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Anti Drug Action Plan for 2020-21

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Why in News

Recently, on the occasion of **International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking** an annual **Anti-Drug Action Plan for 2020-21** for 272 districts was launched by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

The plan includes **awareness** generation programmes, **identification of drug-dependent population**, focus on treatment facilities and **capacity-building** for service-providers to curb drug abuse and alcoholism.

Drug abuse or **substance abuse** is the use of illegal drugs (Heroin, Morphine, Opium etc), or the use of prescription drugs for **purposes other than those for which they are meant to be used**.

Key Points

- **Action Plan for 2020-21:**

- **De-addiction Facilities:** These would be set up in the “**most affected**” 272 districts identified by the **Narcotics Control Bureau** focussing on building up treatment and de-addiction facilities and giving emphasis on reaching the youth and high risk population.

The districts mostly belong to **Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and the North-East.**

- **Drop-in-Centres for Addicts:** The focus will be on setting up drop-in-centres for addicts and also on **peer-led community based outreach programmes** for high risk populations – particularly the youth.

These centres will have **provision for screening, assessment and counselling** and would provide linkage to treatment and rehabilitation services for drug dependents.

- **Integrated Rehabilitation Centre for Addicts (IRCAs):** Funded by the Ministry, IRCAS would reach out to communities to help those affected by **drug addiction.**

- **Drug-Free India Campaign:** The ministry also announced the launch of the ‘**Nasha Mukht Bharat**’, or **Drug-Free India Campaign** which focuses on community outreach programmes.

To step-up the battle against the severe challenge posed by **drug use and alcoholism**, the campaign will focus not just on **institutional support** but also on **community outreach programmes** in the districts identified in coordination.

- **Significance:**

- **Awareness and Sensitisation:** Apart from celebrity backed ‘**Say No to Drugs**’ **publicity campaigns**, national level campaigns are planned across schools and higher education campuses to sensitise youngsters, parents and schools about the issue.
- **Change in the Strategy:** It introduces a new change in the strategy against drugs. So far, India has been focussed on institutions, however the new action plan focuses on work in society at large.
- **Enhanced Funding:** Ministry would ramp up greater funding for institutions to curb the drug abuse.

- **Background**

National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use: The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, conducted a **National Survey on Extent and Pattern of Substance Use in India** through the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre (NDDTC), **All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)**, New Delhi during 2018, which is key to the action plan for 2020-21.

- It is estimated that about **850,000 Indians inject drugs, about 460,000 children and 7.7 million** Indians require help for opioid dependence.
- As per the survey, the prevalence of **opioids** (a type of drug e.g. Heroin) use in India is **three times** the global average.

- **Challenges to Curb the Drug Menace:**

- **Related Data:** The findings of the “**Magnitude of Substance Abuse in India**” report 2019, revealed the estimated 16 crore alcohol consumers in the 10-75 years in the country, as many as 19% of them were dependent on alcohol.
- **Legally Available Drugs:** Such as tobacco is a huge problem which is usually seen as a gateway drug which children take just to experiment with.
- **Lack of Availability of Rehabilitation Centres:** There is a lack of rehabilitation centres. Also, NGOs operating de-addiction centres in the country, have failed to provide the required kind of treatment and therapy.
- **Smuggling of Drugs:** Smuggling of drugs through the states like Punjab, Assam and Uttar Pradesh which share the border with neighbouring countries.

- **Global Initiatives:** The United Nations with the aid of its anti-drug abuse arm, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) spreads awareness, urges governments to avoid stimulating the Narco economy and deal with the Illicit trafficking of drugs in the disguise of legal pharmaceutical businesses.

International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking



- **History:** Also known as ‘**World Drug Day**’, it is celebrated annually on **26th June** since 1987.

The day is also meant to commemorate Lin Zexu’s efforts towards the strategic dismantling of the opium trade in Humen, Guangdong in China right before the First Opium War on the Chinese Mainland.

- **Theme 2020:** Better Knowledge for Better Care.

It emphasises the need to improve the **understanding of the world drug problem** and how better knowledge will foster greater international cooperation for countering its impact on health, governance and security.

Way Forward

- The action plan aims at addiction-free India by countering the growing menace especially across colleges and universities. However, there is a need to **design a more targeted campaign** against drugs and substance abuse.
- Addiction should not be seen as a character flaw, but as an ailment that any other person could be struggling with. Therefore, the **stigma associated** with drug taking needs to be reduced through **social awareness and voluntary processes** like medical help by psychologists, as well as strong support from family.

Source: TH