Issue of Narcotics in India

Why in news?

Around 800 sleuths of Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) interdicted thousands of kilograms of drugs smuggled into India, under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

What does the World Drug Report 2022 say?

- The UN's World Drug Report 2022 (WDR) stated that in 2020, one in every 18 people had used a drug in the past 12 months.
- The report also revealed that cocaine manufacturing reached a record high in 2020, so did its trafficking.

How much narcotics were seized?

- Apart from seizures in the border, the DRI had seized narcotics and psychotropic substances inside the country as well.
- Per latest data published by National Crime Records Bureau, 1,052 kg of heroin was seized in 2021, a staggering increase from 343 kg and 137 kg in 2020 and 2019 respectively.
- The bulk of the seizure was from Kerala, Punjab and Rajasthan.
- Drugs such as Acetic Anhydride, ATS, cocaine, CBCS, ephedrine, ganja, hashish, LSD, MDMA, mephedrone were also seized.

> *Abuse of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs costs the nation $740 billion annually in crime, lost work productivity and health. Out of this, $11 billion goes in healthcare and $192 billion gets drained due to the illicit use of drugs.*

What are the issues with India's borders?

- India's 15,106.7 km land border and 7516.6 km coastline makes it vulnerable to narcotics smuggling.
- The North-East States that share borders with Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, China, and Bhutan are the hot-spots for drug smuggling.
- The location of India with the 'golden crescent' on one side and the 'golden triangle' on the other makes it all the more vulnerable to drug smuggling.

> *The Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle are the names given to Asia's two principal areas of illicit opium production.*

The Golden Crescent comprises Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan.

The Golden Triangle represents the region coinciding with the rural mountains of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand.

- **Other challenges** - Apart from the challenge of "porous" borders, the other challenges are
  - insufficient enforcement apparatus, and
  - a perceived lack of coordination among different agencies.
- But, a Narco Coordination Centre (NCORD) has been in operation since 2016 to have effective coordination among various Ministries, Departments, Central and States law enforcement agencies.
- Apart from the role of enforcement agencies, it is necessary to tackle the menace of narcotics on the social and societal front.

What is needed?

- **Countering internal demand** - Given the addictive nature, youth are particularly susceptible to fall prey to drugs and concerted effort is needed tackle the issue not only at the borders but also internally.
- To counter this internal demand, a campaign that leverages behavioural economics to nudge and inform people of the menace of drugs should be initiated in the form of a Jan Andolan.
- **Addiction centres** - drug and alcohol addiction centres should be supported and non-stigmatised, leveraging the support of CSR initiatives of corporates.
- **Coordination** - There should be greater coordination between Customs and other enforcement agencies to break the backbone of drug syndicates.
- **Involving RWAs** - Even Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) of housing societies should be mandated to incorporate suitable bye-laws in society rules to inform residents of the criminality of drugs.
- **Capacity enhancement** - A need for capacity enhancement in the border areas is imperative for effectively balancing the role of Customs in intercepting narcotics and facilitating genuine trade.
- Dedicated further capacity building of canine squads in Customs along with leveraging technology to improve detection can be considered.
- In the fight against illegal drugs, it may be time to instill a strong sense of fear, in both the smugglers/peddlers and the users of drugs!

Reference

1. Deccan Herald | Seizure of high-value drugs rises manifold in FY22: DRI report
2. The Hindu Business Line | Combating the menace of narcotics consumption

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