

# India accelerates anti-drug effort

by Susan Maitra

The new year has started off with a bang, so to speak, for India's anti-drug fighters. In the first two weeks of January, the Border Security Force seized a total of 420 kg of heroin from smugglers coming across the border from Pakistan into Punjab state. That is already double the monthly average for heroin seizures in 1988. In the view of some, this represents "panic dispatches" on the part of Pakistani-based traffickers anxious to cash in before the new Bhutto government in Islamabad begins to implement its promised crackdown on the narcotics traffic.

But the prospect of collaboration with Pakistan to run Dope, Inc. out of the subcontinent is only one factor giving a boost of optimism to the anti-drug effort here in India. Late last year, an incident in a Bombay court set a precedent for the toughening attitude toward the drug menace. Four individuals were arrested with several kilograms of heroin. Three were granted bail, and for some apparently bureaucratic reason, the fourth was not. When the last took his plea for bail to a higher court, the judge not only denied it, but revoked the bail for his three cohorts. "This does not just involve a murder, this involves mass murder," the judge told the court and the nation.

In an interview with this correspondent in December, officials of the Narcotics Control Board (NCB), India's national anti-drug unit, emphasized the significance of this break from the pattern of arbitrariness and leniency on the part of the judiciary that has bogged down anti-drug enforcement efforts over the past three years, since India's archaic narcotics laws were radically overhauled in 1985. Further encouragement followed, with decisions against granting bail to several narco kingpins operating internationally, who were cornered and arrested in a major NCB operation at the end of the year.

## A political campaign

This toughening stance toward the drug menace coincides with the steady worsening of the drug problem in the country and with a critical view developing in enforcement and other circles as to the loopholes and inadequacies of the 1985 Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (NDPSA). The new attitude was given teeth during the winter session in Parliament, with passage of an amendment to the Act which tightens up enforcement by several orders of magnitude.

Apart from Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's known per-

sonal view that drugs are a priority problem of national security, much of the credit for keeping the anti-drug fight in the public eye must go to the Youth Congress (I) and its active Anti-Narcotics Cell, led by Haroon Yusuf. The Youth Congress has kept the drug issue as a top priority for the ruling party and as a visible national campaign, even as other sections of the party buried themselves in factional in-fighting and other petty politicking. Over the past year, Yusuf led a national campaign, targeting campuses and urban populations, demanding the death penalty for drug traffickers and organizing local awareness and activity to take on the problem.

One outcome of that campaign was the government's introduction of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Bill of 1988 into Parliament, and its passage on Dec. 16. The death penalty for second offenders in narcotics cases is only one of the major new provisions in the NDPSA Amendment. The law also states that narcotics offenders are strictly held without bail, and that there is no remission of sentences in narcotics cases.

## Closing the loopholes

The new law also provides for a system of special courts to try narcotics cases, a move which will remove a significant bottleneck. As the statistics show, less than half of those arrested were brought to trial in 1987-88 (see **Table 1**). A survey in New Delhi in mid-1988 showed that from November 1985, when NDPSA went into effect, through May 1988, some 4,931 cases were reported. Of these, 4,222 were heard. Of these, only 932 cases were decided, and of that, fully 734 resulted in acquittal. The point is: Fully 3,290 cases were pending, and in three years and more than 4,000 cases, there were only 195 convictions.

TABLE 1  
**A statistical profile of India's anti-drug effort**  
Seizures (kg)

	1985	1986	1987	1988*
Opium	—	8,789	2,929	2,718
Heroin	761	2,621	2,747	2,613
Marijuana (ganja)	66,314	60,618	53,920	32,291
Hashish	—	18,909	14,796	14,242
Cocaine	—	26	5	77**
Methaqualone	—	1,485	1,500	1,250
Legal action				
Total arrests	—	—	2,018	1,729
Foreigners	—	—	280	131
Convictions	—	—	247	212
Acquittals	—	—	541	228

\*As of Oct. 31

\*\*Of this, 14 kg remains to be positively identified as cocaine.

Source: Narcotics Control Board, Government of India.

Another major enforcement loophole has been closed with a unique provision for pre-trial disposal of seized drugs. Since, under the law, the drug peddler has to be caught red-handed, seized drugs were routinely kept as critical evidence—and just as routinely reentered the contraband market. Under the new law, on arrest, seized material is presented to a magistrate together with the accused, and full details of the material are recorded, photographed, etc. The trial court is compelled by the law to accept this record as “primary evidence,” and the drugs are to be immediately destroyed.

The other major new provision is for confiscation of assets of drug traffickers and their accomplices. Significantly, the real estate and financial management support network for the drug traffic has been made specifically liable. “To provide for the forfeiture of property derived from, or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, to implement the provisions of the International Convention on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances,” is the way the law now reads.

“Illicit traffic” is further defined as including, beyond growing or handling of illegal substances, the “handling or letting out any premises” for carrying out those activities, as well as “financing, directly or indirectly” any such activities, “abetting or conspiring in the furtherance of or in support of” those activities, or “harboring persons engaged” in them.

The confiscation of assets and forfeiture of property provisions have a wide scope. They apply to anyone convicted under the NDPSA in India, or anyone convicted under similar laws outside of India, to those in detention under the new “preventive detention” law for suspected narco kingpins and co-conspirators. Enacted six months ago, 204 individuals are now in custody under its provisions. Significantly, the confiscation of assets and property provisions also apply to relatives or associates of those individuals as well as any holder of property previously held by them.

Under the new law, authorities are empowered to investigate any and all assets acquired going back six years before the offense, and, importantly, the burden of proof lies with the offender and his associates, to prove that the properties were acquired lawfully and not with dope money.

### **A powerful tool**

The amended anti-drug law is a powerful tool in the hands of the Narcotics Control Board. With a staff of 164—including a mere 80-odd enforcement officers of its own—and centers in Bombay, Madras, Calcutta, Varanasi, and Delhi, NCB coordinates anti-drug activities across the country, operating through the whole spectrum of police and enforcement agencies. Despite its fledgling status—it began work in February 1987—and a persistent shortage of funds, the NCB has made real gains.

Last fall, NCB chalked up a string of successes, including the arrest in October of Gurbux “Sam” Bhiryani, the elusive, Bombay-based kingpin of a syndicate that was shipping over

a ton of heroin annually to the United States. A month earlier, a Delhi-based network smuggling heroin from Pakistan to the Netherlands, United Kingdom, and United States was taken apart.

As in other cases, these milestones also reflected the

## **Bhutto stands firm under Soviet pressure**

by Ramtanu Maitra

The much-ballyhooed Feb. 4-5 visit to Pakistan by Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, the highest-level Soviet official to visit Pakistan since Aleksei Kosygin in the late 1960s, to “work out an acceptable solution” on Afghanistan fell flat on its face. Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, referring to Moscow’s continuing pledge of support to the Kabul regime, said bluntly at a press conference, “Why should they try to stay out, yet stay in by shoring up the regime?”

The fact is that the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, to be completed before Feb. 15, is conceived by the Kremlin as a tactical ploy. That the Soviets do not have any intention of washing their bloody hands of Afghanistan became evident when Shevardnadze, piqued by Mrs. Bhutto’s firmness, warned, “If new complications happen, if there is continued fighting, the Soviet Union has obligations to that country,” Afghanistan. But careful not to show his hand in full, Shevardnadze quickly added, “We are not thinking of any Soviet reentry to Afghanistan.”

Shevardnadze’s visit to Pakistan at this late hour, with nine days remaining before the last Soviet troops are to leave Afghanistan, was to armtwist into submission the 35-year-old prime minister of Pakistan. But he found that he was making the same mistake that India’s Congress Party political barons had with the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi when she assumed the prime ministry of India in 1966 following the death of Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. At that time, Mrs. Gandhi, known chiefly as the daughter of Jawaharlal Nehru, seemed to the Congress heavyweights to be “easy pickings.” However, they found out soon enough their mistake and faded into oblivion.

It is that kind of illusion that brought Shevardnadze to Islamabad. Earlier, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister and Ambassador to Kabul Yuli Vorontsov had tried the usual carrot-and-stick approach with Mrs. Bhutto, without any

growing efficiency of international cooperation in the anti-drug fight. NCB officials told this writer that while foreign assistance per se to the anti-drug effort was negligible—the United Nations Front for Drug Abuse Control has just begun the first of two projects here, involving \$7.5 million assis-

tance to the NCB—the information collaboration with enforcement agencies of other countries has been very good and useful. Key embassies now have designated anti-drug liaisons in New Delhi.

Otherwise, NCB has been concentrating on building up

noticeable effect. From the outset, Shevardnadze put up the “strongman” façade and reiterated the old stand with force and verve, expecting Mrs. Bhutto to succumb. He told the Pakistanis that any attempt to form a stable government in Kabul following the Soviet troop withdrawal would fail if it does not include the Communists—the ruling People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). “Whether you like it or not, the Communist Party is the most powerful force in Afghanistan,” he said. (One cannot help thinking of those backers of the murderous Khmer Rouge, who have been insisting that they are the true representatives of the Cambodian people for almost a decade.)

Ostensibly, Shevardnadze came to Pakistan to tell Mrs. Bhutto to pressure the Mujahideen to invite the ruling PDPA members to the Afghan *Shoora*, or Council, scheduled to be held at Peshawar on Feb. 10. At a press conference, held within hours of Shevardnadze’s departure, Prime Minister Bhutto made it clear that it was up to the Mujahideen to decide who was to attend the *Shoora*. She pointed out that they have refused repeatedly to entertain the idea of the PDPA’s participation. “It’s their country. They have fought the war. They have given their lives in the struggle,” she added.

### Old vodka in new bottles

While Shevardnadze was trying to pressure Mrs. Bhutto to accede to his demands, his assistant, Yuli Vorontsov, was in Teheran, trying to convince the Iranians of the benefits of widening the existing fissure between the Shia-Mujahideen based in Iran and the Ussni-Mujahideen based in Pakistan. Vorontsov, who has long been playing this card with about as much success as Henry Kissinger had in solving the Middle East imbroglio, refused to realize that his mission was also doomed to failure, given the visit of Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati to Pakistan and his talks with Prime Minister Bhutto. “Very soon after withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the Mujahideen will have their own government in Kabul,” Velayati, who was in Pakistan from Jan. 31 to Feb. 3, said in Karachi.

On Jan. 28, Pakistan Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan had air-dashed to Riyadh to hold urgent talks on the Afghanistan situation with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Saud al-Faisal. Reports indicate the talks went well.

Prior to Shevardnadze’s visit, the pro-Moscow rem-

nants in Pakistan were activated to support the Soviet line. Chief Bizenjo of a Baluchi clan and President of the Pakistan National Party, held a press conference in Quetta Jan. 31, urging the Pakistani government to “urgently take the necessary steps under the Geneva Accords to ensure peaceful conditions in Afghanistan and the early return of Afghan refugees.” These words of Bizenjo, who could not even get himself elected to the National Assembly in the last elections, went chiefly unnoticed.

On Jan. 30, one Urdu-language daily reported that the Soviet Union had expressed its “displeasure” over Pakistan’s current Afghan policy, and had made an offer of about \$4.2 billion to Islamabad “conditional on the solution of the Afghan dispute in terms of last April’s Geneva Agreement.” The report, which Pakistan’s Foreign Ministry quickly quashed, was disinformation evidently spread to affect Mrs. Bhutto’s policy.

The latest Soviet diplomacy to “solve the Afghan crisis” may well be a ruse. There are many indications that the Soviets are not keen to create an atmosphere in Afghanistan where peace may break out at any movement. In a report to the U.N. Economic and Soviet Council, an independent investigating panel said recently that estimates of the number of mines planted by Soviet and Afghan forces ranged from 5-30 million, many of them anti-personnel mines in civilian areas. According to available reports, the Soviets have speeded up bombing from Backfire bombers to keep the rebels at bay. There are also reports that some major towns in Afghanistan, the isolated places where the PDPA writ holds, have been stocked up with arms and ammunition and resemble huge arsenals.

Soviet duplicity in the withdrawal is already apparent. “The last of the Red Army soldiers pulled out of the Afghan capital on Feb. 5,” *Pravda* reported the next day. However, according to witness reports, Soviet soldiers are still manning the airport. There are also reports that a large number of Soviet “advisers” will continue to stay in Afghanistan after Feb. 15.

The threat of increased violence cannot be ruled out with so many weapons on the loose. The threat issued by the Afghan chargé d’affaires in Britain, Ahmed Sarwar, cannot be ignored. Sarwar told newsmen on Feb. 1 at a press conference in the House of Commons that the Afghan troops would begin using “the arms it has so far refrained from using” against the Afghan rebels. Whether it is just hot air or a mortal threat will soon be found out.

the infrastructure necessary to extend the writ of the tough new laws to every corner of the country. This means training and equipping police and others, thus building up a specialized anti-narcotics capability in the various military and enforcement branches. It means establishing laboratories for testing drugs in different regions of the country.

Very recently, the development and production indignously of a simple "field kit" for drug enforcement officers was announced. The kits, being produced for the equivalent of \$100 each, contain a set of reagents, a small testing tray, and a few droppers to allow on-the-spot testing for about eight of the most common narcotics. Previously such a kit was available in only limited quantities from the U.N., or could be purchased from Czechoslovakia for the equivalent of \$1,000 each.

### Formidable task

Though India's response has been timely to the virtual invasion of Dope, Inc. in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and fundamentalist takeover in Iran, the job of putting the narco-traffickers on the defensive in the subcontinent is formidable by any standard. From 1980, when not a single case of dope peddling was registered, the traffic soared. In 1985, when India emerged as the number-one source of heroin to Europe in Interpol records, the Indian government drafted sweeping new anti-narcotics laws. But as current statistics indicate, the trend has yet to be reversed.

The biggest problem, say NCB officials, is on the borders. Ninety percent of the seized drugs are positively identified as coming from Pakistan, the principal conduit for drugs grown in Afghanistan. NCB officials state their conviction that the Northeast must also be a major transit area for drugs coming from the Golden Triangle, but say that so far they haven't been able to get the evidence.

All big seizures are on the export side, at airports mostly, as the drugs are being shipped out to the West, officials explain. These seizures have turned up "white heroin," the famous 98% pure type from Burma, but it isn't being caught when it comes into India. It is "common knowledge" that sections of the military who enjoy political protection are involved.

Although the issue of illegal poppy cultivation and "leakage" from the government's legal opium production program has surfaced repeatedly over the years—and sophisticated heroin-refining labs have been discovered in the interior as well as Bombay—NCB officials maintain that this is not a significant problem, at least not yet. In 1988, some 50 acres of illicit poppy cultivation and 623 acres of marijuana were destroyed by the NCB. But officials say they have not found evidence of marketing contacts from the cities plugging the small isolated poppy cultivators—limited to several hundred acres in the hills of Uttar Pradesh, they say—into national, much less international, operations, or broader smuggling rackets—in which gold invariably plays a major role.

# Pedophiles arrested 'more powerful than

by Mark Burdman

On Feb. 2, in London's Old Bailey court, four men were convicted for running a ring of pedophiles—adults who sexually use children—which had recruited at least 150 young boys, some as young as nine, for repeated sodomic abuse. It is the biggest ring of pedophiles yet uncovered in Britain. British newspapers Feb. 3 said it had been run as a "Mafia-like conspiracy." One man arrested was too frightened to testify, declaring that the ring was "more powerful than the Mafia."

According to experts on child abuse in Britain, this case is only the beginning. Interviewed on British television Feb. 3, Dianne Core, head of the Childwatch organization, stated that "people in high places" were involved in pedophilic activities, and that the whole matter would "explode" during the coming months. The London *Daily Telegraph's* crime correspondent reported Feb. 3: "Despite the convictions, police believe there is still a flourishing pedophile network in Britain, with a sophistication said to resemble the Mafia."

The most prominent figure in the ring, Colin Peters, was trained at Oxford, and was formerly a senior adviser in the British Foreign Office. Following his Foreign Office work, he prosecuted cases for the British Customs and Excise. Investigators working on the case had interrogated at least one senior member of the House of Lords, one vicar in West London, and officials in Whitehall, "but the police did not have sufficient evidence or manpower to pursue their suspicions," the *Telegraph* reported.

Alan Delaney, the official head of the ring, is a cleaning company director. Delaney would procure young boys for pedophiles, by putting job advertisements in the press. The ring would also procure boys who were members of a junior soccer team. Many of the youngsters had been at special boarding schools for educationally below-normal children. Others were runaways, who were caught up by members of the Delaney-Peters ring, who would roam the streets of London scouting for boys.

According to the Feb. 3 *Telegraph* account, the young boys were "passed around its members for sexual degradation and, when the attraction faded, abandoned to a life of prostitution, drugs, and petty crime. . . . The boys were tempted off the unfamiliar London streets with promises of food,