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**NARCO-POLITICS AND ILLICIT POPPY CULTIVATION IN MANIPUR: AN  
ANALYSIS ON LEGAL ASPECT**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Manipur, a stunning state in India's northeastern region, is imprisoned in a maze of narco-politics. It poses a severe threat to the political and economic stability of Manipur, as well as to the ideals of society and the safety of the country. A significant worry that contributes to slowing the growth of the state's human resources is the relationship between state and non-state entities. A sizable portion of Manipuri people are impacted by the drugs either directly or indirectly. The Golden Triangle and the Golden Pentagon concepts have made the north-eastern states, notably Manipur, well-known to the drug trafficking community. Massive amounts of drugs are seized by state agencies, and they frequently clear acres of land used for growing poppies. The Manipuri administration has launched a number of steps to manage the drug problem in the state. Additionally, many nonprofit groups are working ceaselessly to protect the state from this danger.

But in recent years, there has been a significant growth in poppy production and cultivation in Manipur, which continues to be a vital element of a booming opium/drug economy. This might have been a side effect of Myanmar's downward trend in poppy production. The state of Manipur, which has struggled with political and armed warfare for more than 60 years, has faced significant difficulty. The Manipuri government has launched a "War on Drugs 2.0" campaign in response to the threat. This paper attempts to analyze the causes, problems, and difficulties of Manipur's rapidly expanding poppy plantation/cultivation.

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**KEYWORDS:**

Narco-terrorism, Poppy Cultivations, Global Terrorism, Domestic Terrorism,

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Recently, there were terrorist attacks in France, and they have just occurred once more in Austria. Terrorist attacks continue to take place in Asia, the Americas, and Europe in this way. At both the national and international levels, nations like the United States of America, India, France, and Britain frequently attempt to outlaw terrorism. However, terrorism based on false religious beliefs was a topic on which the entire globe could not agree. Recently, there were terrorist attacks in France, which prompted both international action and a range of responses. The development of terrorism is thus morally supported by differences in opinion around the world, which raises the terrorists' motivation and helps them carry out their plans, incidents like Pulwama, Pathankot, Vienna, and 9/11.

**Define Terrorism**

The use of organized and systematic violence by a person or organization to intimidate others to further their political, religious, or cultural goals is known as terrorism. To many governments and organizations, terrorism means different things. The official definition of terrorism employed by the US government is used to inform the definition that follows:

*"Premeditated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience."*

**Types of terrorism in India**

1. Ethnic terrorism
2. Religious terrorism
3. Ideological terrorism

- 1. Ethnic Terrorism:** Ethnic terrorism is based on resource depletion, cultural imperialism, and identity crises among distinct ethnic groups. It is widespread in India's northeast.

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2. **Religious terrorism:** Religious terrorism refers to the institutionalized violence that is spread based on religion. At the heart of this terrorism is a sense of religious superiority. Modern-day religious terrorism is seen as terrorism.
3. **Ideological terrorism:** Left terrorism or Naxalism are the terms used to describe planned acts of violence that have communist undertones. However, right-wing terrorism is used to describe acts of violence that have religious or cultural roots.

### **Dominance of religious terrorism in India**

According to India, there are three types of terrorism about religion:

- Global Terrorism
- Cross-border terrorism
- Domestic terrorism

**Global terrorism:** -This kind of terrorism affects the entire world. They primarily aim at Western nations (America and Europe). The 9/11 assaults in America provided the first terrifying sight of international terrorism. Recently, France and Austria have seen acts of international terrorism.

**India's Stand:** India's nonviolent attitude and support for democracy led it to reject all forms of terrorism. As a result, following Osama bin Laden's death in Pakistan in 2011, India commended the US military campaign against terrorism. Masood Azhar has also been placed on a UN blocklist due to India's persistent efforts to get international terrorism banned there. Furthermore, in bilateral discussions, India brings up the subject of terrorism. In recent talks between India and Central Asia, agreements against terrorism have been reached.

**Cross-border terrorism:** -This kind of terrorism involves foreigners who commit acts of terrorism inside India with the help of friendly nations or religious motivations. They also support the separatist movements occurring in India. The region most affected by these operations is Jammu & Kashmir's Ladakh UT. Situations such as Pulwama, Mumbai 26/11, and Pathankot provided clear evidence that Pakistan supported terrorism.

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**Domestic Terrorism:** -Domestic terrorism is a result of relative deprivation, identity conflict, rising extremist sentiment among the majority group, and the presence of communal elements in society. Since India's culture and nation are still developing, communalism challenges nation-building.

**Changing nature of terrorism:** -Not only has technology advanced, but terrorism has evolved as well. The information technology revolution has led to terrorists now using technology to brainwash children. Disadvantaged individuals who carry out terrorist activities while simultaneously being refugees. This kind of terror is known as cyberterrorism.

## 2. **NARCO-TERRORISM – A VICIOUS CIRCLE**

It is thought that the illegal drug trade on the Indian subcontinent finances terrorists both domestically and internationally. Narco-terrorism is the term used to describe the connection between drugs and terrorism. Once an organized cross-border crime, drug trafficking has become a threat to nation-states due to its sinister alliance with terrorist organizations. Everyone must concede that throughout the previous few centuries, terrorist actions have undergone a significant transformation.

Terrorists of today are well-versed in technology. Humanity is inherently vulnerable due to innovations in new tactics. Technology has made the previously inconceivable possible. The internet, satellite phones, sophisticated communication tools, and other technology have made tracking these perpetrators more difficult. Unlike in the past, these terrorists are incredibly well-organized now. Network terrorism in the twenty-first century is supersonic. Thanks to networks, which provide them with a great deal of flexibility, transnational criminal organizations and drug trafficking organizations may quickly adapt to new methods and strategies established by law enforcement. Governments and law enforcement agencies need to think and act much more like networks if they are to develop informal global law enforcement networks based on the trust that drug-trafficking networks exhibit. They, too, need to acquire the same level of adaptability. The terrorist groups with ties to the drug cartels are intricately linked. It should go without saying that the two nations with the highest rates of opium production worldwide, which generates massive profits on the international market, are Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Pakistani government and non-governmental organizations exploit the narcotics earnings to undermine India. In Punjab and, Jammu, Kashmir, where the Pakistani government openly supports

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terrorism, narcotics are the primary source of finance for terrorist activities, according to a study conducted by Kshitij Prabha, Associate Fellow, and IDSA.

Nonetheless, it is possible to determine approximately how much Pakistan spends each month on paying militants alone—between 20 and 30 billion rupees—based on information obtained from terrorists and drug dealers. The expenses that Pakistan has incurred in inciting the threat of terrorism in India are not well estimated. Where does all of this money come from? Pakistan's gross national product is not very spectacular. There is little doubt that the illegal drug trade provides this money. Since all financial transactions include currency, there is no evidence to back up this assertion. These two issues are vital to the regional politics between the two rival nations. The majority of the money used to sponsor terrorism comes from the smuggling of illegal drugs and other unlawful means. This is a costly endeavor. We know that the market value of narcotic drugs is significantly higher than that of other consumer items. For example, on the US market, one kilogram of Golden Crescent heroin fetches about one crore rupees, compared to its selling price of approximately one lakh rupees in South Asia. The cost of a kilogram of heroin coming from the Golden Crescent is between Rs. 30 lakhs and Rs. 1 crore. It is important to note that Colombian marijuana and heroin from Pakistan are in high demand in the United States and other European nations.

Terrorists have forged links with drug traffickers, smugglers, and mafia dons to finance their purported operations, given the enormous financial amounts associated with the illegal drug trade.

The current concern is how to counter the threat posed by drug-related terrorism in India. The drug crisis in the Golden Crescent and the active participation of Pakistani politics and law enforcement have resulted in an unstable Indian subcontinent.

### **Origin and Background of Narco-Terrorism:**

Where narco-terrorism originated is unknown. Nonetheless, there will be a link between drug trafficking and terrorism as long as both are effective. However, as drug trafficking organizations began to engage in more violent and sophisticated criminal and terrorist activities in countries like Colombia and Peru in the 1980s and 1990s, the term "narco-terrorism" gained prominence. These groups regularly use the drug trade as a means of financing their terrorist activities, which include bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations,

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in an attempt to intimidate law enforcement and obstruct initiatives to combat both the drug trade and terrorism.

Over time, both the drug trade and the phenomena of narco-terrorism have grown and evolved. It continues to be a severe security risk in many world regions. Drug-related terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has increased significantly in recent years. The area has seen a dramatic rise in drug trafficking in recent years; among the illicit substances grown and processed in neighboring countries before being shipped into India and other countries are heroin and marijuana. There have also been allegations that local militant and separatist groups, who carry out acts of terrorism and violence in J&K, receive funding from the sale of drugs. As a result, there is now a significant security danger from narco-terrorism, which has encouraged more acts of terror and violence.

Previously, the drug trafficking only engaged Punjab and the North Eastern Region. Unfortunately, since 2021, J&K has seen a sharp rise in the number of narco-terrorism cases. Because of the intimate relationship between drug trafficking and terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, there has been a notable rise in heroin misuse cases, which has alarmed security personnel. Pakistan often sows discontent in India's Border States by utilizing drugs and narco-terrorism as a tactic. Adolescents who use drugs suffer from cognitive deterioration and end up in a drug-using loop. In J&K, mental disability fosters and facilitates young people's radicalization. That Pakistan goes to such efforts to take advantage of the ailments of drug users is sad cognitive decline and get caught up in a drug-using pattern. In J&K, mental disability fosters and facilitates young people's radicalization. That Pakistan goes to such efforts to take advantage of the ailments of drug users is sad. Some media sources claim that six lakh people in Kashmir Valley are affected by the drug epidemic. They need immediate attention because a long-delayed response will only strengthen our adversary.

Terrorists operating in J&K have been found in possession of narcotics in several instances. It seems that Pakistan has been smuggling drugs, especially heroin, into J&K via the Line of Control (LoC) in recent times. Through the constant indoctrination of J&K's youth into drug addiction, Pakistan has exploited the COVID-19 pandemic catastrophe. Drug trafficking degrades young people's cognitive capacities and draws them into criminal activities, all while helping Pakistan and terrorist organizations finance terrorism.

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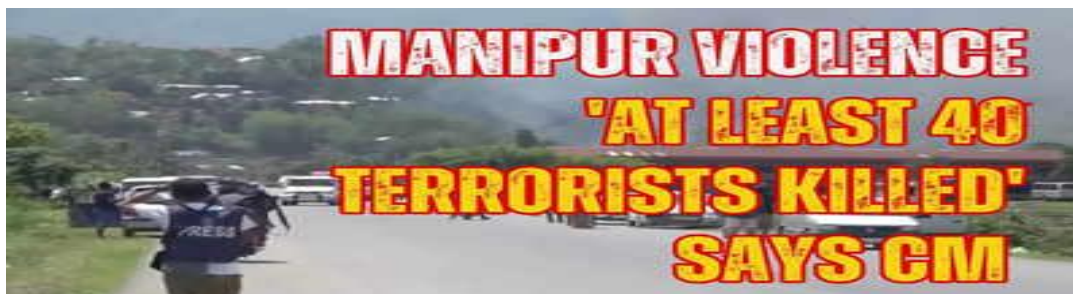
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Security forces' drug-related occurrences indicate that Pakistan is making more of an effort to smuggle drugs into UT.

There have been several instances where militant organizations active in the area have been funded in part by drug trafficking. To address the problem, the government has implemented several initiatives, such as stepped-up monitoring, enhanced interdiction efforts, and the arrest of drug traffickers. The enormous profits made by the illegal drug trade and the existence of organized crime networks make it difficult to eradicate this threat completely, nevertheless.

Drug trafficking has long been a problem in the community. Law enforcement officials assert that they have taken control of the issue by seizing a range of drugs, including heroin, marijuana, and prescription drugs. Additionally, the government has launched a variety of initiatives and campaigns to raise awareness of the dangers of drug abuse and to put an end to drug trafficking in the region.

According to a PIL submitted to the Supreme Court on Tuesday, contrary to Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Anil Chauhan's claim that the unrest in Manipur is "an ethnic clash... nothing to do with insurgency," the border state is experiencing cross-border narco-terrorism by armed Kuki militants infiltrating from Myanmar to promote and protect illegal poppy cultivation and illicit drug trade in the hill areas.



The NGO stated, "If narco-terrorism in the northeastern border areas of India is not acknowledged by the Union government and contained in time, it will have larger implications posing a serious threat to the national security." The NGO warned of severe repercussions if the Kuki militants' nefarious activities were not curbed.

### **THREAT TO MANIPUR POLITICS**

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Manipur is a landlocked country with a unique geographical extension of the Himalayan Range. Over 90% of the geographic area is made up of hills, with valleys making up the remaining 10%. This part of the valley is called Imphal Valley—ninehills range around this little valley of 1,787 square kilometers. The bulk of the state's population lives in this little area. The state is home to 28.56 lakh inhabitants, according to the 2011 Census. The state is divided into 16 districts: Ukhrul, Churachandpur, Chandel, Senapati, Tamenglong, Kangpokpi, Kamjong, Tengenoupal, Noney, and Pherzawl in the state's hill region, and Imphal East, Imphal West, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Jiribam, and Kakching in the valley.

Unfortunately, the gloom of the psychotropic substances casts a shade on such a lovely topography. India is fighting on the two most known fronts for producing drugs in the globe. The first front is coming from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, three neighboring nations that make up the "Golden Crescent" in the country's northwest. The second one comes from the northeast and is known as the "Golden Triangle" because it includes Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand, three nations close to one another in Southeast Asia. The latter is expanding its territory to include Vietnam, Cambodia, and the Indian states of Nagaland and Manipur. The controversial "Golden Pentagon" moniker applies to this new section (Nepam, 2020).

In particular, this illicit global drug influence has a major negative impact on Manipur's national security. Several bogus pharmaceutical companies were established in northeastern India during the 1980s and 1990s. Due to loose regulations, acetic anhydride—a vital raw chemical supply for this industry—is illegally traded with Myanmar. The US Drug Enforcement Administration claims that Myanmar produces 80% of the narcotics in Southeast Asia and 60% of the drugs worldwide (Nepam, 2020). Consequently, the Northeastern States—Manipur in particular—become the supply chain for raw materials for medications and the transportation of completed pharmaceuticals. Once considered the sporting capital of India, Manipur is now a "Convergence Point" for a number of illegal drugs arriving from around the globe.

The Narcopolitisation of Manipur Narco-politics, according to author and political analyst Alan Riding, is the misuse of authority to get income via the drug trade, the misuse of authority to gain power, the use of corruption to create political coalitions, and the use of corruption to advance bureaucracy. This blood money is among the easiest and safest ways to purchase votes and increase voter turnout. To be more

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precise, the practice of politicians smuggling drugs into legislative assemblies and other political institutions to support democratic elections should be called "Narcoecopolitisation."

In most Indian states, political parties employ caste politics. Politicians can use communal politics and caste mobilization to try to influence their voters. But party affiliation is less critical in Manipur politics than an individual's personality is. Manipuri voters tend to form deep emotional connections with candidates. Most voters select candidates without carefully examining their qualifications or objectives for the election if they make any kind of financial or favoritism offer. In India, the criminalization of politics is nothing new. Numerous commissions and committees have been formed to deal with this significant issue.

Unfortunately, all the political parties across the party line have always been reluctant to combat the criminalization of politics. Changes happen through judicial interventions that too Public Interest Litigations (PILs). In practice, democracy is a number game. Everything is fair for the winner, and no one counts the runners-up.

Politicians find it simpler to abuse their influence and misuse their position to buy and influence votes in the state since, in contrast to other large states, the majority of voter families are well-known to them. How could legally obtained, hard-earned funds be illegally wasted on an election with such an uncertain outcome? As a result, it is impossible to argue the importance of black money during election seasons. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has increased the entire budget for the intended candidate from 20 lakhs to 28 lakhs. Political gatherings are becoming less frequent as the pandemic is still very much alive. Still, the critical point is the criteria or reasoning the ECI used to support increasing spending. Manipur, a liberal democratic state in India, has regular legislative assembly elections under the ECI.

A few MPs from Manipur have been imprisoned in Delhi's Tihar Jail due to drug trafficking (Nepram, 2020). There were multiple violent pre-election incidents and three fatalities, the first in Manipur's history. Thus, the legitimacy of the elected officials is questioned. It also exposes the silent consent of the Manipuri voters. In accordance with Section 8(3) of the Representation of the People Act 1951, an MP or MLA who is convicted of another felony and receives a sentence of two years or more in prison

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is permanently barred from holding elective office for a period of six years after release. A person can remain a legislator or minister even after being accused of rape, money laundering, or murder. A peon, however, cannot be appointed if he has a minor criminal case against him. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees equality before the law, is violated by this flagrant example of the judicial system's conflicting standards (Qureshi, 2021). Thankfully, the current Manipur government is dedicated to addressing the drug issue in the region. Thus, "Nisha Thadoklasi" was introduced by the state government.

On June 26, 2018, there will be a celebration in observance of the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal Trafficking. On November 3, 2018, Manipur's Chief Minister, Shri N. Biren Singh, proclaimed a "War on Drugs" once more. However, there are endless political squabbles in our state. The recent argument over the arrest of a drug kingpin between a distinguished Manipur police officer and a member of the ruling party's political leadership revealed the extent of corruption and drug infiltration in the state (Singh, 2021). An event will be held on June 26, 2018, to commemorate the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illegal Trafficking. The Chief Minister of Manipur, Shri N. Biren Singh, declared a "War on Drugs" on November 3, 2018. However, there are endless political squabbles in our state. The recent argument over the arrest of a drug kingpin between a distinguished Manipur police officer and a member of the ruling party's political leadership revealed the extent of corruption and drug infiltration in the state (Singh, 2021).

Again, medicines worth more than Rs 508 crore on the international market were found recently in Town Moreh town and other locations in the state, including the Imphal Airport. In spite of this, the drug lords have eluded law enforcement's grasp. Unknown are the Kingpins/Drug Lords. We kind of live in a Disney theme park. This suggests that the state administration would prefer to say nothing or exercise no official political power, expecting these problems to go away on their own. Once more, there is a suspicion that government agents, hustlers, politicians, and insurgencies are connected. Drug abuse and trafficking are significant problems in Manipur. If narco-politicians penetrate democratic institutions, there may be future tumultuous situations:

1. It will tremendously increase the loss of support or loss of neutrality of the state institutions towards the ordinary people. It will add more legitimate power to these politicians through these illegal means.

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2. The nexus network of crimes and narcotics would deteriorate the good governance principles by penetrating state institutions like courts, legislatures, and state armed forces.
3. Common people would unthinkingly start to idolize them as their leaders because of their money and power. These would inspire the educated unemployed youth into this adverse pathway in the future.
4. State security forces could not defend and enter the extreme terrain areas of the hilly region to ensure the protection of citizens from these illegal activities.
5. It will collaterally damage the state's economy. A parallel economy would control the delivery of government services to society.
6. They'll begin to assert sole territorial dominance over the key locations. Illicit drug dealers promote conflict and mistrust between different ethnic groups. Some groups will be charged with profiting from this murderous trade. It will worsen the social order segregation and lack of trust between the various populations in our diverse society.

#### **KUKI AND MEITEI GROUP CONTROVERSY:**

##### *Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi MLAs demand separate administration and Meitei civil society's reaction*

Ten state assembly members from areas mostly inhabited by the Zomi, Kuki, Mizo, and Chin hill tribes demanded a "separate administration" on May 12 amid the mudslinging and finger-pointing. They claimed that cutting connections with the Manipur administration was the only way to make such a transaction possible. Up till then, these MLAs have unconditionally backed the BJP government led by N. Biren Singh.

The serious accusation that the widespread violence was "perpetrated by the majority Meitei community and was tacitly supported by the BJP-run state government" led the MLAs to demand this. Eight of these MLAs are from the BJP, the governing party's ally, and two are from the Kuki People's Alliance; this might be seen as a confrontation between the BJP and its supporters. They said that the elected leaders of the Chin-Kuki-Mizo-Zomi hill tribes spoke for the people and

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endorsed their political aspiration for "separation from the state of Manipur." But looking back, this is being recognized as a strategy that existed well before the first sparks that set off the extreme violence.

According to the MReF, armed Kuki militants were conducting "murders, arsons, and destruction of Meitei temples and shrines," while the Assam Rifles, dispatched to put an end to the growing bloodshed, and had done nothing but watch on. It also condemned the violent response of the Meitei mobs, which led to the destruction of Kuki houses, belongings, and places of worship in the valley areas. Additionally, the group said that armed Kuki militants were responsible for the conflict and that they were "funded by drug money and illegal migrants from Myanmar, Mizoram, and Bangladesh."

### **Origin of the tension: splitting wide-open**

The origins of the problem can be found without going too far back in time. Manipur watchers have long known that there is a direct connection between national security, global military strategy, narco-economy, and ethnic strife. Detaining numerous alleged participants, the state administration had been aggressively pursuing its "war" on the narcotics illicit market. They have even imprisoned village chiefs, who are in charge of the extensive poppy farming that takes place in the hills. Still, most alleged drug barons and kingpins have managed to evade the state's pursuit, so the general public hasn't been able to recognize the state government's efforts.

On May 8, during the continuous tension in districts hit by violence, the Narcotics and Affairs of Border (NAB), a specialized unit of the state police, confiscated 77 gunny bags in the Mantripukhri slum of Imphal. It was believed that the packets included messages from Myanmar and poppy seeds. A multinational drug cartel reportedly owns the house where the illegal goods were discovered.

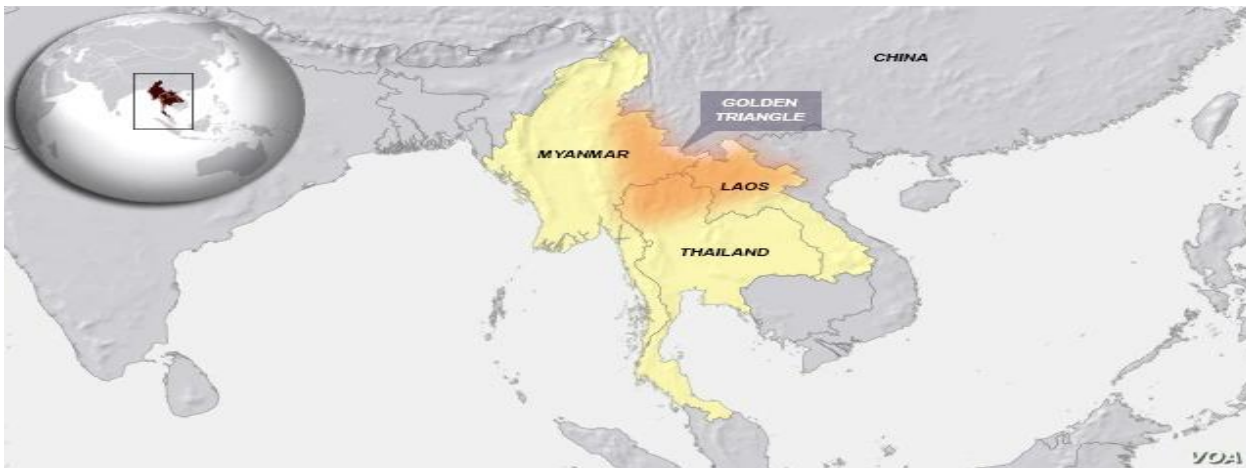
Authorities in Manipur assert that around 18,664 acres of land used for poppies were destroyed by state police between 2017 and 2018. Mostly, this has only happened in hilly terrain. From 2013 to 2016, just 1,889 acres of land used for cultivating poppies were destroyed. An additional aspect fueling the simmering hatred towards the Biren Singh administration, when taking into account such

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state activities, is the eradication of poppy farming, which is otherwise a source of income for a substantial percentage of the Kuki-Zo-Chin tribe.

In July 2022, Congress legislator Kangujam Ranjit Singh raised the issue of poppies in the Manipur legislative assembly. He had requested that the House enact a stringent law that would impose the death penalty or life in prison on anyone found guilty of being involved in the illegal drug trade. In an attempt to project the palpable despair of the people on the "war on drugs," he had noted that drugs seized at the Imphal airport and other areas of Manipur a few years ago had been primarily trafficked from the Golden Triangle countries like Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar, but that they were currently being manufactured in Manipur itself.



He emphasized how massive poppy plantations had been established in Manipur's hilly regions to produce illegal drugs. He emphasized that the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985 has not stopped Manipur's drug trafficking.

### **3. THE POPPY MENACE IN MANIPUR**

The primary source of opium, a highly addictive natural opioid, is the poppy plant, technically known as *Papaver Somniferum*. It is grown both officially and illegally all over the world. The two regions with the biggest concentrations of illicit opium production are the Golden Triangle, which comprises the adjacent countries of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos, and the Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan triangle.

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The lucrative opium and drug trades are centered in these two districts (Zahan, 2022). India is situated between the world's two leading producers of heroin and opium. This essay will focus on the state of Manipur in northeastern India, which shares a border with Myanmar.

As per the findings of Opium Poppy Cultivation in the Golden Triangle (2006), Myanmar is the country within the Golden Triangle that generates the highest amount of opium and ranks second globally in terms of poppies produced. Eight hundred seventy metric tonnes of opium were produced in 2022, the most since 2013, according to the Myanmar Opium Survey 2022 (United Nations, 2023). Manipur's close proximity to Myanmar (about 398 km) has made it a preferred transit route for drug smuggling into other parts of the country and outside. Drug smuggling across borders has undoubtedly grown in recent years. There are also reports of drug manufacturing and poppies being moved from the Golden Triangle to Northeast India, including Manipur. The state of Manipur in northeastern India has a total size of 22,327 square kilometers. It is bordered domestically by the states of Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram as well as externally by Myanmar. It is also wonderfully framed or encircled by hill ranges.

The Manipuri government launched a "War on Drugs" campaign in 2018 to address the growing threat posed by poppies. Alternative crops were introduced in certain districts as part of government activities. Cardamom and lemongrass have been proposed as substitutes for poppies (Kipgen, 2019). However, it is questioned if poppies and this substitute crop can compete. The farmer stated that the only way to end poverty was to grow poppies on a secluded hill that was not under the control of the police, the Assam Rifles, the NAB, etc. The growers cleared mountains, jungles, and even entire regions in order to improve the productivity of their poppy farming. This vast deforestation interfered with the normal cycle, and as a result, many people experience frequent diseases, floods, and droughts every year. This conduct not only affects drug users but also puts the lives of those in plain valleys and steep locations in grave peril. The unripe seed pod of the poppy plant, which is used to make opium, is abundantly grown in the hilly regions where Schedule Tribes live (Zahan, 2022).

### **Shifting of poppy cultivation from Golden Triangle to Manipur:**

In Southeast Asia, the point where Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar meet is referred to as the "Golden Triangle." It has long been a central hub for the production and trade of opium, providing about 60% of

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the illegal opium traded globally. The drug trade in Myanmar is well known for its superior purity. Originally, heroin from Myanmar was trafficked across Northeast India, especially Manipur and a large number of heroin manufacturing plants are situated along the border between India and Myanmar. However, the state of Manipur in northeastern India has recently experienced a shift in the production of poppies. Without a doubt, the infamous Golden Triangle has given way to Northeast India, and more especially to the state of Manipur, in terms of the practice, nature, and process of massive opium/poppy growing (Laang, 2022).

### **Government's Initiative and Policy Response:**

Despite being against the law, planting poppies is prevalent in Manipur. It is interesting to observe how many farmers who depend on opium are unaware of the drug's legal status. Because of the opium industry, communities in the interior of Manipur have become dependent on poppy growing revenue (Kipgen 2019). Rather than being grown for domestic use, poppies are farmed for the survival needs of many cultures. It serves as their primary source of income, enabling them to cover their basic expenses and their children's educational costs. As a result, the government has used both coercive and non-coercive methods to address the issue. These include giving farmers incentives and alternate forms of income in addition to narcotics seizures, eradication programs, and the incarceration of poppy growers.

To help residents in the Senapati district transition away from poppy growing and provide them with an alternative source of income, the government, for example, has introduced cardamom plantations in a number of sites. On November 3 and June 26, the chief minister of Manipur declared the start of the "War on Drugs" and "Nisha Thadoklashi" campaigns in 2018. It's a sensible move, particularly considering the harm that local drug cultivation and trafficking have caused. The primary focus of the war on drugs is not just on limiting drug sales and distribution, but also on the illicit cultivation of poppies. Following the announcement, large areas of land used to cultivate poppies were destroyed and more drugs were taken into custody. The chief minister said that each district would have a squad of at least 100 police officers assigned to uproot and kill poppy plants as part of a vast campaign to end poppy production (Karmakar, 2020). In addition, civil society organizations (CSOs) were utilized in addition to government institutions to increase public awareness, mostly to prevent individuals from cultivating poppies.

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Civil society organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like the Coalition Against Drugs and Alcohol (CADA), the All Lilong Anti-Drug Association, and Meira Paibis are among those working to defend the same (my Govt blog, 2019). Following the chief minister's call's appeal for support in the "War on Drugs," on February 25, 2021, representatives of 33 communities in Manipur convened and made a commitment to abolish poppy farming under the auspices of the "All Communities Convention for a Pledge against Illegal Poppy Plantation" (Morung Express, 2021).

As his government waged a war on drugs, the chief minister of Manipur stated that it was crucial for those who had previously grown poppies to find alternate sources of income. After consulting with specialists, he suggested they may start growing lemongrass and agar trees and raising Mithun (Sapam, 2018). A community in the Ukhrul district was given a cash award of Rs 10 lakh by Chief Minister N Biren Singh in February 2021 in exchange for voluntarily killing the village's poppy plants (Mazumdar, 2021). The biggest danger posed by Manipur's burgeoning illegal poppy cultivation is that it might transform the state into more than simply a stopping point on the drug trade route and into a hub for drug production. The Chief Minister claimed that in the previous 2.5 years, his administration had confiscated drugs worth more than 2,000 crores of rupees. Additionally, more than five illegal drug manufacturing facilities were shut down (Laithangbam, 2020).

Three village heads, one vice chairman, and one secretary of Selsi village have been detained by district police as part of the "War on Drugs" campaign for their alleged involvement in opium cultivation (The Sangai Express, December 31, 2022). Security forces continued their renewed campaign against poppy plantations as part of the State Government's War on Drugs initiative. On January 4 and 5, poppies grew on about 50 acres of land in the districts of Chandel and Kangpokpi. Two village chiefs were detained for their alleged involvement. Security personnel continued the War on Drugs campaign by razing more than 100 acres of poppy plantations across the State in a 24-hour period (*The Sangai Express*, February 8, 2023).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Our culture is being overtaken by the drug mafias like a flood. State security agencies need to be outfitted with the newest scientific tools and technologies to take on these mafias. Law enforcement

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should refrain from using force or acting hurriedly when enforcing anti-drug laws. The federal government and the states must cooperate in good faith with Myanmar and the neighboring nations. There is newfound optimism as a result of the administration's new initiatives. What matters most, though, is the government's willingness to genuinely address the issue rather than just Band-Aid fixes, PR stunts, and empty talk. The people of Manipur want a strong political commitment to stopping drug use and the drug crisis. Legislators should carefully consider social, cultural, political, and economic factors when creating a state's drug policy. They also need to learn from the anti-drug initiatives that have been put in place in a number of states and countries. It is possible to wean people off of these illegal activities through broad socioeconomic growth supported locally.

The main reason poppies are cultivated in Manipur is that the farmers there did not have access to assistance due to a lack of infrastructure, corrupt government agencies, and a hasty desire to escape poverty. Providing people with crops other than poppies to replace them, along with opportunities for skill development, employment, and other essentials of life, should be the government's primary priorities. In addition to enforcing strict laws against illicit drug use and related activities, the community, political organizations, civil society organizations, student unions, and Meira Paibis/Women Torch Bearers of Manipur should collaborate to fight this social evil. Given that this porous border serves as the point of entry for illicit substances into the state, the Indo-Myanmar border also has to be investigated.

Given that the Land Customs Station (LCS) and Integrated Check Post (ICP) at the border are operating efficiently, the Free Movement Regime (FMR) has to be updated. Effective walling is also necessary along the boundary. Should this not happen, will a new Golden Triangle reenacting the struggle with money from drug sales arise in northeastern India? Finally, should the drug trafficking issue not be adequately addressed, Manipur, which is a possible target zone for India's Act East Policy linking India with Southeast Asian Countries, could become an unmanageable security nightmare in the future.

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