

Editorial

Monday, August 26, 2019

Manipur on a high: the unacknowledged drug menace

Manipur police recorded the biggest haul of banned narcotic drugs in the North east region with the seizure of 40 lakh tablets of contraband WY (World is Yours), worth Rs 400 crore in the international market at the inter-village road (IVR) at Phoudei Keirembi Mathak Leikai under Thoubal District assisted by local youth clubs and women welfare associations in the locality. The dubious distinction is nothing new or unexpected, and if the past is any indication, many more and bigger hauls are yet to be expected. This is an alarming indication of the volume of banned psychotropic drugs which is coming through the state.

While the society is immersed in the never-ending political tangles and one-upmanship resulting from a conflict of interests between the state and self of those who are elected to represent the aspirations of the people, the deadly but silent menace of drug abuse is rapidly spreading its tentacles in the state, and despite numerous and increasingly larger hauls on record, the state authorities are evidently unable to make much headway into stemming the flow of the drugs into Manipur.

The task, however, is easier said than done. According to a report by United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Myanmar is the world's second-largest opium poppy grower, beaten only by Afghanistan. Shan State remains the center of Myanmar's opium activities, accounting for 92 per cent of opium poppy cultivation, with the remainder located mainly in Kachin State. In 2013, it was estimated that 57,814 hectares were under opium poppy cultivation, a significant increase of 13 % compared to 2012. Despite eradication efforts, higher yields combined with a rise in cultivation saw Myanmar opium production increase 26 % in 2013 to an estimated 870 tonnes - the highest since assessments by UNODC and the Myanmar Government began in 2002.

With a neighbor as notorious and uncooperative as Myanmar, the task is cut out not only for the state authorities fighting the drug menace, but even the national agency the Narcotics Control Bureau set up to endeavour to bring about prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drugs injurious to health have not been able to make any significant breakthrough given the fact that another mammoth challenge owing to the proximity to the largest producers of heroin and hashish in the world-the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent (Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran) - has made India's borders vulnerable to drug trafficking. Indigenous production of low grade heroin as well as various psychotropic and prescription drugs and their growing demand in the neighbouring countries and international market have added a new dimension to the problem of drug trafficking.

Evidently, the biggest hurdle to controlling the drug menace has been established to be the nexus between drug traffickers, organised criminal networks, corrupt public figures and politicians and terrorists which has created a force powerful enough to cause instability in the country. Money generated through drug trade has been used to fund various insurgent and terrorist movements. For instance, it has been estimated that money generated from the illegal sale of narcotics accounted for 15 per cent of the finances of militant groups in Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, Sikh militant groups in Punjab and Northeast insurgent groups like the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muiyah) NSCN (IM) are known to channelise drugs into India to finance their operations as mentioned in a report of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA). The study continues that 70 per cent of the drugs are transported over land makes the land borders corridors, through which drugs are trafficked into the country. Their vulnerability can be assessed by the fact that 70 per cent of the heroin and 40 per cent of opium that are being trafficked are seized from states along the borders. Easy availability of drugs in the border areas makes their abuse rampant among the local populace as is evident from drug consumption trends and patterns in Manipur, Mizoram, Punjab and Rajasthan.

The pertinent questions right now: what happened to the seized drugs which should have run into tons by now? What about the so-called big boss/es running the drug cartel in the state: has the state authority been able to unearth any significant information and intelligence regarding the identity and operation of any of them? If so, has any practical and sustainable plan of action been laid out in this regard?

Shooting the messenger will have no impact on the people who are really in control of the trafficking and dealing. It is also questionable as to how huge shipments of drugs have repeatedly been able to get past the seemingly thorough and time consuming frisking carried out with ardour by the security forces in various places along the highway to and from the border. The fight against drug calls for unconventional and innovative means as the dangers posed by drugs transcends religion, borders or social strata. Only a determined, honest and concerted effort following a sustainable and broad-based plan of action will stand any chance of achieving success. The cooperation and support of CSOs, NGOs and local bodies will make the difference between success and failure.

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Gen Bipin Rawat visits Eastern Command HQ

IT News
Imphal Aug 26,

The Chief of Army Staff (COAS), General Bipin Rawat visited the Headquarters Eastern Command Kolkata on 24-25 August 2019.

On 24 August the COAS was briefed by Lt Gen MM Naravane, GOC-in-C Eastern Command on the operational readiness of the formations in Eastern Command theatre. The COAS also visited the Palliative Care Centre 'Spars' in Barrackpore Cantonment which was established on 04 Apr 2019 to provide succour to terminally ill patients and their families who are beyond active medical treatment and suffering from cancer, neurological disorders and other critical ailments. He also visited the solar lighting project in the cantonment and hailed this novel green initiative. The COAS appreciated the high



standards of operational readiness of the Eastern Command and also expressed his utmost confidence over the capability of the formations of the Eastern Command theatre. The COAS during his visit also

interacted with officers & soldiers and praised them for their professionalism and exhorted the troops to continue to work with zeal and dedication to overcome all challenges in the future.

One Day Legal Literacy & Awareness Programme held



IT News
Thoubal, Aug 26

District Legal Services Authority Imphal East on Sunday organized a One Day Legal Literacy and Awareness Programme at Andro Louphaooum Youth Welfare Club Ground in Imphal East. Chief Judicial Magistrate Imphal East Ningthoujam Lanleima and Khullakpa (Village Chief) of Sana Pokpa Pana Loisang Chingakham Gandhar Meitei graced the program as the Chief Guest and Functional President respectively. While Advocate Meihoubam Rakesh, Director Human Rights

Law Network Manipur, Thiyam Rajkeshwor Chairperson of Child Welfare Committee Imphal District and Advocate Thokchom Premila Devi Assistant Director Human Rights Law Network Manipur attended as Resource persons. During the programme, issues like "Welfare Scheme of the Government", "Crime Against Children" and "Crime Against Women" etc. were deliberated by the resource persons beside the interaction session and Question hour. The programme was participated by Club Members, Meira Paibis and Students.

Manipuris in Tripura observes Manipuri Language Day



IT News
Imphal Aug 26

The 28th inclusion of Manipuri language in the Eighth schedule in the Constitution of India has been observed as Manipuri Language Day by Manipuri students & Faculty members of ICAFI University Tripura on August 24. Rajkumar Jitendrajit Singh, President of Manipuri Sahitya Parishad, Tripura grace the

function as a Chief Guest. Sri Rajiv Lochan Pareek, Vice Chancellor of ICAFI University was present as a Guest of honour. Prof N. Khoiboi and Wangkhem Birmangal, Chief Adviser of Lamyamba Organisation were present as a Special Guests. Manipuri language was included in the 8th Schedule in the Constitution of India in 1992 on 20th August. Since then every year Manipuri people observed this day as a "Language Day".

Irungbam family hosted grand fest at old age home



Ranjit Singh Irungbam and Irunbam Ongbi N. Chandrajini along with their children today hosted and feast for the aged people taking shelter at Mongsangei old age home.

Awareness workshop on Army recruitment

IT News
Imphal, Aug. 26

Thoubal Battalion of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis of IGAR (South) organised an Army recruitment awareness workshop at Chandrakong Company Operating Base (COB) on 23 August 2019. The Army recruitment rally is scheduled at Luwangpokpa Cricket Stadium, Imphal from 10 to 18 October this year for the youth of the state.

In continuance with the efforts by Assam Rifles to guide and further enlighten youth of the state about various ways to join the Indian Armed Forces, the units of 9 Sector Assam Rifles are conducting guidance and training capsules for the volunteered youth of the area. The units are undertaking the noble cause in a phased manner, commencing with identifying the potential candidates and then subsequently training the selected individuals for the recruitment rally scheduled in October 2019.

On 23 August, Thoubal Battalion organised a workshop at Chandrakong COB to spread awareness about the impending Army recruitment rally. The workshop witnessed an overwhelming and enthusiastic response from a large number of youth of the area. During the workshop, emphasis was laid on the modalities of online registration facility for all interested candidates who can get their name registered during the spot registration at the COBs and unit headquarter as well as during the pre-recruitment training at the COBs.

Assam Rifles organises community service and security meets

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Imphal Aug. 26

Keithelmanbi and Mantripukhri Battalions of 9 Sector Assam Rifles under the aegis IGAR (South) organised community service and security meets with an aim to interact with the local populace as well as sensitise them in regards to existing security situation in the area.

The community service cum interaction was organised by YKPI Company Operating Base (COB) of Mantripukhri Battalion at Baptist Church in Choullouphai, Kangpokpi district. The interaction was aimed to familiarise and orient troops of the COB with the locals as well as identify with their local customs and traditions. The event commenced with offering of prayers followed by an interaction with the villagers. It was followed by an interaction with the villagers during which they willingly shared their various issues of concern with

the troops of the Battalion. As part of the security meets conducted by Andro COB of Keithelmanbi Battalion and YKPI COB of Mantripukhri Battalion, locals were updated on current security situation existing in the area of responsibility. There were also interactions carried out on necessary measures to be undertaken for maintaining a strict vigil against illicit activities in the area as well as future action plan in respect of civil action projects like medical camps. In addition to the security agenda, the locals were also informed about the various opportunities available for the youth to join the Indian Armed Forces including the upcoming Army Recruitment Rally scheduled to be held at Luwangpokpa Cricket Stadium in Imphal from 10 to 18 October 2019. Locals were also enlightened about the increase in snake bite cases during the present season and the assistance being rendered by the unit medical teams.