

IDPC & HRA News Digest, Asia-Pacific | 21st March-29th March 2016

Note: Apologies, due to a public holiday yesterday, this news digest is being sent out on Tuesday instead of Monday.

Global & Regional

[From cannabis cafes to death row: drugs laws around the world](#)

The Guardian (25/03)

As a commission calls for drug legalisation, we look at how some countries deal with the issue.

[Lancet Commission recommends drug legalisation](#)

Reason.Com (28/03)

With a new UNGASS on "the world drug problem" scheduled for next month, a group of 22 experts organized by *The Lancet* and Johns Hopkins University is hoping to inject a little more realism into the proceedings, including an awareness of prohibition's human costs and the benefits of "mov[ing] gradually towards regulated drug markets."

Afghanistan

[New Afghan drug treatment facility helps homeless addicts get clean](#)

Los Angeles Times (22/03)

The Drug Demand Reduction Department of the Afghan Ministry of Public Health has recently opened a facility that can house up to 1,500 addicts for a 45-day detoxification and rehabilitation program, the largest drug treatment facility in Afghanistan.

Australia

[When it comes to handling drugs, we need to be transparent](#)

Huffington Post (22/03)

Australia will be participating in an April 2016 UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the world drug problem, to review decades of progress on the international drug situation. What is not so clear is what position Australia will be taking. In recent years, there has appeared to be an overriding principle of simply avoiding any controversy, with many countries privately lamenting the lack of willingness of Australia to engage in the debate or assume its previously highly regarded leadership position.

China

[Battling drug addiction with Confucian wisdom](#)

Shanghai Daily (22/03)

Authorities in an east China province are applying ancient Confucianism philosophy in their fight against drugs, which advocates family ties, filial duties and mutual respect, which they believe will have a positive moral impact on those receiving drug treatment.

[China eyes harsher punishment on drug-influenced driving](#)

People's Daily Online (25/03)

The Ministry of Public Security (MPS) announced on Thursday that driving under the influence of drugs will soon be a criminal offence. In recent years, an increasing number of accidents caused by drivers taking hard drugs has posed a serious and escalating danger to the public. Punishments for driving under the influence of drugs should be even harsher than those for drunk driving, according to a statement by the MPS.

Fiji

[Drugs at the border](#)

Fiji Times (25/03)

At least \$45million worth of drugs have been confiscated at our borders but traffickers are resorting to desperate ways of concealing even inserting drugs in body cavities.

India

[Women as drug mules on the rise: cops](#)

The Hindu (27/03)

The number of women in drug trafficking is on the rise, according to new data from the Mumbai city police, which shows that women are being used as conduits for smuggling of narcotic substances being sold online. As many as 63 women have been arrested this year across the state, with 59 cases registered against women under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985. The figure last year was 255.

[Ex-minister seeks probe into arrest of drug addicts](#)

The Tribune (27/03)

Former Health Minister Laxmi Kanta Chawla has urged Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal to form high-level district committees to give a reprieve to a number of drug addicts, who were arrested by the Punjab police during its massive drive against drug peddlers in the border state.

[Growing drug abuse among youth matter of concern: HC](#)

Tribune News Service (28/03)

The Jammu and Kashmir High Court has said that due to India's close proximity to the major opium-growing regions, the country is facing the menace of drug trafficking and drug abuse among the youth is increasing, which is a matter of concern.

Indonesia

[Dutch FM: Confront painful parts of Indonesia – Netherlands history](#)

Jakarta Globe (25/03)

Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders met with his Indonesian counterpart Retno Marsudi and other ministers on a visit to Indonesia. Human rights, long an important pillar of Dutch foreign policy, were on the agenda, the Dutch government said in a statement. The rejection of the death penalty is a point on which "we agree to disagree [with Indonesia]," the minister told the Globe.

[Muslimat NU backs Jokowi's anti-drug, anti-radicalism moves](#)

The Jakarta Post (27/03)

One of the women's wings of the country's largest Muslim organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muslimat NU, has supported the call by President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo to root out drug abuse and radicalism in the country by empowering women and improving their role in the family and in society.

Malaysia

[Student on drug trafficking charge faces death penalty](#)

Borneo Post (23/03)

A student of a private college, charged with possessing 655 grammes of Cannabis, faces a mandatory death penalty under Section 39 of the Dangerous Drugs Act, if convicted. The student remains in police custody after a magistrate's court denied the possibility of bail.

[Want to win the drug war? Change policy to reel in kingpins, expert says](#)

Malay Mail Online (28/03)

Malaysia needs to re-look its policies when it comes to minor drug offences as the current set up is doing more harm than good.

[Turning the tide against drugs](#)

The Star (28/03)

COMM Datuk Seri Mohd Mokhtar Mohd Shariff surely knows it when he says that the Royal Malaysian Police (PDRM) must evolve to counter present-day challenges. He has, after all, served 38 years in the force. He spoke to The Star to reflect on PDRM's 209th anniversary, focusing on the grand efforts to curb drug trafficking and abuse.

[Huge shift needed in global drug policy](#)

Star 2 (28/03)

Leading global public health experts have urged for reform in the global blueprint on drug policy, saying prevailing policies that put drug users through the criminal justice system have had "serious detrimental effects" on health and human rights and led to lethal violence.

[Vietnamese drug mule escapes death sentence in Malaysia](#)

Thanh Nien News (29/03)

A Vietnamese woman on Monday had her death sentence commuted to 20 years in prison in Malaysia for drug charges, after proving that she was used only as a mule.

[Poverty and neglect driving kids in Malaysia to drugs](#)

The Star / Asia News Network (29/03)

The number of teens caught for drug peddling and abuse is getting alarmingly high, with 7,412 teens arrested last year, of which 89 were only 13 years old. And that's just the tip of the iceberg, says Bukit Aman Narcotics Criminal Investigation Department director Comm Datuk Seri Mohd Mokhtar Mohd Shariff.

Myanmar

[People's war on drugs in Kachin State: Indication of failed policies](#)

TNI (21/03)

The emergence of Pat Jasan and its recent 'people's war on drugs' is praised by some as a much needed response to the nation's drug problem, despite numerous human rights abuses committed by the group. The reality, however, is that without tackling the root causes of problematic drug use in the Kachin state, and the country as a whole, the problem is unlikely to go away.

[Myanmar's new opium war: Vigilantes, villagers clash over drug trade](#)

The Wall Street Journal (25/03)

The cultivation of opium poppy and production of methamphetamine in these lawless, northern hinterlands have long made Myanmar one of the centers of the world's drug trade. Now they are posing an early test for Aung San Suu Kyi's incoming democratic government.

New Zealand

[Medicinal cannabis 'loophole' may be applied at border, says Customs](#)

Stuff.co.nz (28/03)

Customs has confirmed the long-standing legality of entering New Zealand with prescribed medicinal cannabis products.

Pakistan

[Ebad lauds ANF efforts for drug abuse eradication](#)

Pakistan Today (23/03)

Sindh Governor, Dr Ishratul Ebad, praised the ANF's Model Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (MATRC) for making commendable efforts to tackle demand and rehabilitate drug users. Mr. Ebad appealed to philanthropists to contribute generously to the project, in order to fund an expansion of the centre to construct separate female and children wards.

[Afghan opium resurgence and us](#)

The Express Tribune (25/03)

While not a big opium producer itself, Pakistan is considered the major destination as well as transit point for opiate flows out of Afghanistan since decades. While heroin use became a major problem in Pakistan back in the 1980s, the ongoing surge in the Afghan drug trade has led to an alarming spike in heroin users across Pakistan.

Philippines

[Phillipine financial system vulnerable to illegal transfers from drug syndicates, claims US The Manila Times \(21/03\)](#)

The US state department has said money laundering is a serious concern in the Philippines due to the international narcotics trade, and a high degree of corruption among government officials in the country.

Singapore

[Jackie Chan wants drug offenders to be executed?](#)

Raw Story (21/03)

Jackie Chan, Hong Kong native and unlikely advocate for Singapore's anti-drug abuse campaign, has openly condoned the use of the death penalty for drug offenses: "I approve the death penalty [...] for drugs". Seventy percent of executions in Singapore over the past few decades were for drug offences.

Thailand

[Malaysian drug mules trying to make quick bucks may languish in Thai prison for years](#)

The Sun Daily (25/03)

For the RM500 they receive for each bag of 'instant coffee and biscuit packages' they carry, many Malaysians becoming drug mules at the Malaysia-Thailand border are not aware of what is in store for them in jail in a foreign country. The jail term for drug offenders in Thailand is between 40 and 50 years and that's the fate that may befall the 15 Malaysians who were arrested by Thai police in drug operations two days ago.

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