

UN fears Kabul strikes may spur drugs trade

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 28. — The United Nations fears that the removal of Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia will have a negative effect on efforts to check narcotics trafficking, as stringent controls will break down in the prevalent uncertain political situation. According to reports from the UN Drug Control Programme, the Taliban regime had actively cooperated to control the growth of opium and production of heroin, and their removal will see a rise in opium production.

The strictly Islamic Taliban forbade the cultivation of opium poppies through a decree passed in mid-2000, resulting in a fall in output, the UNDCP said.

Diplomatic observers have, however, widely held a contrary view, suggesting that the conversion of opium into heroin and the trafficking of narcotics was a key element of the Taliban's economic policy. Poppy cultivation also thrives in large parts of the limited area of Afghanistan held by the Northern Alliance. It is then converted into heroin and smuggled out

through Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Iran, ultimately finding its way across Europe and the USA.

The poppy crop is sown around mid-October and is ready for harvest around mid-April. Reports out of Afghanistan indicate that sowing is on despite the devastating aerial assault mounted by the USA.

Severely constrained for funds, the Taliban, far from enforcing the earlier ban on cultivation, will encourage cultivation and trafficking, in exchange for much needed weapons.

The clandestine international net-

work of funding for terrorist outfits would serve as the ideal conduit for this traffic.

Afghanistan had been the world's largest producer of opium for several years till the current Taliban regime had cracked down on the trade, branding it un-Islamic.

For the finance ministry's Narcotics Control Bureau, created in 1986 as the nodal agency to combat drug trafficking in India, increased smuggling out of Afghanistan is bad news.

A key ingredient of India's narcotics problem is its geographical location, at

the centre of two major opiate producing regions of south-west (the "Golden Crescent" — Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran) and south-east Asia (the "Golden Triangle" — Myanmar, Laos and Thailand), making India both a destination and a transit route for opiates produced in these regions.

The NCB, according to officials, has tightened its law enforcement measures to control the threatened additional influx, already leading to seizures of 445 tonne of heroin and 1,389 tonne of hashish in the first four months of this fiscal.

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Drug Traffickers

THE STATESMAN

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A favoured destination for drug traffickers

By Sandeep Joshi

NEW DELHI, JULY 1. For international drug traffickers, Delhi has become the main centre of the new-found "Sri Lankan route". And if Narcotics Control Bureau officials are to be believed, the capital has gained the status of "favoured destination" both for making deals and smuggling to global markets.

Earlier Mumbai used to be the hub for illegal transactions by cartels. But now, the political capital has "outsmarted" the commercial capital as far as illegal drug trade is concerned. Even a United Nations report published in 2000 says that "Delhi has emerged as a major drug trafficking route."

"The capital is being used as the major transit city mainly for re-export. And the new route that

has emerged is through Mumbai, Mangalore, Bangalore to Tamil Nadu's coastal areas from where drugs are smuggled to Sri Lanka," said the NCB's Deputy Director General, Mr. A.P.Kala.

"In recent years, Colombo has emerged as a big maritime centre with massive shipping activities. Thus it has become a major hub from where illegal drugs are being circulated in East Asia and other parts," Mr. Kala said.

On the LTTE connections, Mr. Kala said there had been reports of its cadres indulging in drug trafficking, but it was yet to be established as far as the "Sri Lankan route" connection was concerned. But one thing was sure, illegal drugs going to Sri Lanka was not for consumption but for further trading.

Another major development

had been Bangalore becoming a "staging point" from where drug traffickers "coordinates" between Delhi and southern destinations with Tuticorin being another key centre.

Over the years, there has been reports of organised international narco-terrorist gangs operating in the capital. Seizures of illegal drugs have also been reported. "Though Delhi is not an opium-producing state, there is a large-scale movement of heroin in and out of the city, both home-grown and of foreign origin," he said.

"India is located between two major opium-producing areas — the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle. Due to its strategic location, it has been used as a conduit to transport drugs to Europe and North America. Trafficking occurs through the

Indo-Pakistan, Indo-Myanmar, Indo-Nepal and Indo-Sri Lankan sectors," said a recent UN-sponsored study.

"Delhi is geographically suitably located for organising this trade. Heroin forms the major portion of the illegal drug which is smuggled from neighbouring Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh," he said. Heroin of foreign origin (Pakistan and Afghanistan) also passes for onward transmission.

The study reveals that two varieties of heroin reach Delhi — the white powder (high potency) from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar — and the brown variety which is produced in the States adjoining Delhi where opium is cultivated.

Police dragnet throws up flourishing N-E drug route

HT Correspondent
Imphal, May 26

DRUG SMUGGLING FLOURISHES on the National Highway 39 connecting Silchar in south Assam and Imphal. This came to the notice of the Manipur police following the arrest of two drug smugglers recently at Imphal.

Md Chibu Khan and Md Abdul Moti—two drug smugglers trapped in the dragnets along with several strips of banned items being used by the drug addicts in Manipur as substitute when there is dearth of heroin told police that they had started the shady business long back.

The smugglers acquired Spasmo Proxivon tablets, strips of Diazepam, bottles of Codi-Cough, Tricodine at the cheaper rates from their counterparts in Silchar, commercial hub of south Assam.

These drugs are not allowed to be sold in Manipur without the prescription of certified doctors and are issued to patients having sleeping disorder, police told the *Hindustan Times* on Saturday.

The two inter-state smuggling kingpins are the residents of Golapati, Imphal. Smugglers

from Manipur have carried out this shady business with their counterparts from Silchar from where these goods were bought at the cheap price and sold at Imphal at the much higher rate.

Around 72 strips of Spasmo Proxivon tablets better known as 'SP' in Manipur and strips of Nitrosun tablets were recovered from a grocery shop run by Chibu Khan.

The Narcotics sleuths, after interrogating the arrested youth, later raided the residence of Abdul Moti and seized 144 strips of Spasmo Proxivon, ten strips of Diazepam, two bottles each of Codi-Cough and Tricodine, three bottles of Codex and one syringe and one fake motor cycle RC book.

Moti confessed that he acquired the Spasmo Proxivon tablets from Silchar for Rs 330 per box. Then he sold it to Chibu Khan for Rs 420 per box. Chibu Khan again sold them to other customers for Rs 450 per box.

However, one strip of the tablet that actually costs around Rs 11 is being sold for Rs 50 per strip to the users.

Police further said busting of

this shady business is the tip of the iceberg as there are several smugglers persistently indulging in this business.

Dr O Sanahanbi, medical officer of the District Drug De-addiction Centre, Imphal revealed that Spasmo Proxivon, popularly known as SP in the State, is used as a prescribed substitute for heroin by heroin addict, had itself become addictive putting the lives of these addicts in serious danger. Substitution therapy basically failed because Spasmo Proxivon is also narcotics based. She said, she stopped encouraging the "substitution therapy" and now recommends the "antagonist therapy".

Sanahanbi said an addict can successfully substitute heroin No 4 with SP because its intoxicification effects are basically the same.

Since this substitute is milder to get the right level of the kick, addicts use large doses of the drug than required for treatment, heightening the danger also contained the active ingredient present in heroin, dextro propoxyphene, a derivative of morphine.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 MAY 2000

Canadian police arrest two Indians in drug trafficking case

By Our Crime Reporter

MUMBAI: In a major global operation against a multi-billion-dollar Canadian drug cartel, raids were conducted by the Canadian police in seven countries simultaneously on Wednesday evening. In Mumbai, the Canadian police, along with the city crime branch and the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), arrested two persons who were believed to be the prime conspirators in the cartel.

Those arrested are Mohammed Jusab alias Shahnawaz, who is the director of Memon Co-operative Bank in Nagpada, and Cyrus Cooper, an associate of the London-based alleged narco-trafficker Iqbal Mirchi. Shahnawaz and Cooper were residents of Nagpada and Cusrow Baug, Colaba, respectively. The duo is likely to be extradited to Canada

for trial in the next few days.

Addressing a press conference on Thursday, Michel Roussy, chief investigator from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, said, "The duo had a major role in large-scale international hashish trafficking and money laundering. The hashish was smuggled from Pakistan to Canada. Countries like



Canadian police officer Michel Roussy (right) addresses the press in Mumbai on Thursday as joint police commissioner Bhujangrao Mohite looks on.

the UAE, France, Portugal and South Africa were used as transit points. While the narcotics did not reach India, this country was used as a meeting place to discuss the operations and plan the logistics."

Named 'Operation Chevalin', the Canadian police, along with the crime branch team and NCB officials, nabbed the two persons in Mumbai on Wednesday evening. At about the same time, other teams from the Canadian police arrested 20 persons in simultaneous raids in the UK, Canada, France, Portugal, the UAE and South Africa.

The arrested persons will be tried in Canada under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of Canada, which is analogous to the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act in India. India has an extradition treaty with Canada.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 MAY 2001

'USA concerned over North-east drug smuggling'

TAPAS RAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, May 17. - With heroin staging a comeback in USA, Washington views the drug smuggling across the Indo-Myanmar border as a threat both to itself and India, senior US narcotics control officials told the Statesman today.

The officials, including the consul, Ms Michelle Esperdy, the US state department's coordinator of regional crime and narcotics affairs, Ms Sabra Thornton, and Mr Robert Barnes, US drug enforcement agency's country attaché, handed hardware worth over \$70,000 to the Mizoram excise commissioner, Mr Lalbiakmawia

185
Kiangte, to fight cross-border drug smuggling.

This is part of a \$200,000 package being provided under an Indo-US anti-drug cooperation agreement signed last September.

It includes six Maruti Gypsies, six Yamaha motorcycles, four digital cameras, four computers with modems and printers, and equipment for upgrading the state's VHF radio network.

Mizoram is the first state to receive such assistance. A seminar was held recently in Aizawl to train the state's personnel in law enforcement and anti-narcotics work.

The officials said more equipment and training might be provided later.

The process was initiated when the US Ambassador, Mr Richard Celeste, had visited Mizoram in December 1999.

A Manipur government official was also present. Manipur has a long border with Myanmar, and smuggling is said to be taking place across it too.

The officials said there had been no major seizures of heroin or methamphetamine bound for the US market via India, but this did not mean such shipments were not taking place. "How well these things are documented is the question." Furthermore, though no large shipments had been detected, small ones had been found.

"India is strategically located between Afghanistan, the largest pro-

ducer of heroin in the world, and Myanmar, the second largest producer of heroin, and also one of the largest producers of methamphetamine," one official said. India itself is the world's largest producer of legitimate opium, of which an unknown part is diverted into the production of narcotics. This part is smuggled into Myanmar, even as heroin comes from Myanmar into India.

"Statistically there have been more seizures on the Myanmar side of the border than in Mizoram, which means the Myanmar side probably have been doing a better job," one of them said. Cooperation with India in the field of narcotics started in 1999 with an attempt to stop diversion of opium away

from legitimate uses. The resources, however, is less than what is committed to Central and South America. The USA's major source of cocaine. The country has provided \$1.3 billion to Colombia, for instance. They, however, added that Washington would provide more funds if the concerned states came up with concrete proposals like Mizoram. One official, who was earlier posted in Thailand, said India seems to be following Thailand. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, that country had been playing down the threat from HIV and drugs. Now, however, a national emergency has been declared and the armed forces have been pressed into service on the border.

THE STATESMAN

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US loses seat on UN narcotics board

EVELYN LEOPOLD (11)
UNITED NATIONS, MAY 8

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In a second embarrassing blow to Washington at the United Nations, the United States was voted off the International Narcotics Control Board, which the State Department on Monday called regrettable.

The vote by secret ballot, not announced at the time, occurred last Thursday in the UN Economic and Social Council. The body's 54 members on the same day threw the United States off the UN Commission for Human Rights, the top UN rights group, based in Geneva.

One western envoy speculated that the US lost both back-to-back votes for the same reason. Europeans, who pay their bills to the

world body on time, voted and campaigned for their EU colleagues, with France, Austria and the Netherlands edging out the US candidate, Herbert Okun.

Peru, India, Brazil and Iran also won seats.

Okun had been a respected member for 10 years on the board, which monitors compliance with UN treaties on substance abuse and drug trafficking.

A former ambassador to the now-defunct East Germany and a deputy ambassador at the United Nations, Okun, 70, assisted former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in trying to devise a UN peace formula for Bosnia in the early 1990s.

He then moved to other diplomatic ventures for the United Nations related to the Balkans.

Expressing his regrets at

Okun's loss, US State Department spokesman Richard Boucher, said, "Well, there's something happening out there. I'm not sure. I want to give too much meat to the various arguments that have been advanced for what it is."

But he said "I think it's fair to speculate there may be issues related to how we handled ourselves, to how we pushed very hard for human rights."

The board monitors and enforces three treaties: One in 1961 on narcotics control, a second in 1971 on psychotropic and synthetic substances and a third one adopted in 1988 on drug trafficking and money laundering. It also reports on the status of legal drugs.

For example, Okun, in presenting the board's report at a New York news conference in February,

warned that legal drugs like Viagra, steroids and diet pills were being consumed in worrying excess in rich countries, such as the United States.

The most common speculation at the US loss among UN diplomats was lack of lobbying. Frequently delegates do not check with their home governments before casting a vote.

Envoys said James Cunningham, the US chief of mission, could only do so much, in light of vacancies throughout the American delegation after Clinton appointees had left.

The Bush administration two months ago had announced the appointment of veteran diplomat John Negroponte as UN ambassador but has yet to send his name to Congress. — Reuters

INDIAN EXPRESS

- 9 MAY 2001

Afghan druglords launch 'chemical warfare' across border

By Rajesh Ramachandran
 The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: A disturbing trend seems to be emerging on the Indian narcotics scene. A vital chemical needed to convert opium into heroin is systematically being smuggled out of the country and sold to druglords in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Although investigations are still to be completed, it is suspected that policemen, politicians, truckers and enterprises might be involved in the racket.

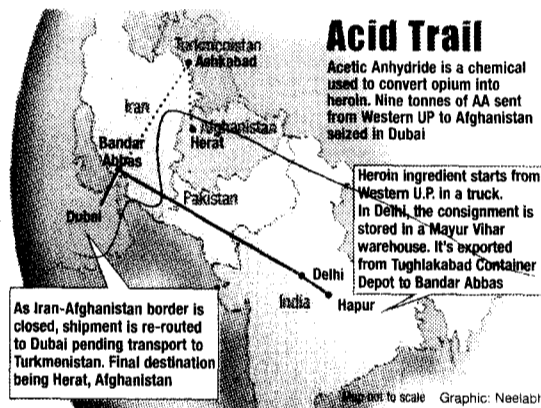
In December 2000, a few dye-making units in Surat were raided by the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), which apparently found 26 tonnes of the multi-purpose chemical, acetic anhydride (AA), unaccounted for. The missing amount was enough to manufacture ten tonnes of heroin.

Earlier, another agency, the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), had busted an illegal mandrax laboratory in Mumbai. AA is required in the manufacture of mandrax as well. During the investigation, the NCB stumbled upon one Hiren Sanghvi, who provided information about a godown on the outskirts of Ahmedabad. Two days

later, the NCB seized 7.05 tonnes of AA from the godown.

In another case, the Dubai authorities on January 11, 1999, seized nine tonnes of Indian AA which was on its way to Afghanistan.

According to NCB officials, the smuggling is driven by pure greed. AA, a mundane ingredient used by pharmaceutical, textile, dying and chemical industries, fetches Rs 35 to Rs 40 a litre in the Indian mar-



ket. In Pakistan, a litre sells for about Rs 1,500 to Rs 2,000, while the price is even higher in Afghanistan. Every kilogram of heroin requires 2.5 litres of AA and 10 kg of opium.

Nine Indian companies annually produce roughly 45,000 tonnes of AA, a "controlled substance". Because of its use in the drug trade, manufacturers are required to seal all the trucks leaving their factories.

Huge drug hauls cause concern

Drug traffic

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 20. Though the smuggling and abuse of stimulants and synthetic drugs in India is relatively recent, the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) has warned of a new trafficking route being carved out along the border with Myanmar in the most vulnerable areas of Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.

The India-Myanmar border could become a major illicit drug producing area, the INCB said in its annual report, released by Ms. Renate Ehmer, UNDCP regional representative, here today. The two countries were concerned at the large seizures of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine along their border.

The INCB appealed to the authorities in India and Myanmar to strengthen cooperation to counter the "disturbing new developments". Field officers had been appointed to maintain regular contact with each other and facilitate exchange of intelligence on drug trafficking.

The total amount of ephedrine seized in the two countries increased from less than 1,000 kg in 1998 to nearly 7,000 kg in 1999. Within the past year, Indian authorities reported several seizures of methamphetamine at the bor-

der of Myanmar. The smuggled amphetamine-type stimulants are destined for large Indian cities and, to a lesser extent, illicit markets in Europe. There are also links between groups manufacturing stimulants in Myanmar and the Netherlands.

Increase in drug abuse

"The abuse of illicitly manufactured narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, in particular, codeine-based cough syrups and benzodiazepines, appears to have increased in Bangladesh, India and Nepal. The main reason for that increase seems to have been the lack of uniformity in monitoring and compliance with prescription requirements. The growing abuse of pharmaceuticals has contributed significantly to the spread of polydrug abuse in South Asia," the report said.

Sounding a note of caution on drug trafficking groups expanding their network in South Asia, the report said illicit activities of organised criminal groups had become varied, involving cross-border smuggling of drugs, counterfeit money and arms, ammunition and explosives. "Traffickers are exploiting weaknesses of law enforcement systems caused by corruption, lack of concern over drug-related matters and lack of human and technical re-

sources." Seizures of heroin in South Asia showed that Afghanistan and Myanmar were the major sources not only of the heroin smuggled through the region, but also of the heroin destined for Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

"Some consignments of heroin are making their way from the border of Myanmar into the north-eastern States of India, in particular through Moreh, Champai, and Mokochung. In India, the heroin prices at the border with Myanmar are low compared with the prices in other parts," it said.

Threat to region

Expressing concern over the continuing production of opium in Afghanistan, the INCB said the resulting smuggling of opiates and related criminal activities in West Asia as a whole might undermine the economic and social stability and jeopardise peace and security in the region. One positive development, it noted, was the decree issued by the Taliban in July last year, banning poppy cultivation.

Heroin processing had virtually disappeared in Pakistan though the goal of a zero-poppy harvest last year was not achieved, mainly because of the re-emergence of poppy cultivation in the Khyber Agency in 1998.

Ministers on the fast track

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ANTI-DRUG TREATY WITH CROATIA

NEW DELHI, Jan. 16. — The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, has — perhaps inadvertently — many records to his credit. The shortest tenure in office for a Prime Minister, and the longest tenure in office for a non-Congress Prime Minister.

And he almost presided over the shortest Cabinet meeting in history today. But not quite.

That dubious record remains for Mrs Indira Gandhi, who chaired a meeting for all of two minutes to get the Cabinet to agree to the declaration of emergency on 25 June 1975.

Mr Vajpayee's Cabinet met for 20 minutes today, in what was perhaps the shortest meeting since that historic occasion more than 25 years ago, the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, smilingly said in his post-meeting briefing. The agenda for today's meeting was perhaps as nondescript as the other was momentous.

A total of eight proposals were cleared, but some of them were ex post-facto agreements, entailing a mere nod and no discussion, which was why a lengthy sitting wasn't required. That was the official explanation.

A Cabinet meeting normally lasts around an hour at least, and

NEW DELHI, Jan. 16. — The Union Cabinet today approved the signing of the agreement on combating international illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances with the Republic of Croatia.

Briefing the media, the Parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said that this will facilitate both the countries in combating international terrorism and also illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs.

The agreement, Mr Mahajan said, will also strengthen cooperation in information exchange in forensic sciences, border and passport control systems.

The minister said that such agreements were also signed with Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, Egypt, Oman, China and Italy.

The Cabinet also approved the establishment of an Institute of Bio-resources and Sustainable Development at Imphal in Manipur so as to exploit the genetic treasure house of plant, animal and microbial resources in the North-east. Manipur has been chosen for the setting up of the institute as the North-east forms a distinctive part of the Indo-Burma hot spot and ranks sixth among the 25 bio-diversity hot spots of the world, home to 13,500 plant species. The IBSD, an autonomous institute of the department of biotechnology, will be set up at an estimated cost of Rs 14.56 crore over a period of five years, Mr Mahajan said.

He also said the tenure of the national statistical commission, which is looking into the deficiencies of the existing statistical system, has been extended by a period of six months till 18 July. — SNS

can, of course, go on indefinitely, when divergent views and interests are up for discussion. That is when briefing schedules go all awry and frantic phone calls keep deadlines at bay.

The Cabinet did, for the record, meet today and clear two agreements with Algeria;

for avoidance of double taxation and prevention of fiscal evasion on taxes on income and capital, and for phytosanitary quarantine and vegetation protection; and one with Croatia on combating international illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.

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