

## KASHI DECLARATION: NATIONAL

**NEWS:** Youth Spiritual Summit Culminates in Varanasi with Launch of Kashi Declaration

### WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The Kashi Declaration launched a five-year roadmap for a drug-free India, advocating a holistic, multi-ministerial approach integrating various societal efforts. This initiative addresses India's severe drug menace, exacerbated by its proximity to major drug-producing regions and significant health, economic, and national security impacts.

### The Kashi Declaration: A Roadmap for a Drug-Free India

The **Kashi Declaration**, outlining a **five-year roadmap for a drug-free India**, was recently signed during the **Youth Spiritual Summit in Varanasi**.

### Kashi Declaration: Key Aspects

- **National Consensus:** It affirms a **national consensus** to treat substance abuse as a **multi-faceted public health and societal challenge**.
- **Approach:** It calls for a **"whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach"** to tackle the issue.
- **Emphasis:** The declaration emphasizes the **integration of spiritual, cultural, educational, and technological efforts** to:
  - Prevent addiction.
  - Support recovery for affected individuals.
  - Foster a national culture of sobriety.
- **Institutional Mechanisms Proposed:**
  - Formation of a **Joint National Committee** for multi-ministerial coordination.
  - Requirement for **annual progress reporting**.
  - Establishment of a national platform for **linking affected individuals to support services**.

### Menace of Drug Abuse in India: Statistics (2019 AIIMS & MoSJE Report)

- **Alcohol:** Over **16 crore (160 million)** Indians consume alcohol, with **5.7 crore (57 million)** requiring medical help.
- **Cannabis and Opioids:** More than **2.3 crore (23 million)** people use cannabis and opioids.
- **Sedatives:** Approximately **1.08%** of Indians aged 10-75 years (around **1.18 crore people**) use sedatives for non-medical, non-prescription purposes.

- **Inhalants:** These are a particular concern, especially among **children and adolescents**, showing a higher prevalence of use (**1.17%**) compared to adults (**0.58%**).

### Reasons for Drug Menace in India:

- **Geographical Location:** India's proximity to the "**Golden Crescent**" (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) and the "**Golden Triangle**" (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) – major global drug-producing regions – facilitates easy cross-border smuggling. This leads to drug inflow in states like Punjab, Manipur, and Assam.
- **Youth Vulnerability:** Factors such as peer pressure, academic/social stress, unemployment, and sheer curiosity make the youth susceptible to initiating drug use.
- **Weak Enforcement:** Inadequate surveillance, instances of corruption, and overburdened law enforcement agencies hinder effective control and interception of drug trafficking.
- **Easy Availability:** The proliferation of online platforms, the widespread presence of local peddlers, and easy access through pharmacies (for prescription drugs misuse) make illicit drugs more accessible.
- **Social Disintegration:** Factors like broken families, social isolation, and a lack of strong community support systems can increase an individual's vulnerability and risks of developing addiction.

### Impact of Drug Abuse:

- **Economic Impact:** Leads to reduced workforce productivity, imposes significant healthcare costs, and generally weakens the nation's human capital.
- **Health Impact:** Directly causes various mental disorders, is a major vector for the spread of infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS and hepatitis, and results in severe physical deterioration.
- **Social Impact:** Disrupts family structures, fuels domestic violence, and leads to social isolation and stigma for individuals and their families.
- **National Security Impact:** The lucrative drug trade often fosters **narco-terrorism** and organized criminal networks. Youth involvement in drug abuse also weakens national integrity and resilience.

### Steps Taken:

- **Indian Initiatives:**
  - **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPS Act):** This key legislation prohibits the production, possession, sale, and consumption of illicit drugs and outlines penalties for violations.
  - **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (Drug-Free India Campaign):** Launched in **2020**, this campaign aims to raise awareness about the detrimental effects of drug abuse and actively promote a drug-free society across India.
  - **Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF):** Many states have established these task forces to strengthen drug law enforcement and coordination at the state level.

- **DarkNet Monitoring Cell:** The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** has established this specialized cell to track and curb online drug sales and illicit activities on the dark web.
- **Global Initiatives:**
  - **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** This UN agency is a leading body in the global fight against illicit drugs. It spearheads campaigns to raise awareness about the dangers of drug abuse.
  - **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):** The INCB plays a crucial role in monitoring the global drug situation and assessing individual countries' compliance with various international drug control treaties.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The escalating drug menace in India presents a severe and multi-dimensional threat to public health, overall societal well-being, and national security. Achieving sustained success in combating this challenge will necessitate **coordinated efforts across government bodies, civil society organizations, and local communities**. A strong emphasis on **prevention strategies, comprehensive rehabilitation programs, and the empowerment of youth** will be crucial to building a truly "Nasha Mukht Bharat" (Drug-Free India).

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