

## **Contemporary Nature of the Narcotics Threat**

Drug menace is an apex threat to Sri Lanka. Unlike many other classical threats, it attacks several dimensions including social, health, individual and economics affecting detrimental to national security. Being an island nation located between two principle sites (Golden Crescent and Golden Triangle) for opium production and distribution, Sri Lanka is easily discovered to global and regional drug menace. However, the state has achieved great victories in eradicating the war of drugs in the most recent past. Since the sphere of narcotics is becoming more complex and diversified in the current context, Sri Lanka needs to advance its competence and operations in order to conquer the drug menace.

The collapse of Afghanistan caused the narcotic threat to spread to a huge extent in the region. Drug traffickers of Afghanistan went out of control and they strengthened their links with traffickers of the other countries of the region. The intention of the traffickers is earning huge profits. In order to make this a success they tend to produce and traffic low cost consignments at laboratories in Afghanistan and Pakistan. “The single most significant problem was seen as the trafficking of heroin from India for local consumption”<sup>1</sup> Since Heroin being an expensive drug in production and distribution, traffickers have tended to switch to Crystal Meth in flow of trafficking (Ice Drug) as it costs low in production and distribution. “In April 2020, the Sri Lanka Navy seized 605 kilograms of Crystal Meth and officially detected that the place of origin of these consignments was Makran coast in Pakistan.”<sup>2</sup> In addition to Heroin and Crystal Meth, Cannabis, Hashish, Cocaine and LSD drug are rapidly spread out among the society.

As Sri Lanka is experiencing an ongoing economic crisis and social protests, the government and law enforcement authorities concentrate to control the prevailing situation. This might cause less focused operations in the drug menace and traffickers may use this opportunity to increase their presence. Further, dealers have switched to social media applications (WhatsApp, Messenger, Telegram) to keep their communications sealed. Since the legal regime does not sufficiently address the threat posed by social media, drug dealers infiltrate the legal regime of the country. These two factors demonstrate that the country is a vulnerable state in the context of narcotics threat.

When compared to the previous decades, Sri Lanka achieved an excellent progress in eradicating the threats from narcotics. “The militarization of drug control has accelerated since the November 2019 election of President Gotabaya Rajapaksha, whose election manifesto prioritized eradication

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<sup>1</sup> Sri Lanka UNODC, South Asian Regional Profile-2005- Sri Lanka, 102, [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south\\_Asia\\_Regional\\_Profile\\_Sept\\_2005/13\\_srilanka.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/india/publications/south_Asia_Regional_Profile_Sept_2005/13_srilanka.pdf), Accessed 30th April 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Sri Lanka: Methamphetamine seizure shows changing nature of region’s trafficking,”Indo pacific defence forum”, <https://ipdefenseforum.com/2021/09/methamphetamine-seizure-shows-changing-nature-of-regions-trafficking/>, accessed 30 th , April 2022.

of the drug menace.”<sup>3</sup> Unlikely previous times, the armed forces and the Sri Lanka Police discovered massive consignments of Heroin, Hashish, Crystal Meth and many other drugs and eventually confiscated. This proved that the militarization of drug control has resulted in destroying the operational capabilities of drug producers, traffickers and dealers. Nonetheless, they are still struggling in detecting new approaches to maintain the drug menace in Sri Lanka. Especially, through enhancing their communication competence in cyber and digital platforms. Even though Sri Lanka has achieved excellent progress in drug control, country has to further fulfil the some of requirements in order to make a drugs free society.

Sri Lanka has to execute immediate actions in amending necessary provisions of the present law to an extent where all possible gaps and loopholes are disappeared. Further it is imperative to develop the competence of intelligence officers in cyber and digital platforms in order to identify the technologically advanced activities and new approaches in the context. Since youth awareness is nil on drugs and narcotic context, education authorities of the country need to include the negative consequences of using drugs to secondary school’s syllabuses. This will keep adolescents and youth educated on violence, health complications and economic issues that can be resulted due to drug usage. The right awareness on drugs may keep them out of curiosity in testing them and this will have a positive impact in the process of preventing the menace. It is noticed that Sri Lanka is greatly defeating the drug menace; however, the country needs to do many more operations to root out the threat completely.

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<sup>3</sup> A Broken System: Drug Control, Detention and Treatment of People Who Use Drugs in Sri Lanka, “Harm Reduction International”, <https://www.hri.global/drug-control-sri-lanka>, accessed 29 th April 2022.