The Vision Document on Drug Control (2026–2029)

GS Paper II: *Governance | GS III Internal Security*

Why in News?

Recently, the Union Home Minister launched the Vision Document on Drug Control (2026–2029) during the 10th Apex-Level Meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD), organised by the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB).

What is the status of drug abuse in India?

- **Increases in cases** – India has witnessed a significant increase in drug trafficking and substance abuse over the past decade due to evolving trafficking routes, synthetic drug production, and digital platforms facilitating illegal trade.

- **Major concerns** – Rising abuse of heroin, methamphetamine, mephedrone, and other synthetic drugs.
- Expansion of online drug markets through Telegram, WhatsApp, and Signal.
- Growing involvement of organised criminal syndicates
- Diversion of pharmaceutical drugs for illicit consumption
- Increasing addiction among youth and students
- Expansion of cross-border trafficking networks
- Drug abuse has become not only a law enforcement issue but also a major public

health and socio-economic concern.

What are the key features of the vision document?

- **Foundation –** The Vision Document is built upon a three-pronged strategy:
  - **Detect** trafficking networks through intelligence.
  - **Disrupt** supply chains and financial networks.
  - **Destroy** organised narcotics ecosystems through coordinated enforcement.
- **National Strategy Against Narcotics –** The document provides a time-bound national strategy to dismantle the entire narcotics ecosystem by targeting, drug trafficking, drug abuse, illicit financial networks, organised criminal syndicate and cross-border trafficking.
- **Dismantling Major Drug Cartels –** Dismantling of, 100 major inter-state and transnational drug cartels through intelligence-led investigations coordinated multi-agency operations, financial disruption and strong prosecution.
- The focus shifts from arresting individual couriers to eliminating entire criminal networks.
- **Enhanced Stakeholder Coordination –** The Vision Document aims to integrate the efforts of over 40 Ministries and agencies, including:
  - Central Government departments
  - State Governments
  - District administrations
  - Educational institutions
  - Civil society organisations
  - Citizens
- This whole-of-government approach seeks to ensure better coordination and information sharing.
- **Financial Disruption of Drug Networks –** Recognising that drug trafficking is driven by financial gains, the document proposes, Mandatory financial investigations in major drug cases.
- Attachment and confiscation of assets acquired through drug proceeds
- Tracking money laundering linked to narcotics trade
- This approach weakens criminal organisations by targeting their economic foundations.
- **Greater Use of the 1988 act –** The vision document recommends wider application of the *PITNDPS act, 1988*.
- States are encouraged to use this legislation against drug kingpins and organised trafficking syndicates.

*The **PIT-NDPS Act, 1988** (Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act) is a key Indian law providing for **preventive detention** to combat organized drug trafficking. It aims to incapacitate habitual offenders and major drug syndicates.*

- **Adoption of Advanced Technology –** The document emphasises technology-driven enforcement through the following:

    - Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled profiling
    - Anti-drone technologies
    - Advanced surveillance systems
    - Container scanning
    - Data analytics
    - Enhanced inter-agency intelligence sharing
- These measures aim to improve interdiction across land, air, and maritime routes.
- **Focus on Synthetic Drugs –** Special attention has been given to emerging synthetic drugs such as, Methamphetamine, Mephedrone, and Other Amphetamine-Type Stimulants (ATS).
- **Industry Participation –** The chemical and pharmaceutical sectors are encouraged to adopt, voluntary compliance mechanisms, reporting of suspicious transactions, cooperation with enforcement agencies and prevention of diversion of prescription medicines.
- **De-addiction and Rehabilitation –** The Vision Document balances enforcement with public health measures by focusing on, expansion of de-addiction centres, counselling services.
- It also focuses on treatment facilities, rehabilitation programmes, social reintegration of recovering addicts, the objective is to reduce demand alongside supply reduction efforts.
- **Public Awareness –** A nationwide awareness campaign aims to reach over 50 crore citizens through, schools and colleges, community organisations, youth clubs, sports institutions, civil society.
- The objective is to transform drug prevention into a people's movement.
- **Drug-Free Educational Institutions –** Higher educational institutions are expected to promote drug-free campuses, student counselling, early intervention programmes, preventive drug screening (pilot initiatives), comprehensive student wellness programmes.
- **Addressing Digital Drug Markets –** The document highlights the growing misuse of digital platforms such as, Telegram, WhatsApp, and Signal.

What are the existing and emerging narcotics routes affecting India?

- **Myanmar Route –** India's eastern border has emerged as the country's most significant narcotics trafficking challenge.
- Following the Taliban's ban on opium cultivation in Afghanistan in 2022, Afghan production declined substantially.
- Global supply shifted towards the Golden Triangle.
- Myanmar emerged as a major producer of opium and methamphetamine.
- Opium cultivation in Myanmar reportedly expanded significantly between 2021 and 2023, particularly in Shan State under the control of ethnic armed groups.

- **National Highway routes –** The NH, 102 through *Manipur – Champhai–Aizawl–Barak valley* route via mizoram, routes facilitate the movement of, heroin, methamphetamine, and synthetic drugs.
- The porous border, difficult terrain, and the erstwhile Free Movement Regime have enabled these regions to become important staging points for narcotics distribution.
- **Northeastern States –** The States facing the highest exposure include, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.
- Mizoram recorded the highest seizure of Amphetamine-Type Stimulants in 2025, highlighting the increasing importance of India's eastern frontier in narcotics control.
- **Western Coast –** The western coastline, particularly, Gujarat and Maharashtra is vulnerable to heroin and synthetic drugs originating from the Afghanistan–Pakistan–Iran corridor.
- **Southern and Eastern Coastlines –** The southern and eastern seaboards face increasing trafficking through, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Golden Triangle-linked maritime routes.
- Drug traffickers increasingly use, Fishing vessels, Coastal boats, and Low-signature maritime platforms
- These vessels often evade conventional surveillance systems.
- **Tamil Nadu Coast –** The NCB Annual Report 2025 records several significant maritime drug interceptions, including seizures of Amphetamine,
- Ganja and Hashish oil.
- These seizures indicate an emerging maritime shift in trafficking patterns along India's southern coastline.

What are the ethical issues involved?

- Drug use in India raises several ethical concerns. It involves a conflict between individual autonomy and the State's duty to protect public health.
- Criminalising addicts instead of treating addiction as a health issue challenges the principles of compassion and human dignity.
- Drug abuse disproportionately affects vulnerable groups, violating social justice and equity.
- Organised drug trafficking fuels crime, corruption, and terrorism, undermining rule of law.

- The use of surveillance technologies raises concerns over privacy and civil liberties.
- Ethical governance requires a balanced approach that combines strict enforcement against traffickers with rehabilitation, de-addiction, awareness, and social reintegration of drug users.

What measures authorities can take?

- **Enhance Border & Port Security –** Strengthen surveillance at international borders and maritime entry points using advanced technology (drones, scanners) to intercept illegal narcotics.
- **Crack Down on the Darknet –** Expand specialized cyber-units targeting the rising trend of darknet markets and cryptocurrency transactions used for illicit drug trade.
- **Inter-Agency Coordination –** Strengthen real-time intelligence sharing between the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), state police forces, and border guarding forces.
- **School & College Programs –** Implement early intervention and educational programs (such as the Navchetna modules) to educate youth on the ill effects of substance abuse.
- **Community Campaigns –** Utilize local bodies (Panchayati Raj Institutions, youth clubs, and Self-Help Groups) to drive community-led campaigns under the Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan.
- **Media & Helplines –** Run widespread, stigma-free awareness campaigns on mass media and promote nationwide helplines (e.g., Toll-free: 14446) for families seeking help.
- **Expand Infrastructure –** Increase the number of Addiction Treatment Facilities (ATFs) in government hospitals and establish community-based Outreach and Drop-In Centers (ODICs).
- **Training Medical Professionals –** Train general medical officers and counselors in government hospitals to identify and treat substance dependence effectively.
- **Rehabilitation & Livelihood Support –** Provide vocational training, skill development, and livelihood assistance to recovering addicts to support their full reintegration into society.
- **Strict Pharmaceutical Monitoring –** Enhance the regulatory oversight of the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) to prevent the diversion of prescription drugs and psychotropic substances for recreational use.
- **Fund Grassroots NGOs –** Scale financial assistance programs provided by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE) to NGOs operating community-based de-addiction and rehabilitation centers.

What lies ahead?

- The Vision Document on Drug Control (2026–2029) marks a significant shift from isolated law enforcement actions to a comprehensive national strategy against

narcotics.

- By integrating enforcement, technology, financial disruption, rehabilitation, industry participation, and citizen engagement, it aims to dismantle organised drug networks while addressing the social dimensions of substance abuse.
- Successful implementation through cooperative federalism and active public participation will be critical to achieving the goal of a safer, healthier, and drug-free India.

Quick facts

Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD)
• The Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) is a four-tier coordination mechanism established by the ***Ministry of Home Affairs*** to ensure effective cooperation among: - Central Ministries - State Governments - Law enforcement agencies - Intelligence agencies - Pharmaceutical and chemical industries - Financial institutions - Educational institutions and civil society • It provides a common platform for coordinated action against drug trafficking and substance abuse.

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Reference

The Hindu| Strategy Document on Drug Abuse

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