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Bhutto cracks down on drugs as promised

by Ramtanu Maitra

A series of actions—drawing up a new bill providing for confiscation of property acquired through drug trafficking, a proposal to impose the death sentence for trafficking of narcotics, shoring up the Narcotics Control Division, and the netting of some “big fish”—indicate that Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has firmly put the fight against narcotics on top of her government’s agenda, as she had promised in her first address to the nation.

On May 3, Pakistan’s Interior Minister Aitzaz Ahsan went on record that the government is determined to apprehend “all fish, particularly the big ones.” Less than a week later, Narcotics Control Division Secretary Kaleem Dil Khan, while talking to newsmen at the Lahore Airport on his way to a New Delhi conference on international drug trafficking, reported that the federal government has complete information about 17 of the “big ones” involved in both domestic and international drug trafficking. For obvious reasons, Kaleem Dil Khan withheld the names, but said they would be provided to Interpol.

Pakistan, where about 100 tons of opium will be illegally grown this year, has been hit hard in recent years as a result of becoming the conduit for a huge amount of Iranian and Afghan drugs. This lucrative trade has created a vast network within Pakistan involving people from almost every walk of life. The country is also reeling under growing drug addiction: The number of addicts, it is estimated, has already reached the 2 million mark and is still growing fast. Moreover, billions of unaccounted-for dollars, earned through heroin and hashish trafficking, have ushered in a culture of violence that has almost paralyzed the port city of Karachi.

Hence Prime Minister Bhutto’s decisive crackdown. In mid-April, the Narcotics Control Division busted an international gang which was shipping hashish to Europe measured in tons, and had already laundered more than \$100 million through the Dubai-based Bank of Commerce and Credit International, earlier named in the United States as a “drug bank” and still under investigation, and the Kreditkasen Bank of Norway. The gang leader Maj. Farouq Hamid (ret.), arrested in Rawalpindi, was found to be the former pilot of the late President Zia ul-Haq.

Moreover, an officer from the Narcotics Control Division in Islamabad told journalists on April 19 that the government has reopened an investigation involving Zia’s aide-de-camp, who tried to smuggle kilos of pure heroin into the United

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States in President Zia's personal plane in 1981, when General Zia went to address the U.N. General Assembly. The President was carrying with him 100 marble lamps as gifts to various dignitaries. A change in itinerary meant the marble lamps had to be shipped directly to New York. When one of them broke, they were found to be stuffed with pure, white heroin. The case was referred to the Customs and Federal Investigation Agency, but was hushed up later, because of the accused's "very high connection." Although the Narcotics Control Division officer did not name the aide-de-camp, *EIR's* Oct. 6, 1981 issue named one Captain Qamar, considered the "adopted son" of President Zia, as the mastermind.

On the same day that Kaleem Dil Khan spoke to newsmen, the Pakistan Supreme Court, reversing its own, previous decision, upheld a government appeal to extradite Malik Mohammad Salim (see *EIR*, Vol. 16, No. 3) to the United States, where he had been indicted by the U.S. Attorney in Miami. Malik Salim is reportedly the number-two man in a 22-person drug ring that has been in operation since 1970 in England, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Singapore, Australia, West Germany, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Canada, and the United States. According to an Islamabad-based U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration official, this is the first time that a Pakistani has been extradited under the 15-year-old treaty. Malik Salim was hustled onto a New York-bound flight that very day.

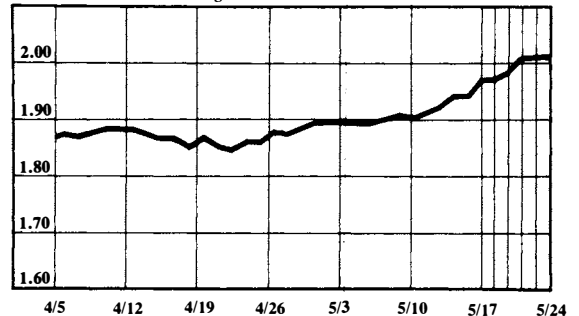
In early May, another "big fish," Anwar Khattak, was picked up and put in jail. Khattak, who made billions in narcotics smuggling and then became a big real estate man, has since been interrogated by a special team of Customs officers. Tried and convicted *in absentia* by the summary military court in 1983 for organizing and financing the smuggling of 6.5 tons of charas—a *cannabis* derivative—seized in Antwerp, Belgium, Khattak was sentenced to one-year, 15 lashes, and 50 million rupees. Khattak has now reportedly named a number of people in his network and its *modus operandi*. Khattak, a small businessman in Karachi in 1979, now has properties worth billions of rupees, including beachfront houses, penthouses, movie theaters, and commercial buildings.

Other initiatives were laid out by Federal Minister of State for the Narcotics Division, Mian Muzaffar Shah, who told newsmen April 21 about a new bill by the government allowing seizure of the drug traffickers' property, as well as legal action against some "important personalities" of the previous regime involved in the drug trade. A spokesman for the Narcotics Control Board said on April 29 that the government is considering proposals to hand down death penalties to drug traffickers. The present law provides for life imprisonment, the spokesman pointed out, but no one has been awarded this punishment as yet, because of the "inadequacy of law." He added that an estimated 100 heroin labs in Mehmund and Khyber Agencies are churning out huge quantities of heroin for smuggling to Europe, besides providing for local consumption.

Currency Rates

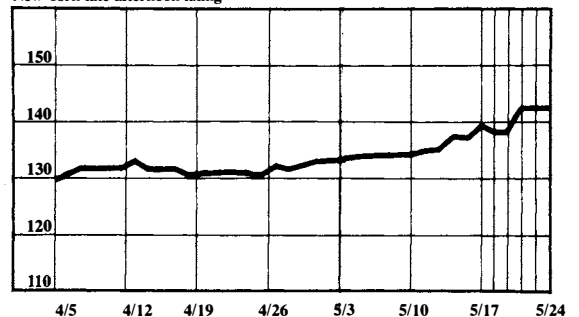
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



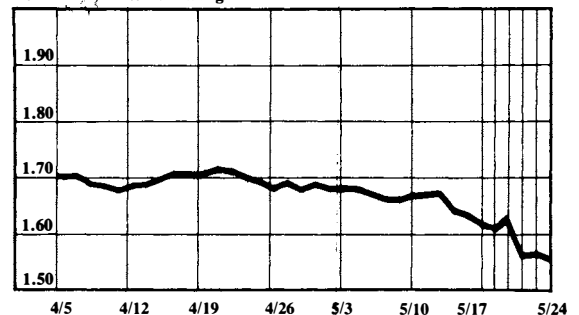
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

