

Despite pandemic, Asia's illegal drug trade thriving

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

Experts tracking the illicit drug trade in Asia have, for some time, likened it to a tsunami - and it is not stopping.

In fact, while the Covid-19 pandemic cut deep into the regular economy across the region, organised crime thrived, producing and distributing synthetic drugs in record quantities.

A new report from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirms that production and trafficking of synthetic drugs - overwhelmingly methamphetamine - surged last year.

Available quarterly data from East and South-east Asia showed a drop in seizures in the second quarter of 2020 during the height of the pandemic, the report said.

But "seizures quickly rebounded from the third quarter, demonstrating the flexibility of organised crime groups to adapt to change and take advantage of porous borders in the region".

Seizures of methamphetamine in the region amounted to approximately 170 tonnes last year, a 19 per cent increase over the 142 tonnes seized in 2019.

This was primarily driven by increases in five lower Mekong countries - Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam - which accounted for 71 per cent of total seizures.

The meth trade saw continued growth in East and South-east Asia last year, with a concentration of supply and seizures in the Mekong region. No new figures were given on the regional meth market value, but the last estimate two years ago, which included Australia and New Zealand, put the value at US\$61 billion (S\$81 billion).

The report also notes a continuous flow of methamphetamine tablets from Myanmar to South Asia. Last year, 36.4 million methamphetamine tablets were seized in Bangladesh.

The supply surge has fed rising usage.

"Thailand has reported a tenfold increase in the number of crystal methamphetamine users between 2016 and 2019, and price data reported by Cambodia and Malaysia showed decreases from 2019 to 2020," the report says.

The continuing methamphetamine market expansion is not the only worrying development. "The emergence of potentially harmful new psychoactive substances, including synthetic cannabis and designer benzodiazepines, has added to the complexity of the situation," the report added.

Jeremy Douglas, UNODC's regional representative for South-east Asia and the Pacific, told The Straits Times: "There is no getting around the fact that the Mekong has a very serious organised crime problem - and the Golden Triangle remains the heart of the problem."



Israeli security forces detain a Palestinian demonstrator outside the Israeli Central Court in east Jerusalem yesterday, during a protest over Israel's planned evictions of Palestinian families from homes in the eastern sector's Silwan district. Three Palestinians were killed early Thursday by Israeli special forces who were on a mission to arrest suspected "terrorists" in the occupied West Bank, sources on both sides said. Two of those killed were members of the Palestinian Authority's security forces, and the Palestinian presidency condemned their deaths as a "dangerous escalation."

PHOTO: AFP

UK, US to sign new 'Atlantic Charter'

Aims to boost ties, pandemic recovery; Biden, EU warn Britain on N Irish peace

AGENCIES

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and US President Joe Biden were expected to agree a new version of the "Atlantic Charter" aimed at leading the world's pandemic recovery and bolstering ties.

The agreement comes as the leaders hold their first face-to-face talks on Biden's first overseas trip of his presidency.

The new pact, modelled on the 1941 accord signed by Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, aims to emulate the original accord, which shaped the post-war world order by promoting democracy, free trade and opportunity.

The 2021 charter will cover everything from global defence and security to rebuilding from coronavirus and curbing climate change, according to Johnson's Downing Street office.

In remarks released ahead of the meeting, Johnson said close cooperation between London and Washington "will be crucial for the future of the world's stability and prosperity".

Johnson greeted Biden yesterday in the English seaside resort of Carbis Bay, ahead of the G7 summit. The US president touched down in



Britain late Wednesday ahead of the three-day gathering.

"It's gorgeous, I don't want to go home," Biden said of the seaside view as he walked with First Lady Jill Biden, Johnson and Johnson's wife Carrie.

The two leaders will hold talks before the summit begins today.

The new Atlantic Charter will outline eight areas where the transatlantic allies resolve to work together based around their "enduring values", Downing Street said.

They include addressing threats posed by cyberattacks, climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as scaling up joint pandemic recovery

work such, including genomic sequencing and variant assessments.

The two leaders are also set to agree several new policy priorities to underpin the charter, spanning travel, trade, post-Brexit issues in Northern Ireland and defence.

Analysts say Europe's bitter dispute with Britain over post-Brexit trade rules for Northern Ireland will haunt Johnson's G7 summit.

Ahead of the meet with Johnson, Biden camp warned Britain for imperilling the delicate peace in Northern Ireland.

"President Biden has been crystal clear about his rock-solid belief in the Good Friday Agreement as the foundation for peaceful co-existence in Northern Ireland," White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"Any steps that imperil it or undermine it would not be welcomed by the United States," said Sullivan, who declined to characterise Johnson's actions as imperilling the peace.

European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen confirmed yesterday that she would bring up the row when she and fellow EU chief Charles Michel meet Johnson.

UN REPORT ON CHILD LABOUR Numbers on rise after 2 decades

AFP, Geneva

The world has marked the first rise in child labour in two decades and the coronavirus crisis threatens to push millions more youngsters toward the same fate, the United Nations said yesterday.

In a joint report, the International Labour Organization and the UN children's agency UNICEF said the number in child labour stood at 160 million at the start of 2020 -- an increase of 8.4 million in four years.

The hike began before the pandemic hit and marks a dramatic reversal of a downward trend that had seen child labour numbers shrink by 94 million between year 2000 and 2016, it said.

Just as the Covid-19 crisis was beginning to pick up steam, nearly one in 10 children globally were stuck in child labour, with sub-Saharan Africa the worst affected.

The report warned that unless urgent action is taken to help ballooning numbers of families plunging into poverty, nearly 50 million more kids could be forced into child labour over the next two years.

"We are losing ground in the fight to end child labour," UNICEF chief Henrietta Fore told reporters, stressing that "the Covid-19 crisis is making a bad situation even worse."

"Now, well into a second year of global lockdowns, school closures, economic disruptions, and shrinking national budgets, families are forced to make heart-breaking choices."

A full 79 million children were considered to be doing hazardous work at the start of 2020, up 6.5 million from four years earlier, the report showed.

The study revealed that most child labour is concentrated in the agriculture sector, which accounts for 70 per cent of the global total, or 112 million children. Some 20 per cent of child labour meanwhile happens in the service sector and around 10 per cent in industry, it found.

BUILDING COLLAPSE At least 11 killed in Mumbai

AFP, Mumbai

At least 11 people, including eight children, were killed yesterday when heavy monsoon rains caused a residential building to collapse in a Mumbai slum, Indian authorities said.

Mumbai city authorities confirmed that seven other residents were injured in the incident late Wednesday even as search and rescue operations continued for several others feared missing. One source said at least 3 people are still missing.

Residents have been evacuated from nearby structures considered to be in a dangerous condition.

Of the injured, six were in stable condition, with one 30-year-old woman admitted to hospital in critical condition.

Collapses of poorly constructed buildings are common during the monsoon, which officially hit India's financial capital on Wednesday bringing widespread flooding and traffic chaos.

New era of robot war may be underway unnoticed

REUTERS, London

In March 2020, as Covid-19 locked down the world, what may have been the first autonomous drone attacks in history were taking place on a largely unwatched battlefield in Libya.

According to a UN report published in March this year, Libyan forces loyal to the Government of National Accord (GNA) used Turkish-made STM Kargu-2 drones to hunt down units loyal to former Libyan Field Marshall Khalifa Haftar.

The report stated that the four-rotor drones were programmed in "autonomous mode" to attack fleeing logistics convoys and other vehicles automatically, without further human intervention.

If correct, that would represent the first documented such incident on a battlefield - a development that has long been predicted and feared by military and human rights experts alike. While drones

have been a feature of the battlefield for years, they have still required a human being to operate the "kill switch".

That such a step may have taken place unheralded and largely unnoticed, however, should not be a surprise. The last two decades have seen a mass proliferation, downsizing and democratisation of technology once the preserve of the most powerful states. Innovation is now much cheaper, and

those willing to bend rules can find advantage. Some campaigners have long called for a prohibition on autonomous killer drones. They had argued this should be done before such technology became a reality, but it may already be too late. Whether or not the March 2020 Libya strike was the first autonomous drone attack, it is unlikely to last - and there may well have been more since then.



NEWS IN BRIEF

Global plastics production falls

Global plastics production declined in 2020 as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, only the third time since World War II that output has fallen, an industry body said yesterday. Output has fallen only twice previously, as a result of the oil crisis in 1973 and during the financial crisis in 2008. Worldwide output slipped to 367 million tonnes last year from 368 million in 2019, a 0.3 per cent decline, according to the industry federation PlasticsEurope. But output in China - which currently accounts for a third of global plastics production -- continued to grow by 1.0 per cent. In Europe, production of new plastics was down 5.1 per cent at 55 million tonnes last year. The 27-nation EU now accounts for just 15 per cent of worldwide plastics production, down from 21 per cent in 2010. The United States produces around 19 per cent of the world's plastics, compared with 20 per cent 10 years ago.

Russia calls Navalny US 'agent'

Russia yesterday suggested that Washington was quick to condemn the designation of Alexei Navalny's groups as extremist because the jailed Kremlin critic was in fact working for the United States. A Moscow court late on Wednesday ruled to designate Navalny's regional offices and his Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) as "extremist", barring them from working in Russia. The US State Department called the action "particularly disturbing" and said it was part of a pattern of restricting fundamental rights in Russia. Prosecutors in April had requested that Navalny's organisations be hit with the "extremist" label, saying the group was plotting an uprising with support from the West.

Facebook to allow remote work

Facebook on Wednesday said it will give employees the option of sticking with remote work for the long term, even offering to help some interested in moving to other countries. Beginning on June 15, Facebook will let any employee whose job can be done remotely ask to work that way permanently, the internet giant told AFP. "We believe how we work is more important than where we work," Facebook said while sharing an update to its remote work policy. Facebook and other Silicon Valley firms shifted to remote work early in the pandemic, relying on the internet tools they create to get jobs done. Facebook said work schedules for those returning to offices will be flexible, but its guidance is for people to be on-site at least half the time.

JBS, one of the world's biggest meat processors, has paid bitcoin worth \$11 million in ransom to hackers to prevent any further disruption after a paralyzing cyberattack believed to have originated in Russia. This was the second multi-million-dollar payment to hackers in recent weeks, drawing attention to the broader threat posed by ransomware to essential infrastructure, services and businesses. Hackers had targeted the computer systems of Brazil-based JBS last week, impacting operations in the United States, Australia and Canada. A cyberattack in May forced the temporary shutdown of the huge Colonial fuel pipeline network in the eastern United States, and sparked panic buying in some states. Colonial paid \$4.4 million in ransom to regain control and restore operations.

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File No. 30.32.0000.060.14.003.2021 Date: 08-06-2021

e-Tender Notice No-02/2020-2021

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of work	Procurement method	Closing date & time
1	565444	Supplying, Installation, testing and commissioning of 750-800kg capacity passenger Lift at NHTTI & Hotel Abakash Building, BPC, Mohakhali, Dhaka.	OTM (NCT)	23.06.2021 15:30PM

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 13:00 on the IFT mentioned date.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP Portal and at e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Engr. Md. Mahmud Kabir
General Manager (Works)
Deputy Secretary

GD-1183

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক
(সেন্ট্রাল ব্যাংক অব বাংলাদেশ)
প্রধান কার্যালয়
মতিঝিল, ঢাকা-১০০০
বাংলাদেশ

তারিখঃ ১০/০৬/২০২১

উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

ব্যাংকার সিলেকশন কমিটির সদস্যভুক্ত ৩টি প্রতিষ্ঠান (সোনালী ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১৮টি, জনতা ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১০টি ও রূপালী ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১৯টি) ২০১৯ সাল ভিত্তিক 'এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট হার্ডওয়্যার মেইনটেন্যান্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার/সিনিয়র অফিসার (এসিস্ট্যান্ট হার্ডওয়্যার ইঞ্জিনিয়ার)' এর ৪৭টি শূন্য পদে নিয়োগের উদ্দেশ্যে প্রার্থীদের MCQ Test ও লিখিত পরীক্ষা গ্রহণকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান নির্বাচনের জন্য ই-টেন্ডার বিজ্ঞপ্তি।

ক্রম	শিরোনাম	বিবরণ
১	কাজের নাম	ব্যাংকার সিলেকশন কমিটির সদস্যভুক্ত ৩টি প্রতিষ্ঠান (সোনালী ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১৮টি, জনতা ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১০টি ও রূপালী ব্যাংক লি.-এ ১৯টি) ২০১৯ সাল ভিত্তিক 'এসিস্ট্যান্ট ইঞ্জিনিয়ার (আইটি)/এসিস্ট্যান্ট হার্ডওয়্যার মেইনটেন্যান্স ইঞ্জিনিয়ার/সিনিয়র অফিসার (এসিস্ট্যান্ট হার্ডওয়্যার ইঞ্জিনিয়ার)' এর ৪৭টি শূন্য পদে নিয়োগের নিমিত্তে প্রার্থিকভাবে যোগ্য ৪৬৩১ জন প্রার্থীর অভিন্ন প্রশ্ন সম্বলিত একাধিকসেটে ১ ঘণ্টাব্যাপী ১০০ নম্বরের MCQ Test এবং MCQ Test এর ফলাফলের ভিত্তিতে ভিন্ন একটি তারিখে কম/বেশি ৫০০ জন প্রার্থীর ০২ ঘণ্টাব্যাপী ২০০ নম্বরের লিখিত পরীক্ষা গ্রহণ এবং এর ফলাফলের ভিত্তিতে মেধা ও রোলওয়ারী তালিকা (হার্ড কপি ও সফট কপি) প্রণয়ন ও প্রদান।
২	যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা	সরকার কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত উচ্চ শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান/প্রশিক্ষণ ইনস্টিটিউট/কনসাল্টিং ফার্ম যাদের বিগত ৫(পাঁচ) বছরের মধ্যে টেন্ডার দাখিলের তারিখ হতে) এক বা একাধিক কার্মদেশ/চুক্তির আওতায় একক আয়োজনে সরকারী/আধা-সরকারী/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত সংস্থা/ব্যাংক বা আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠানে কমপক্ষে ১০০০ (এক হাজার) জন প্রার্থীর নিয়োগ পরীক্ষা গ্রহণ ও ফলাফল তৈরীর অভিজ্ঞতা রয়েছে এরূপ প্রতিষ্ঠান।
৩	নির্দেশিকা ও সিডিউল	বিজ্ঞপ্তির নির্দেশনা ও শর্তাবলী সম্বলিত দরপত্র সিডিউল বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েব সাইট www.bb.org.bd এর e-Tender-এ পাওয়া যাবে।
৪	অংশগ্রহণ কার্যক্রম	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে ই-টেন্ডারিং-এ অংশগ্রহণে আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহকে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকের ওয়েব সাইটে (www.bb.org.bd) রেজিস্ট্রেশন সম্পন্নকরতে; নিজ নিজ ক্ষেত্রে প্রবেশ করে আর্থিক প্রস্তাবের নির্ধারিত ফর্ম পূরণপূর্বক যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা ও সংশ্লিষ্ট যাবতীয় কাগজপত্রাদির সত্যায়িত কপি আপলোড করতে হবে। দরপত্র সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রমাপক যাবতীয় কাগজপত্রাদির ব্যাংকার সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়ে রক্ষিত নির্দিষ্ট টেন্ডার বক্সে দাখিল করতে হবে।
৫	দাখিলের শেষ সময়	২৭/০৬/২০২১ তারিখ সকাল ১০.৪৫টা পর্যন্ত।
৬	খোলার সময়	২৭/০৬/২০২১ তারিখ সকাল ১১.০০টায়ে দরদাতাগণ অথবা তাদের প্রতিনিধিবৃন্দের উপস্থিতিতে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) দরপত্রসমূহ ব্যাংকার সিলেকশন কমিটি সচিবালয়ে অনলাইনে খোলা হবে।
৭	অন্যান্য শর্ত	ক) পরীক্ষা কেন্দ্রে পরীক্ষার্থীর ধারণ ক্ষমতা ও অন্যান্য বিষয়ে বিএসসিএস এর সাথে আলোচনারূপে কেন্দ্র চূড়ান্ত করতে হবে। খ) অসম্পূর্ণ ও ত্রুটিপূর্ণ দরপত্র বিবেচনা করা হবে না। গ) কর্তৃপক্ষ সর্বশেষ দরপত্র গ্রহণে বাধ্য নয় এবং কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করে।

ডিসিপি: ৪৮/২০২১-১৮৪২
তারিখ: ১০.০৬.২০২১

"মুজিববর্ষের অঙ্গীকার
দেশী পণ্যের ব্যবহার"

আরিফ হোসেন খান
মহাব্যবস্থাপক, বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক
ও
সদস্য-সচিব, বিএসসি

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS