

**Press Information Bureau
Government of India**

**Two-day ‘Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking’ for BIMSTEC Partner Nations
concludes in New Delhi**

New Delhi, February 15, 2020

The BIMSTEC ‘Conference on Combating Drug Trafficking’ concluded in New Delhi yesterday. Over two days of extensive deliberations, it provided an important platform for the Partner Nations to share ideas and exchange best practices required to combat the drug menace in the region.

The **geographical proximity to both Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle**, major opium production regions of the world, puts all the BIMSTEC Partner Nations in a very precarious position. India’s position is more vulnerable as we are sandwiched between Golden crescent and Golden Triangle. The bumper harvests of opium in Afghanistan for the last few years have given rise to increased supply of Heroin in all the BIMSTEC Nations. Another major concern for worry is the large number of Methamphetamine manufacturing facilities that are prevalent in some of the BIMSTEC countries. These facilities manufacture a large quantity of Methamphetamine which is further trafficked to all the BIMSTEC countries.

Another area of concern is **drug trafficking through sea route** that affects BIMSTEC Nations. While the Bay of Bengal facilitates trade worth billions of dollars, the drug traffickers also use this vast network to their advantage. Two recent seizures of 371 kg and 1156 kg Methamphetamine by Indian authorities from two vessels in the Bay of Bengal are two glaring examples of this facet. Further, the BIMSTEC region is one of the most thriving centres of pharmaceutical manufacture and trade. It is also in very close proximity to China, which is another leading country in the Pharma sector. This has also made the BIMSTEC region very vulnerable to the diversion and trafficking in Pharmaceutical Drugs.

The **developments in technology** have thrown a challenge to the drug law enforcement agencies. The use of darknet is one of the ugly facet of technological use in drug trafficking. The combination of darknet and courier /postal deliveries have made the narco/psychotropic trafficking more anonymous in nature. Keeping in mind these problems which are common to the BIMSTEC Nations and Indian subcontinent in particular, the various sessions of the conference were designed.

The first day of the conference i.e. 13.02.2020 witnessed two thematic sessions. The first session was on **Maritime Trafficking of drugs in the Region-Sharing of experiences by the BIMSTEC countries**. The session was chaired by Shri Krishnaswamy Natarajan, PTM, TM, Director General, Indian Coast Guard and co-chaired by the representatives from Sri Lanka and Thailand. The session witnessed detailed presentations by all the member Nations. The common factor among all the presentations was the increased trafficking of Heroin in the Bay of Bengal Region. The Chair and the Co-Chairs raised the concern about Methamphetamine and Ketamine trafficking through maritime routes. The recent seizures by the Coast Guarding forces called for more co-ordination and information sharing among the member Nations.

The second thematic session of the day was on the **Production & Trafficking of Methamphetamine in the Region** chaired by Shri Balesh Kumar, DG, DRI, India and co-chaired by Mr. Ye Win Aung of Myanmar and Police Major Suriya Singhakamol. The

presentations and the discussions revolved around the need for regional co-operation to tackle the problem of manufacture and trafficking of Methamphetamine in the region. Emergence of Afghanistan and Iran as major centres for plant based Methamphetamine was also shared by most members.

The final day of the conference began with a technical session on **Drug Trafficking and Darknet - Courier & Postal Interdictions**. This session witnessed the speakers from United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and prominent Indian technocrats. Mr. Sergey Kapinos, UNODC representative for South Asia, highlighted the significance of UNODC as an agency to provide necessary assistance to the member Nations. Shri Jayant Misra, Consultant (UNODC) and former DG, DRI discussed about capacity building measures deployed by UNODC that can be of utility to the member Nations. They envisaged a better intelligence/information sharing platform for the member Nations. The other eminent speakers of the panel were Prof. Ponnurangam Kumaraguru & Dr. Prabhat Kumar. The session was chaired by Dr. Gulshan Rai, Former National Cyber Security Co-ordinator, PMO. He deliberated on the various facets of darknet use and technological solutions for drug law enforcement agencies.

Keeping in mind the diversion and trafficking of Pharmaceutical drugs to which the BIMSTEC countries are subject to, the third thematic session on **'Trafficking of Pharmaceutical Drugs containing Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances'** was executed. This session was chaired by Dr. K. Bangarurajan, Joint Drug Controller General of India and co-chaired by representatives from Bangladesh and Nepal. The deliberations were undertaken especially w.r.t. the possible diversion of the lawfully manufactured narco/psychotropic drugs and trafficking of Pharmaceutical drugs. The best practises among the various stakeholders were showcased.

The final thematic session of the conference was dedicated towards the **demand and harm reduction mechanisms used by the member Nations**. This session was chaired by Shri R. Subrahmanyam, Secretary, Department of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India and co-chaired by Mr. Ugyen Tshering of Bhutan and Mr. Sanjoy Kumar Chowdhury of Bangladesh. The rehabilitation measures and community partnership approach was the main focus of the session. The best practises were shared by the members.

The Conference brought out the best practises followed in terms of Drug Law Enforcement in BIMSTEC nations. All the BIMSTEC nations reaffirmed their commitment to increased co-operation.

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