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INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE AND TRAFFICKING

Northeast: UN tells a grim story

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THE WORLD is winning the war on drugs — but the trend could easily back. A United Nations report on “trafficking and abuse” said the “positives” could be offset by the “economic meltdown and lack of territorial control in central Asian countries”.

“Worldwide efforts to reduce the threat posed by illicit drugs have effectively reversed a quarter-century-long rise in substance abuse that, if left unchecked, could have become a global pandemic,” head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Antonio Maria Costa said on Monday after the publication of the 2006 World Drug Report by his agency in Vienna.

Painting a grim picture of the scenario in India — especially in the Northeast — the UNODC report said trafficking was rampant along the Indo-Myanmar border in Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram. Officials said illicit cultivation of opium and cannabis, heroin and amphetamine smuggling, trafficking of banned pharmaceutical drugs, codeine-laced cough syrups and painkillers from other parts of the country to the region and outside were the major “concerns”.

Outlining the nature of trafficking and the trails, the report said a purer form of heroin (locally known as “Number Four”), enters India from Myanmar through Manipur. Smugglers generally use the National Highway 39 to ferry “consignments” to the rest of the region and beyond.

Trafficking throws yet another problem to the center stage—the HIV/AIDS situation in the region. Officials feel that any discussion and preventive measures on drug use in the region should also take the problem into account. Two of the six high HIV-positive prevalence states—Manipur and Nagaland — now feature what epidemiologists call a “generalized epidemic” with a strong “injecting drug users-link”. The disease is spreading in Mizoram as well.

Presenting the UNODC report for the Northeast on the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, Nagaland Governor Shyamal Datta on Monday urged a comprehensive strategy to deal with the challenge. He advocated a “private-public” rehabilitation model as the National AIDS Control Organisation policy was not “sufficient” considering the grim situation on Ground Zero. **AFP**

Blue haze on drug alley

The narco-battle is a crossroad. A UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report for 2006 says the “menace has been contained”. But the situation could slide in the absence of proper “monitoring”

Success

In 2005, the Golden Triangle— Myanmar Thailand and Laos — recorded a sharp fall in heroin, morphine and opium production.

Catch

For the first time since 2001, Afghanistan, the world’s main producer of opium, poppy cultivation showed a decline. But officials warned that it could go up again.

Reasons

- Poverty, lack of security and inadequate control over territory
- Cannabis, or marijuana, used has seen a steady rise in consumption over the past decade and is still spiralling.
- Of the 200 million users or five per cent of the world’s population (aged 15-64), 162 million use cannabis, cite figures for 2004.



Indian story

- The situation is grim. Surveys by NGOs and the government put the number of users in Nagaland alone between 40,000 and 50,000.
- The state spent around Rs 180 crore annually on treatment and rehab.
- The UN report says the Indo-Myanmar border is the trafficking hub.

“It is a social issue and everyone of us should understand and foresee the economic cost of it in the days to come when we have limited resources for development”

— Shyamal Datta
Nagaland Governor