

Future Trend of Drug Situation in Thailand

Though Thai Government has strictly focused its policy and suppression plan to reduce the drug problem continuously, the largest incentive inspires the new entries and supports the drug trafficking system to be more complicated. Drug problems in 4 regions are varied according to the geography, characteristic of drug situation in each region, and the prevention and suppression capability of the authorities in each region. Comparing with last year, trafficking, and smuggling have a trend to increase next year because of the increase in supply and demand of illicit drugs.

There are 4 external factors which affect the flourish of illicit drugs, especially heroin and methamphetamine in Thailand.

Firstly, the Political and minority group problem in neighboring country is one of the most important factors in opium cultivation, heroin production, and trafficking for the global market, including Thailand because the minority groups have to obtain income to support their groups.

Secondly, the altering of drug situation in each region, the accomplishment in reducing the number of teenagers heroin addicts of the United States and the changing of illicit drugs addictive behaviors of European decrease major demand of the drug. Then the heroin produced in

Golden Triangle, one of the major sources of heroin production, will be stocked and increased within this region.

Thirdly, the expansion of the economic integration in sub-region and international level develop the technology, transportation, communication, and allowing the free flow of production factors. Then the trafficking and smuggling of illicit drugs will be more convenient and difficult to control. In addition, the Thai Government has submitted the Bill Amending the Land Code (No.2) B.E. 25xx, which allows the foreigners to invest in assets and businesses freely. This bill will also convince the drug traffickers to commit the offense of money laundering easily, especially in the

situation of liquidity crush in the present.

Finally, the effects of the economic crisis in Thailand since 1997, many new illicit drug producers and traffickers have joined the business in order to gain the large return, and foreign income in case of export. Moreover, the social change in the next couple of years from the migration of unemployed people returning to the rural area will induce the altering of drug situation, and the cheap drugs will be used by this group. Some of the unemployment will return to cultivate the opium, especially the hilltribe farmers, and the situation of opium crisis will be back again.

As mentioned above, supply of illicit drugs in neighboring country is concerned to be the main source of drugs epidemic in Thailand and this region. Considering from the external variables, the heroin was anticipated increasing within this region and for export. Thus, the opium cultivation and the heroin production should be concerned strictly to prevent the problem return.

However, in 1999, methamphetamine remains as a crucial problem in Thai society and has a tendency to increase. Main reasons are the increase of supply from neighboring countries and extension of the smuggling route along the borderline in all possible regions, especially in the North and Northeast. The characteristic of clandestine refineries will be changed from largescale to be small-scale size and movable. The production sources have along Thai-Myanmar, Thai-Laos PDR, and Thai-Cambodia borderline because of the convenience in obtaining the precursors from China. Some abusers develop to be reetailed traffickers, and some reetailed traffickers develop to be producers or big agents. These change support the efficient distribution of methamphetamine to the desired target groups in schools, workplaces, and communities. Moreover, the average age of methamphetamine abusers and traffickers, especially among the youth groups in schools and out-of-school, tend to decrease.

Regarding opium and heroin, its concern was criticized in the next year

because of the internal economic crisis and external problems as mentioned before. Thus the supply of opium and heroin will increase in the next couple of years. Though the suppression measure by the government authorities is the main obstacle for smuggling and trafficking, but the convenience of transportation and communication persuade the traffickers using Thailand as a transit country to export to the final destinations.

According to the marihuana, there is the main cultivation in the Northeast and the South, but the crop cultivation control of Thai Government affects a decreasing trend of marihuana epidemic next year. Since the addicts remain the same group, it doesn't have the new addicts.

Concerning volatile substances, most abusers are unemployed people and the youth in school and communities. These drugs will continue to spread widely and regularly. Then the trend of next year will remain the same, because of its legal availability and low price.

The epidemic of ecstasy, cocaine, and ketamine have been spread through the big cities and tourism provinces like Chiang Mai, Hat Yai, Surattanee, and Bangkok, especially in the entertainment places. The drug abusers are expected to be in the high purchasing power groups and tourists.

Focusing on drug problem solving in the country, Thai Government by the ONCB set up many operational plans to fight against drugs covering both demand and supply reduction.

On demand reduction, from the number of drug addicts in treatment centers indicated that the heroin and methamphetamine still are the principal drug for the next year. The trafficking network in schools and communities will increase sharply and more complicated. Therefore, the ONCB realized that the contribution of public awareness and strengthening of the communities are the most efficient way to solve the drug problem sustainably. The ONCB focuses on the preventive activities in full cycle with respect to

information given, behaviors adjustment and building up new attitude about drugs to parent group, youth group and people organization by aiming to encourage them for participation in fighting against drug starting from families. Besides, treatment and rehabilitation program will be fully developed for all kinds of drug abusers by the cooperation of all hospital and public health authorities to accept the addicts and can provide treatment at least the detoxification stage. The cooperation between the government and non-government agencies has to be carried out continuously. Particularly the stage of rehabilitation, the religious institutions, schools, and families should be raised to play the important roles to prevent the relapse. Otherwise, the development of treatment data system will be helpful in order to monitor the altering of drug problem.

On supply reduction, in coming year, the law enforcement policy will focus on the illicit drugs trafficking suppression, and target to the major traffickers and their networks by giving the

cooperation to all concerned organizations including the neighboring countries. The operation will mainly follow the Prime Minister Order No. 141/B.E. 2541 (1998) under the strategy of state-civil alliance against drugs. Besides, the Thai Government by ONCB has tried to carry out to support the transparency of authorities that are believed to be the important part of illicit drugs trafficking and smuggling. Then the Office of the Prime Minister's Regulation regarding prevention of government officials from being related with drugs was issued to be the supportive instrument to the PM's Order No. 141/B.E. 2541 (1998). This regulation has been mandated on January 29, 1999, in order to initiate the social awareness and confidence in watching out the inappropriateness of the government officials' behaviors. Furthermore, the Prim Minister Order No. 192/B.E. 2541 (1998) focuses on interception and suppression operation of illicit drugs from the neighboring countries, especially in the northern part of Thailand. Moreover, assets

seizure and legal measures are used to strengthen the effectiveness of drug suppression measure.

The cooperation among various countries in fighting against illicit drugs in the world society is also considered as the main policy of Thai Government. Thailand has encouraged the collaboration with other countries in bilateral, sub-regional, and international

levels continuously. The cooperation has been carried out through the exchange of information, experiences, and other necessary operation cooperation on drug control.