



Drug situation
in **Thailand**



Drug Situation in Thailand

The drug situation in Thailand during 2000/2001 remained serious since the epidemic of drugs, especially methamphetamine, continued. Drug trafficking networks always changed their marketing techniques in distributing drugs in Thailand as much as possible. Meanwhile, the high demand of drugs in Thai society has brought many kinds of drugs into the country.

Young people and students have become the main users of methamphetamine for the past few years, and the drug epidemic in schools had been worse since the number of student drug dealers had increased. Seizures of imported drugs like ketamine, cocaine, ecstasy, ice, LSD, and diet pills by the Thai authorities were still going on in this period. Among those drugs, club drugs like ecstasy and ketamine were most widely abused by the youth in urban cities, who attended “rave” parties. Interestingly, selling narcotic drugs to customers in oversea countries by using the internet was firstly detected by the Police Narcotics Suppression Bureau (PNSB) in Bangkok and Chiang Mai Province in the early last year and there had only been two cases that were found up till now. Traditional drugs like opium, heroin, marijuana, and kratom plants

were still widely abused in Thai society but an epidemic of these drugs tended to decrease or at least became stable rather than increasing since a number of those traditional drug abusers had turned to methamphetamine instead. The quantity of seized heroin in 2001; however, tended to increase because the heroin amounting 276 kgs. was already seized during the first half of this year. Furthermore, Thailand was still used as a transit country in smuggling heroin from the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent to other countries. In the past few years, West Asian heroin was frequently smuggled to Thailand. A factor that has caused this may relate to the quality of the heroin from that region currently being better than in the past (the purity of West Asian heroin is now 66-90% compared with 80-91% of Southeast Asian heroin’s purity).





African drug traffickers brought heroin from the Golden Crescent into Thailand for gathering and then changed the brand

name on plastic bags before sending the heroin to destination countries. This is an



Drug trafficking by using internet was firstly detected in Chiang Mai Province and Bangkok in the early 2000. The method used was to conceal the drugs inside gifts, diaries, or toy animals, and packed those things into postal parcels before sending them to customers in overseas countries. The police said that a case like this was really difficult to detect.





attempt to deceive those heroin buyers by telling them that it was the Golden Triangle's heroin.

In 2001, the retail price of heroin in Thailand increased a fraction compared with the previous year. It costs 700-900 baht per gram in the Northern border provinces and costs 2,700-3,500 baht per gram in Southern provinces. However, it costs only 650-700 baht per gram in Bangkok, which is lower than other parts of the country. This occurs as most heroin traffickers/dealers in Bangkok gather heroin from the Northern border areas themselves.

Methamphetamine was still the most prevalent abused drug in Thailand this year. The estimated number of methamphetamine abusers in this year increased two times when compared with the last year. Domestic clandestine laboratories were still found to be small-scale producing sites (kitchen labs) which were located mostly in the central provinces, including Bangkok and nearby provinces. Throughout last year, the Thai authorities detected and dismantled 10 methamphetamine labs. However, the domestic production of methamphetamine accounted for only ten

percent of the total methamphetamine production in the Thai drug market this year. Major methamphetamine production was produced and smuggled from outside Thailand to the country by using various routes and methods. Besides the Northern border, all of Thailand's other borders were used to smuggle the drugs into the country. In recent years, the sea route has been used more frequently to smuggle the large volume of drugs from neighboring countries via the Andaman sea or Thai gulf to the Southern region of Thailand. In the early January 2001, a large seizure of illicit drugs from the sea route was made by the Office of the Narcotics Control Board together with the Royal Thai Navy which comprised 7,798,000 million tablets of methamphetamine and 116 kilograms of heroin (more details in Narcotics Law Enforcement section).

The retail and wholesale price of methamphetamine varied from place to place. The average wholesale price along the border line in the Northern provinces ranged from 15-50 baht per tablet but rose to 30-100 baht per tablet for the retail price. In the Central provinces and





Bangkok, the wholesale price ranged from 25-60 baht per tablet and will move up to 60-120 baht per tablet for the retail price. Compared with last year, the price of methamphetamine per tablet this year tended to be a little higher which may be due to a severe suppression by the Thai authorities.

The marijuana epidemic situation did not change much this year compared with the past few years. Marijuana continued to be grown in Thailand and neighboring countries. The domestic production of this drug ;however, was for local use only while the imported marijuana from neighboring countries to Thailand was for both distribution in the country and smuggling to international markets. Domestic marijuana cultivation was not only found in all regions of the country, but also concentrated mostly in the Northeastern region and tended to spread more into the Northern region. The wholesale price of marijuana in the Northeastern region this year ranged from 1,500-6,500 baht per kilogram compared with the wholesale price of 2,000-3,000 baht per kilogram in the previous year. Marijuana was still widely abused in Thailand this year.

The volatile substances epidemic in Thailand remained to be glue, thinner, and lacquer. Among them, glue was mostly abused because it was cheapest and most readily available. These volatile substances were mainly used by street kids and young people in city slums and dense communities around the country.

New types of drugs like ecstasy, cocaine, and ketamine were still epidemic in urban cities, especially in Bangkok. Comparing the siezed amount of these drugs and the number of drug cases during the first half of 2001, with those of the previous year, the epidemic trend was not different. Youth in big cities who attended “rave” parties in apartments, hotels, and entertainment places were still frequently found with drugs and arrested by the police. Domestic drug producers/traffickers have recently deceived ecstasy users by producing methamphetamine tablets in the form of ecstasy tablets and selling them at a higher price. Surprisingly, a cocaine clandestine laboratory was detected by the police on the fourth of July 2001, in Bangkok. This could be evidence that some domestic drug producers are



expanding their drug markets by trying to produce popular drugs worldwide such as ecstasy and cocaine in Thailand now. For ketamine abuse, the problem tended to be more serious since ketamine was also used as a club drug like ecstasy but the price was cheaper than the latter. A small pack of ketamine costed about 200-300 baht, and this type of drug was imported mainly from a country in South Asia. Other synthetic drugs like diet pills were seized by customs authorities while the drugs were being prepared to send abroad. This haul of one million tablets was seized in a province nearby Bangkok in October 2000. Small quantities of ice (methamphetamine hydrochloride) were also seized by the Thai authorities in the North of Thailand this year.

The reports of drug situations from 4 regional offices of the ONCB, focusing on the difference characteristic of the drug problem in all regions of Thailand during 2000-2001, were the following:

In the Northern region, a large percentage of the methamphetamine and heroin production was smuggled into

the country. The drug producers were minority groups in neighboring countries. Some of the necessary equipment and chemical precursors were smuggled from Thailand to the drug producing source but mostly they were smuggled from other Asian countries. Marijuana was also cultivated widely in many Northern provinces during this period. Domestic methamphetamine and heroin clandestine laboratories were not found in this region. The Northern Thai border was still used as a major route for smuggling methamphetamine and heroin from neighboring countries to provinces of the Northern region and to other parts of the country. There were 226 border channels at the Northern Thai border and 60 among these were used to smuggle the drugs. Besides, 323 villages around the Northern border areas were found, one way or another, to be involved with drug trafficking. The drug smuggling was done either in the form of drug caravans escorted by armed forces or drug couriers who traveled by foot or motorcycles. Most of these drug couriers were found to be hilltribe people.

There were 16,461 villages of drug abuse in the Northern region during



1999-2000. The largest drug abuse areas were Phare, Phitsanulok, Chiang Rai, Sukhothai, and Lampang Provinces, respectively. The survey of drug abuse in educational institutions was conducted in September 1999, by the Assumption University. The survey was done with 954,339 students from the elementary school level to the university level in the Northern region. It was found that 138,664 students or 14.53% got involved with drugs.

In the Central region, methamphetamine trafficking and epidemic continued to be radical, and has turned out to be the most seriously abused drug in this region for years. The supply market of methamphetamine in the Central part was largest when compared with other parts of the country. Domestic methamphetamine clandestine laboratories were located mostly in this region due to an availability of those necessary chemical precursors and equipment. The Central region has yet been used as the central area for distribution of drugs from the Northern region. Seizures of methamphetamine in the region increased 200% in 2000, when compared with

those in 1999. The land route was used mainly to smuggle drugs from one place to another by using all kinds of vehicles, especially, trucks and pick-up trucks. Small quantities of methamphetamine were also smuggled to Thailand from the Eastern border areas. The heroin epidemic decreased in the past 5 years but tended to increase again this year since more quantities have been seized recently. In case of the marijuana epidemic, marijuana cultivation was still present in the same provinces as last year while marijuana trafficking was detected less frequently. Moreover, seizures of imported marijuana from neighboring countries decreased both in the number of cases and the quantity of drugs. For the epidemic of other drugs like opium, kratom plants, volatile substances, and synthetic drugs, the problem tended not to be so radical; however, new types of drugs like ecstasy, ketamine, cocaine, and diet pills were found to be most prevalent in Chonburi, which is a tourist province.

In the Northeastern region, none of the local drug producing sources were found during the first three months of 2001. Drugs were mainly smuggled





into the region from other regions of the country and from neighboring countries. The three main drugs of abuse in this region were methamphetamine, volatile substances, and marijuana, respectively. The drug trafficking in local areas turned out to be less serious in recent years than in the past due to various drug prevention and suppression measures of the Royal Thai Government all over the region. Though the Northeastern region has tended to be used more frequently to smuggle drugs from neighboring countries to Thailand in recent years since the Northern region was strictly controlled by the Government. The three border provinces of the region; i.e., Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom, and Ubon Ratchathani, were frequently used to smuggle metamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana from neighboring countries to Thailand. Nonetheless, about 60% of those smuggled methamphetamine in the region came from the Northern and Central regions of Thailand. Major methamphetamine trafficking areas were still located in provinces around the central part of the region. Marijuana cultivation was discovered mostly in the same area as past years; i.e., Mukdahan,

Sakon Nakhon, and Nakhon Phanom Provinces. The eradication of marijuana plants during the 1999-2000 growing season was weighted at 33 tons. The estimated figures of imported marijuana from a neighboring country to the region throughout the year 2000, were 18-24 tons. Volatile substances were the second most abused drug in the region. Main abusers were young people aging between 13-17 years old. Glue sniffing was most popular among this group and the epidemic of volatile substances has subsided since 1996. Methamphetamine abuse in schools all over the region has become the most serious problem during the past few years as the number of student drug dealers are rapidly increasing. In 1999, about 200,000 students were found by survey to be involved with methamphetamine.

In the Southern region, no drug clandestine laboratories were detected during this period. Local drug crops being cultivated were marijuana and kratom plants which were grown in many provinces around mountainous areas. Marijuana cultivation in the region was expected to increase rather than decrease since there was a high local demand.





The drug trafficking in the region involved both local traffickers and foreign traffickers who were also involved in legitimate business at the same time. Trafficking areas spread throughout the whole region since the Southern region's economy is better than that of other areas. Major drug trafficking areas were located in the border provinces both in the upper and the lower South. Methamphetamine, heroin, and marijuana were mostly smuggled from the Northern and the Central regions to the Southern region by land and sea routes as well as the air route. Meanwhile, ecstasy and ketamine were smuggled from Bangkok and neighboring countries to the South. The

drugs mentioned above have also been smuggled in and out of the Southern border for many years by using various routes. Predominantly, abused drugs were still heroin and marijuana as well as methamphetamine while ecstasy, ketamine, and codeine were mainly epidemic in tourist areas. Besides, volatile substances abuse by youth and children were still a problem in this area. Abusers of heroin, methamphetamine, and marijuana in the region were agricultural and fishery laborers including students. However, the price of drugs in this region is higher than other regions due to the cost of transportation and the region's economic conditions.





Methamphetamine



Ecstasy



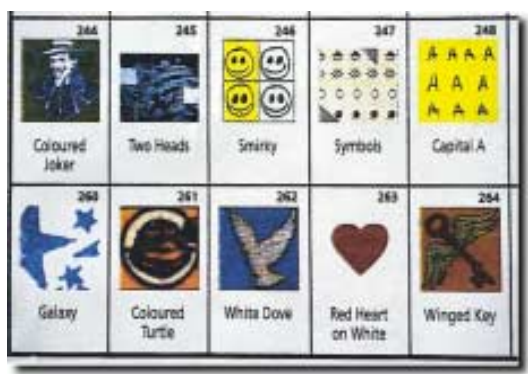
Heroin



Cocaine



Ketamine



LSD Paper



Kratom Plants



Codeine

