

Growth of Narco-Terrorism in India

Narco terrorism is a matter of great concern and seriousness. The drug menace has become so rampant that it has become even more dangerous than the usual known terrorism. It is a matter of great concern that narco-terrorism has claimed more lives in Northeast India than the number of people killed in terrorist activities in India. Speaking in an online dialogue organised by Brigadier Hemant Mahajan (Retd.), Honorary Director, Praveen Dixit gave various information and pointed out the seriousness of narco-terrorism.



India has been beset by many types of terrorism - bomb blasts, attacks on civilians, leisure places, religious places, government establishments, hospitals, the railways, and many more.

There is one kind of terrorism that has not been given much due importance.

Narco-terrorism is much more serious than other types of terrorism.

The border States of North East India like Mizoram and Manipur are highly affected because of narco-terrorism. Similarly, States having an international border with Pakistan, especially Punjab, is a major victim. There have been many seizures on the Gujarat coast too - a recent one being at the Adani Port. Even in Mumbai, there were large seizures in this particular arena.

Today, our extensive focus will be

on this particular terrorism. What is the status of narco-terrorism in the country, and Maharashtra? What are security agencies doing about it? What do they need to succeed in anti-narcotics operations, and what role should we play as citizens to ensure that narco-terrorism is reduced? We have with us, former DGP of Maharashtra Police, Shri Praveen Dixit. He was also a former Defence Advisor to the High Commission of India. An active thinker, writer, and commentator on issues related to national security, he has a wide experience

in dealing with subjects such as nationalism, terrorism and narco-terrorism.

Recently, the Director-Generals of Police from all Indian States, Director-Generals of Central Paramilitary Forces and Central Agencies had a conference at Lucknow. Two important topics were highlighted - Narco-Terrorism or Narco Trafficking, and Terrorism. The other issues were Cybercrime, Border Security pertaining to Coastal Security, etc. This indicates the importance of these two subjects - Narco DISM, Narcotic Trafficking, and the nexus between narcotics and terrorism. Before we proceed, we need to know about The Golden Triangle and The Golden Crescent. The Golden Triangle represents the region in the rural mountains of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. It is Southeast Asia's main opium-producing region and one of the oldest narcotics supply routes to Europe and North America. On the other hand, The Golden Crescent is the slice of the opium-producing area that cuts across Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It has become one of the most important opium-producing centres of the world. These two regions are where the maximum production of narcotics takes place. It is also important to know that the countries under these two infamous monikers are



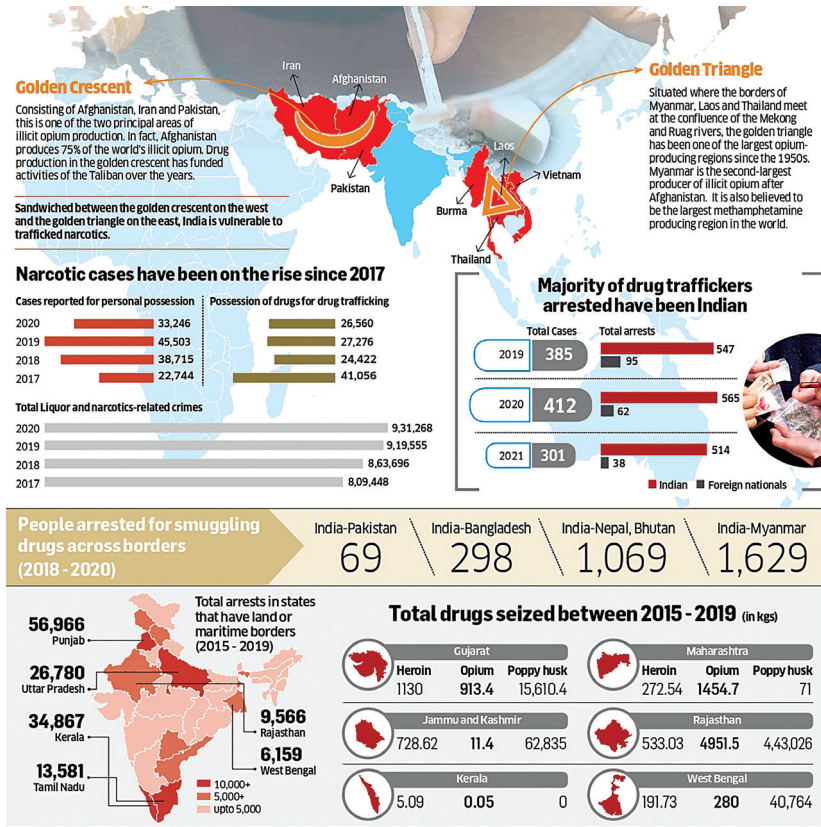
known as the Failed States in the international arena. A Failed State is one with not much economic progress. The people are quite poor and are hardly able to sustain themselves. Such a government is not in a position to support the aspirations of its people. As a result, people in a failed state cultivate narcotics or the banned psychometric drugs at minimum cost. The cost for cultivating narcotics could be Rs 100/- and the same product would cost Rs 1 Lakh at the international market. The profit is indeed a huge margin. Initially, India was used as a country of transition where drugs were pushed in, and from India, these drugs were being moved to either Europe, the UK, Australia,

or North America, including the United States, Canada and other places.

In addition to what was coming from outside, there are certain States in India itself, including Chattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, where the land is highly cultivatable and is an excellent land from where ganja is cultivated in huge quantity and transported by road, railways and through other modes. Earlier, people were of the impression that it was being exported or that India was being used as a transit. But over the last few decades, narcotics consumption in India as well as in Maharashtra has skyrocketed. Areas in Punjab that are closer to Delhi and those areas closer to the North East are victims of narcotics. The dangerous situation is such that most of the institutes, colleges, universities, and even schools have access to cocaine and other narcotics. This is worse than terrorism because it is killing and destroying young lives in India from within the country itself. This is precisely what our enemy countries, including Pakistan, China, and now Afghanistan, are striving for. They are aiming to kill our youth with their own narcotics consumption.

This is a worst-case scenario. It is not just Punjab or a few States in the





North East where we find narcotics victims. This menace has even reached the interior parts of many States, including Maharashtra, and has struck the youth with a force. The youth, particularly from the IT industry, Management/IIT have fallen prey to this kind of

terrorism. They are all pressured to give exemplary results. This undue pressure and the high expectation required from them have led them to seek solace in drugs to numb their senses. My suggestion to the faculty in these universities is to reduce the workload given to the

students. Most of them expect the students joining these institutes to work continuously without any rest. That is a high expectation from the part of the faculty as the normal capacity of a student is not to work for 19 to 20 hours every day. Like I said above, this then led to undue pressure and has led many students to find comfort in drugs, which leads to addiction. The other side is that there is no open door for proper dialogue between the parents and these students. Working parents give more importance to their career and that leaves their children secluded, alone, lonely, and frustrated. It is no surprise that they seek companionship through drugs. I had, on many an occasion, interrogated such young students who were victims of drugs. The main reason which comes out is the failure of dialogue within the family. Unfortunately, many are discovered by their parents only when they have become fully hooked to it and when the situation is out of control. When parents are told that their children are drug addicts, they are in a state of shock and denial. They would then ramble that they have given their children a wonderful home atmosphere, all the facilities,





gadgets, etc., and that the news they are hearing is not true. When they are confronted with the children, and when the children themselves admit that they are drug addicts, the parents are left reeling. This is not just a situation in Western or advanced countries, but India as well. There have been many unfortunate instances where the grandparents who objected to their grandchildren's drugs consumption are murdered. These young, rich kids from well-to-do families are unable to free themselves from the addiction. Such is the scenario pervading the country, particularly the metropolitan cities.

How do we tackle this? There are two views regarding this. Some of

the advanced countries including Portugal, Italy, Spain, the US, and Canada says that banning drugs is beyond their control as Venezuela and Mexico are exporting drugs to the US or Canada, or that drugs are being produced even in Africa, and countries like Nigeria are producing and exporting it. Countries are increasingly agreeing that instead of banning drugs, it will be better to reduce consumption by providing counselling to drug addicts as totally withdrawing drugs will lead to Cold Turkey, a drug withdrawal syndrome that makes people violent as they cannot control themselves. Keeping them in jail will also not help as the violent streak will not abate. Counselling is the best course to take to tackle the drug issue.

As far as India is concerned, we need to advise parents and families to ease down on the pressure they put on their children regarding studies and achieving cent per cent marks. We should highlight these issues even in schools and colleges. There should also be regular inspections of the surrounding places around educational institutions - the so-called Havas, tea shops, restaurants, small pan and cigarette shops because drugs are pushed through such shops.

As far as agencies are concerned, there are two to three aspects to it. One - the agency supplying the information - be it an international or national agency are always suspicious about the other side. There is always that lingering doubt whether the information provided to the person who is going to take action will be acted upon with integrity or whether the person would be hand-in-glove with the culprits and leak the information. This is one of the most important reasons why international agencies are always doubtful. There have been several examples from developing countries where the so-called Chief of the Narcotics Control Bureau were arrested because of their involvement with drug lords as money in the drug world runs into millions and billions of dollars. There is always that possibility of enforcement agencies being drawn to get a piece of this pie and live a comfortable life. For this reason, suspicion always lingers in the minds of those who are providing the information. Having said this, intelligence agencies worldwide are the only ones who can tackle this issue as they can better coordinate with each other, be it locally, nationally or internationally. They have to work hand-in-hand and tackle this issue and support the activities of well-intended NGOs, civil society, parents to defeat narco-terrorism. ■