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Fight Drugs (05/11/01) Burma time: Sunday May 27, 2001 at 01:35:37AM

Asians Vow To Fight Drugs. Myanmar Urges Local Strategies



Yangon (AP): Six Asian governments Friday signed agreements to **fight** illegal **drugs** jointly, as a top Myanmar leader said every country must devise its own strategy, free of foreign interference.



In their most important agreement, the six countries approved a new regional project to control precursors, the legal chemicals that are used as ingredients and catalysts for producing **drugs** such as heroin and methamphetamine.

The agreement was signed by Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, whose ministers met Friday after senior officials hammered out the agreements over the last two days.



The meeting, sponsored by the United Nations International Drug Control Program, highlighted the dangers of amphetamine-type stimulants such as methamphetamine, a cheap and popular drug that has become the biggest scourge of the region after heroin.

Myanmar has been widely criticized for being a major source of opium and its derivative, heroin, as well as methamphetamine.



In a speech, Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the No. 3 in Myanmar's military junta, said each country must adopt a solution appropriate for its own conditions.

"Given the differences in political, economic, social, administrative, judicial and cultural traditions and religious conditions of countries, the strategies and methods used by individual countries cannot be identical," he said.

"Making allegations and accusations against each other will serve no useful purpose," he said.



The biggest drug operation in Myanmar is known to be controlled by the ethnic Wa army, which is pro-government and enjoys virtual autonomy in the border areas.

Khin Nyunt also criticized the U.S. for barring aid to Myanmar. The U.S. said the junta failed to take adequate and sincere measures to stop the drug trade.

"Sometimes such actions are undertaken after turning a blind eye to the nation's achievements in anti-narcotics endeavors," Khin Nyunt said.



"What is worse is that the decisions to undertake such measures are based on political grounds or in disguise for reason to interfere in the internal affairs of other

.. states," he said.

Washington criticizes Yangon not only over **drugs** but also because of the junta's poor human rights record and failure to hand over power to a democratically elected government.

In a speech, Sandro Calvani, head of UNDCP's Asia office in Bangkok, warned that successful campaigns to eliminate illicit crops in Bolivia, formerly a major sources of cocaine, and Afghanistan, where opium production has been slashed, were mixed blessings.

"They also bring the obvious risk that the problem will migrate to another angle of the world and it is very, very likely that it will be our corner," he said.

Source: AP



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