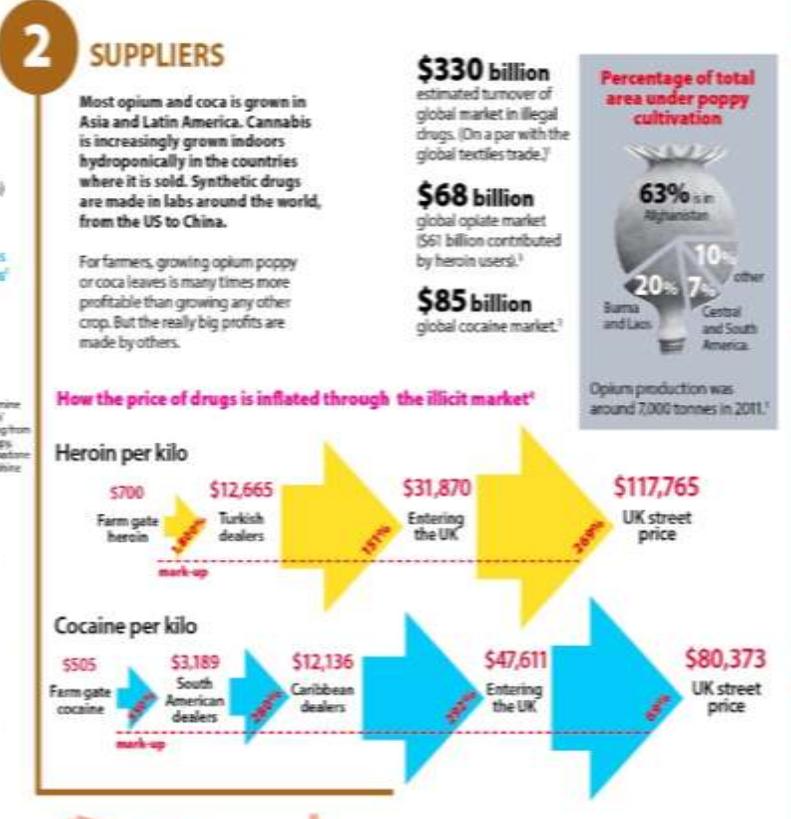
<p>Who</p>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>ORGANISED CRIME GROUPS</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>CRIMINAL NETWORKS</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>CRIMINAL EXPERTS</p> </div> </div>
<p>How</p>	<div style="display: grid; grid-template-columns: repeat(4, 1fr); gap: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> CORRUPTION</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST LAW ENFORCEMENT</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> CRIMINAL FINANCES (MONEY LAUNDERING)</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> DOCUMENT FRAUD</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> ONLINE TRADE</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> TECHNOLOGY</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> VIOLENCE AND EXTORTION</div> </div>
<p>What</p>	<div style="display: grid; grid-template-columns: repeat(4, 1fr); gap: 10px;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> CURRENCY COUNTERFEITING</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> CYBERCRIME Child sexual exploitation Cyber-dependent crimes Payment card fraud</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> DRUG PRODUCTION TRAFFICKING AND DISTRIBUTION</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> FRAUD Excise fraud Investment fraud Mass marketing fraud Payment order fraud Value Added Tax fraud</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> ILLICIT WASTE TRAFFICKING</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY CRIME</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> MIGRANT SMUGGLING</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> ORGANISED PROPERTY CRIME</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> SPORTS CORRUPTION</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> TRAFFICKING OF ENDANGERED SPECIES</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> TRAFFICKING OF FIREARMS</div> <div style="text-align: center;"> TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS</div> </div>

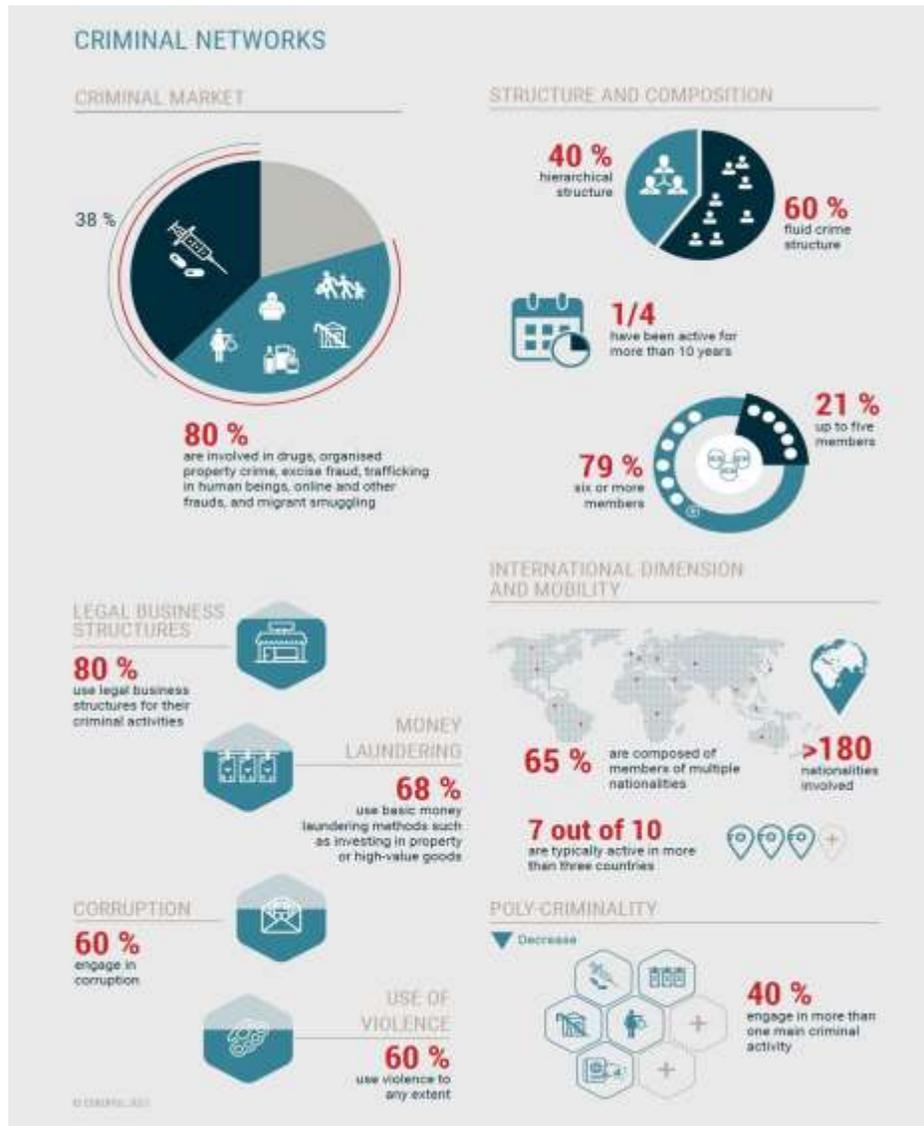
20. Highlight key data on Narcoterrorism and Organised Crime?

CONSUMERS



The demand for illegal drugs is solid and the trade in them resilient – in spite of expensive and punitive attempts to stop it.





Race and drugs in the US

The US population is **80%** white, with **similar levels** of drug use as the black and hispanic population. But 45% of all prisoners on drug offences are black, while only **28%** are white.⁴

Cost

Costs

\$25.7 billion – estimate of US spend on drug-related criminal justice each year.⁸

\$5.1 billion – annual British spend on drug-related offending across the criminal justice system.⁴

\$1.9 billion – Australian spend on dealing with drug use, the majority on crime costs, in 2002-03.⁴

Has the war on drugs reduced demand?⁹

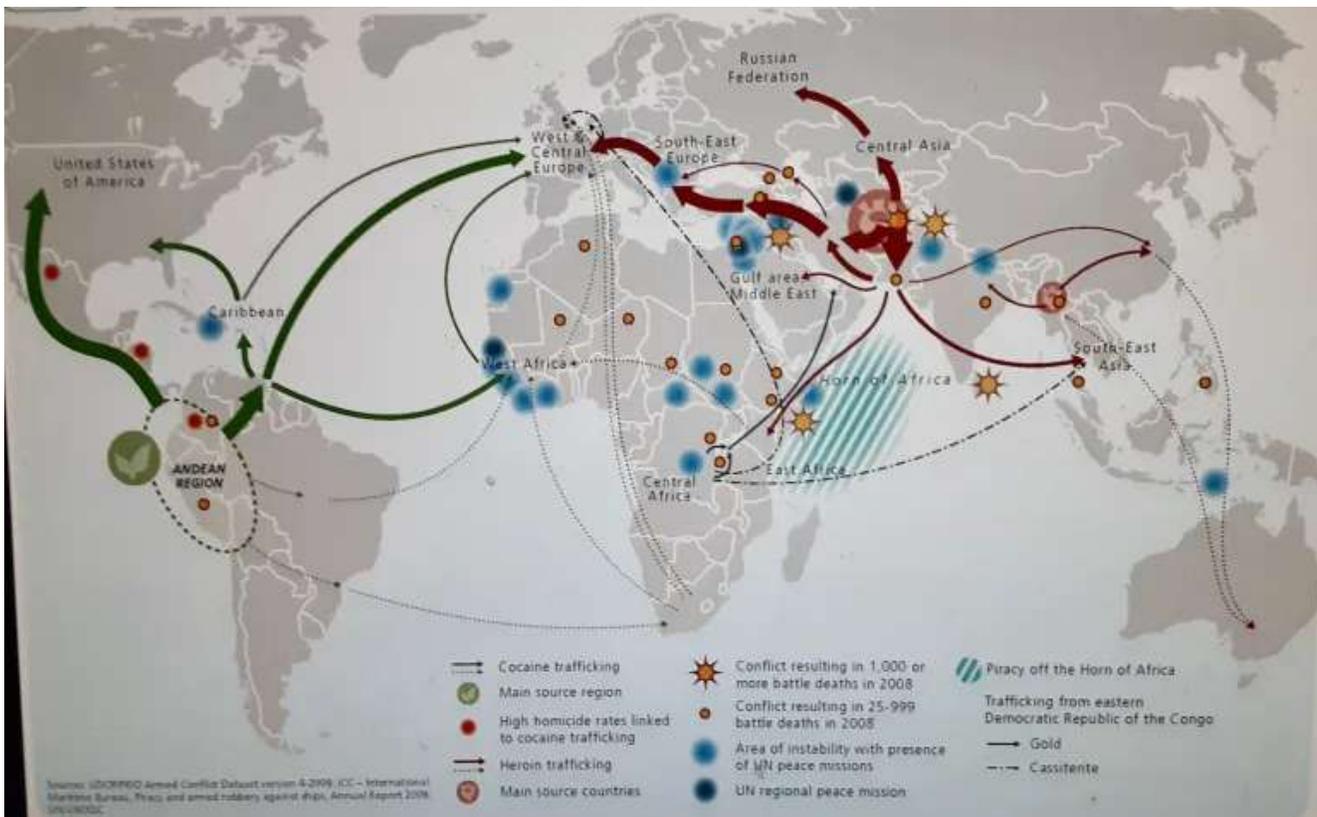
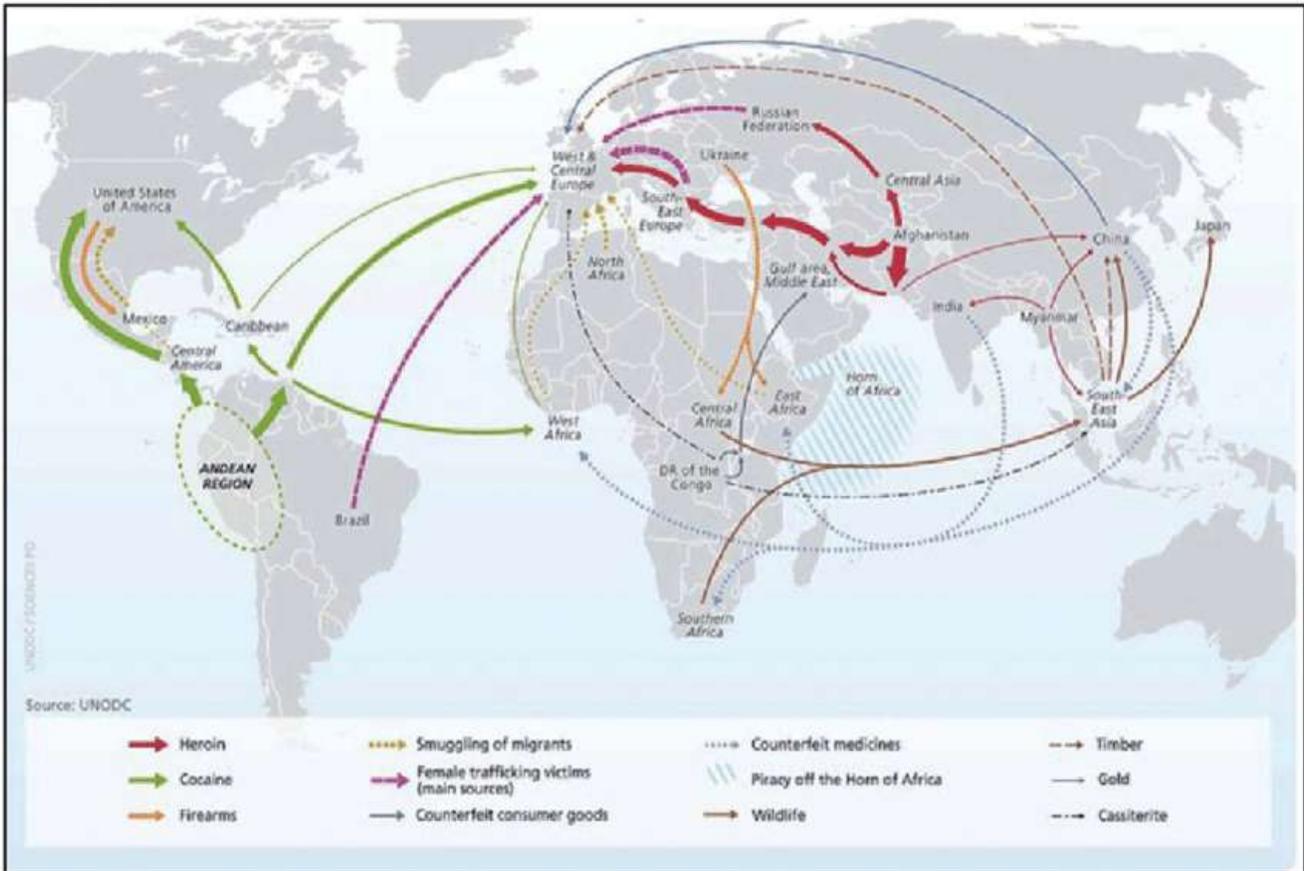
Users of illicit drugs	Opiates	Cocaine	Cannabis
1998	12.9 million	13.4 million	147.4 million
2008	17.35 million	17 million	160 million
% increase	34%	27%	8%

Narco-terrorism

● **\$125 million** – what the Taliban derives from the illegal drugs trade annually to fund its activities.¹⁰

● **\$500-\$600 million** – estimate of amount taken by Colombian FARC guerrillas from the illegal drug trade, in addition to kidnapping, extortion and protection 'tax'.¹¹

21. Mention about various Transnational organized crime markets and Nacro terrorism routes?



22. How has the US been involved in Narcoterrorism in the past?

History of US involvement in narcotics smuggling

- Opium Wars with China (1840s-60s)**
 US traders joined their British counterparts in flooding China with opium, benefitting from two wars that forced the weakened Asian nation into accepting unfavourable trade terms


- Laos/Vietnam War Era (1960s-70s)**
 Air America, a CIA-linked airline in Laos, was alleged to have ferried opium for allied Hmong militias


- Soviet-Afghan War (1980s)**
 CIA-backed Mujahideen fighters were accused of funding their war through opium cultivation and trafficking


- Nicaragua (1980s)**
 CIA-supported Contras were implicated in smuggling cocaine into the US to bankroll their fight against the Sandinista government


- Panama (1970s-80s)**
 Manuel Noriega, a longtime CIA asset, was accused of enabling large-scale cocaine trafficking for Colombian cartels


- Haiti - Coup periods (1980s-90s)**
 Haitian military officers with CIA ties were alleged to have moved narcotics into the US during the coup-era instability


- Pakistan-Afghan war spillover (1980s-2000s)**
 Heroin routes through Pakistan's tribal belt expanded during CIA collaboration with Pakistani intelligence, arming Afghan rebels



23. Enlist the international events of episodes on Narcoterrorism?

- In the twenty-first century, **US law-enforcement agencies** refer to terrorist groups that finance at least part of their organizations' activities through drug trafficking as **narcoterrorists**.

 - The train bombings in **Madrid on March 11, 2004**, are an example.
 - The bombings killed **191 people**.
 - **Al Qaeda** claimed responsibility for the bombings, which were financed through the sale of **hashish and ecstasy**.
- Some say the key to stopping **narcoterrorism** is to **eradicate the production of the crops** used to make the illicit drugs, but this is no easy task.

 - The **opium poppy** is the plant used to make heroin.
 - It is grown in many parts of **Afghanistan**.

- Since **2001, the beginning of the United States' War on Terror**, the United States has **spent billions of dollars** trying to reduce or stop opium production in **Afghanistan**.
 - By 2014, **Afghanistan** was producing double the opium it produced in 2000.
 - By 2015, 90 percent of the **opium in the world** came from **Afghanistan**.
 - However, **opium production in the country** seriously declined after the **Taliban banned the cultivation of the opium poppy**.
 - In **2023, the United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC)** reported a decline of **95 percent in opium poppy cultivation**.
- The situation prior to the ban was **similar in Colombia, which grows the coca plant used to produce cocaine**.
 - About **95 percent of cocaine sold in the United States** comes from **Colombia**.
 - Despite efforts to stop it, between **2012 and 2015, coca cultivation in Colombia** more than **doubled**.
 - In **2023, Colombia** set a new record for coca production.
- The **Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a leader in terrorism in the Middle East**, also engages in narcoterrorism to generate a certain portion of its revenue.
 - During its occupation of large portions of **Syria, members of ISIS seized drug labs in Aleppo, where legal pharmaceuticals were once produced**.
 - ISIS used the **chemicals and equipment in the labs** to make **high-grade methamphetamine, which it sold in the Middle East and Europe**.
 - Like other terrorist groups, **ISIS has diversified its revenue-making activities**.
 - It is also involved in the **illegal sale of oil, human trafficking, and pirated technological information**.
- To eradicate the sale of **heroin and cocaine**, the **United States and other countries** have **researched** and considered using mycoherbicides.
 - **Mycoherbicides are developed from pathogenic fungi** that infect certain plants.
 - If mycoherbicides are **sprayed on soil**, it is likely they would prevent the growth of **drug crops, such as the opium poppy and the coca plant**.
 - Cutting off the **production of heroin and cocaine** would put a serious dent in narcoterrorists' income.
 - Additionally, it **would end the need to spend billions of dollars to fight drug trafficking**.
- However, too many fears about **mycoherbicides** persisted to implement their use.
 - Scientists worried that **mycoherbicides could harm legal crops and hinder the food supply in these areas**.

- They questioned how **mycoherbicides** might affect animals, humans, and the environment in which they are used.
- Studies on the use of **mycoherbicides** have indicated that the research done thus far is not adequate to **draw conclusions** regarding their effectiveness and safety.

24. Highlight the most common illicit drugs in the world?

- **The World Drug Report** looks explicitly at the supply and demand of the international illegal drug market, not including commonly legal substances like caffeine and alcohol.
- Drugs are grouped by class and type, with **six main types of drugs** found as the most prevalent drugs worldwide.

Drugs	Description
Cannabis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drugs derived from cannabis, including hemp. ● This category includes marijuana (dried flowers), hashish (resin), and other for various other parts of the plant or derived oils.
Cocaine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Drugs derived from the leaves of coca plants. Labeled as either cocaine salts for powder form or crack for cocaine processed with baking soda and water into rock form
Opioids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Includes opiates which are derived directly from the opium poppy plant, including morphine, codeine, and heroin, as well as synthetic alkaloids.
Amphetamine-type Stimulants (ATS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Amphetamine and drugs derived from amphetamine, including meth (also known as speed), MDMA, and ecstasy.
Sedatives and Tranquilizers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Includes other drugs whose main purpose is to reduce energy, excitement, or anxiety, as well as drugs used primarily to initiate or help with sleep (also called hypnotics).
Solvents and Inhalants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gases or chemicals that can cause intoxication but are not intended to be drugs, including fuels, glues, and other industrial substances.

THE MOST USED DRUG IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD 2021

OTHER DRUG TYPES

This category highlights the least common prevalent drugs, including tranquilizers, household inhalants, and prescription drugs.



THE MOST USED DRUG IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD 2021

AMPHETAMINE TYPE STIMULANTS

Amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) includes drugs derived from amphetamine, including meth (also known as speed), MDMA and ecstasy.



THE MOST USED DRUG IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD 2021



OPIOIDS

Opium was a driver of culture, trade, and war in Asia and parts of Europe, but modern usage is centered around heroin and synthetics.



Morphine, codeine, and heroin (originally derived from morphine) are called opiates, meaning they are derived from the opium poppy.



Outside of Asia, most opioids are derived from synthetic alkaloids and not directly from opium.



Despite the opioid epidemic affecting the U.S. and much of the world, opioids weren't the most prevalent type of drug in any of the Americas or Africa.

THE MOST USED DRUG IN EVERY COUNTRY IN THE WORLD 2021



CANNABIS TYPE

Drugs like cannabis and derived products have been used throughout history, and modern prevalence is spread around the world.



Cannabis (marijuana or hashish) was the most frequently prevalent drug in the world.

Many countries didn't separate different types of cannabis usage.

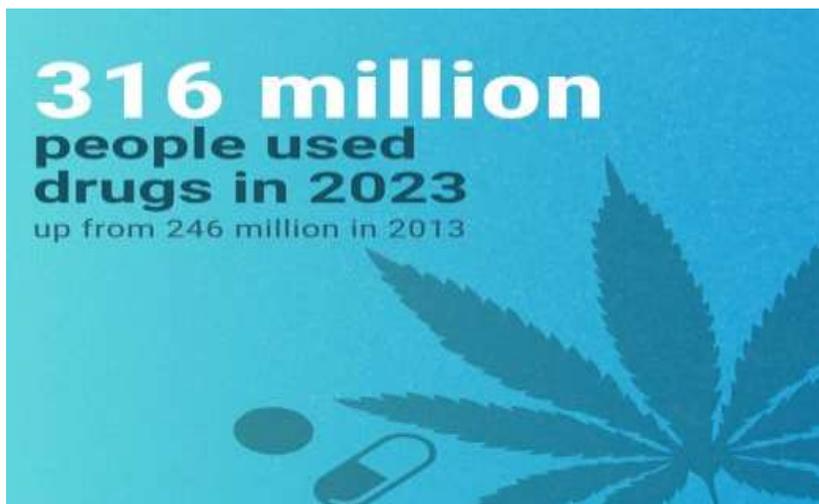
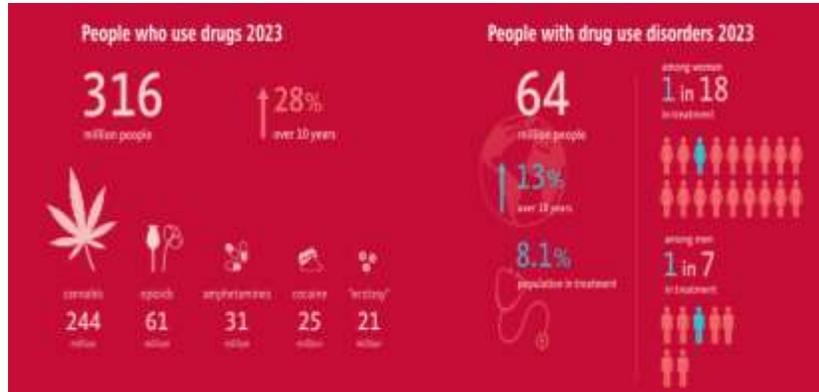
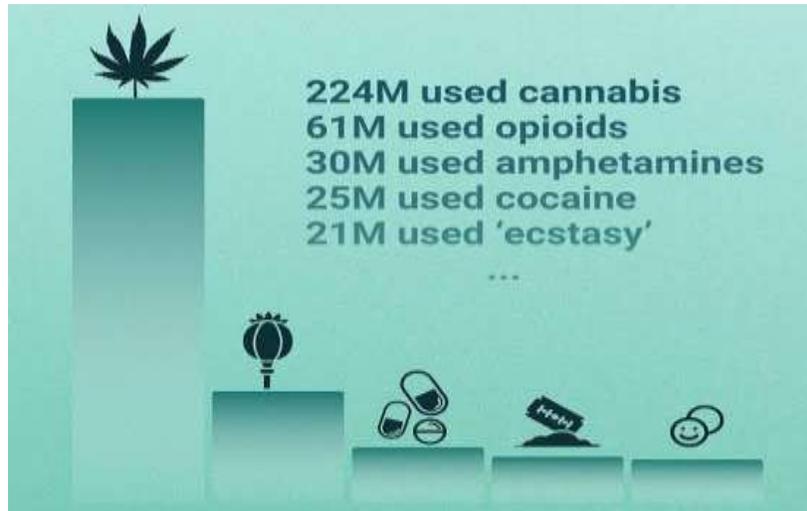


Only five countries have legalized recreational cannabis usage:

- Canada
- Georgia
- Mexico
- South Africa
- Uruguay

25. Highlight key statistics on global drug abuse?

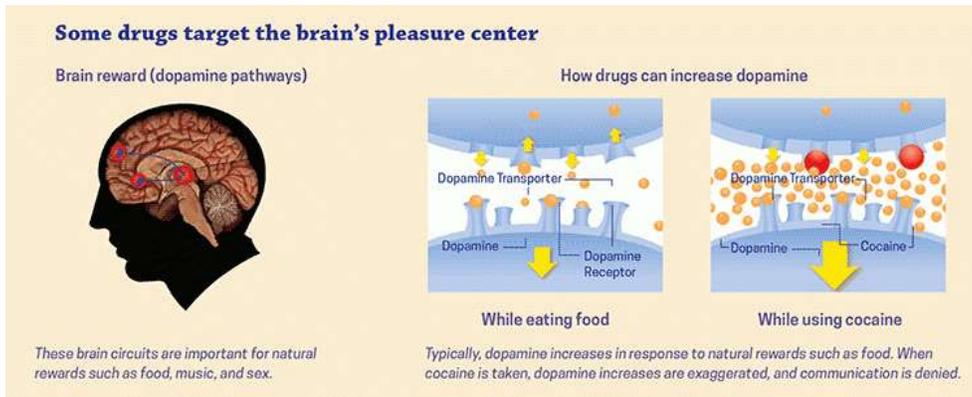
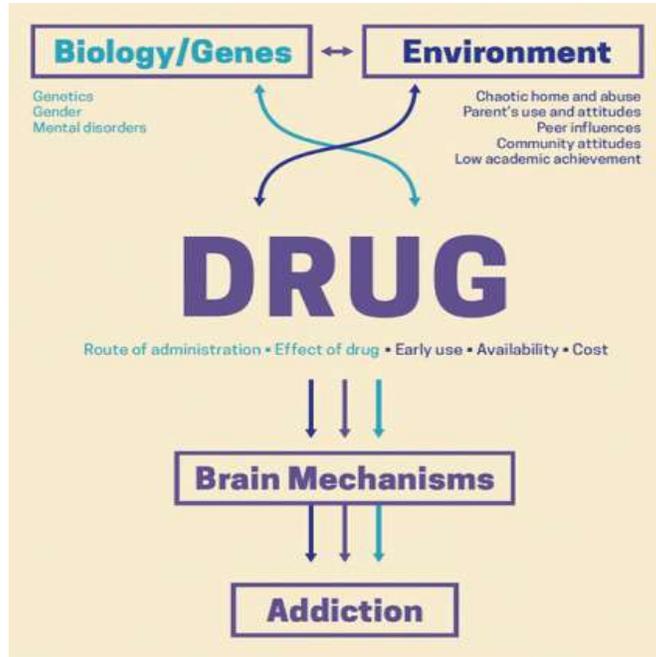
- The 26 June 2025, **Vienna witnessed the launch of the World Drug Report 2025**, issuing a stark warning: global instability is fueling the drug trade, compounding its **social, economic, and security tolls**.
- According to **UNODC, 316 million people aged 15–64 used a drug in 2023** (excluding alcohol and tobacco) – an **increase of over 20% since 2013**, and outpacing global population growth.
- That’s nearly **6% of the world’s population aged 15 to 64**.



TOP 8 MOST DRUG-ADDICTED COUNTRIES

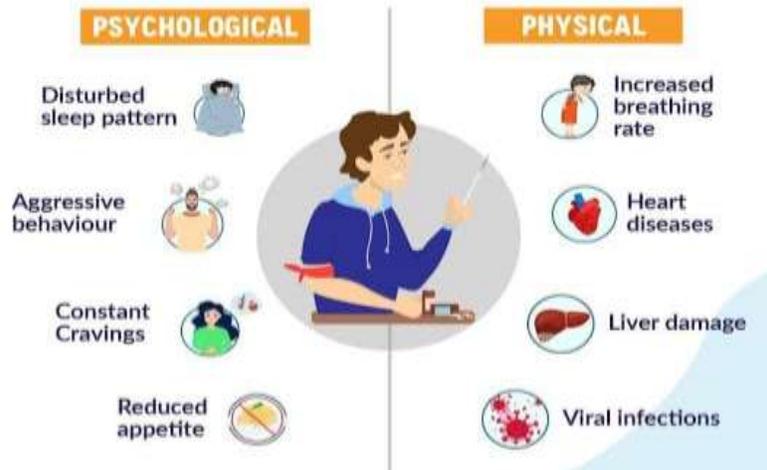


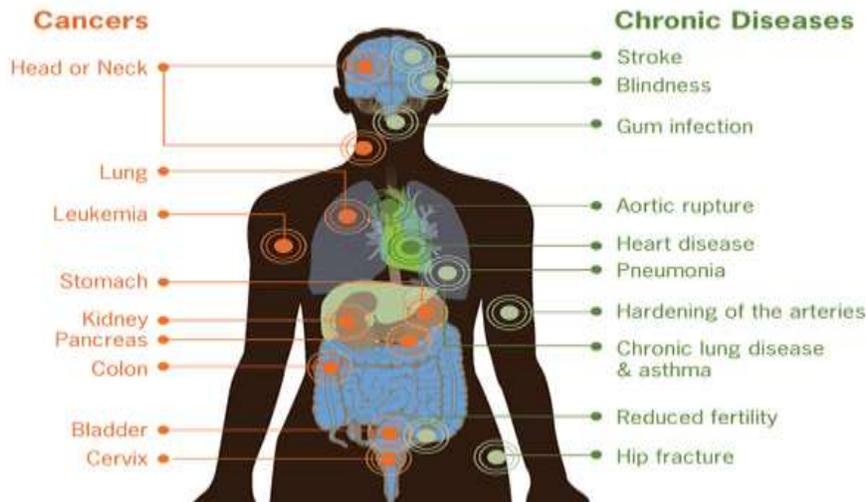
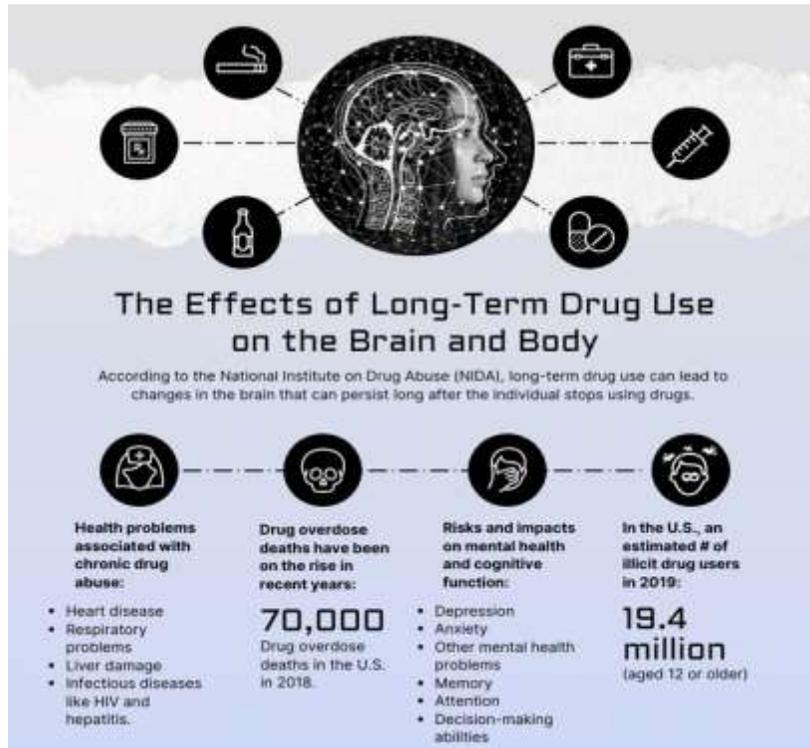
26. How drug addiction affects brain?



27. How do drug abuse impact health?

EFFECTS OF DRUG MISUSE





28. What is the relevance of the topic for UPSC CSE?

- **For Prelims:** Drug Trafficking & Organized Crime, Mexico’s location, Narco-violence, Fentanyl crisis
- **For Mains:** Internal Security, Money laundering, Illegal mining, Human trafficking, Arms smuggling, Organized crime, Drug trafficking.

Some previous years prelims questions.

Q1. Consider the following statements: (2019)

1. The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) has a ‘Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air’.
2. The UNCAC is the ever-first legally binding global anti-corruption instrument.

3. A highlight of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) is the inclusion of a specific chapter aimed at returning assets to their rightful owners from whom they had been taken illicitly.
4. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) is mandated by its members States to assist in the implementation of both UNCAC and UNTOC.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: (c)

Some previous years mains questions.

- Q1. Explain how narcoterrorism has emerged as a serious threat across the country. Suggest suitable measures to counter narcoterrorism. **(10 Marks - 2024)**
- Q2. Discuss the types of organised crimes. Describe the linkages between terrorists and organised crime that exist at the national and transnational levels. **(10 Marks - 2022)**

Some questions from this year and previous years interview transcripts.

Board Sheel Vardhan Singh sir:

- What is narcoterrorism?
- What makes narcoterrorism so dangerous that it is classified as a form of “terrorism”?
- What is the difference between normal terrorism and narcoterrorism?

Board BB Swain sir:

- Kerala is witnessing increasing drug abuse?
- How will you counter such incidents?

Board Suman Sharma mam:

- Should drug abuse among youth be addressed through punitive criminal law or through a health-centric rehabilitation model?

Some questions for QUIZ.

Q1. Consider the following Countries:

1. Afghanistan
2. India
3. Israel
4. Pakistan
5. Iran

How many of the above countries are part of the Golden Crescent?

- (a) Only two
- (b) Only three
- (c) Only four
- (d) All five

Ans: (b)

Some questions for POLL.

- Q1. Does drug trafficking in India significantly contribute to the funding of terrorist activities?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q2. Can narcoterrorism weaken India's internal security beyond just law-and-order concerns?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q3. Does narcoterrorism contribute to the radicalization and destabilization of border states like Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q4. Can drug money be used to procure weapons and finance attacks against the Indian state?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q5. Is narcoterrorism harmful only to individuals who consume drugs?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q6. Does organised crime create a parallel shadow economy that challenges state authority?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.
- Q7. Is narcoterrorism merely a criminal issue rather than a national security threat in India?
- (a) YES
 - (b) NO
 - (c) Can't say.