Defence & Security · GS - III

Examine the challenges in controlling illicit opium cultivation in Afghanistan. Discuss the role of alternative livelihoods and international cooperation in addressing the problem.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
DAILY PRACTICE 29/10/2026	GS - III	Defence & Security

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

Illicit drug cultivation; rural poverty; Taliban restrictions; alternative livelihoods; international cooperation; regional security

Model Answer

Introduction

Afghanistan has historically been a major centre of illicit opium cultivation. According to the report described in the article, cultivation increased in 2026 despite restrictions imposed by the Taliban government.

Challenges in Controlling Cultivation

Economic dependence: Impoverished farmers may rely on opium as a source of income where legal alternatives offer lower returns or uncertain markets.

Enforcement limitations: Restrictions can reduce cultivation, but sustained control is difficult without effective monitoring, livelihood support and reliable local institutions.

Regional security: Illicit drug production and trafficking can strengthen criminal networks, contribute to corruption and create cross-border security challenges.

Role of Alternative Livelihoods

International assistance should support viable crops, irrigation, rural infrastructure, agricultural credit and market access. Transition programmes must provide predictable incomes and consider local conditions. Abrupt restrictions without economic support can deepen rural poverty.

International Cooperation

UNODC and other international partners can support monitoring, technical assistance and evidence-based drug-control strategies. Regional cooperation is necessary to disrupt trafficking networks and improve border management.

Conclusion

Sustainable drug control requires more than prohibition. Combining enforcement with alternative livelihoods, rural development and international cooperation offers a more durable approach to reducing illicit cultivation and its associated security risks.

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