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**Patterns and Trends of
Amphetamine-Type Stimulants
and Other Drugs in East
and South-East Asia
(and neighbouring regions)**

Global SMART Programme

Executive Summary

This report presents the most current patterns and trends of amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and other drugs of use in East and South-East Asia and provides overviews for neighbouring South Asia and the Pacific Island states. The report is the first in a series prepared under the Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analysis, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Programme. The objective of the Global SMART Programme is to enhance the capacity of targeted Member States and relevant authorities to generate, manage, analyze, report and use synthetic drug information, in order to design effective, scientifically sound and evidence-based policies and programmes.

The East and South-East Asia region, home to about 28% of the human populace, is one of the fastest growing regions in the world. As a result of globalization, the countries in the region have also become more interdependent. As such the challenges within any sector - be it governance, development, infrastructure, trade and economy, environment, health or security - of a particular country, have a ripple effect across the region. One such issue and challenge is the threat posed by synthetic drugs.

In recent years, although the overall drug problem globally is being contained, there have been several regional shifts, in the production, trafficking as well as consumption patterns. More people use ATS than heroin and cocaine combined. The manufacture of ATS has been reported by nearly a third of all Member States around the world, and it is increasingly spreading throughout the developing world. There is no better example of this reality than the countries of East and South-East Asia, where the impact of ATS affects so many people.

The findings of the report are based on primary information submitted by the drug control agencies and designated institutions in Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China and Hong Kong (SAR), Indonesia, Republic of Korea, Japan, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam, via the on-line Drug Use Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (DAINAP). In addition to DAINAP, information for this report was also supplemented with official government documents such as the UNODC Annual Reports Questionnaire, and through secondary research.

Results outline several key issues and emerging threats throughout the region and implications for neighbouring regions. There are indications of increasing demand for methamphetamine in Thailand which will likely have wide implications for neighbouring countries, such as the likelihood of increased trafficking and risk of clandestine laboratory operations being established or increased in border areas of Lao PDR and Cambodia. Viet Nam may emerge as a vulnerable market as methamphetamine manufacturers seek to diversify away from their reliance on the Thai market. In addition, the changing political situation in Myanmar in 2009 might serve as a push factor for illicit drugs and relocation of clandestine manufacturing sites across its borders.

Although methamphetamine in pill form remains the dominant form of methamphetamine in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, the availability of crystalline methamphetamine with considerably higher purity is likely to expand with a subsequent increase in use, particularly that of injecting drug use.

The scale of ATS manufacturing in Indonesia is already large and the country may potentially displace Europe as a supply source for ecstasy in the region. Malaysia is at a high risk of becoming a major consumer market for ATS as large amounts are trafficked into the country in addition to large-scale domestic manufacturing.

Development is accelerating in the region leading to new infrastructure and trade initiatives. The resulting increased movement of persons, traffic and cargo, provide opportunities that can be exploited by traffickers unless adequate mechanisms and capacities are in place in terms of law enforcement and customs. Although countries in the region are already gearing up to tackle the emerging ATS situation, data indicate that more needs to be done in terms of consolidated responses from the security and health perspectives. Challenges in some countries remain in terms of disparate levels of analysis, data generation and forensics. Also, the health implications including the treatment facilities and challenges posed by associated dimensions such as injecting drug use and HIV/AIDS, need to be understood further. This is necessary for adequate responses to these issues, both in terms of the quality as well as the quantity.

The harvesting of trees for the extraction of safrole-rich oils has been illegal in Cambodia since 2005. Although there is currently no evidence that the seized safrole-rich oils produced in Cambodia are used to manufacture MDMA, significant seizures continue to be made and the likelihood of illicit use for exists. These large-scale operations have a huge environmental impact from deforestation and the chemical

pollution from their production.

Consolidated data on the ATS markets in South Asia and the smaller Pacific Island nations are limited, but increasingly suggest that ATS is spreading. South Asia is attractive to organized crime groups seeking to manufacture ATS due to the large precursor chemical industry and the potential market. The established presence of clandestine laboratories for synthetic drug manufacture risks a spill-over into the local market. There are already indications of methamphetamine use in the vulnerable Pacific Islands nations. Very few countries have adopted the frameworks for international drug control, and the absence of formal drug surveillance systems for monitoring illicit drug use and emerging drug trends, leads to very sporadic and limited data reporting - either nationally or regionally.

Based on data submitted for the year 2007 and 2008 the additional following observations are made in the report:

- The number of countries reporting methamphetamine in either pill or crystalline form as their primary drug of use, have remained largely the same over the past four years. However, methamphetamine has rapidly become more prominent in some countries which now rank it as the second most common drug.
- Not all countries reporting to DAINAP disaggregate treatment data according to drug type or demographics. But for those countries that do report, methamphetamine treatment admissions have risen from just over 26,000 in 2004 to nearly 50,000 admissions in 2007.
- In East and South-East Asia, methamphetamine pill seizures increased in 2008 over the previous year with slightly more than 31 million pills seized compared to just over 25 million pills in 2007. Crystalline methamphetamine seizures have increased, from 7.3 tons in 2007 to 8.3 tons in 2008.
- For most countries that disaggregate arrest data by drug type, methamphetamine related arrests have been on an increasing trend in East and South-East Asia over the past five years with the total number of arrests nearly two times as great in 2008 compared to four years earlier. The burden that methamphetamine use places on the justice system is considerable for many countries. In Brunei, Cambodia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, and Thailand, methamphetamine related arrests account for over three quarters of total drug arrests.
- Ecstasy is not reported as the most common form of drug use in any country in East and South-East Asia. It is the second most common drug of use in Australia, Indonesia and New Zealand. China reports ecstasy as the third most common drug, after heroin and methamphetamine. It is ranked as number four in Viet Nam, along with methamphetamine and ketamine. The bulk of the region's seizures of ecstasy in 2007 and 2008 have been made by six countries, Australia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand.
- Forensic information suggests that drugs marketed as 'ecstasy' often contain substances other than MDMA, such as ketamine or methamphetamine.
- Ketamine was recorded as a drug of use by eight countries in East and South-East Asia. Ketamine seizures are now higher than annual regional heroin seizures in East and South-East Asia with 6.3 tons of ketamine seized in 2008 compared to 5.2 tons of heroin.
- An increasing number of clandestine synthetic drug manufacturing facilities have been dismantled in East and South-East Asia during the past five years and typically represent the larger, industrial-size operations. The largest number of reported ATS operations dismantled were in China, which reported 37 laboratories seized in 2005, 53 in 2006 and 75 in 2007. Although data were not disaggregated in 2008, a total of 244 clandestine operations were dismantled and it is likely that at least a half were related to ATS. Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, and the Philippines also reported the dismantling of several clandestine ATS labs over the past two years.
- Seizures of methamphetamine manufacturing facilities in recent years in South Asia may indicate the intent by organized crime groups to utilize the region for manufacturing and trafficking.
- Heroin has been reported as the primary drug of use for the past five years in China, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore and Viet Nam. Of these, only Singapore and Viet Nam reported it to be on an increasing trend in 2008. Viet Nam also reported an increasing use trend between 2003 and 2006. Overall, the countries with a history of heroin use over the past decade, such as China and Malaysia have reported a declining

trend. In contrast, Singapore reported an increasing use trend for heroin for the past three years.

- China, Malaysia, Thailand and Viet Nam account for the vast majority of the regional heroin seizures. Hence, declining seizures over the past five years in those countries have reduced the regional total for East and South-East Asia significantly. Declining seizures are particularly evident for China which reported 10.8 tons seized in 2004 with progressively lower seizures in the ensuing years. In 2008, 4.3 tons of heroin were seized.

- All countries reported cannabis use. This was the primary drug of use in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Thailand. Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam, have each reported large annual seizures of cannabis over the past two years. Cannabis related arrests increased more than three-fold from 2004 to 2008, in East and South-East Asia, to just under 27,000 in 2008.

- Recently there has been a notable presence of the benzodiazepine, nimetazepam, in some East and South-East Asian countries, and large seizures of the drug have been made in both Indonesia and Malaysia in recent years.

- Several countries list inhalant and solvent use as a serious problem, particularly among young drug users. This is a special concern in Cambodia where select surveys indicate high use levels among street children.

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