Cannabis in India

Prelims: *Current events of national and international importance*

Why in news?

Experts stress the need for research and physician training to expand medical uses of cannabis in India.

- The ***Cannabis or hemp flower*** has many names (colloquially known as ganja, charas or maal).
- **Family –** Canabenaceae.
  - Cannabis is mainly associated with 3 species of flowering plants, namely sativa, indica, and ruberalis.
- **Distribution –** The plants are indigenous to Central Asia and the India, which have been growing freely along the Himalayan foothills and adjacent plains of India for centuries.
- **Laws on Cannabis in India – NDPS Act –** The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in 1985, effectively ***banning*** the ***cultivation, production, and consumption*** of cannabis along with 70 other narcotic and psychotropic drugs.

  India is a signatory to the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961)

- **Section 10 of NDPS act –** Empowers state governments to regulate, permit, or prohibit the cultivation of cannabis for these uses.

  Uttarakhand *– The first state to permit the commercial cultivation of hemp plants, followed by Madhya Pradesh, and other states are conducting controlled cultivation for research purposes.*

- **Legal in many countries –** Canada, Thailand, Belgium, Spain, Portugal, much of Latin America, and several American states, etc.

- **Argument for legalizing –** Cannabis can relieve people from pain, especially in cases of cancer patients who need palliative care.
- **Medicinal uses –** To help relieve lifelong ailments, cancer treatments, chronic pain, and digestive problems, full-spectrum cannabis extracts are now available in India.
- **Risk –** Short-term side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, dry mouth, increased appetite, mood changes, and forgetfulness.
- Long-term or uncontrolled use can affect memory and concentration, and increase the risk of dependence.
- Pregnant or breastfeeding women, people with psychiatric illnesses such as schizophrenia, patients with uncontrolled heart problems, and those with substance-use disorders are advised not to use.

References

1. The Hindu | Cannabis in India
2. National Library of Medicine | Cannabis in India

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