



REPORT on Conference on 'Illicit Drugs in the North-East: Searching for Truth and Solutions'



Organised at Guwahati from December 5-7, 2013
by

Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis (INSA)
New Delhi



His Excellency Lt. Gen. Nirbhay Sharma, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh
inaugurating the Conference on December 5, 2013



Session on "Current Drug Control Strategies" in progress

REPORT

on

**Conference on 'Illicit Drugs in the North-East:
Searching for Truth and Solutions'**

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DISCLAIMER

This publication has been compiled and summarized from the views expressed and information provided by various speakers, experts and participants during the conference on 'Illicit Drugs in the North-East: Searching for Truth and Solutions' ("Conference") organised by INSA at Guwahati, Assam, India from December 5-7, 2013. This report is intended to serve as a guide to members/stake holders and does not purport to be a legal document.

While due care has been taken during the compilation of this publication to ensure that the information is accurate as per disclosure to and sharing thereof with INSA during the Conference, INSA takes no responsibility for infactual if any, accuracy of the information as disclosed to and shared with INSA by the speakers, experts and participants.

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INSA expresses its deep gratitude to His Excellency Lt Gen Nirbhay Sharma, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh for formally inaugurating the Conference and for very encouraging and thought provoking remarks made in his inaugural address.

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INSA also thanks all the participants.

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This report has been prepared by Anil Sharma, Dalbir Singh, Devendra Dutt, Jogendra Singh, R.K. Gupta, and Romesh Bhattacharji of INSA.

New Delhi,

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMAR

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the prevailing illicit drugs situation in the North-Eastern region of India, obtained as a result of the three day conference on '*Illicit Drugs in the North-East: Searching for Truth and Solutions*' ("**the Conference**") held in Guwahati from 5 to 7 December, 2013. The report summarises the proceedings of the Conference, and highlights the weaknesses of the current drug control regimes and makes bold recommendations to remedy the worsening situation in this extremely sensitive part of India.
- 1.2. The North Eastern region of India comprises eight States, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. The region has a severe problem with narcotic drugs. Illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis is increasing, substance abuse is on the rise and, to add to the problem, drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities in the region are woefully inadequate, both in terms of number and efficacy. The region borders Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. The total length of international border measures 5437.15 kilometers. Drug trafficking being a trans-border criminal activity, adds new dimensions to the problem.
- 1.3. Ever since its inception in July 2009, the Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis (INSA) has been looking into the problem of illicit drugs in this region and had conducted a detailed study of the problem in two of the most prolific illicit opium producing districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Government of Arunachal Pradesh has initiated action on the recommendations made by INSA in its report. With a view to understanding the drug problem of the entire region, INSA decided to bring all governmental and leading non governmental bodies as well as the community leaders of the local population of the North East together to undertake a quick study of all aspects of the drug problem in this region and recommend workable and sustainable solutions to curtail the problem. With this objective, INSA held the Conference.
- 1.4. Policy makers and law enforcement officials both from the Central Government and the State governments, leading NGOs, academicians, women/student organisations, doctors, lawyers, social and health workers, Gaon Burahs (village heads), cultivators and recovering drug users were invited to participate in the Conference.
- 1.5. In order to ascertain the truth about the drug problem in the North East and find solutions thereto, the Conference in its sessions, inter alia, -
 - attempted to gauge different dimensions of the current drug scenario,
 - deliberated on all aspects of problems of illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis and drug addiction,
 - tried to find out current state of affairs about treatment and rehabilitation facilities and drug demand reduction strategies in operation,
 - discussed about necessity or otherwise of alternative development programmes, and
 - explored desirability of adopting innovative approaches in the areas of drug demand and supply reduction
- 1.6. It emerged from the deliberations that:
 - i. While there is extensive illicit cultivation of opium poppy in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur, cultivation is also reported in some pockets of Upper Assam and in Mon and Mokokchung districts of Nagaland. Cannabis cultivation mainly takes place in Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
 - ii. Opium Cultivators are of two types. The first category comprises majority of cultivators who are of subsistence level and grow opium poppy for their use and for barter and in limited amount to get better grain, kerosene oil and utensils. The second category is of several commercial level cultivators

in some districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Possibly, they account for most of the opium produced illegally in the North East. They are mostly in Arunachal and Nagaland. What propels the latter category to cultivate is the desire to earn much higher income than what legitimate activity provides. The random and scattered attempts made by enforcement agencies to curb illicit opium cultivation have not yielded desired results.

- iii. There is no single reason why people start using drugs. Containment is not possible unless a multi-pronged approach is adopted. Current demand reductions strategies are not successful.
- iv. Drug abuse being a health issue calls for a more humane approach. Law enforcement alone is not sufficient to contain it. The present day strict laws have failed too. Parents, family and community too need to play a more proactive role in preventing drug abuse.
- v. There is a need to examine whether the innovative drug control methods tried elsewhere in the world could be replicated in India.
- vi. Poverty and lack of opportunity is not the only reason for illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the North-East. There are tribes in the opium cultivation area that do not indulge in such cultivation despite being part of similar economic and geographical milieu. The perception that lack of development alone leads to illicit cultivation does not seem to be relevant in respect of the North-East. It is doubtful whether a Doi Tung type alternative development programme is required in this part of India. A strong political will is needed to stop the practice of illicit cultivation of opium.
- vii. Drug control strategy must include efficient law enforcement on the supply side and effective demand reduction and harm reduction measures on the demand side of the problem. Law enforcement must focus primarily on big traffickers rather than frittering away energy and resources on small pedlars and drug users.

1.7. Based on the findings and conclusions made, INSA's recommendations are as follows:

i. Illicit opium poppy crop destruction programme:

Illicit crop destruction programme must include:

- a. **Pre-destruction awareness programme:** An extensive awareness campaign by the Central Bureau of Narcotics and Narcotics Control Bureau in collaboration with local administrations should be conducted informing the cultivators just before the sowing season that they must not cultivate the illicit crop and that if they do, they would be legally proceeded against apart from suffering destruction of the crops.
- b. **Registration of addicts:** Since it is the small cultivators and or members of their family who are primarily addicted to opium, destruction of their poppy crop places them at the mercy of the traffickers for meeting their requirement for opium. It is essential that such addicts receive the opium for their personal consumption from the Government till they are cured of their addiction. This will prevent them from cultivating opium themselves. One-time registration of opium addicts through revival of the Opium Registry System of the 1970 should precede destruction of opium poppy crop in illicit opium cultivation areas in Arunachal Pradesh so that addicts in this area do not have to depend on traffickers on eradication of illicit cultivation.
- c. **Destruction of poppy cultivation:** Major / commercial level cultivators quite often carry out cultivation in large tracts located in areas not easily accessible. Maximum yield of illicit opium arises from such plots. Such plots escape destruction exercises. It is, therefore, recommended

that aerial surveys by helicopters (after mid-February when poppy flowers bloom) should be made to identify big plots under opium poppy cultivation and destruction of illicit poppy crop in big plots should be undertaken first, followed by destruction in plots of small cultivators.

ii. Illicit cultivation of cannabis:

- a. Attempts to destroy illicit cannabis cultivation must continue, and recommendations relating to illicit poppy destruction, so far as possible, should also be applied in respect of illicit cannabis cultivation. Nobody pointed out any significant local consumption of cannabis and it is mainly used by the people from outside. The cannabis cultivated here is sent to the rest of the country.
- b. Simultaneously, India should also take cognisance of developments taking place elsewhere in the world in the approach of the governments towards cultivation of cannabis.

iii. Alternative development programmes in the North-East

Alternative development is also development. Areas along the major roads in Arunachal Pradesh have benefitted from development. Yet greed for money propels the people to indulge in poppy cultivation even in these areas, which have electricity, generous scholarships, easy financial support and many employment and business opportunities. Though pace is slow and inefficient, development will also reach remote interior areas. There will still be no assurance that people would give up illicit cultivation then. INSA understands that measures taken by the Government such as subsidised supply of good quality seeds of viable alternative crops, expertise support to farmers and financial support should have weaned away the cultivators from opium cultivation. However, this has not happened.

INSA recommends that additional measures namely providing support for marketing the yield of the cultivators, guaranteeing minimum support price of the produce and encouraging non-agricultural income generating activities in illicit cultivation areas should be taken.

iv. Drug addiction in the North-East: treatment and rehabilitation

Considering that there is wide-spread drug addiction of opium, heroin, brown sugar, and synthetic drugs and also misuse of some pharmaceuticals in the North-East, INSA recommends that-

- a. An in-depth survey should be conducted in the North-East to find out, State-wise and district-wise number of drug addicts, types of drugs they use and reasons for drug use.
- b. Frequent and vigorous awareness raising programmes against drug addiction involving, among others, parents, families, community, and youth groups should be organised by the concerned governmental/non-governmental organisations in all drug sensitive areas.
- b. Based upon the results of the drug situation assessment surveys in the region, the State Governments should augment their treatment and rehabilitation facilities and create more facilities, wherever required.
- c. If so required, the States in the North East should approach the Government of India for allocation of funds from the National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse.
- e. The Governments should facilitate augmentation of the service delivery capacity of NGOs engaged in counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug users.

f. The Governments must increase number of government- run treatment centres.

v. Innovating drug control strategies

a. In the light of decriminalisation experiments abroad an expert group should be set-up by the Central Government to study the viability and appropriateness of de-criminalising drug users as different from the drug traffickers.

b. INSA recommends that India should take cognisance of developments taking place elsewhere in the world in the approach of the governments towards cultivation of cannabis. The centre Government may also consider setting up of an expert group to study if there is need to review the total ban on cultivation of cannabis and permit cultivation in a regulated manner for certain specified purposes.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1. The North-East¹ of India has a severe multi-dimensional drug problem. Accordingly, on its coming into existence, the Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis, New Delhi (INSA) addressed itself to this region by way of conducting a survey of illicit cultivation of opium poppy in two districts namely Anjaw and Lohit of the State of Arunachal Pradesh during the year 2010. The survey had brought out that extent of illicit cultivation of opium poppy as well as drug abuse in these two districts was very substantial. This spurred INSA to take another initiative to understand the truth about the drug problem in all respects in the entire North-East and find out ways and means to tackle the problem in a holistic manner. The result was the conference on 'Illicit Drugs in the North-East: Searching for Truth and Solutions' ("the Conference") organised by INSA through December 5-7, 2013 at Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli, Guwahati, Assam.
- 2.2. Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India provided substantial financial support to INSA from the National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse for holding the Conference. Funds to meet expenses beyond the amount provided by the Government of India were raised by INSA through donations.
- 2.3. In its quest for the truth about the drug problem in the North-East, the Conference aimed at providing a platform for free and frank discussions on the extent and prevalence of illicit cultivation, drug trafficking and drug abuse in the North-East region. Idea was to find out official views as well as public perception on all issues related to drug problem in the North-East including on adequacy of what has been done to deal with them. As a part of this endeavour, the Conference also intended to learn about the innovative developments taking place elsewhere in the world for dealing with the problem of illicit cultivation and drug abuse and consider their appropriateness for the North-East within the ambit of the National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2012 ("NNP 2012") and the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and rules thereunder ("Narcotics Laws") or, if need be, by amending them. The ultimate goal of the Conference was to find out such solutions to the drug problem in the North-East as are practically viable and sustainable. The Conference was accordingly designed to deliberate on the following issues / questions:
- i What has been the drug scenario in the North Eastern States in recent years as viewed by the drug enforcement agencies?
 - ii What is the extent of illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis in the North-East as assessed by the Central and the State enforcement agencies and perceived by the NGOs and others concerned with the problem?
 - iii What are the reasons for illicit cultivation and its effects in the North-East?
 - iv What are the reasons for drug use, how drug use can be prevented, and how the users can be treated and rehabilitated in the society? In other words, is containment of the drug usage possible?
 - v What drug demand reduction strategies have been put into action, what treatment facilities have been created and what is the extent and nature of problem of drug related HIV in the North-East?
 - vi Is law enforcement alone sufficient to reduce drug usage?
 - vii Have there been any innovations in drug policy reforms in other countries and if so to what extent such experiments and experiences are relevant to India in general and the North-East in particular?

¹North-Eastern part of India consisting of the States of Arunachal, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura.

viii What is the concept of alternative development as a means of permanent eradication of illicit cultivation? Evaluation of this concept in the sense that how this strategy has functioned elsewhere and whether the same could be adopted in the North-East with suitable adjustments and modifications?

ix What is the relevance of the current drug control strategies for their application in the North-East?

The agenda of the Conference marked as ANNEXURE-'A' is enclosed.

2.4. Accordingly, INSA invited policy makers and law enforcement officials both from the Central Government and the State governments, leading NGOs, academicians, women/student organisations, doctors, lawyers, social and health workers, Gaon Burahs, cultivators and recovering users of drugs to participate in the Conference. All sessions were made open to the public so that anyone who had an opinion and wished to contribute had freedom to do so and thus help in emergence of the truth about the drug problem in the North-East and sustainable solutions thereto. List of the participants marked as ANNEXURE-'B' is enclosed.

2.5. Inauguration:

2.5.1. His Excellency Lt Gen Nirbhay Sharma, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd.), the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, formally inaugurated the Conference on December 5, 2013. In the inaugural session, keynote address was delivered by Mr. Najib Shah, Director General, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, New Delhi.

Mr. Najib Shah, Director General, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, New Delhi in his crisp and very thought-provoking keynote address stated that narcotics problem in India is very complicated inasmuch India is having both demand and supply readily available within the country. Further, the North Eastern region being closer to the Golden Triangle and having porous international borders faces a bigger challenge in combating illicit drug problem. In addition, the spectrum of narcotics availability and their abuse in India in general and north eastern region in particular is also vast and complex.

Mr. Najib Shah observed that law enforcement alone was not sufficient to reduce drug problem. What was required was a balance between supply and demand reduction strategies. He said that the key to tackle the narcotics problem lied in a comprehensive strategy. The drug problem has to be tackled in totality where one has to understand various causes and consequences of drug production, trafficking and consumption. Answers to these issues would require an approach which has to take into account all possible facets of the problem and it cannot be seen from one particular prism. Similarly finding the solutions would require a comprehensive approach with innovative and alternative methods, he said.

He hoped that that the debates, discussions and exchanges during the conference would go a long way in enhancing and enriching the think tank of drug abuse and make us more aware of the extent of the problem and contribute significantly towards concrete steps being initiated to reduce the levels of illicit cultivation, production and consumption of drugs and improved drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation facilities ultimately contributing to the development of the North Eastern region.

Full text of the Key note address of Mr. Najib Shah, DG, DRI, New Delhi marked as ANNEXURE- 'C' is enclosed.

2.5.2. While delivering his inaugural speech, His Excellency, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh congratulated INSA for organising the Conference to supplement the ongoing governmental and non-governmental efforts to fight the menace of narcotic drugs in the North Eastern region. He said that holding of the Conference was very relevant and timely and hoped that participation of eminent personalities, policy makers, women and student groups, government officials from Narcotics Control Bureau, Customs, State administration, cultivators, grassroots workers and victims of illicit cultivation in this conference will definitely serve to cross-fertilize policy debates. He expected that this endeavour would result in better cooperation among the participating States in matters of drug law enforcement and drug abuse control.

The Governor pointed out that drug abuse was a complex phenomenon, which had various social, cultural, geographical, historical, economic, biological and psychological aspects and cautioned that nexus amongst drug traffickers, organized criminal networks and terrorists had potential to cause instability in the country.

With particular reference to Arunachal Pradesh, the Governor recalled the indepth study made by INSA in two of its worst affected districts namely Anjaw and Lohit. He mentioned that in its survey report, INSA had drawn attention to a number of disturbing facts, including the trends in illicit cultivation, trafficking and irresponsible use of opium by young rural population.

Having talked about magnitude of the problem, the Governor thoughtfully made some suggestions to tackle the problem in the North-East and wanted the Conference to deliberate upon them. He suggested that apart from regular and intensive awareness campaign in all the sensitive parts of the region to be undertaken pro-actively with active participation and contribution of civil society, NGOs, grassroots and political leaders, an awareness campaign should also be conducted when the farmers are sowing the poppy seeds in the month of September and October so that local population cultivating these crops decides not to cultivate opium. The opium cultivators abandoning the practice of opium cultivation should be provided with some alternative cash crops like large cardamom, horticulture, etc. Anti-drug education should become a component of the health curriculum in schools. By involving local community leaders, women in particular, different faith leaders, and churches, the problem of drug misuse must be tackled at community level. The Governor observed that rehabilitation and counselling services were deficient in the North-East and that the Central and State Governments will do well to focus on them, allot adequate funds for such facilities and also effectively monitor running of such centres and programmes.

The Governor also wanted INSA to conduct awareness programmes and assist the Government of Arunachal Pradesh to draw out a workable action plan as follow-up on its survey report of 2010. He looked forward to this type of conference in different parts of North- Eastern region in the future.

While concluding his inaugural speech, the Governor, on his own behalf and also on behalf of the people of the North East, conveyed good wishes for the successful conduct of the Conference and expressed his confidence that this initiative of INSA would be fruitful and would offer practical solutions to the challenges posed by drug problem in this region.

The Full text of the inaugural address of His Excellency, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh marked as ANNEXURE- 'D' is enclosed.

- 2.6. INSA has prepared this report that captures in detail the deliberations that took place in the Conference. The report also contains the findings arrived at and the conclusions drawn by INSA. In fact, these findings and conclusions encapsulate the 'truth' that came to the fore about the drug problem in the North-East. On the basis of discussions in the Conference and the findings and conclusions that emerged therefrom, INSA has made certain recommendations on what needs to be done to deal with various facets of the drug problem in the North-East. In other words, these recommendations point out the possible solutions to curb the problem.

2.7. Valediction:

- 2.7.1. The Conference came to an end on December 7, 2013. Hon'ble Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and Parliamentary Affairs, who was to deliver his valedictory address could not come to Guwahati due to important Parliamentary commitments. He, however, sent a letter dated December 5, 2013 stating that though he would have loved to be present amongst the participants on this memorable day of the Conference, he was not able to do so due to the Parliament being in session. He wished the Conference a grand success. A copy of his letter marked as ANNEXURE- 'F' is enclosed. Ms. Ananya Ray, Chief Commissioner, Customs and Central Excise, North-East, Shillong gave the valedictory address.

- 2.7.2. During the valediction, the issues discussed in various sessions were summarised by one of the INSA members and it was recounted how very meaningful discussions took place and how the experts and participants aired their views on various issues in a free and frank atmosphere.
- 2.7.3. Ms. Ananya Ray, Chief Commissioner, Customs and Central Excise in her valedictory speech relating her observations of the problem stated that it was indeed appropriate and timely to consult everyone concerned on reasons for the drug problem in the North-East as well as on how a solution can be found to this problem. She hoped that after such intense and wide-ranging consultations and deliberations, the Conference would be able to yield such solutions as are appropriate and implementable.

3. ISSUES DISCUSSED IN THE CONFERENCE, SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

DAY - 1

3.1. Evolution of global drug control System and evolution of India's drug laws from 19th Century to the National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2012

(Day-1: Session-3:Chaired byMr. Dalbir Singh, Member, INSA)

3.1.1. The Issue

All solutions to the drug problem have to be found under the Narcotics Law as it exists today or by making suitable modification therein. It therefore becomes imperative that the Conference is provided a historical perspective on both how the drug control system has evolved internationally over last 100 years and how Narcotics Laws in India evolving since 19th Century to the present day acquired the form and content they are in today. Accordingly, it was attempted to provide a backdrop to the Conference of various international drug conventions developed over the last 100 years and also how the Indian drug laws and policies have evolved, quite often under influence of the international conventions, from 19th century to the NNP, 2012.

3.1.2. Summary of discussions

3.1.2.1. Evolution of global drug control system:

Mr. Martin Jelsma of Trans National Institute, Amsterdam briefly explained various milestones in the evolution of international drug control system and quickly took the Conference through 1912 The Hague Convention, 1925 Geneva Convention, 1931 Limitation Convention, 1936 Trafficking Convention, 1953 Opium Protocol, 1961 Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs, 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances and 1988 Convention on Drug Trafficking. He stated that these conventions progressively escalated a war on drugs resulting in militarisation of the anti-drug approach manifesting itself in aerial spraying of crops for eradication of illicit cultivation, human rights violations, provision of death penalty for trafficking offences and other disproportionate sentences, compulsory treatment of addicts etc. Fallouts of such an approach, he stated, were an increase in crime and corruption and explosion of violence in the affected areas. Mr. Jelsma pointed out that there were inconsistencies in various conventions as reflected in a 'north-south divide' during the negotiations. To substantiate his contention, he pointed out that traditional and religious use of drugs was condemned in 1961 Convention but accepted in 1971 Convention while 1988 Convention provided that "due account" be taken of "traditional licit uses". He pointed out that of late, de-escalation of the militant approach towards drug problem is noticeable in the form of decriminalisation of some drug offences in some countries, adoption of harm reduction strategies and use of alternative development as a means of weaning the cultivators away from illicit cultivation. Decriminalisation practices are quietly in practice in Argentina, Armenia, Australia (at State level), Belgium, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Uruguay, and United States of America (at State level). He went on to point out that the consensus reached through various conventions has already been broken by United States of America (in respect of cannabis), Bolivia (in respect of coca leaf) and Uruguay (in respect of cannabis). According to him, lessons learnt from or benefits arising from decriminalisation are- no increase in drug use, reduced HIV infection, less overdose deaths, more people entering voluntary treatment and harm reduction services, reduced prevalence of problematic drug use, reduced overcrowding of prisons and significant savings on criminal justice systems. He emphasised the need for reforms in treaty provisions. Already several countries have called for treaty reforms, he said. Mr. Jelsma pointed out that the Indian Hemp Drugs Commission Report, 1894 had observed that "Total prohibition of the cultivation of the hemp plant for narcotics, and of the manufacture, sale, or use of the drugs derived from it, is neither necessary nor expedient in consideration of their ascertained effects, of the prevalence of the habit of using them, of the social and religious feeling on the subject, and of the possibility of its driving the consumers to have recourse to other stimulants or narcotics

which may be more deleterious" (Chapter XIV, paragraphs 553 to 585). The said report had also advocated the policy as one of control and restriction, aimed at suppressing the excessive use and restraining the moderate use within due limits (Chapter XIV, paragraph 586). Mr. Jelsma concluded by saying that it would be interesting to watch what position India takes during 2016 UNGASS in New York.

3.1.2.2. Evolution of India's drug laws from 19th Century to the National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2012:

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau informed the participants that opium and cannabis have been used for centuries in India. During the Mughal period also tax was collected on opium. During the 19th century, the first important enactment was The Opium Act 1857 which regulated the cultivation of opium poppy and manufacture of opium. Next important milestone was the Opium Act, 1878 which prohibited possession, transportation, import or export and sale of opium except as permitted under the said Act. Cultivation of opium was permitted under licence. The Act vested officers with power to arrest and seize. Violations of the provisions of the Opium Act, 1878 or rules thereunder were punishable through imprisonment which could extend to one year or fine upto one thousand rupees or both. Following the Geneva Convention, the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930 was enacted which controlled various narcotic drugs such as coca, cannabis and manufactured drugs and provided for punishments for violations of the provisions thereof. The Opium Act 1857, Opium Act 1878 and the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1930 were repealed in 1985 by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 which is a comprehensive legislation on narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. This Act consolidates the law relating to narcotic drugs, makes stringent provisions for the control and regulation of operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances; provides for forfeiture of property derived from, or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, and implements the provisions of the International Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances. Very stringent punishment provisions were made for offences under this Act. These provisions have been amended subsequently and provisions now provide for graded punishments.

Mr. Sahoo explained that the National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2012 is a comprehensive policy on various aspects, such as licensed cultivation of opium poppy, illicit cultivation of poppy and cannabis, drug trafficking, drug addiction and drug demand reduction. The policy provides that licensed cultivation of opium poppy for medical & scientific purposes as per actual requirements will continue. Government of India will encourage research and development of low alkaloid or alkaloid-free varieties of opium poppy which can be used exclusively for production of poppy seeds. Import of poppy seeds will continue till self-sufficiency is achieved. On the illicit cultivation of poppy and cannabis, the policy emphasizes use of satellite imageries for detection of illicit crop and its subsequent eradication and development of alternate means of livelihood in respect of cultivators in pockets of traditional illicit cultivation. Mr. Sahoo stated that the policy attempts to curb the menace of drug abuse and contains provisions for treatment, rehabilitation and social re-integration of victims of drug abuse. Implementation of the provisions of the policy will lead to reduction of crime, improvement in public health and uplifting of the social milieu. Further, the Policy is to serve as a guide to various Ministries and organizations and re-asserts India's commitment to combat the drug menace in a holistic manner.

3.1.3. **Findings**

The two expositions were primarily meant to provide a historical backdrop of international conventions and evolution of Narcotics Law in India to the participants. The two presentations demonstrate that law is not always static and it changes in line with the thinking of the governments and the people over a period of time.

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3.2. Is law enforcement alone sufficient to reduce drug usage?

(Session - 4:Chaired by Mr. Romesh Bhattacharji, President, INSA)

3.2.1. The Issue

Despite all the international and national legislative and enforcement measures taken across the world, it has not been possible to control the supply, demand and abuse of illicit drugs. Information received by INSA revealed that drug peddlers and users formed a very high percentage of the total arrests made in Punjab. Situation in many other States in India and a number of other countries may not be very different. This throws up the question whether law enforcement alone is sufficient or we need to consider other options as well to reduce illicit drug usage. Accordingly, this issue was flagged before the Conference to deliberate upon and provide an answer

3.2.2. Summary of discussions

Prof. Dipesh Bhagabati, HOD, Psychiatry, GMCH, Guwahati, initiating the discussion, stated that mere existence of law does not help. Law alone does not control drug abuse. When a person goes to buy alcohol, nobody enquires about his age despite law providing that alcohol can be sold to persons of specified age and above. Social acceptance of alcohol also contributes to alcohol problem. A person beginning with alcohol graduates to drug abuse. Prof. Bhagabati further stated that poverty is one cause of drug problem. Drugs reduce hunger and so poverty pushes many to drugs use. Role of parents is also important. How they behave influences the children. In the society, there is more law defiance than law obedience. So, he opined, law alone cannot reduce the drug use. Prof Bhagabati stressed that spirituality helps in keeping people from using drugs and also during the process of de-addiction. Engaging the youth in social activity too helps, he stated.

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau observed that supply and demand were the two sides of the same coin. Hence a balanced approach was required for combating drug abuse. Law has been developed for combating drug trafficking. There is not so much emphasis on controlling addiction. After 2001, the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act provided for graded punishment and thus the law is not equally harsh on all offenders. A survey is required to be done whether such graded punishment has improved the situation. There is need for a national survey, he said. Mr. Ranjan Sahoo pointed out that law alone is not sufficient means that demand reduction too is necessary.

Fr Joe Pereira, Managing Trustee, Kripa Foundation, Mumbai asked the question whether prohibition has worked. He stated that human beings love to defy law. A large number of policemen in Mumbai use Gutka (chewing tobacco). He emphasised that we must interface supply and demand for drugs so that there is a human face. Human beings are being weakened and not strengthened by law enforcement. We must ennoble people by good parenting. Internet, pornography and drugs are inter-connected. He further stated that alcohol is the gateway drug. Boys and girls drink and become addicts. They smoke and take cannabis. Fr. Pereira regretted that crores of rupees meant for de-addiction are returned unused to the government because of unhelpful attitude of some of the Government officials in the concerned Ministries. Human aspect of the problem needs to be taken into consideration. He bemoaned that NGOs are working in metro cities but what about the remote areas, he asked. He emphasised that a very indepth survey needs to be taken to find the exact magnitude and extent of drug addiction. Fr. Pereira also stated that any country that is corrupt does not have the will to deal with this problem. By decriminalising, we instil self-confidence. It is also a psycho-spiritual and psycho-social issue that requires a more humane approach. For reducing drug usage, one has to start with human beings, he stated. Fr. Pereira stressed that drug abuse is a health issue and not a moral issue.

Dr. Nuno Capaz of Ministry of Health, Portugal began by saying that law enforcement does not have direct impact on usage of drugs. Further, there is a gap between lawmakers and law enforcers. If more people defy law, it shows that law is not good and therefore should be changed. Law is based on small number of

problematic users and does not think of 90 % of users who do not create any problem after consuming drugs. If one is a user of drug but does not create problem for the society, why the State should be bothered about him, he asked. Dr. Capaz further stated that drug users are easy targets for police as their performance is judged by number of arrests made. If drug users are de-criminalised, police would not look for them. Further, a drug user afraid of law would not go to a hospital for treatment. Therefore, law and policy should be research-oriented. In Portugal, the Government changed the law in 2001 and there are positive results of this change, he informed.

Mr. L H Sanga, Commissioner, Narcotics & Excise, Mizoram stated that law alone is not sufficient. Society too has to work. Young Mizo Association is doing good work and drug addiction is going down in Mizoram. So, involvement of NGOs in demand reduction helps.

A participant from Arunachal stood up to say that 50% of law enforcers in Arunachal are drug users. It is police that brings drugs from the borders to other areas. This shows inadequacy of law, he said.

Dr. Mandeep Singh Tuli, IPS, DIG of Police, Gangtok, Sikkim informed that 15 years ago, no hard drugs were used in Sikkim. Only medicinal drugs were the problem. In 2006, substances of abuse were brought under law. There are provisions for pedlars under the TADA Act. He also informed that NGOs are doing good work in de-addiction area in Sikkim.

A participant from Sikkim observed that why should we blame Myanmar for drugs smuggled from that country when we are producing acetic anhydride. We need to have a realistic approach, he said.

An officer from the Nagaland police stated that when liquor was available, there was less drug abuse. If a police constable is found to be a drug addict and action is taken against him, NGOs protest and allege violations of his human rights. Nagaland is a less developed state. If people have nothing else to do, they become drug addicts. NGOs have to help and they should go to the remotest areas.

Another participant observed that drugs are marginalising people as due to the stigma, they can neither get married nor get jobs.

Another participant from Nagaland bemoaned that if politicians are corrupt, people also become corrupt. Young people are consuming drugs/alcohol. INSA should go to their doors to help them.

A lady participant from Arunachal stated that law enforcement alone was not sufficient. But what media is doing about it and what INSA is doing about it, she asked.

A lady participant from Arunachal informed that women group in her locality is asking pedlars not to sell drugs and displaying pictures of pedlars on walls and wanted to know if such displaying of pictures of peddlers was legal or illegal.

Another participant complained that government officers are not provided proper security and therefore they cannot act against traffickers.

3.2.3. **Findings**

It emerged from the deliberations that-

- (i) Law enforcement alone was not sufficient to reduce the drug usage.
- (ii) Drug use also being a health issue calls for a more humane approach.
- (iii) Parents, family and community too need to play a proactive role in preventing drug abuse.

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3.3. Narcotics and Precursors-State-wise analysis

(Session -5: Chaired by Mr. Devendra Dutt, Member, INSA)

3.3.1. The Issue:

The North-East has the problem of production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs. Different States of the region have different types and degrees of problems with such drugs. States with international borders have an additional problem of smuggling of precursor chemicals required for production of illicit drugs. Accordingly, law enforcement officers from the Central Government as well as the State Governments were called upon to share with the Conference their perspective based on data on above issues.

3.3.2. Summary of discussions

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau informed that illicit cultivation of cannabis takes place mainly in Manipur and opium cultivation in Arunachal Pradesh. Further lot of precursors are brought to the North-East and smuggled into Myanmar. Drugs like opium, heroin and cannabis are used and there is considerable addiction problem. There is also problem of consumption and smuggling of phensedyl into Myanmar, he said.

Mr. L H Sanga, Commissioner, Narcotics & Excise, Mizoram informed the Conference that heroin was the commonly abused drug. Entire heroin comes from Myanmar. All opium seized in Mizoram had come from Manipur. There was open plantation of opium poppy in Mizoram in the past but now there is no such plantation. Very small plantation of cannabis has been noticed but the same has been destroyed. Cannabis (Ganja) comes from Manipur and Ganja smugglers of Manipur take advantage of peacefulness in Mizoram. Some methamphetamine has also been seized. There has been no seizure of acetic anhydride recently in Mizoram. Some ephedrine was seized in Mizoram during 2011-2013.

Ms. Violet Baruah IPS, Superintendent of Police (Narcotics), Assam mentioned various routes of drug smuggling, operandi used by drug traffickers, action taken against them and difficulties faced in investigations and prosecutions.

Dr. Mandeep Singh Tuli, DIG of Police, Gangtok, Sikkim informed that so far as smuggling of drugs into Sikkim was concerned, there was a well-guarded border with China; border with Bhutan was impregnable; border with Nepal was porous and that there were better routes for smugglers to rest of the North-East. There is hardly any seizure of cannabis (ganja) in Sikkim. Sikkim has an anti-drug Act. Sikkim also has a small forensic laboratory. Rehabilitation centres in Sikkim needed to be stricter, he observed.

3.3.3. Findings

The presentations by the law enforcement authorities confirmed extensive illicit cultivation of opium poppy mainly in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur but also in some pockets in Upper Assam; and of cannabis mainly in Manipur. Presentations also indicated trafficking in narcotic drugs in the entire North-East and in precursor chemicals across India-Myanmar border.

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DAY 2

3.4. Innovations in drug policy reforms- Experiences and experiments from other countries

Session- 6:Chaired by Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Dy. Director General, NCB, Kolkata)

3.4.1. **The Issue**

Several countries in the world are reported to have successfully applied certain new approaches to deal with the drug problem. Accordingly, the Conference was exposed to account of such experiments made elsewhere and to examine how relevant these experiments were in Indian situation and whether these could be tried out in India.

3.4.2. **Summary of discussions**

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau briefly explained India's National Policy on Narcotic drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2012 and stated that it provides for a strategy for dealing with problem of drug addiction.

Dr. Nuno Capaz of Ministry of Health, Portugal narrated the innovative experiment which Portugal has carried out on how to deal with drug addicts as distinct from drug traffickers. He informed that by late 1990s, Government in Portugal had come to the conclusion that its narcotics policy was not working adequately. The government set up a group of experts to examine the issue. The group recommended that the drug addiction issue was a health issue and not a crime issue. So, the Government decided to decriminalize the drug use regardless of the drug involved. Drug use is still illegal but is not a criminal offence. In fact, the subject of drug use was transferred to the Ministry of Health from other ministries. There are two kinds of drug users-regular user and the recreational user. There is no financial fine on a regular user. He can opt for treatment. If the recreational user is caught a second time, financial sanctions can apply to him. Sanctions are financial fines, engaging in social services, licence cancellations, etc. Dr. Capaz informed that it is twelve years since the experiment started. There are no adverse consequences. Figures of the users are almost the same as they were 12 years ago. But, police has been relieved of the burden of dealing with the drug users. It can use all its resources to deal with the drug traffickers rather than using them against drug users. There is change in the attitude of the police too, he informed.

Mr. Martin Jelsma of Trans National Institute, Amsterdam mentioned that in Ecuador, the President has issued pardon to very large number of carriers who were caught with drug less than two kgs and undergone imprisonment for 1 year. In Uruguay, personal use is to be decriminalized. Several States in the USA have decriminalized certain activities with regard to cannabis. These developments are going to have domino effect in other parts of the world, concluded Dr. Capaz.

Mr. Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Yangon stated that generally, law was more focused on supply side and very little on demand reduction. In the context of Myanmar, he informed that Myanmar is now struggling to amend narcotic laws. Harm reduction approach is now gaining ground. There are 216 licensed opium dens in Myanmar. Two hundred drug treatment centres are working. There is also provision of vocational training and counselling of drug addicts in Myanmar.

Ms. Gloria Lai, Senior Policy Officer, International Drug Policy Consortium, Bangkok, Thailand, China and Japan speaking on approach adopted towards drug user in Thailand, China and Japan gave the following account:

Thailand: There is no health-oriented approach towards drug addicts. There are disproportionate punishments for drug offences. Consequently, jails are overcrowded.

China: There is increasing use of drugs. Seizures of drugs and arrests of offenders are also increasing. There is an expanding market of methamphetamine and other synthetic drugs among the youth. There is clear conflict between criminality and treatment for drug addiction. China has introduced compulsory treatment for the addicts. First time, there is treatment. Next time, one is sent to labour camps re-named as detoxification camps.

Japan: Japan is an attractive destination for methamphetamines. Punishment is upto 10 years for possessing or consuming banned stimulants. There are no harm reduction services.

Speaking of ill-effects of approach such as adopted in the above-mentioned three countries, Ms. Gloria Lai highlighted following consequences:

- Severe stigmatization of drug users
- Over-crowded jails
- Burdened criminal justice as well as administrative system
- Costly, ineffective and inappropriate drug treatment service
- Unbalanced law enforcement
- Inadequate treatment in health and harm reduction services

Having pointed out the adverse consequences, Ms. Gloria Lai suggested following innovative approach:

- Phasing out of compulsory detention of drug users
- Decriminalisation of drug use.
- Improved support for harm reduction.
- Search for other approaches such as finding an alternative to imprisonment in personal use offences.

3.4.3. **Findings**

There is need to study and examine the viability and appropriateness of innovative methods (tried out elsewhere) for India to deal with the large number of drug addicts, which currently eat away resources of the police that should have been best used against traffickers, and which unduly burden the justice delivery system and the prisons.

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3.5. Drug use reasons, prevention, treatment and rehabilitation- is containment possible?

(Session-7:Chaired by Mr. Devendra Dutt, Member, INSA)

3.5.1. **The Issue**

In order to appropriately respond to the drug problem in the North-East, it is necessary to ascertain why and which of the illicit drugs and substances are commonly used in the North-East and further, to know whether the current prevention, treatment and rehabilitation policies are good enough to deal with the drug abuse problem in the region and if not, what needs to be done to obtain desirable results. Accordingly, the panellists were asked to deliberate on these issues and provide answers.

3.5.2. **Summary of discussions**

Fr. Pereira stated that there are several reasons for drug use. Sometimes, genetic reason is also there. He stated that drug use can be prevented through awareness against it. Then, there should be skills to detect and prevent drug use. There is also need for improved value system. As regards treatment of addicts, Fr. Pereira stated that there is no one particular mode. Rehabilitation has to be community based. There should be self-help groups in affected areas and psycho-spiritual element should also be part of rehabilitation process.

Dr. Mandeep Singh Tuli, DIG of Police, Gangtok observed that rehabilitation has to be a very concrete programme. He also suggested that every senior officer must visit 2-3 rehabilitation centres every month to oversee that they are working properly.

Mr. Dineshwar Hijam Singh, an activist from Manipur stated that there could be different reasons for different persons to become addicts. Some people just experiment with drugs and in the process become addicts. Lack of means of recreation too in some cases leads to drug addiction. Lack of opportunities (education, economic, employment, entertainment, sport etc.) also impels people to find solace in drugs. In Manipur, frequent strikes, bandhs, blockades too lead to depression making people take to drugs. Easy availability of drugs also encourages and facilitates drug addiction, according to Mr. Singh. Further, there are no prevention programmes given the high potential of drug addiction in the North-East, he pointed out.

A participant who stated that he was a Zila Parishad Member from Manipur bemoaned that containment of drug use is not possible for the reason that those who are charged with responsibility to prevent it do not take this responsibility seriously. Further, local youth is not involved in efforts to contain drug use. There is lack of rehabilitation centres. Even the existing centres have failed in their duty. One returns from the rehabilitation centre as a greater addict.

Mr. Gaidon Tamang, Project Director, Sikkim Rehab Centre said an addict does not cease to be a human being, but he is looked down upon. Infact, an addict is a human being, but one, who looks down upon him is not, he said emphasizing need for a greater humane approach towards addicts.

One of the lady participants interjected that her husband is an addict but she loves him. She suggested that INSA must speak to authorities to have awareness programmes for children and young generations.

3.5.3. **Findings**

What emerged from the discussions was that there is no one single reason why people start taking drugs. As there are different reasons, containment is not possible, unless a multi-pronged approach is adopted to contain the problem of drug use. Discussions pointed out inadequacy of preventive programmes and treatment and rehabilitation facilities in the North-East.

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3.6. **Drug demand reduction strategies-Treatment facilities & problems of drug related HIV in the North-East**

(Session- 8 : Chaired by Fr. Joe Pereira, Managing Trustee, Kripa Foundation)

3.6.1. **The Issue**

It is important to review demand reduction approaches adopted in the North-Eastern States, including the existing treatment facilities to control drug abuse as well as problems of drug related HIV in the region as also the adequacy or otherwise of the measures being taken to deal with the problem.

3.6.2. **Summary of discussions**

Dr. (Ms.) Yeni Nabam, Clinical Psychologist, Arunachal State Hospital, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh stated that we must use whatever is available for demand reduction. We must teach parents to become counsellors and take up counselling in villages. Self-help through awareness and knowledge would be the best. She also recommended that skill development to earn alternative means of livelihood can also be useful. Dr. Nabam also informed that the few treatment and rehabilitation centres that exist in the State of Arunachal Pradesh were not adequate.

Mr. Abou Mere, Director, Kripa Foundation and Advisor Nagaland Users Network, Kohima stated that he was a drug addict and may best be called a drug activist. He complained that strategies adopted in Manipur and Nagaland had gone wrong. People are shot dead. Addicts are sent to jail and come back as hard core criminals. Policies being adopted bring more harm than good. The strategy that would work should be under-pinned by love and not punishment. He further stated that without treatment, we can reduce demand. Due to intravenous drug use, HIV had become very common in the past in Manipur and Nagaland but now, it is coming down, he added.

Gaidon Tamang, Project Director, Sikkim Rehab Centre said that best strategy for drug demand reduction is: "I learn from you and you learn from me". He said that in their centre, they are trying to give back dignity to the drug addict. Drug addict cannot be treated like any other patient, he said. Focus too must be on alcohol, which according to him acts as a gateway drug.

Mr. Tia Akum, Coordinator (Boru), Prodigal's Home, Dimapur, Nagaland said that most of the drug users are drivers, mechanics and so on. Law enforcement authorities put them in jail. Stigma gets attached to them. They come out with an attitude of revenge. He also bemoaned that rehabilitation centres do not have adequate money.

Mr. Dineshwar Hijam Singh, Activist, Imphal made a presentation according to which majority of drug users in Manipur are youth of the age between 14 and 40 years. It is estimated that there are 14,000 drug users in Imphal alone of which 90 % are injecting drug users (IDUs). Number of new users is on the rise. More than 90 % of IDUs are HCV positive. According to his presentation, there are 22 drug treatment and rehabilitation centres in Manipur where treatment slots are 320. There is high treatment cost and detention is too long. Treatment centres are abstinence based. No alternative option or integrated programme is offered.

Mr. Anil Sharma, Member, INSA interjected that all concerned ministries have to come together to make the demand reduction strategies succeed.

Fr. Pereira observed that current strategies having not much succeeded, new strategies for rehabilitation and reintegration need to be thought of.

One of the participants observed that it was a matter of choice for the addict. He must decide what treatment he should undergo.

Prof. Bhagabati opined that people in rehabilitation centres should be trained how to deal with the addicts and their skills must be constantly updated. He further stated that stigma of being a drug user should be removed.

One of the participants stated that education system must come in to provide right information to children before they go to internet or newspapers.

A participant from Sikkim stated that some people do come out better from the rehabilitation centres and all do not come out worse. Minimum standards need to be maintained in these centres. Further, syllabus of schools should also be amended to create awareness against drug addiction.

Mr. Abou Mere stated that Nagaland has only one rehabilitation centre that is working. Rehabilitation centres are not regulated. Further there should be community detoxifications, he added.

Fr. Pereira pointed out that human right violations were taking place in rehabilitation centres. He informed that the World Health Organisation had prescribed Minimum Standards of Care, which should be applied. INSA should point out this fact to the authorities.

3.6.3. **Findings**

Deliberations suggested that there are diverse reasons for drug abuse; that current demand reductions strategies

are not producing desired results in the North-East; that there is need to have a re-look at them for possible improvements with greater emphasis on human aspect of the problem; and that existing treatment and rehabilitation facilities are inadequate both in terms of numbers and delivery.

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3.7. Illicit cultivation of opium in the North-East:An assessment

(Session- 9 : Chaired by Mr. Romesh Bhattacharji, President, INSA)

3.7.1 The Issue

Illicit cultivation of opium has been reported in different parts of the region, mainly, in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Some cultivation is also reported to exist in the sandy river beds of Brahmaputra in Assam. Accordingly, speakers from the three States as well as from the Central Government authorities were asked to elucidate the reasons of illicit cultivation, extent of it and also the steps being taken to curb such illicit cultivation in the region. Additionally, the NGOs and cultivators were also provided a platform to air their views on the issue.

3.7.2 Summary of discussions

Mr. Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Yangon speaking on his experiences in neighbouring Myanmar (drug situation in Myanmar impacts the North-East) stated that production of opium poppy has gone up in Myanmar in recent years. Syndicates are operating in illicit cultivation areas. Alternative development programmes have received only limited success in Myanmar.

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau pointed out that there is considerable illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis in the North-East and it needs to be curbed effectively.

Mr. B. Banerjee, Superintendent, Central Bureau of Narcotics, Kolkata read out a paper on behalf of the Narcotics Commissioner of India, Gwalior which acknowledged recurrence of substantial illicit cultivation of opium poppy in Arunachal Pradesh, highlighted the destruction programmes carried out by the CBN in Arunachal Pradesh in the recent years and CBN's strong determination to eradicate illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the North-East.

Dr. Sachin Shinde, IAS, Secretary to Governor of Arunachal informed the Conference that satellite survey of the area under opium cultivation should be done. Further, an assessment of persons cultivating the poppy also needs to be done. He pointed out that all tribes do not cultivate opium poppy. Among the tribes carrying out cultivation, some tribes consume opium heavily. There are two such tribes according to him. Opium consumption is now coming down in Dibang valley in Arunachal. Speaking on adverse impact of opium consumption, Dr. Shinde stated that opium use is adversely affecting the potency to re-produce of tribes that heavily use it. It is smaller tribes which are getting affected. He stated that in some areas, produce of opium is as high as 30 kg. per acre. Area under cultivation is thousands of acres. So, cumulative quantity of opium production in Arunachal would be quite huge. He suggested that to begin with, a corrective plan for one affected village should be developed on pilot basis and completed in specified time. If the plan succeeds, it could be replicated, he suggested.

Mr. H. C. Baruah, Asstt. Curator, Changlang Museum submitted a paper 'titled as 'A study on opium abuses in Changlang district: Remedial solution". According to the paper, Changlang district has problem of illicit cultivation and drug addiction. Main occupation of the people in the district is agriculture. People consider opium poppy as cash crop. Though opium is cultivated in some circles of the district, it is available for consumption in the entire district. According to Mr. H C Baruah, the opium produce is only for local consumption. Further, drugs are supplied into this area from Myanmar across the border and also come from other north-eastern

States. According to Mr. Baruah, District administration of Changlang has in collaboration with NGOs, panchayat members, and Gaon Buras taken a number of corrective measures such as-

- Organisation of 7 day de-addiction camps
- Training on alternative crops and awareness about NDPS Act provisions
- Distribution of seeds of alternative crops in poppy growing areas
- Police action against drug pedlars
- Destruction of poppy crops.

Mr. H C Baruah also observed that no NGO is active in the area of drug de-addiction in Changlang district.

Mr. Gosailum Kri, Chairman, Co-op and a lawyer and also projecting himself as spokesman for opium cultivators in Anjaw district of Arunachal Pradesh disputed the data of consumption usually quoted. He said that data collected is not correct. Only 5% people use opium. He gave his theory on why people cultivate opium. According to him, invention of television has made possible for people to see mobiles, cars and grand buildings. But from where money would come to buy these goods as development has not reached this area which are difficult and hence opium is cultivated there. He further stated that opium is the best sedative. Old people who suffer from painful diseases take it. In 1996, the Supreme Court had banned timber-felling, so people started opium cultivation. The opium seed had started coming from Punjab, so he claimed. After opium started to be grown, demand for it increased. Mr. Gosailum Kri questioningly asked that if they were not provided an alternative, why the Conference organisers call the opium cultivation 'illicit'? He stated that cultivators of opium must be given support and not sympathy. All the blame is apportioned to the poor people, all the rules are framed in Calcutta, he observed by translating a local adage. Mr. Gosailum Kri suggested following measures to wean away farmers from opium cultivation:

- Give money to the people and not to the government, for those who have money live in plains and those who have no money live on the hills.
- here must be elaborate, comprehensive and strict laws against the perpetrators and not against cultivators.
- Involve everyone in the exercise whether, user, addict or cultivator.
- Principal of balance must be maintained in dealing with opium cultivation. It is wrong to eradicate opium cultivation. People use leaves and the bulk of the plant. Through eradication, opium also goes and so also leaves and bulk of the plant. So a balanced approach is required.

Mr. Gosailum Kri requested that INSA should give these suggestions to the Government.

Mr. Anjite Menjao, Zila Parishad Member, Ambalu-Jo Foundation, Roing, Lower Debang Valley, Arunachal Pradesh stated that opium was not traditionally cultivated in Lohit and Anjaw. His community (Idu Mishmis) is only 14,000 strong. The community feels scared because of the problem. In Changlang, there are more widows as males are dying because of drug addiction. The population is going down. In the past, opium was used only for medicinal purposes and quantity of opium grown was very less. Now, consumption of opium has gone very high. Average age of opium users is coming down. 99 % cultivators are female because when males have poor health or die, it is the female who have to take the responsibility of cultivation. It is now difficult to change the perception of the people. When campaigning against drug addiction failed, their group had started affixing the posters of pedlars on the walls. It had some impact. Mr. Menjao further stated that addicts are now getting recruited as constables in the police department. When they are posted in other areas they carry opium with them. He claimed that 50% of police are involved in drug trade and abuse. He suggested that Arunachal Police should have a drug testing system for their constables. INSA should go to district and village level and campaign against drug abuse. He further stated that four districts have only one college in Tezu. But even in the compound of this college, opium is cultivated. He informed that their group is now having educated youth with them to campaign against drugs.

Mr. Dineshwar Hijam Singh, Activist, Imphal in his presentation indicated that there is poppy cultivation in Churachandpur, Imphal, Senapathi and Ukhrul districts of Manipur. He also stated that illicit cultivation has been taken over by cartels. Poppy cultivation is more profitable than paddy cultivation, according to Mr. Singh. He also added that heroin laboratories have started working.

3.7.3. **Findings**

There is extensive illicit cultivation of opium poppy in Arunachal (Anjaw, Changlang, Lohit, Roing, Tirap and Yingkiong districts) and Manipur (Churachandpur, Imphal, Senapathi and Ukhrul districts), and in pockets of Upper Assam (Tinsukia district), and Nagaland (Mon and Mokokchung districts). The cultivation is primarily for personal use and sale and also meets the cultural and medicinal requirement of the community. What propels the cultivation is the desire to earn much higher income than what traditional cultivation provides. Attempts by enforcement agencies to curb the illicit cultivation have not yielded desired results.

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3.8. Alternative development- Concept and evaluation

(Session- 10: Chaired by Mr. JSR Khathing, Member, INSA)

3.8.1. **The Issue**

Opium is known to have been grown traditionally in several parts of India including in the North- East. It is claimed that opium cultivators have depended upon opium farming for earning their livelihood and used opium/ poppy seeds for medicinal/ culinary purposes. Experience shows that it is not easy to compel the growers to stop this practice overnight by prohibiting such cultivation by law. This has given rise to the concept of 'Alternative Development' as a humane means of weaning the cultivators away from illicit cultivation of opium poppy. In the backdrop of problem of illicit cultivation in the North-East, the conference was exposed to this concept and an evaluation of how far the concept has been successful in different parts of the world and in the surrounding region.

3.8.2. **Summary of discussions**

Mr. Martin Jelsma of Trans National Institute, Amsterdam explaining the concept of 'alternative development' stated that what is to be tackled through the alternative development is an illegal market of demand and supply. It is therefore important that while devising an alternative development plan, local consumption aspect has to be examined and a package of alternatives offered. The alternatives should not affect the demand side, to begin with. He further stated that some projects have succeeded and some have failed. Alternative development should provide viable crops substitution and job opportunities. For the success of an alternative development project, a relationship of trust with the community is a must. Further, it is important to balance alternative development with crop eradication. The alternative development plan offers an alternative to existing problems where people come in conflict with law enforcement and suffer human rights violations. He pointed out that to destroy the crop of one who has no alternative is a human rights violation because there is a right not to remain hungry. He further stated that there are guidelines issued by the United Nations in respect of alternative development. Alternative development may change the destination of crop from illicit to licit, i.e., for medicinal use.

Mr Gosailum Kri, a lawyer and also projecting himself as spokesman for opium cultivators in Anjaw while expressing his views on the possibility of alternative development plans suggested that area specific programmes should be developed; 80% financial aid should be given for growing rubber trees and 100 % financial aid should be given for tea plantation; and that if good programmes are implemented, there would be no problem in giving up opium habit

Ms. Rekhilu Marap, a farmer from Naraliang, Anjaw stated that illicit cultivation of opium is resorted to under economic compulsion. They have to educate their children for whom they require money and the money comes from opium cultivation.

Another lady from Anjaw District aired similar views and complainingly stated that they put lot of labour in opium cultivation but police is sent to destroy the same. They have attempted at cardamom cultivation but the same has failed. They must be shown the way out of the situation they are in.

Another person from Anjaw stated that they know that opium is bad. But they have to educate their children and therefore carry out opium cultivation under economic compulsion.

Mr. Pranjal Saxena wanted to know if there was any alternative business when the entire village grew opium.

Mr. Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae Fah Luang Foundation, Yangon gave an expose' on an alternative development project called 'Doi Tung Alternative Development Project' in Thailand. This project is under way in an area of 150 sq km inhabited by 6 ethnic groups. In 1987, the area had extensive poppy cultivation, drug abuse, prostitution, fighting and insurgency. In 1999, forest cover in this area had come down to 28% and annual household income was 1100 US \$. It was noticed that drug and social problems were only symptoms. Root cause was poverty and lack of opportunities. It was decided to solve the problems by attacking the root cause. 3 'S' model, i.e., survival, sufficiency and sustainability was implemented. Sustainability meant use of natural resources in balance with the environment. Reforestation was started in 1989 and was closely monitored and supervised. Trees started growing in 1991. Private sector was roped in and people were helped in the area of health, livelihood and education. Daily wages were paid for the work done and close communication was maintained with the community. Cash crops of Coffee and Macadamia were adopted. Villages were given 50% ownership of coffee trees. Whole family could work together. People changed from opium farmers to forestry workers. Landscaped gardens were also developed. People became grassroots entrepreneurs. Man and nature started living in harmony. Food, handicrafts, horticulture and tourism developed in the area and Doi Tung became a brand. Local wisdom was used. Coffee value chain was started. The result was that in 2010, annual family income rose to 8369 US \$. Higher education improved very considerably in the community. All profits were ploughed back for social development. Reason for the success of this alternative development project was that all stake holders namely Central Government, local leaders and grassroots community were involved in the project. On conclusion of the expose', Mr. Hkam Awng observed that each area requires a different kind of alternative development project but the Doi Tung project could be studied to see if anything can be drawn therefrom for starting an alternative development programme in the poppy cultivation affected areas in the North-East.

Mr. Romesh Bhattacharji observed that for alternative development, first thing required to be done is to revive registration of the addicts. Once this need for opium is legally satisfied, eradication should start. He also said that alternative development is a panacea that has not worked anywhere. He further stated that the area having illicit cultivation was extremely backward two decades ago. Not as much now. Education is almost free, job opportunities for employment and self employment are many, and all kinds of communications have improved immensely. Earlier there would be one bus in a fortnight. These days there are several buses a day and in addition there are numerous taxis all owned by people there.

A participant observed that though there are crops but there is no market for them. The gap between the crop and the market has to be bridged for a successful alternative development plan.

3.8.3. **Findings**

The perception that lack of development alone leads to illicit cultivation does not seem to be relevant in respect of the North-East. In fact, despite considerable development, illicit cultivation is persisting and seems to have been taken over by traffickers. It is not marginal farmers who only are carrying it on. There are affluent and

powerful individuals who are cultivating opium in very large areas. It is, thus, doubtful if the Doi Tung type of alternative development would work here.

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DAY - 3

3.9. Illicit Cultivation

(Day 3: Session -11:Chaired by Mr. Dalbir Singh, Member, INSA)

3.9.1. The Issue

Illicit cultivation of opium and cannabis in the region is a serious issue. The panelists were, therefore, called upon to discuss threadbare how it affects the region and the reasons why it has not been able to curb such a practice despite the existing legislation and enforcement.

3.9.2. Summary of discussions

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau informed the Conference that illicit cultivation was not confined to the North-East alone. He referred to similar problem in the West Bengal where people had resorted to illicit cultivation for the purpose of poppy seeds. But traders also started approaching the cultivators for poppy straw. Subsequently opium stock was also found in the villages. Taking this example, Mr. Sahoo stated that originally opium was cultivated for religious, cultural and medicinal purposes. Later on it became source of livelihood. Then it came to be grown for profits. He also gave the example of Jharkhand where people from outside came and told the cultivators how to cultivate opium. This resulted in transformation from peaceful cohabitation with nature to cultivation of opium poppy resulting in drug trafficking. Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau observed that illicit cultivation was harmful and willingness to stop this unlawful activity must come from within the society.

Mr. Gosailum Kri, a lawyer and also claiming to be spokesman for the opium cultivators in Anjaw, Arunachal stated that to begin with it is an adventure to take opium. Opium also gives a feeling of friendship and this is how one gets into addiction. Opium use results in postponement of disease. But, the addicts gradually become poor. According to Mr. Kri, corruption is the main reason for addiction. As regard the effects of cultivation of opium, Mr. Gosailum Kri stated that there was no negative effect thereof. People go in for it because there is no other alternative. Poppy cultivation gives higher income. Traditionally, people in Arunachal are peaceful. Law is being used by the stronger to discipline the weaker. Law should be changed and opium cultivation should be permitted. Mr. Kri pleaded that even if there were some addicts, cultivation of opium poppy should still be allowed for economic reasons. However if the wife of an officer cultivates opium, she should be stopped, said Mr. Kri apparently stressing that those in authority and those who are rich should not be allowed to cultivate opium.

Mr. James Kabang Lego, Dy. SP, from SP Office Khonsa, District Tirap, Arunachal Pradesh stated that people on Myanmar side are cultivating hectares and hectares of opium upto international border with India. Indian authorities destroy opium cultivation on Indian side. He also mentioned that Dr. Sachin Shinde while earlier posted in that district had done good work but now people have again relapsed into inaction.

Ms. Sumila Linggi, Asstt. General Secretary, Enjalumenda Women's Empowerment Forum, Roing, Lower Dibang Valley, Arunachal stated that in the area she comes from, opium cultivation is nil. She further stated that there is lack of awareness of adverse effects of opium use. There is large number of school dropouts because of this. There is also leniency on the part of law enforcers. There is increase in violence due to alcohol use. Addicts use both alcohol and opium. She narrated the horrible incident of an alcohol and opium addict beating up his wife for several hours. He continued to beat her even after she was dead and her dead body was found suckling her hungry baby. She requested that INSA should do something to solve drug use problem in her neighborhood.

Mr. Rezina Mihi, Chairman, Dibang Indigenous Peoples Association, Upper Dibang Valley, Anini, informed that there was no poppy cultivation in his area, but such cultivation in other areas adversely affects his locality. He stated that even when people were starving, opium was being dropped from helicopter hidden in food packets. Even though there is no cultivation in his area, half of the population is consuming opium. He suggested that INSA should bring all legislators, administrators, political leaders and society leaders under one banner and create awareness against drug use and stop the poppy cultivation.

Ms Ananya Ray, Chief Commissioner of Customs, Shillong interjected that lack of opportunities could be one of the main reasons for illicit cultivation in the North-East.

A participant suggested that cultivation of cannabis and opium poppy should be licensed.

A journalist from Arunachal stated that people's perception in Arunachal Pradesh about cultivation is different in different areas. Opium cultivation persists in Arunachal Pradesh not because people are poor. It is there because people want to grow rich; they want to buy cars; and they want to own palatial homes. Politicians also do not want to offend voters and therefore do not stop illicit cultivation. So things are going wrong. Cardamom and oranges are also profitable. People should be helped in cardamom cultivation. Proper roads and local markets should be developed to make them remuneratively marketable.

3.9.3. Findings

Poverty and lack of opportunity alone is not the reason for the spread of illicit cultivation in the North-East. There are tribes in the opium cultivation area that do not indulge in such cultivation despite being part of similar economic and geographical milieu. It is mainly the greed for more money that now impels and promotes illicit cultivation, more so in case of commercial level cultivators. Cultivation is now commercially driven. A strong political will is needed to stop the practice of illicit cultivation of opium.

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3.10. Relevance of current drug control strategies

(Session- 12: Chaired by Mr. Devendra Dutt, Member, INSA)

3.10.1. The Issue

Despite stringent legislative and enforcement measures, it has not been possible to achieve satisfactory results in controlling illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs. This makes one think whether there is need to have a fresh look at the strategies adopted and whether there are new approaches that need to be tried out. Accordingly, international and national experts participating in the Conference were asked to discuss the relevance of current drug control strategies and also to make suggestions on possible improvements in them.

3.10.2. Summary of discussions

In the context of drug control strategies, Mr. Tapan K. Satpathy, Under Secretary, Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, very lucidly explained the objectives for which the National Fund for Drug Abuse Control is available and he further explained how one can apply for a grant from this Fund. He volunteered to help and guide those agencies in governmental or non-governmental sectors who wished to obtain financial assistance for fighting drug problem.

Mr. Ranjan Sahoo, Deputy Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau referred to the laws on control of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and precursors and how they are to be implemented to control the drug problem in the North-East.

Mr. Jenpu Rongmei, President, Young's Club, Dimapur, Nagaland suggested that as a part of drug control strategy, education department should include anti-drug awareness in its syllabus.

Dr. Nuno Capaz, Ministry of Health, Portugal explained in detail how decriminalization of drug users is a very good strategy inasmuch as law enforcement agencies are relieved of the burden of dealing with the drug users who are in large numbers and they can deal with the drug traffickers more effectively. Jails get de-crowded. Burden of the justice system gets relieved. Drug addicts become more amenable to treatment and rehabilitation.

Gloria Lai, Senior Policy Officer, International Drug Policy Consortium, Bangkok, Thailand, China and Japan too emphasised how the current drug control strategy in Thailand, China and Japan has not produced desired results. She also emphasised the need for new strategies that are humane and allow the enforcement authorities to concentrate on interdiction of traffickers rather than spending their resources on dealing with drug users.

Mr. Dineshwar Hijam Singh, Activist, Imphal through his presentation found fault with current policy of dealing with drug users and thereby attempting to reduce demand for drugs. He stated that intervention programmes are not guided by effective policies on primary prevention. They are designed only to attend to people who have fallen to drugs. He stated that a drug policy in the context of the North-East must address the following issues:

- Drug policy must be State specific.
- State policy must decriminalise drug use if the same is not legalised.
- Drug policy should allow regulated cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis.
- Drug policy should provide for coordination among supply reduction, demand reduction & harm reduction.
- Drug policy must provide for primary prevention of drug use.
- Drug policy must emphasise respect for human rights of drug users.
- Drug policy must look at the prison problems faced by drug users.
- Drug policy should address to HIV treatment issues which are related to drug use.
- Drug policy should involve drug user community while planning programmes relating to drug users and their implementation.

Mr. Dineshwar Hijam Singh in his presentation further stated that preventive initiative should include the following;

- Youth development services such as entrepreneurship, games and sports.
- Inclusion of drug prevention in the curriculum of schools and colleges.
- Coordination with local youth clubs.
- Effective economic rehabilitation programme for those who have completed treatment
- Special programmes for school/college dropouts

3.10.3. Findings

Drug control strategy has to necessarily consist of efficient law enforcement on the supply side and effective demand reduction and harm reduction measures on the demand side of the drug problem. Law enforcement must focus primarily on big traffickers rather than frittering away their energy and resources on drug users. Demand reduction and harm reduction measures should now draft in innovative measures of proven efficacy?

4. CONCLUSIONS

4.1. INSA has analyzed the views expressed by the speakers/panellists/participants during various sessions of the Conference. INSA's findings thereon have been briefly recorded under sub-paras 3.1 to 3.10 above.

4.2. INSA has categorized the deliberations during the Conference into following broad issues:

- Illicit cultivation of opium poppy/cannabis in the north-East.
- Requirement of alternative development programmes in the North-East.
- Drug addiction in the North-East, and treatment and rehabilitation of drug addicts.
- Innovating drug control strategies.

4.3. INSA's conclusions on the above issues are given in subsequent sub-paras.

4.3.1. Illicit cultivation of opium Poppy/cannabis in the North-East

- There is a widespread illicit cultivation of opium poppy in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur. Opium poppy is also cultivated in some pockets in upper Assam and in Mon and Mokokchung districts of Nagaland. Cannabis cultivation mainly takes place in Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.
- INSA found no evidence to substantiate argument generally given that such cultivation is justified by 'economic compulsion' or traditional, cultural, religious or medicinal considerations. Greed for money is the main reason for the illicit cultivation. The fact that some tribes in the opium cultivation area do not indulge in such cultivation despite their being part of similar economic and geographical milieu proves the point.
- Illicit cultivation begets drug trafficking apart from ensuring easy local availability of the drugs; thereby contributing to drug addiction in the cultivation and surrounding areas.
- Illicit cultivation is now controlled by traffickers. Cultivators engaged in illicit cultivation can be divided into big and small cultivators based on the size of area under cultivation by them.
- The big cultivators are affluent and powerful persons in the area. They cultivate opium poppy only for profit. There is not even a perceived sense of economic or other compulsion whatsoever in their case to indulge in this illegality. They are professional traffickers.
- The small cultivators grow opium primarily for their personal use and barter. They make a little more income to make life a little more convenient. Addicts among small farmers necessarily need the opium for personal use.
- Activities of both the big cultivators and small cultivators are illegal, because cultivation of opium poppy or cannabis irrespective of the status of the cultivator is banned by law. Yet, the two stand out as different from each other in several respects. For instance, area of individual cultivation by the big cultivators is very large when compared with that of a small cultivator. Motive of cultivation by a big cultivator is nothing but avarice despite the fact that he/she is quite prosperous by local standards. Small cultivators (large numbers of them are addicts) engage in cultivation primarily to obtain opium for their personal requirements and to make their lives a little more comfortable than the one afforded by conventional crops such as paddy.

4.3.2. Requirement of alternative development programmes in the North-East

- As highlighted earlier, illicit cultivation of opium poppy or cannabis is not the result of poverty or lack of development alone.
- Conceptually, the areas affected by illicit cultivation may not justify launching of a major alternative development programme in the North-East. The fact still remains that illicit cultivation has continued

for a long time in some of these areas, and has drastically increased in the last decade. Developmental efforts have not benefitted majority of the cultivators to the desired extent; and general poverty prevails among many in the cultivation areas. All these factors combined with vested interests create an ideal ground for persistence of the illicit cultivation. Therefore, rather than launching a major alternative development programme, the government needs to increase the pace of all round development in the remote areas that are still cut off. Major skill development programmes should be launched so as to help them generate income from sources other than agriculture. Law enforcement should continue to be an important component of any such scheme launched by the Government. Sports, educational and recreational infrastructure for youth should be developed.

4.3.3. **Drug addiction in the North-East and treatment and rehabilitation**

4.3.3.1. Drug addiction in the North-East:

- No exact data on number of drug addicts in the North East and drugs consumed by them is available. However, INSA's survey of 2010 in two poppy cultivating districts, namely, Anjaw and Lohit of Arunachal Pradesh had thrown up a data which was quite alarming.
- The speakers representing NGOs and representatives of some tribes had highlighted the fact in no uncertain terms that drug addiction was of a very high order with very substantial social and economic cost to the society.
- Easy availability of the drugs, frustration in the society, unemployment amongst the youth, lack of recreational means for the youth, troubled conditions in certain areas were recounted as reasons for the drug addiction. There could be many more.

4.3.3.2. Treatment and rehabilitation facilities in the North-East:

Based on the near unanimous views expressed by the speakers, panellists, and participants during the Conference on the number, status and functioning of treatment/ rehabilitation facilities, the following inference can be drawn:

- Existing number of treatment/rehabilitation facilities is extremely inadequate.
- Number of trained personnel to treat and help rehabilitate the recovering addicts is also insufficient.
- There is no updating of the skills of the personnel based on new research and developments in the areas of de-addiction, detoxification, counselling, rehabilitation, etc.
- Existing treatment/ rehabilitation facilities suffer from lack of expertise and finances.

4.3.4. **Innovating drug control strategies**

Presentations made by foreign experts during the Conference on innovations made in drug control policies such as decriminalisation of drug users are reported to have yielded positive results. Decriminalising drug use has not resulted in an increase in drug using population. At the same time, law enforcement resources could be directed more against major drug trafficking syndicates rather than against drug users.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on above findings and conclusions, INSA's recommendations are as follows:

5.1. **Illicit cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis**

5.1.1. Illicit cultivation of opium poppy:

5.1.1.1. Law against illicit cultivation needs to be enforced. Current strategy of ritualistically sporadic destruction of illicit opium poppy cultivation mainly along the roads and involving small cultivators would not do. There is urgent need to modify and refine the current strategy. Therefore, INSA recommends that ideally, illicit crop destruction programme must include phases as described below:

- Pre-destruction awareness programme: As suggested by His Excellency, the Governor of Arunachal Pradesh, an extensive awareness campaign by the CBN & NCB in collaboration with the local administration should be conducted informing the cultivators just before the sowing season that they must not cultivate the illicit crop, and that if they do, they would be legally proceeded against apart from suffering destruction of the crops.
- Registration of addicts: Since it is the small cultivators and or members of their family who are primarily addicted to opium, destruction of their poppy crop places them at the mercy of the traffickers for meeting their requirements for opium. It is essential that such addicts receive the opium for their personal consumption from the Government till they are cured of their addiction. INSA therefore recommends that ideally, one-time registration of opium addicts should precede destruction of opium poppy crop in the illicit opium cultivation area in Arunachal Pradesh so that addicts in this area do not have to depend on traffickers on eradication of illicit cultivation.
- Destruction of poppy cultivation: Major cultivators quite often carry out cultivation in large tracts located in areas not easily accessible. Maximum yield of illicit opium arises from such plots. Such plots escape destruction exercises. As such, INSA recommends that-
 - Survey (after mid-February when poppy flowers bloom) by helicopter of big plots should precede destruction exercise, because survey by helicopter alone can help identify such plots in view of their difficult location.
 - Exercise should begin with destruction of illicit poppy crop in such plots to be followed by poppy crop destruction in plots of small cultivators.

5.1.2. Illicit cultivation of cannabis:

- Attempts to destroy illicit cannabis cultivation must continue and recommendations made above in respect of opium cultivation would also apply in respect of illicit cannabis cultivation with suitable minor modifications in the context of actual situation on the ground.
- INSA suggests that simultaneously, India should also take cognisance of developments taking place elsewhere in the world in the approach of the governments towards cultivation of cannabis. Any review of approach would have relevance for illicit cannabis cultivation in the North-East.

5.2. **Requirement of Alternative Development programmes in the North-East**

Alternative development is also development. Areas along the major roads in illicit opium poppy cultivation area in Arunachal have considerably benefitted from the development, yet greed for money force the people to indulge in poppy cultivation even in these areas. Though pace is slow and inefficient, development would also reach the interior areas without guaranteeing that people would give up illicit cultivation then.

INSA understands that following measures have been taken that should have weaned away the cultivators from illicit cultivation:

- subsidised supply of good quality seeds of viable alternative crops capable of yielding incomes better than the traditional crops.
- expert support during farmers, switch over to these new crops.
- financial support where gestation period of such crops is longer.

However, these measures have not yielded the desired results inasmuch as the illicit cultivation continues unabated. Therefore, INSA makes following recommendation:

Further additional measure as under should be taken:

- Facilitating transportation of their yield to places where it fetches a remunerative price, so that they are not exploited by middlemen.
- Guaranteeing minimum support prices of their yield.
- Review of scholarship scheme so as to make it wide-based and easily available to the needy.

5.3. **Drug addiction in the North-East and treatment and rehabilitation**

5.3.1. Drug addiction in the North-East:

INSA recommends that-

- An in-depth survey should be conducted in the North-East to find out, State-wise and district-wise, -
 - Number of drug addicts.
 - Drugs they use.
 - Reasons for drug use by them.
- Frequent and vigorous awareness raising programmes against drug addiction involving, among others, parents, families, communities, and youth groups should be organised in all the drug sensitive parts of the North-east. Such awareness programmes need to be undertaken by the concerned governmental/non-governmental organisations.
- Drug treatment programmes of expert determined duration should be implemented rather than short duration programmes.

5.3.2. Treatment and rehabilitation facilities in the North-East:

The Conference could not have the benefit of experts on demand reduction side working in or under the aegis of the Union Ministry of Health and Family Planning and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, as none of them attended the Conference even though they had accepted the invitation. Accordingly, viewpoints of these experts on the perception of the speakers and participants of the functioning as well as inadequacies of the treatment/rehabilitation facilities in the North-East were not available. However, the general perception suggests gross inadequacies in these facilities and also raises doubts about the efficacy of the existing facilities. As such, INSA recommends that the State Governments should -

- Realistically assess and then project their needs for skill and infrastructural up-gradation of the existing treatment and rehabilitation facilities and for setting up of additional facilities in the context of the extent and prevalence of drug addiction in the State.

- Approach training facilities such as the All India Institute of Medical Science's (AIIMS's) National Drug Dependence & Treatment Centre to upgrade the skills of medical and paramedical staff working in State's treatment and rehabilitation facilities.
- Allocate more funds to augment State's treatment and rehabilitation facilities and create more facilities, if so required.
- Approach the Government of India, if required, for allocation of funds from the National Fund for the Control of Drug Abuse.
- Facilitate augmentation of the service delivery capacity of NGOs engaged in counselling, treatment and rehabilitation of drug users.

5.4. **Innovating drug control strategies**

- In the light of experiments such as in Portugal (2001), Colombia (2012), Czech Republic (2010), Netherlands (1976) and even Argentina (2009 following the Ariola decision by the Supreme Court), an expert group should be set-up by the Central Government to study the viability and appropriateness of de-criminalising drug users as different from the drug traffickers.
- INSA recommends that India should take cognisance of developments taking place elsewhere in the world in the approach of the governments towards cultivation of cannabis. The government may also consider setting up of an expert group to study if there is need to review the total ban on cultivation of cannabis and permit cultivation in a regulated manner for certain specified purposes.-

3. ANNEXURES

**CONFERENCE ON ILLICIT DRUGS IN THE NORTH EAST:
SEARCHING FOR TRUTH AND SOLUTIONS**

Organised By : Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis (<http://narcoinsa.com/>)
Funded By : Government of India
Venue : Don Bosco Institute, Kharguli Hills, Guwahati, Assam, India (<http://dbi.org.in/>)
Dates : 5-7, December, 2013
Compere : Kawaldeep Kaur

AGENDA

Day 1(December 5, 2013)

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| #1 | 09.00 - 10.15 | Registration |
| #2 | 10.30 - 11.30 | Inauguration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome address by INSA (Dalbir Singh) • Key Note Address by Najib Shah, Director General Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, New Delhi • Inaugural address by H.E. Lt Gen Nirbhay Sharma PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) the Governor of Arunachal • Vote of Thanks (Devendra Dutt) |
| | 11.30 - 12.00 | Tea |
| #3 | 12.00 - 13.30 | International And National Drug Control Mechanisms Introduction: Dalbir Singh 1) Evolution of International Drug Policies & Conventions - History & analysis <u>Speaker:</u> Martin Jelsma, Trans National Institute, Amsterdam. (30 minutes) 2) Evolution of India's drug laws from 19th Century to the New Policy of 2012 <u>Speaker:</u> Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics Control Bureau, Kolkata (30 minutes) Followed by discussion |
| | 13.30 - 14.30 | Lunch |
| #4 | 14.30 - 16.00 | Is Law Enforcement Alone Sufficient To Reduce Drug Usage? (Panel discussion) Moderator : Romesh Bhattacharji Panellists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LH Sanga, Commissioner, Narcotics & Excise, Mizoram • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Director General, Narcotics Control Bureau • Prof. Dipesh Bhagabati, HOD, Psychiatry, GMCH, Guwahati • Dr. Nuno Capaz, Ministry of Health, Portugal • Fr. Joe Pereira, Kripa Foundation |
| | 16.00 – 16.15 | <u>Tea</u> |

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| #5 | 16.15 - 17.45 | <p>Narcotics & Precursors - State- wise Analysis</p> <p>Introduction: Devendra Dutt Speakers : (10 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics Control Bureau, Kolkata • Ms. Violet Baruah, IPS, Supdt. of Police, Narcotics, Assam • Mandeep Singh Tuli, IPS, DIG of Police, Gangtok, Sikkim • LH Sanga, Commissioner of Narcotics and State Excise, Mizoram |
| Day 2 (December 6, 2013) | | |
| #6 | 08.00 - 10.00 | <p>Innovations In Drug Policy Reforms -Experiments And Experiences From Other Countries</p> <p>Introduction: Ranjan Sahoo Speakers:(15 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Nuno Capaz, Ministry of Health, Portugal • Martin Jelsma,Trans National Institute, Amsterdam • Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae FAH Luhang Foundation, Yangon • Gloria Lai, Senior Policy Officer, International Drug Policy Consortium, Bangkok, Thailand, China and Japan |
| #7 | 10.00 - 11.30 | <p>Drug Use Reasons, Prevention, Treatment And Rehabilitation - Is Containment Possible? (Panel Discussion)</p> <p>Moderator: Devendra Dutt Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fr. Joe Pereira, Kripa Foundation • Prof. Dipesh Bhagabati, HOD, Psychiatry, GMCH, Guwahati • Dineshwar Hijam Singh, Activist, Manipur • Mandeep Singh Tuli, IPS, DIG of Police, Gangtok, Sikkim |
| | 11.30 - 11.45 | Tea |
| #8 | 11.45 - 13.15 | <p>Drug Demand Reduction Strategies, Treatment Facilities And Problem of Drug Related HIV In North East</p> <p>Introduction: Fr. Joe Pereira Speakers: (8 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Yeni Nabam, Clinical Psychologist, Arunachal State Hospital, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh • Gaidon Tamang, Project Director, Sikkim Rehab Centre • Tia Akum, Coordinator, Prodigal's Home, Dimapur Nagaland • Dineshwar Hijam Singh, Activist, Imphal • Prof. Dipesh Bhagabati, HOD, Psychiatry, GMCH, Guwahati • Abou Mere, Director, Kripa Foundation and Advisor Nagaland Users Network, Kohima • Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae FAH Luhang Foundation, Yangon (on his experiences in neighbouring Myanmar) |
| | 13.15 - 14.15 | Lunch |
| #9 | 14.15 - 15.45 | <p>Illicit Cultivation of Opium In The North East -An Assessment (Presentations on behalf of NCB, Customs and NE States Police & NGOs)</p> <p>Introduction:Romesh Bhattacharji</p> |

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|--------------------------|---------------|--|
| | | <p>Presentations by: (10 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae FAH Luhang Foundation, Yangon (on his experiences in neighbouring Myanmar) • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics control Bureau, Kolkata • Dr. Sachin Shinde, IAS, Secretary to Governor of Arunachal • B. Banerjee, Supdt., Central Bureau of Narcotics, Kolkata • H. C. Baruah, Asstt. Curator, Changlang Museum • Gosailum Kri , Chairman, Co-op, Lawyer & Opium Cultivators' Spokesman Anjaw, Arunachal • Ms. Anjite Menjao, Zila Parishad Member, Ambalu-Jo Foundation, Roing, Lower Debang Valley, Arunachal |
| | 15.45 - 16.00 | Tea |
| #10 | 16.00 - 17.30 | <p>Alternative Development- Concept and Evaluation</p> <p>Introduction: John Khathing Speakers: (10 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Jelsma, Trans National Institute, Amsterdam • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics control Bureau, Kolkata • Gosailum Kri , Chairman, Co-op, Lawyer & Opium Cultivators' Spokesman, Anjaw, Arunachal • Ms. Rekhilu Marap, Farmer, Naraliang, Anjaw • Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae FAH Luhang Foundation, Yangon • Romesh Bhattacharji, President, INSA |
| Day 3 (December 7, 2013) | | |
| #11 | 08.15 - 09.45 | <p>Illicit Cultivation</p> <p>(Panel discussion) Moderator: Dalbir Singh Panellists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics Control Bureau, Kolkata • Ms. Rakhi Linggi, General Secretary, Enjalumenda Women's Empowerment Forum, Roing, Lower Diband Valley, Arunachal • Gosailum Kri, Chairman, Co-op, Lawyer & Opium Cultivators' Spokesman Anjaw, Arunachal • Rezina Mihu, Chairman, Diband Indigenous Peoples Association, Diband Valley, Anini, Roing. • Hkam Awng, Director, Myanmar Programme, Mae FAH Luhang Foundation, Yangon |
| #12 | 09.45 - 11.15 | <p>Relevance Of Current Drug Control Strategies</p> <p>Introduction: Devendra Dutt Speakers: (8 minutes each)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloria Lai, Senior Policy Officer, International Drug Policy Consortium Bangkok, Thailand , China and Japan • Ranjan Sahoo, IRS, Dy. Dir. Genl., Narcotics control Bureau, Kolkata • Dr. Nuno Capaz, Ministry of Health, Portugal • Tapan K. Satpathy, Under Secretary, Deptt. of Revenue Ministry of Finance, Government of India • Jenpu Rongmei, President, Young's Club, Dimapur, Nagaland |
| | 11.15 - 11.30 | Tea |

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| #13 | 11.45 - 13.00 | Closing Session <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome address and summary of conference proceedings by Jogendra Singh, Member, INSA• Valedictory address by Chief Guest Ms. Ananya Ray, Chief Commissioner of Customs, Shillong• Vote of Thanks |
| | 13.00 - 14.00 | Lunch and Departure |

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Conference on Illicit Drugs in the North East: Searching for Truth and Solutions

Key Note Address

By

Najib Shah, Director General

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All over the world, narcotics have become a grave threat to the health and wellbeing of humanity. The story of India is no different; in fact more complicated. Illicit drug problem in India is unique in the sense of having both demand and supply readily available within the country. At the same time India remains a major transit country by virtue of its geographical location where it is sandwiched between the two major drug hubs of the world, the Golden Triangle in the east, and the Golden Crescent in the west. While transiting through India, narcotics leave a substantial footprint inside the country. The North Eastern region being closer to the Golden triangle and having porous international border faces a bigger challenge in combating illicit drug problem.

The spectrum of narcotics availability and abuse in India in general and north eastern region in particular is vast and complex, ranging from plant-based drugs to synthetic drugs, psychotropic substances to new psychotropic substances, and all kind of pharmaceutical preparations. In the past few decades, the abuse of such substances has reached such a high level of danger that its prevention and control have become increasingly significant.

Enforcement agencies have been making regular seizure of all kind of drugs in North East region. DRI has made considerable seizures of ganja and precursors in this area in last few years. Illicit cultivation of opium in the region continues unabated despite of eradication efforts by NCB and CBN along with state agencies every year. As head of lead Enforcement agency, I can assure that Law Enforcement alone is not sufficient to reduce drug problem. The ‘war on drugs’ be it US, Latin America or South East Asian Countries has not succeeded in eliminating the drug menace; drug use continues everywhere with new form of drugs emerging to vet the insatiable appetite of drugs.

The key to a successful drug strategy lies in the balance between supply and demand reduction strategies where on the one hand enforcement agencies make sure that every kind of supply of these drugs are curbed, and on the other, the demand for these drugs should be brought down by education and treatment.

Since drug menace cannot be tackled by enforcement alone, role of civil society becomes very crucial in handling the illicit drug problem. Here comes the contribution of agencies like **INSA: Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis** which are doing good work in providing for a platform for the “free, frank and unbiased interaction on all matters relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances amongst scholars, experts and government agencies”.

When I got the invitation to deliver the key note address by INSA which has some eminent colleagues and former DRI officers, I glanced through the website of INSA. I was quite impressed by the first line on the website which says **“To understand everything to do with narcotics”. And then the website mentions that “We ... try to find solutions for all kinds of headaches that narcotics cause.”**

I believe this is **the key** to tackle the narcotics problem which requires a comprehensive strategy. The drug problem has to be tackled in totality where one has to understand various causes and consequences of drug production, trafficking and consumption. One has to find out the reason if a farmer is growing illicit poppy what are its compulsions? Are there livelihood issues or criminality behind it? Answers to these issues would require an approach which has to take in to account all possible facets of the problem and it cannot be seen from one particular prism. Similarly finding the solutions would require a comprehensive approach with innovative and alternative methods.

I notice that the conference agenda covers almost the entire gamut of drug problems ranging from International and National Drug Control Mechanisms to the illicit drug problem in the north eastern region and will attempt to debate sustainable solutions including alternative development. I am confident that the debates, discussions and exchanges during the conference would go a long way in enhancing and enriching the think tank of drug abuse and make us more aware of the extent of the problem. At the same time, I am sure that this conference would contribute significantly towards concrete steps being initiated to reduce the levels of illicit cultivation, production and consumption of drugs and improved drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation facilities ultimately contributing to the development of the North Eastern Region.

I wish all the best to the organizers of the conference



SPEECH
OF
HIS EXCELLENCY
LT GEN NIRBHAY SHARMA, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD), GOVERNOR,
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
ON THE OCCASION
OF
CONFERENCE ON
“DRUGS IN THE NORTH EAST:
SEARCHING FOR TRUTH & SOLUTIONS”
ORGANISED BY
INSTITUTE FOR NARCOTICS STUDIES & ANALYSIS
AT DON BOSCO INSTITUTE, KHARGULI, GUWAHATI
ON 05 DECEMBER 2013

At the very outset, I would like to congratulate the esteemed members of Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis, New Delhi and officials of Government of India for organising this three-day conference on, “**Illicit Drugs in the North East searching for the truth and solutions.**” This conference is very relevant and timely.

INSA has organized this conference to supplement the ongoing governmental and non-governmental efforts to fight the menace of narcotics drugs in the North Eastern region. I am pleased to note that **important issues, like evolution of International drugs Policies and convention, India’s drug laws from 19th century to the new policy of 2012, enforcement policy and execution, illicit cultivation of opium and cannabis in the north east etc. are going to be discussed.** It reflects the genuine attempt of the organisers to go to the root cause of understanding the challenges due to illegal drugs and look at the way ahead in a comprehensive manner.

Participation of eminent personalities, policy makers, women and student groups, government officials from Narcotics Control Bureau, Customs and administration, cultivators, grass root workers and victims of illicit cultivation in this conference will definitely serve to cross fertilize policy debates, stimulating participants to exchange experiences and learn lessons. **I call upon all of you to join in the crusade against drugs abuse.**

I expect that this conference will result in enhancing regional cooperation among the participating States in matters of drug law enforcement and drug abuse control. It should also lead to a better assessment of the adequacy of drug abuse treatment and rehabilitation facilities in the region, and further stimulate the concerned agencies of the government for initiating appropriate action.

Historically, subcontinent India has been a traditional consumer of opium and various cannabis derivatives (bhanga, marijuana/ganja and hashish). These narcotics were mostly consumed for medicinal purposes, for recreation or during religious and social ceremonies. Earlier, almost all the demands for these drugs were met locally. Only a small quantity of hashish was smuggled in from Nepal and Pakistan. However, in the early 1980s, in the wake of inflow of heroin, which has widespread with disastrous consequences, drug trafficking became an issue of concern. In subsequent years, the large scale availability of synthetic and medicinal drugs and their abuse have added new dimensions to the concerns about drug trafficking.

Drug abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical, economic and psychological aspects. The disintegration of the old joint family system, absence of parental love and care in modern families, where both parents are working, decline of old religious and moral values etc lead to a rise in the number of drug addicts, who take drugs to escape hard realities of life.

It has led to increase in the crime rate. You are aware that drugs remove inhibition and impair judgment, egging one on to commit offences. Incidence of eve teasing, group clashes, assault and impulsive murders increase with drug abuse. Apart from affecting the financial stability, addiction increases conflicts and causes untold emotional pain for every member of the family. With most drug users being in the productive age group of 18-35 years, the loss in terms of human potential is incalculable.

The nexus between drug traffickers, organized criminal networks and terrorists has created a force powerful enough to cause instability in the country. Money generated through drug trade has also been used to fund various insurgent and terrorist movements. **The National Survey of 2004 points to the problem of India's population having twice the global (and Asian) average prevalence of illicit consumption, but also shows that the treatment resources available are not commensurate with the 'burden of work' (number of dependent drug users) requiring immediate treatment.**

India is wedged between the world's two largest areas of illicit opium production, the Golden Crescent and the Golden Triangle. This proximity has traditionally been viewed as a source of vulnerability, since it has made India both a destination and a transit route for opiates produced in these regions. The INCB report ranks Myanmar as second to Afghanistan in opium production, but this position could well change soon or may have already changed. In that North East India sits on the western corner of Myanmar's infamous Golden Triangle.

The North East region is known as a place with rampant use of drugs, high number of HIV and AIDS, regular ethnic conflict, poverty and unemployment. Politically and socially also, it has been a neglected region. Easy access and availability of illegal drugs and close proximity with places like Laos, Thailand and Myanmar have also contributed to it. Heroin and Spasmo, a painkiller drug, are commonly used by the addicts of this region. Strict laws against heroin trafficking in Mizoram in 1990s and in Manipur in 2000s resulted in shift to another form i.e. vein puncturing habit of injecting pharmaceutical products like dextropropoxyphene, which is a pain reliever. Cannabis(ganja) is widely used in places like Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura.

The North Eastern region of India borders Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Myanmar and Nepal. The total length of International border of this region measures 5437.15kilometers. Drugs trafficking, being a transborder criminal activity, gives new dimensions to the problem. Hence, such disturbing phenomenon in frontier states will create dangerous situation in terms of national security as well.

Coming to Arunachal, although a number of districts in the State are affected, in 2010, at the behest of Government of Arunachal Pradesh, INSA conducted an in-depth study in two of the worst affected districts of Eastern Arunachal Pradesh, namely Anjaw and Lohit. In its survey report INSA drew our attention to a number of **disturbing facts, including the trends in illicit cultivation, trafficking and irresponsible use of opium by young rural population. Simultaneously, the report highlighted the fact of grossly inadequate facilities for treatment and rehabilitation.** I have gone through the report and find it very insightful and it is receiving my utmost attention.

Having talked about **magnitude of the problem and its 'why'**, let me flag a few suggestions, which the esteemed participants

of the conference may debate. I believe, first thing is to **acknowledge the fact that, there is a problem of illicit drugs in the north east. Once we accept the problem and its gravity, looking for solutions is easier.**

First, talking about opium, it is observed that the Central Bureau of Narcotics(CBN) conducts destruction operations in the opium cultivating districts, when the opium is about to be harvested. Such destruction, during the time of harvesting creates resentment amongst local populace and there have been instances of resistance, sometimes violent against these attempts of the CBN. **While this Destruction Agency of the Government is very active in the region, the preventive wing of the Narcotics is almost defunct.** If the awareness campaign is conducted when the farmers are sowing these poppy seeds in the month of September and October, the local population cultivating these crops may decide not to cultivate opium. Therefore **I would like to recommend that activities of the concerned agencies should be synchronized, understanding the life cycle, geo-climatic, socioeconomic realities of the region.**

Secondly, the **preventive aspect of opium life cycle** is not complete, unless the opium cultivating farmers, who are willing to abandon this practice of opium cultivation, are provided with some alternative cash crops like large cardamom cultivation, Horticulture crops etc. There are few villages in Tirap District of Arunachal Pradesh, where the farmers have abandoned the practice of opium cultivation and successfully cultivating large cardamom in lieu of opium cultivation. Such initiatives need to be sustained.

Thirdly, regular and intensive **awareness campaign** in all the sensitive parts of the region should be undertaken pro-actively with active participation and contribution of civil society, NGOs, grass root and political leaders.

Fourthly, as Noble laureate and Bharat Ratna Nelson Mandela said, I quote **‘Education is the most powerful weapon, which you can use to change the world’**. We have to strengthen our education system further and create awareness about drug abuses. **Drug education should be included as a core component of the health curriculum in schools.** Setting up of support groups for parents to teach them how best to educate their children about the ill effects of substance abuse will ensure that younger generations are free from this menace.

Fifthly, there are many different tribes, faiths and communities in the whole of north east region. Arunachal Pradesh, for example is a home to 26 major tribes and 110 sub-tribes and minor tribes. If we **take up this subject at community level**, talk to the local community leaders, women in particular, different faith leaders, and churches about funding for youth clubs, art facilities and other activities to give local youth meaningful outlets, in place of spending time on the streets drinking and taking drugs, it can bring a positive change.

Sixthly, while the preventive action is undertaken by CBN and Police, as already mentioned, the **rehabilitation and counseling services are a major lacuna in NE region.** Therefore, there is strong case for establishment of rehabilitation-cum counseling sessions for drug addiction to be established in NE region. We need to strengthen and improve our counseling services and treatment programs for those with substance abuse problems in our community. It is a priority area and Central & State Governments will do well to focus on it, allot adequate funds for such facilities and also effectively monitor running of such centers and programmes.

In the ultimate analysis, I believe, the problem of illicit drugs in Northeast is a joint responsibility of Narcotic Control Bureau, Ministries and departments of Rural Development, Agriculture, Social Justice & Welfare and Health. **A single agency with representatives of these agencies should device a comprehensive policy for dealing with this problem of opium/illicit drugs in Northeast region.**

Above all, the Civil society as a whole has to rise collectively to take on this challenge.

As I conclude, on my own behalf also on behalf of people of North East, I convey good wishes for the successful conduct of this three-day conference on illicit drugs in the North East. I am confident that this initiative of INSA will be fruitful and we will have practical solutions to the challenges due to drugs menace. Also, **I would like INSA to follow up on its Report of 2010 and conduct awareness programmes and assist my State Government to draw out doable action plan. My Government will be in touch with you soon. I also look forward to this type of conference in different parts of North eastern region in the future.**

To those addicted to drugs, my message is:-

Addiction is a monster, it lives inside and feeds off you, takes from you, controls you and destroys you. Its a beast that tears you apart, rips out your soul, and laughs at your weakness. Its a stone wall that stands to keep you in and the rest out. Its a shadow that always lurks behind you, waiting to strike.

Finally, I would like to conclude my address with a poem by Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, which is very close to my heart:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,

Where knowledge is free

Where the world has not been broken up into fragments

By narrow domestic walls

Where words come out from the depth of truth

Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection

Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way

Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit

Where the mind is led forward by thee

Into ever-widening thought and action

Into that heaven of freedom,

my Father, let my country awake

Once again I congratulate INSA, led by its President Shri Romesh Bhattacharji and Secretary Shri Devendra Dutt for a grand initiative. I wish the conference all the success.

Thank you
Jai Hind.

Letter dated December 5, 2013 of Hon'ble Shri Paban Singh Ghatowar, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region and Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India.

पबन सिंह घटोवार
Paban Singh Ghatowar



D. O. No. 14/13
MCRD/CD/DonBosco/14/13/2013

पबन सिंघी (स्वतंत्र चार्ज)
उत्तर पूर्वी क्षेत्र विकास मंत्रालय
एवं
संसदीय कार्य मंत्रालय
सरकार, भारत
Minister of State (Independent Charge)
Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region
&
Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs
December 5, 2013

Dear Shri Devendra Dutt,

Thank you very much for your letter dated 21st October, 2013, inviting me as Chief Guest at the valedictory session of "Conference on Drugs in the North East – Searching for Truth and Solutions" at the Don Bosco Institute, being organized at Guwahati on 7th December, 2013.

Though I would have loved to be present amongst you all on the memorable day but due to ongoing Parliament Session, regrettably I will not be able to make it.

I wish the conference a grand success.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,


(Paban Singh Ghatowar)

Shri Devendra Dutt
Secretary,
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New Delhi - 110066



Participants engrossed in discussion with speaker



Group photograph of participants of the conference



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