

What druglords get high on: CBMs

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THERE IS a flip side to everything - even peace. Drug trafficking across the western border has increased dramatically ever since India and Pakistan pulled back troops in 2002 and went on to smoke the peace pipe.

The confidence building measures (CBM) that followed saw nearly 1.7 lakh people from both side, travel across the border by bus, train and air this year.

Officials say drug traffickers too were sharing the peace dividend, pushing larger quantities of drugs into India. Seizures of drugs like heroin, which have been tracked to Pakistan, have shot up from 50 kg to nearly 300 kg in three to four years. Deputy Director, Narcotics Control Bureau Om Prakash says it is estimated that seizures account for one-tenth of the actual availability.

"The CBMs adopted by India and Pakistan have led to movement of more people across the border," says Gary Lewis, South Asia repre-

sentative of UN Office on Drugs and Crime. "So did the drugs."

There obviously are not as many security personnel guarding the border today, as a few years ago when relations between the two countries were at its worst, says a NCB official. The 12-foot-high fence along the border is hardly a deterrent since one has to just lob the drug packets across the fence at pre-determined places, to be picked by the Indian contact.

Most of these packets are aimed at the domestic market. India has two million opiate consumers, a quarter of them addicts. Consignments of heroin that use India as a transit are usually smuggled via the air route.

Lewis sees a link between the increased supply through the border around Gurudaspur, Amritsar and Ferozpur and reports of a rise in drug consumption in Punjab. "It is inevitable," he says adding supply creates its own demand, which explains increased drug use in almost all countries around Afghanistan and Punjab.