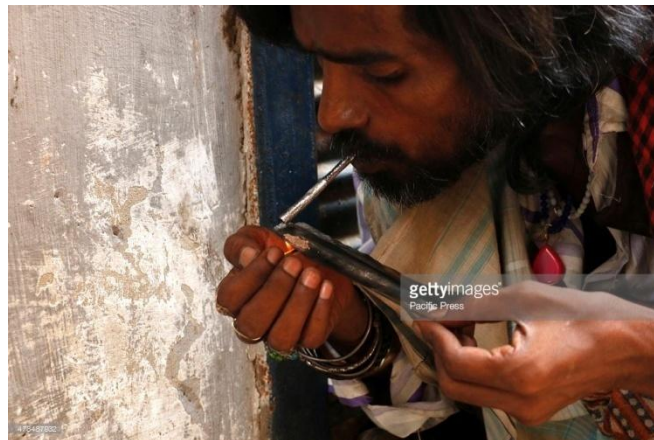


26th June – United Nations Day against Drug Abuse



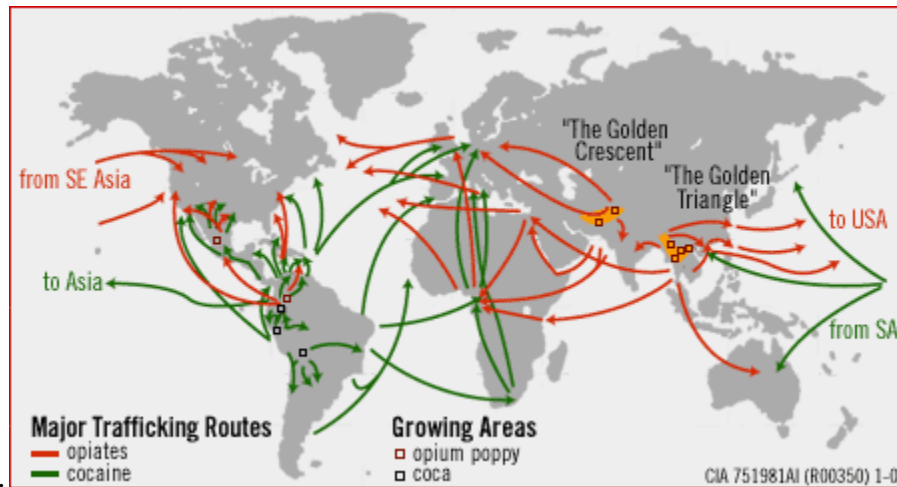
Understanding the illicit drug trade

The United Nations Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking is observed annually on 26th June, to create awareness about the socio-economic problems, created, due to abuse of illicit drugs, across the world. Current global estimates are that there are over 200 million drug addicts, in the vicious grip of Cannabis, Cocaine, Hallucinogens, Opiates, and sedative hypnotics, in addition to a variety of psychotropic substances. Drug trafficking was initially perceived to be a socio-criminal problem, but it is now considered to be a major security issue. Afghan illicit opium is the major source of funding for international terrorism, insurgency and money laundering. Though the fight against drug trafficking is going on in every country, the trade is only flourishing and fueling crimes and political instability. Governments have the twin responsibility of curbing drug trafficking and drug abuse which erodes social and human capital.



Drug trafficking is a long process starting from cultivation and culminating in consumption. Every stage is marked by secrecy and clandestine movement, covering national and international borders, dodging armed enforcement officers of various departments. The trafficking process

commences from the production zone, then on to shipment centers involving air, land and sea routes, and lastly the consumption stage



At any stage the traffickers can be intercepted by armed Military forces, Police, Customs and specialized anti-narcotics personnel, which can result in seizure of the illicit drugs, conveyance if any that is involved, and arrest of the traffickers. Death penalty is in force in over 24 countries of the world for drug related offences. India has also incorporated the death penalty in the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act 1985. Clash with any enforcement agency can result in getting entangled in a long drawn legal process, as well as preventive detention. However, disputes within the ranks of the drug traffickers over issues of territory, protection money, safe passage, can result in violence and even death.

The UN Convention against Illicit Trafficking (1988) gives a deep insight into how nations can tackle drug trafficking. It is a two pronged attack focusing on interdiction and funding. Interdiction is a direct confrontation with the drug trafficker by enforcement agencies, aimed at crippling all drug trafficking operations. This is the standard procedure in vogue in all countries. The drawback being, any interdiction can have a balloon effect. Interception and disruption on one route, results in emergence of an alternate route or of a new modus operandi. Another action involves crippling the finances that funds drug traffickers. Enormous profits generated from the drug trade support a host of other criminal activities like human trafficking, arms trafficking, wild life trafficking, art & cultural trafficking, fake medicines trafficking and fake currency rackets. These funds are rolling in the underground markets, funding sinister trades, beyond the purview of tax authorities. Many banks and other financial institutions serve as "financial conduits" by arranging to launder such drug tainted money. The passage of criminal drug money is facilitated by the global shadow financial system comprising of tax havens, secrecy jurisdictions, disguised corporations, anonymous Trusts accounts, fake Foundations, trade mispricing and money laundering techniques like Hawala.

Many countries around the world are experimenting, relaxing laws, for permitting, small amounts of drugs, for personal consumption. This will allow enforcement agencies to concentrate on dismantling drug cartels and apprehending traffickers, which has been a continuous challenge for the last several decades, for over 170 countries. India also needs to have a relook at the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPS Act) and devise fresh policy initiatives to tackle the ongoing drug menace.



Dr. G ShreeKumar Menon, IRS (Rtd) Ph.D (Narcotics),
Former Director General
National Academy of Customs Excise and Narcotics,
& Multi Disciplinary School Of Economic Intelligence,India,
Fellow, James Martin Center For Non Proliferation Studies, USA.
Public Administration, Maxwell School of Public Administration, Syracuse University, U.S.A.
AOTS Scholar, Japan
Registrar, Yenepoya University, Mangalore - 575018, Karnataka State, India.
CEO, Mission Angel Dust