

# Daily Current Affairs



by Dhananjay Gautam

# Table Of Content 23 July 2025

1. Kashi Declaration: Paving the Way for a Drug-Free India

2. Guryul Ravine: A Prehistoric Treasure Under Threat

3. Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Resigns

4. India Strengthens Ties with Lesotho

5. India's Coal Sector on the Path to Sustainability and Self-Reliance

6. Hatti Tribe: Preserving Heritage and Traditions in the **Himalayan Foothills** 





You Tube Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice



# Kashi Declaration: Paving the Way for a Drug-Free India

**Context:** India took a significant step toward building a **Nasha Mukt Bharat** (**Drug-Free India**) with the adoption of the **Kashi Declaration**, a comprehensive five-year strategy unveiled during the **Youth Spiritual Summit in Varanasi**. The declaration represents a collective national vision to combat the growing menace of drug abuse through a **holistic and inclusive approach**, blending governance, spirituality, technology, and social reform.



# **Highlights of the Kashi Declaration:**

The **Kashi Declaration** signals a paradigm shift in how India addresses substance abuse—not merely as a legal issue but as a **multi-dimensional public health and societal challenge**. Key elements include:

- Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approach: Recognizing that no single entity can solve the crisis, the declaration calls for **coordinated efforts** across ministries, civil society, and local communities.
- Integration of Spiritual, Cultural, and Educational Tools: Leveraging India's rich spiritual heritage, the declaration promotes mindfulness, value-based education, and community support as preventive measures against addiction.
- Technology-Driven Solutions: It advocates using digital platforms to track, prevent, and rehabilitate, offering real-time support to affected individuals.
- **Institutional Framework**: Proposes the creation of a **Joint National Committee**, annual performance reviews, and a centralized **national support platform** to connect addicts with rehabilitation services and emotional support.

# **Understanding India's Drug Abuse Crisis:**

The scale of India's drug challenge is staggering. A 2019 report by **AIIMS** and the **Ministry of Social Justice** and **Empowerment** provides alarming statistics:

- Over **16 crore people** consume alcohol, with **5.7 crore** requiring treatment.
- Around 2.3 crore Indians use cannabis and opioids.
- **1.18 crore** individuals between ages 10 and 75 use **sedatives** (non-medically).
- **Inhalants**, especially among children and teens, show a **higher prevalence** (1.17%) than among adults.

These figures underscore the urgent need for **multi-layered intervention strategies** that not only penalize but **educate**, **heal**, **and reintegrate**.

# **Root Causes Behind the Drug Menace in India:**

India's drug problem is fueled by a mix of geographical, social, and systemic factors:

Download Our Application



- **Strategic Location**: India is sandwiched between the **Golden Crescent** (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) and the **Golden Triangle** (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand)—two of the world's largest drug-producing regions.
- **Cross-Border Smuggling**: Border states like **Punjab, Manipur, and Assam** are hotspots for illegal drug entry due to porous borders.
- **Youth Vulnerability**: Unemployment, academic pressure, peer influence, and curiosity contribute significantly to drug initiation among youth.
- Weak Enforcement Mechanisms: Overburdened law enforcement, corruption, and inadequate surveillance hamper effective control.
- Easy Access: Drugs are now available via online markets (including the darknet), local dealers, and even certain pharmacies.
- **Social Breakdown**: Dysfunctional families, **mental health issues**, and isolation are major contributors to substance dependence.

# Impact of Drug Abuse on India's Socio-Economic Fabric:

Drug addiction doesn't just harm individuals—it damages entire communities and the nation's core:

- Economic Loss: Drug abuse reduces workforce productivity, strains healthcare systems, and erodes the country's human capital.
- Public Health Crisis: Widespread drug use is linked to mental illness, spread of HIV/AIDS, and chronic diseases.
- Family and Social Disruption: Addiction causes domestic violence, family breakdown, and leads to stigmatization and social alienation.
- National Security Threat: The drug trade finances terrorist organizations, strengthens organized crime, and destabilizes youth, weakening internal security.

# **India's Policy Response and Ongoing Initiatives:**

India has adopted a **multi-pronged approach** to address the drug problem at national and international levels:

#### **National-Level Interventions:**

- Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985: A legal framework that prohibits
  the production, sale, possession, and consumption of banned substances, with stringent
  punishments.
- Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyaan (2020): A flagship campaign focusing on awareness, community outreach, and behavior change, operating in hundreds of vulnerable districts.
- Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs): State-level enforcement bodies to enhance local law enforcement capabilities.





 DarkNet Monitoring Cell: A unit under the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) that monitors illicit online drug sales.

#### **Global Collaborations:**

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**: India works with UNODC to share best practices, promote prevention, and tackle transnational trafficking.
- **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB)**: India's compliance with global treaties is monitored and aligned with international standards.

# Way Forward: Toward a Truly Nasha Mukt Bharat

India's rising drug crisis demands more than just regulation—it calls for a **massive cultural and policy transformation**. The **Kashi Declaration** provides the framework, but **implementation is key**.

# To truly eradicate drug abuse, India must:

- Empower youth through education, employment, and mental health support
- Foster grassroots movements involving religious leaders, educators, and social workers
- Expand rehabilitation services with a focus on dignity and reintegration
- Use technology for early intervention, anonymous reporting, and support delivery

# **Conclusion: A Nation United Against Addiction:**

The **Kashi Declaration** is more than a policy—it's a **call to conscience**. It affirms that drug addiction is not just a personal failing, but a **national challenge** requiring empathy, coordination, and sustained action. As India envisions a **Viksit Bharat by 2047**, building a **drug-free society** is an essential step toward achieving a **healthier**, **safer**, and more empowered nation.





GS Paper 3 – Environment and Ecology

2

# **Guryul Ravine: A Prehistoric Treasure Under Threat**

**Context:** The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has raised serious concerns about the **deteriorating condition** of the **Guryul Ravine fossil site**, located in **Khonmoh**, near **Srinagar**, Jammu and Kashmir. In its latest warning, the GSI emphasized that this globally significant geological heritage is facing a "serious threat" due to human activity, negligence, and lack of proper conservation measures.



This ancient site, often hailed as a **natural archive of Earth's prehistoric past**, is now at risk of being lost forever unless **urgent preservation efforts** are undertaken.

# Guryul Ravine: India's Window into Earth's Deep History

The **Guryul Ravine**, situated in the **Vihi district of Kashmir**, is not just a regional landmark—it's a site of **global geological importance**. This extraordinary fossil-rich ravine contains layers of sediment that provide critical evidence of the **Permian–Triassic extinction event**, the most devastating mass extinction in Earth's history, dating back nearly **260 million years**.

# **Key Features of Guryul Ravine:**

- Contains fossils from the Permian-Triassic boundary, offering insights into how life on Earth was nearly wiped out.
- Hosts what is believed to be the world's earliest recorded tsunami event, with physical imprints still visible in the exposed strata.
- Lies adjacent to **Dachigam National Park** and is part of the **Khonmoh Conservation Reserve**, a sensitive ecological area.

The fossil layers here help scientists reconstruct past climates, track extinction patterns, and understand geological transitions over millions of years.

#### What Was the Permian-Triassic Extinction Event?

Often referred to as the "Great Dying", the Permian–Triassic extinction occurred around 251.9 million years ago, marking a pivotal boundary between the Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras and the Permian and Triassic periods.

#### **Significance of the Event:**

- Over 90% of marine species and around 70% of terrestrial vertebrates vanished.
- Triggered by massive **volcanic eruptions**, **global warming**, **acid rain**, and **ocean anoxia**.
- Reshaped the evolutionary trajectory of life, eventually paving the way for the rise of **dinosaurs** and **mammals**.

This event is regarded as the **most catastrophic extinction in Earth's history**, even surpassing the later extinction that wiped out the dinosaurs.

#### Why Guryul Ravine Matters to the World:

Globally, there are only a few places where the **Permian–Triassic boundary** is so well exposed and preserved. Guryul Ravine offers:

Download Our Application





- **Exceptional geological clarity**, enabling researchers to pinpoint extinction-related events.
- A **research goldmine** for studying ancient tsunamis, climate shifts, and ecosystem collapses.
- A unique opportunity for India to **promote geotourism** and **scientific education** by conserving and showcasing this natural heritage.

#### **Current Threats to the Site:**

Despite its immense scientific value, the Guryul Ravine is under threat due to:

- Unregulated construction, quarrying, and illegal stone mining.
- Lack of protective fencing or on-site supervision by authorities.
- Encroachment and habitat degradation in surrounding conservation areas.
- Neglect in recognizing it officially as a geo-heritage or UNESCO site.

If these issues are not addressed, the **irreplaceable fossil evidence** and geological structures could be **permanently lost**.

# The Way Forward: Conservation and Recognition

To safeguard this priceless natural archive, experts recommend:

- Immediate declaration of Guryul Ravine as a National Geo-Heritage Site.
- Involvement of local communities and educational institutions in its protection.
- Establishment of a **fossil park or research center to** promote scientific tourism.
- Application for UNESCO Global Geopark status to bring international attention and funding.

#### **Conclusion: A Legacy Worth Preserving**

The **Guryul Ravine fossil site** is not just a Kashmiri or Indian treasure—it's a **global monument to Earth's ancient history**. It stands as a silent witness to one of the most critical turning points in the evolution of life. The recent warning by the GSI should serve as a call to action for conservationists, policymakers, and citizens alike. Protecting Guryul Ravine means preserving a **timeline of survival, extinction, and rebirth**—a story that belongs to all of humanity.





GS Paper 2 – Indian Constitution

3

# Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Resigns: A Historic Move Amid Health Concerns

Context: In a surprising turn of events, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar tendered his resignation on July 21, coinciding with the opening day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament. Citing health-related issues and following medical advice, Dhankhar submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu, invoking Article 67(a) of the Indian Constitution.



With this step, he becomes only the **third Vice President in India's history** to resign before completing his term—after **V. V. Giri** and **R. Venkataraman**, both of whom stepped down to contest in **presidential elections**.

# **Constitutional Framework: Resignation of the Vice President**

Under **Article 67(a)** of the Constitution, the **Vice President** has the right to **resign at any time** by submitting a written letter to the **President of India**. The resignation takes effect **immediately upon acceptance**, with no further approval needed.

Dhankhar, who assumed office in **August 2022**, resigned roughly **two years into his five-year tenure**, well ahead of the scheduled end in **2027**.

# What Happens Next? Succession and Parliamentary Functioning

The Indian Constitution does not provide for an acting Vice President. Following a resignation:

- The post **remains vacant** until a new Vice President is elected.
- Meanwhile, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, currently Harivansh Narayan Singh, will
  perform the Vice President's ex-officio role as Chairman of the Upper House.
- This arrangement ensures the Rajya Sabha continues functioning without disruption.

Timeline for Vice-Presidential Election: What the Law Says

Unlike the Presidential office, where elections must be held within six months, there is no fixed deadline for electing a new Vice President. The law mandates that the **Election Commission** conduct the election "as soon as possible" after a vacancy arises.

- The election will be held under the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952**.
- The **Secretary-General of Parliament** (on a rotational basis from either House) will serve as the **Returning Officer**.
- Once elected, the new Vice President will begin a fresh five-year term, not just the remainder of Dhankhar's term—unlike some constitutional roles where the successor serves only the remaining period.

# Who Can Contest? Eligibility Criteria for Vice President of India

As per **Article 66** of the Constitution, a candidate for the office of Vice President must:

- Be a citizen of India
- Be at least 35 years of age
- Be eligible to be elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha

Download Our Application

Google Play



Not hold any office of profit under the Government of India or any state/local authority

These criteria are designed to maintain the **integrity and impartiality** of the high office.

# **Election Mechanism: A Parliamentary Affair**

The Vice President is elected through an **electoral college** consisting solely of **members from both Houses of Parliament**, including **nominated members**.

- The election is conducted via **secret ballot** using the **proportional representation system** with a **single transferable vote**.
- Members rank candidates by preference.
- A candidate must secure a **quota** of votes—calculated by dividing total valid votes by two and adding one—to win.
- If no one meets the quota in the first round, **the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated**, and second-preference votes are redistributed. This process continues until a winner emerges.

State assemblies do **not participate** in this process, making it **distinct from the Presidential election**.

The Role of the Vice President: A Pillar of Parliamentary Democracy

The **Vice President of India** holds the second-highest constitutional office in the country. Though not part of any legislature, the Vice President plays a **vital role in parliamentary proceedings** as the **Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha**.

- Ensures discipline, order, and procedural conduct in the Upper House.
- In the event of a vacancy in the office of the President—due to resignation, death, or inability—the Vice President serves as Acting President until a new one is elected.
- Acts as a symbol of federal unity and a key constitutional figure for maintaining checks and balances in governance.

# Looking Ahead: What This Means for India

The resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar has added a new chapter to India's political and constitutional history. As the nation prepares to elect a new Vice President, the spotlight will be on **Parliament's choice**, political alignments, and potential contenders for the prestigious post.

This event also opens up a **larger conversation about health transparency, leadership transitions**, and the **functionality of constitutional offices** in modern India. The smooth process laid out by the Constitution ensures that **democratic continuity and institutional stability remain intact**, even in moments of abrupt change.





GS Paper 1 – Geography



# India Strengthens Ties with Lesotho: A Mountain Kingdom in Focus

**Context:** India is poised to enhance its **bilateral cooperation with Lesotho**, following the visit of the **Indian Minister of State for External Affairs** to the southern African nation. This visit marks a key step in deepening political, economic, and developmental ties with **Lesotho**, a country that holds strategic importance in the **Southern African region**.

# Lesotho: A Unique Landlocked Nation in Southern Africa

**Lesotho**, with its capital at **Maseru**, is a **landlocked country completely surrounded by South Africa**, making it one of only three such countries in the world. Despite its size, Lesotho stands out for its **distinct topography**, **strategic water resources**, and **stable democratic governance** in a complex regional landscape.



# Geographical Marvel: The 'Kingdom in the Sky'

Often referred to as the "Kingdom in the Sky," Lesotho is the only country in the world located entirely above 1,000 metres in elevation. Its dramatic landscape is dominated by rugged mountains and high plateaus, making it not just a scenic wonder but also a unique ecological zone in Africa.

# **Key Geographical Highlights:**

- Mountains cover over two-thirds of Lesotho's total area.
- The **highest point** is **Thabana Ntlenyana**, standing tall at **3,482 metres**, and also recognized as the **highest peak in Southern Africa**.
- Drakensberg Mountains form the eastern boundary, while the Maloti Mountains stretch across
  the north-south axis of the country.

This elevation gives Lesotho a **cooler climate** than most African nations and influences its agriculture, biodiversity, and settlement patterns.

# White Gold: Lesotho's Most Precious Natural Asset

Among Lesotho's key natural resources, water is the most valuable, often referred to as "White Gold." The country's high-altitude rivers and abundant rainfall make it a regional water hub.

- The **Lesotho Highlands Water Project** (LHWP), a collaborative initiative with South Africa, channels vast quantities of water to meet urban and industrial demands in **Gauteng province**, including **Johannesburg and Pretoria**.
- In return, Lesotho earns **revenue and electricity** from the hydro-power facilities associated with the project.

This makes Lesotho a **critical water security partner** in the region, and a potential area of collaboration with countries like India on **water management and sustainable development**.

# **India-Lesotho Relations: A Partnership with Potential**

India and Lesotho share warm diplomatic relations, with India offering support in areas such as **healthcare**, **education**, **capacity building**, **and IT infrastructure**. The visit by India's Minister of State underscores:

Growing South-South Cooperation

Get IT ON Google Play

**Download Our Application** 



- India's commitment to Africa's development agenda
- Potential for collaboration in solar energy, digital connectivity, skills training, and agricultural innovation

India also provides **scholarships and technical training** to students and professionals from Lesotho under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** program.

#### **Conclusion: Mountainous Yet Connected**

**Lesotho**, with its towering landscapes and flowing rivers, offers not just natural beauty but **geostrategic** and developmental significance. As India looks to build stronger ties with African nations, Lesotho stands out as a **partner in progress**, where diplomacy meets elevation—literally and figuratively. This renewed engagement paves the way for **mutual growth**, **sustainability**, **and regional stability** in the years to come.





GS Paper 3 - Economy

5

# India's Coal Sector on the Path to Sustainability and Self-Reliance

**Context:** India, home to the **world's fifth-largest coal reserves**, relies on coal to meet nearly **55% of its energy demands**. As the nation moves toward **cleaner energy and economic resilience**, the government has laid out a **comprehensive strategy** to make the coal sector more **sustainable**, **competitive**, and **environmentally compliant**, while also aiming to **reduce dependence on coal imports**.



# **Sustainability-Driven Transformation in Coal Mining:**

To align with **environmental goals** and global climate commitments, India is pushing for a **green overhaul** of its coal sector through several forward-looking initiatives:

# **Eco-Restoration and Green Credits:**

- Afforestation of mined-out areas is being actively pursued under bio-reclamation efforts.
- Coal and lignite PSUs are participating in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Green Credit Programme, incentivizing ecological restoration.

#### Sustainable Use of Mine Water:

• Treated mine water is being reused for community irrigation, industrial needs (such as dust suppression and firefighting), and ecological services like aquifer recharge and fish farming.

#### **Utilizing Overburden for Sand Extraction:**

 Sand derived from overburden waste material is being repurposed for construction activities and stowing operations, reducing pressure on river sand ecosystems and promoting circular mining practices.

### **Adoption of Blast-Free Technologies:**

 Modern technologies such as Surface Miners, Continuous Miners, and Rippers are replacing traditional blasting and drilling methods, resulting in lower emissions, noise pollution, and enhanced worker safety.

#### **Clean Coal and Renewable Integration:**

- Strategic focus is on **Coal Gasification**, **Coal-to-Liquid (CTL)**, and **Coal Bed Methane (CBM)** to **minimize carbon output** and **create cleaner alternatives**.
- These efforts complement India's **commitment to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030**.

#### **Moving Towards Import Independence:**

To cut down reliance on **imported coal**, especially for **power and steel production**, the government is implementing multiple strategies:

#### **Boosting Domestic Production:**

- Accelerated allocation of coal blocks and enhanced private sector participation are driving local production.
- A dedicated Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) was formed to streamline efforts for coal import substitution.

**Download Our Application** 



Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam



# **Upgrading Supply Chain Infrastructure:**

New railway corridors, modernized coal transport systems, and First Mile Connectivity (FMC) projects are improving the coal evacuation process from mines to consumers, reducing logistical delays and transport emissions.

# **Financial Reforms Under SHAKTI Policy:**

Under the SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyla Transparently in India) policy, import-based coal power plants can now procure domestic coal more easily, ensuring energy **security** without added foreign dependence.

# **Coking Coal Mission for Steel Industry:**

India has launched a dedicated **Coking Coal Mission** to ramp up the **domestic supply of coking coal**, a crucial raw material in steel production, reducing import bills and strengthening the Make in India initiative.

# **Conclusion: Balancing Growth with Green Responsibility**

India's coal sector is undergoing a paradigm shift—from being a carbon-intensive industry to a technologically upgraded and environmentally conscious sector. With a strong emphasis on sustainability, domestic capacity building, and resource efficiency, the sector is being prepared to meet both the energy demands of a growing economy and the climate goals of a responsible global player.







GS Paper 1 – Indian Society & Culture

# Hatti Tribe: Preserving Heritage and Traditions in the Himalayan Foothills

**Context:** In a recent social event that drew significant public attention, two brothers from the Hatti tribe in Himachal Pradesh married the same woman—reviving the centuriesold tradition of polyandry, a practice still found in some isolated tribal pockets. **Hundreds gathered** to witness the rare union, spotlighting the tribe's unique cultural identity.



# Who Are the Hatti? A Community Rooted in 'Haats'

The **Hatti tribe** derives its name from "haats" — traditional village markets where they sold home-grown crops, vegetables, livestock, and wool. This trade-centric lifestyle shaped their tight-knit social structure and distinctive **community identity** over generations.

- Traditional Attire: Hatti men are easily recognized by their distinctive white headgear, worn proudly during festivals, weddings, and community gatherings.
- Geographic Spread: They inhabit the Himachal-Uttarakhand border, particularly along the Giri and Tons river basins, both important tributaries of the Yamuna River.

# Two Regions, One Culture: Hatti Clans Across States

The Hatti community is primarily split into **two major regional groups**:

- 1. Trans-Giri Region Located in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh
- 2. **Jaunsar-Bawar Region** Situated in **Uttarakhand**

Despite residing in two different states, both groups share similar customs, rituals, and dialects. Intermarriages are common, and community bonds remain strong across state lines.

The community is governed by a traditional tribal council called 'Khumbli', which handles local **disputes, marriage approvals**, and **social matters**—much like a customary judiciary.

#### Life and Livelihood: Agriculture as a Way of Life

The Hatti people primarily depend on agriculture, with their climate favoring cash crop cultivation such as **ginger**, **fruits**, **pulses**, **and millets**. Farming is often **subsistence-based**, though market trading remains a vital economic activity.

- The community still practices barter exchange in remote areas, reflecting their semi-traditional economy.
- Some Hatti families are also involved in **seasonal migration** for labor in towns and cities.

#### **Population and Political Recognition:**

- As per the **2011 Census**, the Hatti community numbered around **2.5 lakh**.
- Current estimates place their population at approximately 3 lakh.

#### In a historic development:

In 2023, the Hatti community of Himachal Pradesh was granted Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. fulfilling a long-standing demand and promising greater access to educational, political, and economic opportunities.

**Download Our Application** -





The **Jaunsar-Bawar region in Uttarakhand** had already received **tribal recognition back in 1967**.

This ST status opens doors to affirmative action benefits, preservation of traditional practices, and increased representation in policymaking.

Conclusion: A Tradition-Rich Community at the Crossroads of Change

The **Hatti tribe** is a striking example of a community that has **retained its deep-rooted traditions**, while slowly adapting to the modern socio-political landscape. From ancestral customs like polyandry to **newfound constitutional recognition**, the Hattis stand at the **intersection of heritage and progress**.

