

# Golden Triangle to Bangladesh: Regional Analysis of ATS Sources, Trafficking Routes and Kingpin Involved, and Role of Regional Organizations

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## Abstract

**Background:** Beyond traditional routes to East and Southeast Asia, Excessive ceaseless flow of ATS (yaba/crystal meth) and synthetic drugs in South Asia especially Bangladesh are the new dimension of drugs which have little study of its sources, routes, prices and the kingpin involved to ATS trafficking and production. Security forces have been taking stringent action for the non-conventional security threats including 'war on drug'. Large information and reasoning gaps are seen which influenced to find the source of ATS, its trafficking routes, its prices and role played in Bangladesh and the region. The research aimed to identify the major sources, trafficking routes of ATS, prices level & economic impact, Kingpin involved and to explore its different regional implications for national and regional level decisions.

**Methods:** A long array of national and international reports, publications etc. reviewed and analyzed. 300 face to face interview survey to drug law enforcement officers, drug dealers and drug consumers with many more qualitative & quantitative interviews.

**Results:** ATS (yaba/crystal meth) problem for Bangladesh and most South Asian countries are intertwined with Golden Triangle drug problems. Potential new drug production & trafficking prone regions such as 'Black Triangle' have been becoming sources of ATS for South, East and Southeast Asia. Myanmar non-state ethnic actors, Myanmar military affiliated militias & BGFs, Chinese-Myanmar-India-Bangladesh etc. transnational syndicates involved and per piece of yaba has become as minimum as less than USD \$1 dollar.

**Conclusion:** Golden Triangle, especially Myanmar Shan State with expanding trafficking region, anarchic situations and military policies are continue breeding drugs that linked to different routes and actors, changing environment changes sources, routes and actors.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh ATS trafficking, Bangladesh yaba trafficking, Golden Triangle, Black Triangle, Arakan Army yaba trafficking, ATS trafficking routes, ATS Kingpin

## 1. Introduction

The major ATS (yaba/crystal meth) market in South-East Asia is Thailand's Bangkok, or Philippines's Manila, if considered, the major market for ATS in South Asia is the capital Dhaka, Bangladesh. The Naf River on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and its Rakhine-Cox's Bazar border is one of the world's major ATS trafficking areas and Teknaf is gateway of Yaba in Bangladesh. Bangladesh security forces took stringent action against ATS (Amphetamine Type Stimulants) including 'war on drug'. The aims of the study is to identify that Golden Triangle drugs has expanded its markets to the South Asia and these areas has also been used to trafficking to other areas in Southeast Asia and the world market. Moreover, the research is tried to unveil the new routes which will especially help Bangladesh and the South Asia with others to understand the expanded ATS problems. Bangladesh security forces including incumbent nodal agency with others have been mentioning that Bangladesh-Myanmar border areas are constantly producing ATS (basically yaba) with 37/49 ATS production factories. It mention that some ATS are trafficking from India of Indian origin (Dhaka Tribune, August 25, 2022 & Hossain, 2019). The information does not correspond with the analysis findings. Bangladesh was not part of Golden Triangle ATS drugs before 2010 but it has now become prime source. According to a UNODC report (2022), 172 tons of ATS were seized in Southeast and East Asia in 2021 and Yaba pills seizure have exceeded

01 billion. According to ICG (2019) estimates, more than 250 metric tons of methamphetamine are produced annually in Shan State. Myanmar's Bay of Bengal coast west of Myanmar's Rakhine state and along the border with Bangladesh along which Myanmar's ethnic Rohingya are expelled and the Arakan Army fighting for independence and autonomy is the main trafficking area for ATS trafficking into Bangladesh. All of the 34 Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar have become hubs for drugs, and other organized and cross-border crime.

During study, it is seen the predominance of golden triangle ATS in Bangladesh rising drugs market and ATS market in the region including Bangladesh is intertwined with Golden Triangle ATS production and trafficking. The sources of yaba in Bangladesh are from Myanmar and almost all methamphetamine drugs within Myanmar come from Myanmar's Shan State in the Golden Triangle (Reed, 2021 & Bhadouria, 2022). "The Black Triangle" has been increasingly become another dominant drugs production and trafficking region for south & Southeast Asia. Netherlands-based research and advocacy organization 'The Transnational Institute' stated in a report (2021), "Myanmar has become one of the highest ATS (Amphetamine Type Stimulant) producer in the world," and institute researcher Renaud Cachia describes, "The expansion of international drug routes from Shan State in Myanmar to the Thailand and Laos, Karen State and Rakhine State on Bangladesh border (Berlinger, 2021)." It also expanded southward by sea through Yangon and eastward along the Indian border.

Significant parts of Myanmar's eastern, northern and western borders are under rebel control. Myanmar had become a regional center for opium cultivation during the British colonial period and later heroin production, and recently yaba and crystal meth production, and more recently fentanyl and other NPS production. Decades of conflict and war between the Myanmar military and ethnic armed groups have compounded Myanmar's drug production and trafficking problems (International Crisis Group, 2019). A major challenge to drug control in the region is that South, East and Southeast Asia, specifically China and India, have become major global hubs for licit and illicit chemicals, which are trafficked for the production of various synthetic and semi-synthetic drugs. According to various international media report, Myanmar drugs producers have increased drugs production at a large rate, avoiding the obstacles of domestic and international laws by acquiring pre-precursor to precursor production techniques (Strangio, 2021).

The location of the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent at the two corners of the northern coast of the Indian Ocean greatly influencing heroin and ATS trafficking in Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal. The increased trade with the construction of China's deep sea port at Kyauphyu in Myanmar's Rakhine State near Bangladesh, development of other connectivity systems with Rakhine state including construction of roads and railways from China's Yunnan Province through Shan State as well as India's Look East Policy and establishment of road & sea connectivity to Mizoram and Kolkata in India with Rakhine state capital 'Sittwe' under India's Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project, so smooth connectivity with the Golden Triangle and lower Mekong region will further entangle the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh drug problems even with China. Also, crossing the impassable 1643 km Myanmar-India border, Myanmar's ATS are entering through the eastern, northern and western borders of Bangladesh and Bangladesh is one of the destinations of ATS smuggled into India.

The production, trafficking and use of ATS could not be stopped even during the standstill period of covid-19 lockdown by closing borders, stopping imports and exports, stopping movement of vehicles and people, forcing people to stay at home in Bangladesh. ATS are mentioned as high as BDT 300 – 500 (USD \$2.73-\$4.5 US dollar) Taka per piece of yaba tablet and BDT ৳10000000 - ৳50000000 taka (USD \$90909 - \$454545 dollars) per KG Crystal meth in Bangladesh drug market (Daily Star, July 29). However, the study shows the price of ATS are also similar to Myanmar, Thailand or Laos as minimum as less than USD \$1 dollar per piece of yaba (ATS tablet) for rampant trafficking and Economies of scale in production. Yaba tablets are popular in Thailand, Bangladesh, Myanmar, eastern states of India, Laos, Vietnam and China, Malaysia, South Korea Cambodia are also seizing increased amount of yaba tablets (Table-1). Being neighbor, the price of ATS in Bangladesh is the lowest in this region of Asia after Myanmar. After the Myanmar military seized state power in February 2021, in early 2023 the retail price of each yaba pill in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, is 500 Myanmar Kyat (\$1= 2100 Kyat), which is about BDT ৳26 Taka (USD \$0.24) in Bangladeshi currency (BNI, March 18, 2023). Crossing the nearest border, this is being sold at the same price to Bangladesh at the border of Rakhine State. Available information states that drug money in Bangladesh is transferred to different places including Myanmar, India, China, Singapore, Thailand, Hong Kong, Middle East through hundi, gold, foreign currency, banking channels, import-export and other trade etc.

Regional transnational syndicates such as Sam Gor, #Teochiew, Hakka, 14K triad, Ma-Hseuh etc.; Myanmar insurgent groups such as Arakan Army, UWSA, ARSA, DKBA, MNDAA, KIA, TNLA, USDP, SSPP, RCSS, KNU, Palaung, Lahu, Akha, Mongla groups etc.; Indian groups such as Naga, Kuki, Manipuri, Kamtapur,

Boroland, Assam, Mizu etc. separatists; Myanmar military affiliated BGFs and militias such as Kokang BGF, Kaungkha militia, Panthay militia, Tarmoenye militia, Village Defense Force etc.; Bangladesh local & transnational syndicate etc., multinational organization such as Kings Roman Group etc., individual/groups Kingpin involved in drugs production & trafficking including ATS and money laundering in Golden Triangle & the region. Shan State residents Shan, Wa, Palaung, Lahu, Kokang, Akha etc. have a long history of hoarding opium and heroin, taking advantage of ethnic instability in Myanmar. It is now the world's largest ATS production and trafficking region, growing since the beginning of the 21st century (Sahu, 2022). ATS in South Asia affecting the regional drug perspective and trend which need to explore to avoid regional instability.

## 2. Objectives of Study

It is observed in Internal and international Information exchange, discussion-criticism, reports, media publications, etc. along with Bangladesh's policy making frequently present that trafficking of yaba/crystal meth (ATS) from Myanmar to Bangladesh-Myanmar border, and setting up yaba factories in Myanmar's Rakhine State on the border of Bangladesh and trafficked under Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) control with others. Indian origin yaba tablets are also trafficking to Bangladesh. 'War on drug' is also implemented against the drugs Kingpin, but the price of ATS has decreased tremendously. There found little research or study on this very drug problems in Bangladesh and South Asia under Golden Triangle regional perspective. So,

- (1) The primary objective of the research is to identify the sources of ATS (yaba/crystal meth), its trafficking routes, price level and Kingpin involved for Golden Triangle to Bangladesh which involve with South Asia, East & Southeast Asian Region. The analysis will help to take the regions drug policy and interdiction procedure.
- (2) The secondary objective is to explore and analyze its regional drugs related implications including the role of Regional and International organizations.

## 3. Methods

Bangladesh has no specific study on ATS sources, its trafficking routes, prices and hence no study for drugs kingpin involved to Bangladesh and the region. The study is based on primary and secondary data sources within Bangladesh and regionally based on secondary data, and the analysis of secondary data which predominantly based on primary data sources. Reports on various individuals, organizations and organized criminal groups related to historical and contemporary drugs production and trafficking in the regions especially for Myanmar, India and Bangladesh are studied and broadly evaluated to understand chronology and the types of drugs problem. Secondary data regarding ATS sources, trafficking, and the people and strategy involved are collected from the related reports surfing the Google search engine and international organizations. Regional political statement, military statement, security statement, economic, social, etc. reports are inquisitively analyzed to understand the view of their ATS problems to come to a true conclusion. Secondary data are evaluated from various perspectives to authenticate the data and sources.

A face to face questionnaire interview survey made to 165 drug law enforcement officers of Bangladesh who directly engaged in the enforcement of drug control laws and 135 ATS consumers (addicts) and dealers (with more informal data collected later) to identify the sources and routes (Annexure-1 questionnaire). Secondary data are also gathered regarding Bangladesh ATS (yaba/crystal meth) sources, trafficking routes and the groups involved from government nodal agency reports, media reports etc. related publications. Moreover my long working experience, trainings, tours etc. as a drug law enforcement officer helped to analyze the problems.

Regarding regional ATS trafficking and its sources, specially yaba/crystal meth trafficking from Myanmar, the paper includes related findings of all research reports, media news and reports, investigation accused of producing methamphetamine reports particularly related to the Myanmar military, various ethnic insurgent groups, militia groups, Border Guard Forces (BGFs), transnational syndicate working regionally, NGO activists reports, etc. ATS production, seizures and trafficking routes which are considered to analyze the ATS sources and trafficking routes to Bangladesh. As said earlier, for data and information for Myanmar drugs scenario, the paper relied on all related national and international reports surfing the Google search engine. Myanmar long term political instability and national strategy on drugs are studied and evaluated. The findings are pointed out to analysis the report.

Report on India's ATS (yaba/crystal meth) trafficking and recovery including India's NCB annual reports, reports on drug trafficking in the North-East region, reports on drugs in separatist activities, reports on various individuals, organizations and organized criminal groups related to drug production and trafficking in India etc. are collected, evaluated and presented. Valuable information has been taken from hundreds of different reports

including INCB & UNODC publications, BIMSTEC report, EMCDDA report, US country strategy report, ASEAN countries drugs related report, China's Office of National Narcotics Control Commission report, Wikipedia, ICG report etc. and various research institutes, media & newspapers, journals reports on Golden Triangle, the lower Mekong region, drugs & organized crime published in South Asia, South-East Asia and East Asian countries, and especially overall political, economic, state-ethnic conflicts including drugs in Myanmar. These all helped to find ways to analyze, evaluate and solve the study problems.

#### 4. ATS: The Main Synthetic Drug Used in Bangladesh and the Region

In the drugs market of Bangladesh, ATS (Amphetamine Type Stimulant) mainly refers to "Yaba", which is colored tablets mixed with Methamphetamine and Caffeine. It is known as yaba in Bangladesh and neighboring India, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos and it is also known as Crazy Drugs in Thailand and WY (World Is Yours) in Myanmar. Three-quarters of ASEAN countries use meth in tablet form and one-half in crystal form (UNODC, 2021). Methamphetamine is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting transparent powder that is easily mixed with water or alcohol. Ephedrine and Pseudoephedrine is mixed with Drain Cleaners, Phosphorus, Sulfuric Acid and Hydrochloric Acid as Solvents in the preparation of Methamphetamine (yaba/crystal meth). 05 (five) kg of foul-smelling toxic sludge is created for 01 (one) kg of meth production, which has to be produced and disposed of in remote areas (Uhlmann, et al., 2020). So, it is not pure meth or only caffeine, moreover using toxic harmful chemical base to make ATS.

However, Pseudoephedrine or ephedrine is used in Bangladesh or the Golden Triangle region for ATS production, whereas P-2-P is predominantly used in North America, including the United States. 0.70 percent of Thailand's population aged 12-65 years use crystal meth and 01.30 percent use yaba tablets, more than a million in total (UNODC, 2022). It is cheaper than heroin or plant-based drugs and has no barriers to easy production in all environments, all year round and all the seasons. Yaba (containing caffeine) can be smoked, snorted, taken orally and injected. In Bangladesh, yaba is mainly consumed by nasal inhalation. The use of yaba/crystal meth in Bangladesh, and the nature and trend of use, type, frequency, etc. are more similar to South-East Asian countries.

Table 1. Yaba tablets seizures in various Asian countries including Bangladesh

(Pieces)						
Yaba tablets seizures in various Asian countries including Bangladesh						
Country	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
Bangladesh	4,58,68,569	5,30,73,665	3,63,81,017	3,04,46,328	5,30,48,548	4,00,79,443
Myanmar	16,90,70,909	19,81,88,715	32,84,10,692	10,87,19,071	10,67,02,365	7,40,01,667
Thailand	54,14,29,075	59,20,13,942	41,26,20,744	39,50,00,000	51,51,46,570	24,00,51,853
China	5,18,75,676	6,72,54,459	13,23,60,700	12,94,64,300	—	—
Laos	14,39,91,200	14,30,07,700	1,86,02,900	1,77,03,036	2,10,36,045	1,00,19,43
Vietnam	39,98,040	25,57,966	24,36,507	9,87,913	13,63,495	9,79,487
Malaysia	40,46,222	41,18,667	23,00,222	22,08,889	25,12,444	8,47,334
South Korea	18,62,247	5,57,075	2,53,167	1,93,034	94,869	28,700
Cambodia	3,08,222	63,130	43,222	4,83,444	77,000	3,71,556

**Source:** Compiled by the author, Data source from UNODC report on 'Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia'.

Growth of yaba market in Bangladesh is largely 'Supply Driven' and the growing crystal meth market has also seen efforts to grow supply driven, sometimes through compulsory supply of some crystal meth with yaba pills and at lower prices. In years 2022 and 2021, Bangladesh is world's 5<sup>th</sup> big yaba tablets recovery country where it recovered 45868569 and 53073665 pieces of yaba tablets in 2022 and 2021 respectively. In year 2022, Thailand recovered 541429075 pieces, Myanmar recovered 169070909 Pieces yaba tablets, Laos recovered 143991200 pieces and China recovered 51875676 pieces of yaba tablets. In 2021, in Bangladesh 4.78 tons, Myanmar 63.73 tons, India 0.33 tons, Thailand 75.41 tons, China 16.39 tons, Laos 15.86 metric tons ATS (methamphetamine)

were seized by the countries of the region which sourced from Golden Triangle by its Kingpin (UNODC, 2023). During covid-19 border and trade closures with Myanmar and India and even in the closed domestic movement situation, Bangladesh did not have to face shortage of yaba. Observing the size, nature and trends, it can be said that the yaba (ATS pills) market can continue to dominate the drugs market in Bangladesh for a long time.

Table 2. Seizures ATS (yaba tablets/crystal meth) in some Asian countries including Bangladesh

(M Tons)

Seizures of methamphetamine (yaba tablets/crystal meth) in some Asian countries including Bangladesh						
Country		2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
<b>Bangladesh</b>	Methamphetamine	4.78	3.27	2.74	4.78	3.61
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Myanmar</b>	Methamphetamine	63.73	98.13	38.42	5.66	15.32
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	0.22	4.29	1.36	-	-
<b>India</b>	Methamphetamine	0.33	1.26	1.63	0.17	0.02
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	0.06	0.10	0.15	0.26	0.07
<b>Thailand</b>	Methamphetamine	75.41	62.21	53.19	64.80	39.49
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>China</b>	Methamphetamine	16.39	21.97	25.10	6.15	30.78
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	Methamphetamine	0.32	0.11	0.12	-	0.05
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	72.63	29.03	24.79	-	16.22
<b>Lao PDR</b>	Methamphetamine	15.86	7.24	6.70	3.73	1.03
	<i>Amphetamine</i>	-	1.53	-	-	-

Source: Compiled by the author. Data source UNODC World Drug report 2023.

## 5. Myanmar is the source of ATS in Bangladesh: Myanmar's Shan State and the Golden Triangle

### 5.1 ATS Trafficking Source Concentrated on Myanmar's Shan State (the Golden Triangle)

Due to lack of production of yaba in Bangladesh and the presence of millions of consumers, yaba is trafficked across the borders of Myanmar, India and the Bay of Bengal to all parts of Bangladesh. Mostly it is found that Shan State of Golden Triangle in Myanmar is the source of yaba trafficked within and out of Myanmar. Millions of yaba seized in India's north-eastern states, including Kolkata, come from Myanmar's Shan State across the Myanmar-India border, various reports and findings have revealed. Bangladesh is one of the main destination of yaba trafficked from Myanmar to India. In 2021 and 2022, Yaba tablets were most seized in Shan, Mandalay and Yangon in Myanmar (UNODC, 2023), yaba seized in Yangon definitely destined for Bangladesh. As a result, major parts of yaba is trafficking across the borders from Shan State of Myanmar to Bangladesh and spread inside the country. In June 2021, Thai Minister Somsak mentioned in a press briefing that drugs (yaba/crystal meth) are being trafficked west into Bangladesh from the Golden Triangle, east through Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai in Thailand, and south through Myanmar to its ports (Reed, 2021). Moreover, various report mentioned that meth is trafficking from the Golden Triangle through Laos to Thailand and Vietnam and through Vietnamese ports to other countries. In January 2022, 36.5 million yaba tablets were seized in the north-west of Bokeo Province, Laos adjacent to Myanmar Shan State, and in October 2021, 55.6 million yaba tablets and 1500 kg of crystal meth were seized from the same place. They had manufactured in Myanmar's Shan State and trafficked (Sahu, 2022). The Golden Triangle across the border is China's main source of narcotics. Of China's 15 tons of methamphetamine seizures in 2021, 13.4 tons came from the Golden Triangle, accounting for 89.3 percent of total seizures (National Narcotics Control Commission, 2022). In fact, the sources of methamphetamine in all the countries bordering Myanmar, including Bangladesh, are mainly supplied from the Golden Triangle and

Bangladesh is supplied predominantly from the Shan State of the Golden Triangle. It has become the world's major meth producing region and it is impossible for Bangladesh to be yaba free next to the Golden Triangle. According to The International Crisis Group (2019) report, "Good infrastructure, easy access to required chemicals from China, and secure production facilities in areas held by government-controlled militias and ethnic insurgents to protect and control them, have made Shan State a major source of more pure meth."

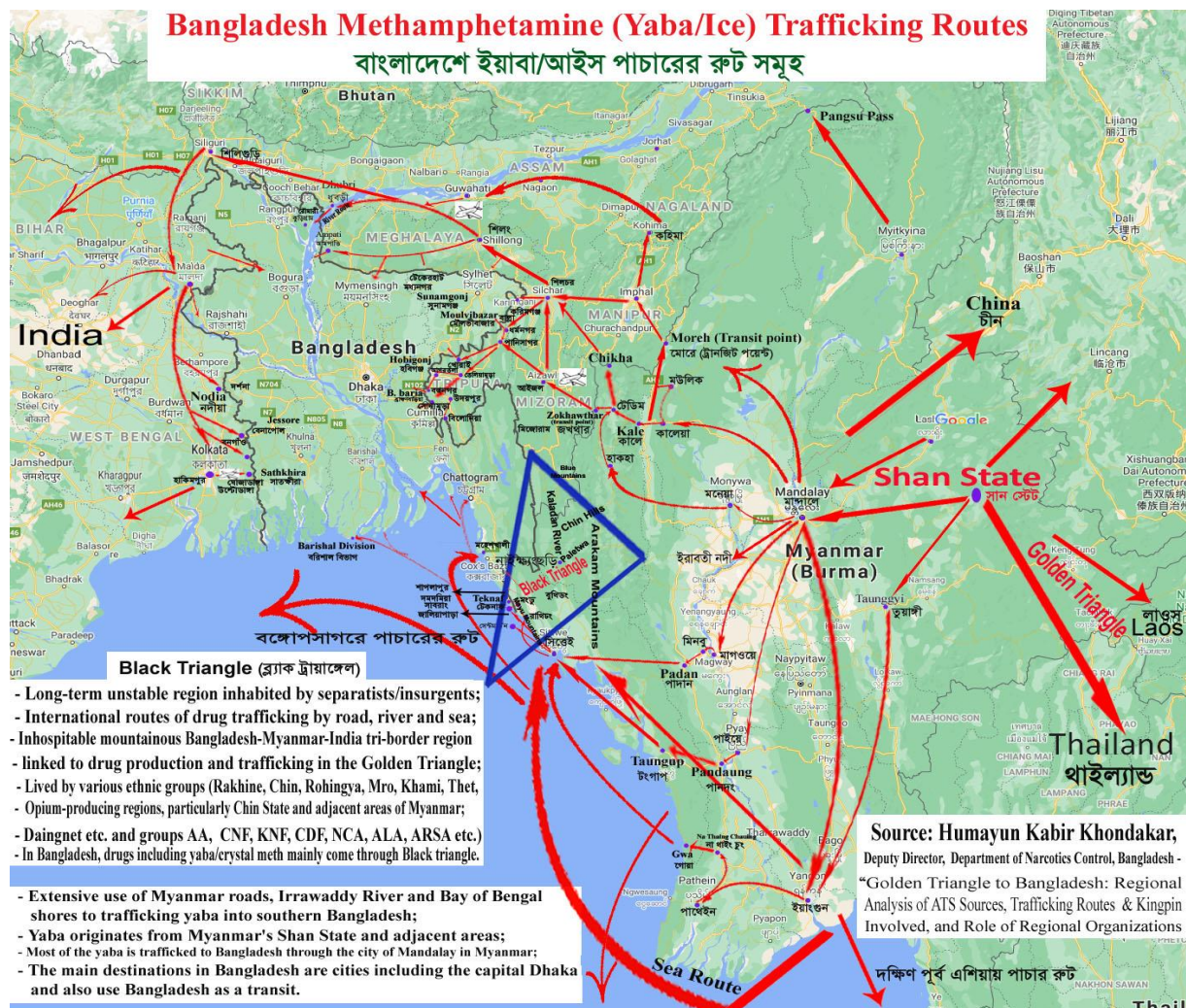
### *5.2 Yaba (ATS) Trafficking From Golden Triangle to Bangladesh*

Police Colonel Zaw Lin of the Myanmar Police Force Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control said that armed groups use land or sea routes to smuggle from Shan State to Rakhine State. During trafficking to Bangladesh-Myanmar border, they use various places including Mandalay, Magwe, Minbu, Padan, Yangon, Pyay, Pandaung, Taungup, Pathein, Nga Thaing Chaung, Gwa (Lwin, 2020). In August 2020, 1,380 kg of crystal meth was recovered from a ship's dock at Kyeintali beach in Rakhine State near the Bangladesh border, which was transferred from another ship to that ship near Thandwe village in the area (Htun, 2020). According to the police, the drugs came from southern Shan and were being trafficked to Malaysia (Htun, 2020). Large shipments of yaba and crystal meth are being seized in various areas of southern and western parts of Myanmar, including Rakhine State. Yaba/crystal meth is predominantly trafficking to the Myanmar-Bangladesh border through Yangon in Bangladesh, Myanmar authorities have intercepted many such large consignments (UNODC, 2023). Yaba caught in Yangon mainly come to Bangladesh-Myanmar border for trafficking and Yaba caught in Mandalay cross the India-Myanmar border and are smuggled to Bangladesh.

### *5.3 Southern Routes to Bangladesh*

A large portion of the Golden Triangle Meth is trafficking land and sea routes west and south of Myanmar and Thailand to various locations including East Asia, Australia, New Zealand via the Malacca Straits and Penang, Malaysia. Meth follows the southern routes from the Shan to the western border of Myanmar, following the shores of the Bay of Bengal to Bangladesh. Jeremy Doglus, UNODC's regional representative for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, said the syndicates use mother ships, which are transferred to smaller ships in Myanmar's Irrawaddy Peninsula or the Andaman Sea to trafficking the destinations. Usually these ships change their flag, name (Son, 2021). Another major trafficking routes for manufactured meth enters Thailand from Myanmar's Shan State through northern Thailand and Laos. According to World Drug Report, 172 tons of meth were seized in the region in 2020 and 2021 (UNODC, 2022). The Golden Triangle and the Lower Mekong region (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam) account for about 89% of total seizures (UNODC, 2022). Yaba tablets seizures are the reason for this increase of the seizures (Bhadouria, 2022). For the first time, yaba seizures in East and South-East Asia exceeded 01 (one) billion. Before the 1990s, the 'Golden Triangle' was the world's largest producer of heroin, and in the 2010s, it is now the world's largest producer of meth. Production of methamphetamine and other ATS began in Thailand in the 1990s (Marrero, 2023). Drug production in the jungles of Southeast Asia today is comparable to that of the Mexican cartels. As drug demand trends change, drug trafficking routes and drug trade and dealers are seen to change. The yaba trafficking in Bangladesh is now dominated by Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh-Myanmar border and yaba trade is dominated by drug dealers from Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Dhaka in the south-east of the country, but Bangladesh-India border has becoming dominant for meth also (Graph-1 shows the routes to Bangladesh).





Graph 1. Bangladesh Methamphetamine (Yaba/Crystal meth) Trafficking Routes

Source: Compiled by the author.

China-Indian precursor chemicals, Taiwan-Chinese chemists, Golden Triangle- lower Mekong region production facilities, Chinese-Thai syndicates, safe havens for Myanmar separatist, government-backed militias & Border Guard Forces (BGFs), and Thailand, Laos, China, Bangladesh, India’s improved communication system for the Bay of Bengal, the Andaman Sea, the Mekong including trafficking by road, sea and air, and above all increasing misuse for the increased purchasing power of large populations in the adjacent South, East and Southeast Asian emerging economies, have made the Golden Triangle the world’s largest meth producer. One new record is being created breaking the records of meth seizures.

### 6. The “War on Drug” and Increased Flow of ATS in South and Southeast Asia

Due to recent increase in drug abuse, strict drug control measures have become popular measures in the dream of establishing a drug-free country in various Asian countries. The crackdown on ATS, in particular, has been associated with intentional and collateral human rights violations. Finally, everywhere this system of control has been questioned! The culture of killing that Thailand’s former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra introduced in 2003 through the ‘War on drugs’ against yaba, has not reduced drugs, but the culture of killing has remained as drugs have multiplied. Basically, drug lords had not died in these wars. No war can stop drug godfathers or cartels unless drug policy is sound. If the godfather had died in the war on drug in Bangladesh, there would have been a lack of yaba, even for a temporary period, or there would have been an impact on trafficking or receiving, but this did not happen even for a moment. In countries where once unsustainable drug war has started, a culture of extrajudicial killings or torture has been introduced, it takes a long time for the countries to get out of this

cycle, perhaps decades. Philippines, Thailand, Mexico, and even Bangladesh are examples of this. It also has a negative impact on other positive activities of the society. It is difficult to restore law-enforcement personnel who commit unlawful killings to normal public service. Yaba godfathers in Bangladesh are seen to spending the income from drug trade on election of public representatives, public service, as a result the drug war is stuck in various limitations.

Nationalist political leadership and security forces in various countries, including the Philippines, use drugs as a weapon and medium to increase their popularity, take advantage and credit, and promote themselves in the media. Rather, it deteriorates the state order and incites the people to violent behavior. It is not a policy or a process but supports the illegal approach and when the illegal approach crosses the limit, then good governance are talked about. But it may take years for another moral awakening, to come back from the breakdown in society, public mind, order or political decisions. Following the anti-narcotics crackdown in Thailand in 2003 and the Philippines in 2016, similar anti-drug operations were conducted in Bangladesh, Indonesia, China, Sri Lanka, and even to some extent the eastern states of India. The Chief Minister of Assam declared a war on drugs and announced the maximum action necessary (Das, 2022). States are realizing that supply reduction policies are a much easier challenge and visible than demand reduction. As a result, countries in the region have focused their efforts on disrupting the drug supply chain (Htun, 2020). Drug trade and use have increased in countries that have adopted stricter measures. Notwithstanding, Bangladesh, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, almost all countries in the region have strict drug control measures, including the death penalty.

When security forces control drug crimes through illegal measures such as killing, disappearances, torture, illegal detention etc., the means of control proper are lost. Trust in the means of control is questioned, anti-drug operations are forced to slow down than usual, and drug trafficking and use increase. Widespread publicity and effects led to drug proliferation and social unrest. Normal control functions go out of control. The local community, local drug dealers and the security forces are all temporary panicked. Drug dealers and patrons tried to shift the blame to the security forces. Dishonest members of the law enforcement agencies get involved in massive corruption, develop kinship with drug lords, and dishonest leadership dominated in the law enforcement agencies. Illegal control measures actually encourages illegal activities. Civil society, public representatives, journalism, leadership of business and religious institutions etc. increase the control of dishonest leadership and their supporters & beneficiaries. As a result, this process of drug control become the cause of total disaster. Drug is a social problem, but unethical and illegal approach to drug control is responsible for increasing psychological problem to the society including creating social, political, discipline problems. So it is unacceptable in any society.

## **7. The Bangladesh-Myanmar Border and Dominance of the Bay of Bengal in Methamphetamine Trafficking Into Bangladesh**

### *7.1 Bangladesh-Myanmar Border: First Choice for Traffickers*

The Bangladesh-Myanmar border is the first choice for traffickers as yaba trafficking from Myanmar through India to Bangladesh involves three border guards of three countries, crossing two different borders and difficult roads. Trafficking into India through conflict zones is often risky, so Mandalay to Yangon and other south-eastern cities are considered by traffickers suitable for transit. Continued yaba/crystal meth seizures in Myanmar's Rakhine State and along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and adjacent to the Bay of Bengal are largely part of Shan State's yaba/meth market diversification (International Crisis Group, 2019). Before 2010, the Bangladesh-Myanmar border was not significant in the drug market, but currently it is used as the main entry point of yaba into Bangladesh. Most of the ATS enters Bangladesh through Sittwe, the capital of Myanmar's Rakhine state, and Maungdaw, the state's northernmost border town. Occasionally some ATS are seized at Myanmar military checkpoints in Rakhine. The main target of Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) is to capture Arakan Army trafficked arms and drugs (yaba/ crystal meth) to weaken the Arakan army (LIN, 2022). The Arakan Army, fighting for greater autonomy, uses money from drug sales to buy arms and ammunition. Their strong ties to Shan State-based armed ethnic groups, particularly Kaungkha militia, benefit them from Shan State's drug networks and manufacturing hubs. The Arakan Army supplies meth to markets from northern and western Shan State through Rakhine State to cities in Bangladesh. According to the analysis of the location of the drug seizures, the drug are transported mainly by boat and road through the capital Sittwe of Rakhine State and the town of Maungdaw in northern Rakhine State and adjacent area, and crossed The Mayu Mountain Range, or The Naf River before entering Bangladesh to Teknaf, Ukhia, Naikhongchari, various coastal areas of Cox's Bazar and other coastal areas in the Bay of Bengal (Black Triangle). The drug is trafficked to India, Middle East, East Asia, Oceania etc. using Bangladesh as a transit, previously pseudoephedrine trafficked by air from Bangladesh was seized in Malaysia, and yaba has been seized in various countries in the middle east. On 21



February 2020, the author as deputy director of Chattogram Divisional Intelligence officer, seized 21100 pieces of yaba from Chattogram Airport in Bangladesh during transiting to Saudi Arab with the help of Airport authority. Instability in the Black Triangle region along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, the state's weak control over inaccessible borders and seas, and rampant corruption have led to increased drug trafficking and drug trade. Myanmar's Rakhine state west of Myanmar's Bay of Bengal coast and Bangladesh border along the route where persecuted Rohingya are driven into Bangladesh and the Arakan Army fighting for independence and autonomy, is the main yaba/crystal meth trafficking zone to Bangladesh. Rohingya camps in Teknaf and Ukhiya in Cox's Bazar are used by local and transnational syndicates as ideal locations for yaba stockpiles and the major entry routes to yaba are built around the adjacent areas.

### *7.2 Predominance Use of the Bay of Bengal for Trafficking to Bangladesh*

The Bay of Bengal is being used as a network of drug trafficking routes in the Golden Triangle. The location of the Golden Triangle (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand) and the Golden Crescent (Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran) in the northern two corners of the Indian Ocean and its drugs trafficking routes affect the Bay of Bengal extensively. In recent times, large shipments of Golden Crescent heroin have been recovered in Sri Lanka and adjacent areas, a coastal country on the Bay of Bengal (one with the arrest of Bangladeshi nationals) and crystal meth or yaba shipments of the Golden Triangle in the Bay of Bengal are often seized by the security forces of Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar. Both regions are major heroin and ATS production areas. Meanwhile, the Golden Triangle's main drug is ATS and the production of ATS in the Golden Crescent is increasing rapidly, especially the production of 'Captagon' (ATS) and others. 'Captagon' is in high demand in the nearby Arabian Peninsula region. As ATS trafficking in the Bay of Bengal, like Heroin, threatens to increase in both regions, inter-regional ATS trafficking and exchanges would increase the presence of ATS markets in the regions in the long run.

### *7.3 Increased Potential Trafficking Routes*

Like the Golden Triangle, the Black Triangle, a mountainous, insurgent-controlled and opium-producing junction of the Bangladesh-India-Myanmar trilateral border area, is being used rampant ATS trafficking and can be an ideal hub for meth production. At present opium is being produced in the adjacent of this triangle including Myanmar Chin State and Rakhine State. If rebels (Arakan Army & Chin ethnic groups etc.) hold the opium-producing areas of Chin State and Rakhine State under their control for a long time, they can go into large-scale production themselves without bringing all the ATS (methamphetamine) from Shan State. Using the eastern Indian State of Mizoram and the Bay of Bengal, as a result, yaba trafficking would increase through Rangamati and Bandarban hilly districts along with Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. In the Myanmar-Bangladesh bilateral conference, Bangladesh alleged that there are yaba production factories in Rakhine State near the Bangladesh border, although no yaba factories have been discovered in the region so far and no specific information is available on who is producing them. Yet, there have potential for the use of Indian precursor chemicals in the production of ATS in the Black Triangle, which can increase trafficking in the Chin and Rakhine State in Myanmar, and even through the Rangamati and Bandarban districts of Bangladesh. At present, the crude opium coming this way are sometimes intercepted from Chattogram Hilly areas and adjacent areas by the security forces of Bangladesh. There are opportunity to procure precursors chemicals from China in the region via weapons smuggling routes to Rakhine State and Chin State, but because of ATS low price and safe trafficking routes from Golden Triangle, ATS production are not observed. Growing extensive drug trafficking in remote border areas in Bangladesh indicating drug networks are growing in the region. Yaba/crystal meth are assumed trafficked into Bangladesh and Myanmar's Rakhine State through Myanmar's Sagaing region using the Kaladan river and hilly areas in Chin State via northern Rakhine, en route assumed to weapons trafficking.

### *7.4 Southern Bangladesh Bordering Areas: Pivotal ATS Trafficking Routes*

Drugs are being trafficked into Bangladesh via roads in Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar district and Naikhangchari in Bandarban district border areas and various coastal points of Cox's Bazar and Chittagong district, even Bhola, Patuakhali districts and Hatia in Noakhali Districts. Rivers and sea ports in Bangladesh are also major centers of drug entry. Frequent and chronological bulky yaba seizures in these routes known it as major trafficking routes. The Myanmar military directly or indirectly contributing yaba trafficking into Bangladesh by indirectly permitting, and facilitating ATS production and trafficking the Myanmar Army supported and controlled militia groups and Border Guard Forces (BGFs), and by facilitating long-distance crossings from the eastern border to the western border of Myanmar into Bangladesh. The Rohingya refugee problems have made Bangladesh-Myanmar border more vulnerable to drug trafficking.

## **8. ATS Trafficked to Bangladesh by Myanmar's Arakan Army (AA) and Through Rakhine State**

### *8.1 Arakan Army: Growing Power in Rakhine Leads to More Yaba in Bangladesh*

Yaba trafficking to Bangladesh has increased with the Arakan Army increased its armed struggle or conflict in the region. The link between the growth of the Arakan Army movement in Rakhine and the increase in the flow of yaba into Bangladesh is not unusual, the reality is that the Arakan Army has adopted the tactics of other armed groups in Myanmar to raise funds. This region of Myanmar, bordering Bangladesh, is gradually falling out of the control of the Myanmar government and the control of Arakan's armed groups is increasing. The Arakan Army is a member of Myanmar's 07 armed groups' organizations - the Federal Political Negotiations and Consultative Committee (FPNCC), Northern Alliance and Three Brotherhood Alliance. The Arakan Army receives weapons from its advisor the Kachin Defense Army and its ally the United Wa State Army. Supporters unable to provide enough money to procure ammunition for the Arakan Army's about 30,000 troops, various weapons, including the M60. As these separatists bordering Bangladesh have no significant alternative source of income, the money earned from methamphetamine (ATS) trafficking is helping them to finance their organizational activities, including weapons collection. Bangladesh is the main market for their supplied yaba trafficking as well as money.

In 2017, the Rakhine State Advisory Commission report established by Kofi Annan stated that the Arakan Army has links with drug traffickers (The Irrawaddy, January 08, 2019). Arakan Army also known to be involved in timber smuggling to India and Bangladesh (Htet, et al., 2020). After their initial training, some AA members together with their Northern Alliance partners-the KIA, TNLA and MNDAA-fought against the Myanmar army to northern Shan State, and began entering Rakhine in 2014. These relations helps to unleashing trafficking expansion across Myanmar borders.

### *8.2 Kaungkha Militia and Other Insurgent Groups Supplying ATS (Yaba/Crystal Meth) to Arakan Army*

Arakan Army' relation with The Kaungkha militia, including various militia groups, was established during operations against Myanmar military in northern Shan State. 'Jane's Terrorism & Insurgency Monitor' first publish the report (April 12, 2018) that Myanmar military intelligence identifies the Myanmar military-backed ethnic Kachin 'Kaungkha Militia' and the Arakan Army as key strategic partners in ATS production and trafficking. The report also states that lucrative new markets in central Myanmar cities, Rakhine and Bangladesh are serving to expand the drug trade (Htet, et al., 2020). Later, Myanmar military spokesman said, the militia had been disarmed when it was found to be producing illegal drugs. The Kaungkha militia was accused of helping the Arakan Army build strong positions and arm bases with drug money, and launched a raid against them. Although the Kaungkha militia has been disarmed, neither their drug factories nor the drug production sites have been destroyed. There was no incident of severing the drug supply chain of the Kaungkha militia members with the Arakan Army. They are gaining some popularity among the Rakhines, including religious Buddhists, but high-level cannot survive without taxes on drug trafficking (LIN, 2022).

### *8.3 Arakan Army Financing From ATS Money and Its Members Arrested*

In October 2019, police seized 2.6 million pieces of yaba on a Yangon-to-Sittwe highway bus, and following its link police arrested an ethnic Rakhine man, Khine Khine, who police said worked to finance the Arakan Army. The Arakan Army said the accused was working with them until 2015 (Chan, 2019). Although the Arakan Army officially denies arresting its members with drugs, the seizures of drugs at their locations, confession of group members support their involvement, and one of the key Arakan Army officers who initiated the first operations in Rakhine Aung Myat Kyaw, drug trafficker U Wai Tha Tun and former Administrator Kyaw Myint all admits to trafficking drugs for the Arakan Army. Myint is alleged to have procured \$299,000 worth of arms for the group alone through drug trafficking (Xinhua, June 24, 2015). According to the Aung Myat Kyaw, Arakan Army supplied 4.4 million (forty four lakh) yaba from December 2016-November 2017 and used the money to purchase weapons (The Irrawaddy, January 8, 2019). Arakan Army uses Rohingya citizens for trafficking to Bangladesh after bringing ATS to Rakhine State. The Arakan Army has a strong supply chain as it has its own people on the Bangladesh border from manufacturers (Xinhua, June 24, 2015). Drug shipments intrude the region using Myanmar's internal road network and waterways. Millions of pieces of yaba are caught in Rakhine, but this is negligible compared to trafficking, as drug seizures are not the main objective of the Myanmar military or border guard police. Basically the drugs are seized during security measures (LIN, 2022).

### *8.4 Arakan Army Maintaining Relations and Trafficking Yaba to Bangladesh*

Across the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, the Arakan Army-controlled syndicate and the transnational syndicates are utilizing established networks using various individuals and modus to trafficking yaba into Bangladesh. According to various media and report, The Myanmar military, border guard police and law enforcement forces

support these traffickers in exchange for money and commissions. The Arakan Army's territorial hold is not as mature as that of Shan or Kachin, so the area is more known for trafficking than ATS production. Internationally Controlled Substances, Chemists, Laboratories and Various Solvents are required for ATS production, which are available in Shan State but difficult to produce industrially in the current environment provided in Rakhine. Large scale ATS production are difficult here due to the lack of restrictions on law-enforcement entry through the Ceasefire Agreement, risk of easy identification of ATS production sites by neighboring countries, lack of money laundering cooperatives, unskilled manpower for ATS production, lack of transit and location facilities for transnational syndicates, unskilled ATS waste management and ATS storage techniques, and not having a long tradition of ATS production etc. local features as it is risky to maintain the traditional characteristics of drug production in the long term. However, large ATS (methamphetamine) production groups in Shan State are selling powder (raw material) for yaba production, and smaller groups are collecting these powders and producing yaba. Groups in the Arakan Army or Southern Chin States can take advantage of production with simple tablet shapes. In changing circumstances, disruptions in the financial flow of the Arakan Army and supply shortages of ATS from the Shan region could lead to ATS production. Currently there is little obstacles of ATS supply and trafficking from the Shan area. China needs Arakan Army for security and commercial issues like construction of China's deep sea port, construction of rail and road links, oil and gas pipelines etc. in Rakhine area. China is accused of cooperating with Myanmar's Arakan Army and India's northeastern separatists to prevent India's Kaladan Project in Rakhine and India's strengthening of ties with Myanmar (Shivamurthy, 2021). Arakan Army is also involved in large-scale trafficking of ATS (yaba tablets) to Bangladesh while protecting China's and its own interests, and at the same time, has become a strong barrier Rohingya repatriation to Myanmar.

### **9. Black Triangle\*: A Rugged Land for Meth Trafficking and Drug Production**

Various ethnic groups including Arakan Army (AA), Arakan Liberation Army (ALA), Chin National Defense Force (CNDF), Chin Defense Force (CDF), Chin National Front (CNF), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Kuki Chin National Front (KNF), Mizu National Front (MNF) continue their activities in Myanmar's Rakhine State and Chin State regions, and bordering Bangladesh and India. Among them, Paletwa, Chin Hills and Mayu Hills are the center of operations of the largest insurgent group, the Arakan Army. The Arakan Army controls the territory and administration of a significant portion of Rakhine State (Development Media Group, 2023). The area has become a major center for ethnic conflicts, and drugs trafficking and drugs production. In 2015, the Arakan Army first established a strong position in Paletwa and used it as a military base. Arakan Hills and Chin Hills around Paletwa set it apart from other towns of the east. Chin Hill is located away from Matupi, another town in Myanmar. Although the Rakhine community is the majority in Rakhine State, Paletwa in Chin State has 83 percent Chin and 17 percent Rakhine (Frontier Myanmar, June 9, 2023) but Paletwa is now under Arakan Army control and administration. During fighting in the first quarter of 2024 between Myanmar military and Arakan Army, Rakhine and Southern Chin states townships- Paletwa, Mrauk-U, Kyauktaw, Myebon, Pauktaw, Ponnagyun, Minbya, Ramree, Taung Pyo Letwe, Rathedaung- in Black triangle region have come under Arakan Army control. The lawless situations and rouge state may make the region more vulnerable to drugs traffickers and producers. India-Bangladesh through Paletwa, and India and Rakhine capital "Sittwe" through Kaladan River are easily connected. The Kaladan River in the region can play a major role in drugs and other contraband trafficking. A gray economy prevails here due to drug and other trafficking activities. Terrain, challenging socio-economic conditions and insecurity have concentrated opium poppy cultivation in Myanmar (UNODC, 2013). A similar situation prevails in Rakhine and Chin states.

The Black Triangle area, known for opium production and ATS trafficking, includes the Northern part of Myanmar's Rakhine State including Capital 'Sittwe' and Southern Chin State including the Triangle region of the Chin Hills, Arakan Mountain Range & the Mayu Hills, and the remote border region of India's Mizoram State adjacent to Myanmar's Chin & Rakhine State, and Bangladesh-Myanmar remote border area including Naf River and adjacent Bay of Bengal coastal region. The rugged mountainous area, ethnic conflicts, absence of Government control and ethnic rebels control, and the confluence of rugged Big hills-Rivers-sea-land has made it a fascinating location for drugs trafficking, production and drugs economy Especially Yaba/Crystal Meth enters Bangladesh through this region. The triad's rugged mountainous terrain, lack of control by the Myanmar government, close trafficking routes to the Bay of Bengal, and the presence of growing markets make the Black Triangle region a vulnerable area for drug production and trafficking. Various ethnic groups, including the Arakan Army, fund their operations from yaba/crystal meth trafficking, and opium production and trafficking. In 2023, 87 acres of poppies were destroyed in remote border areas of Thanchi, Ruma, Alikadam, Rowangchari upazilas of Bandarban,

Bangladesh as well as 22.76 kg opium in 2022, and 26 acres poppy plants & 20.80 kg opium in 2021, were also seized. Moreover, the destruction and seizure of poppies and opium almost every year in these areas (Annexure-2).

Anti-military movements are strong in the Chin State, with the Arakan Army providing arms, training and ammunition to rebel groups in the state. China has been supplying arms to the Arakan Army and accused of using the Bangladesh-Myanmar border through the Bay of Bengal for arms smuggling (Chaudhury, 2020). Currently, the Arakan Army (AA) in Rakhine and the Chin National Organization (CNO)/Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) in the Chin State have good relations. On 13 April 2023, the Chin National Defense Force (CNDF) led the second of their Chin National Spring Revolution and Arakan Army Chief Major General Twan Mrat Naing's participation in the anniversary indicates their long-term Control, so Myanmar military have to struggle for the regions. Various domestic-international licit and illicit activities, including separatist activities and other trafficking of narcotics for money in the remote Bangladesh-India-Myanmar trilateral border area and opium production in Myanmar's Chin State and Rakhine State, opium production in the border hilly areas of India adjacent to the Chin State border, and flourishing methamphetamine trafficking, made the region known as a drug prone unstable region.

More than 1.20 million Rohingya are living as refugees of Myanmar along the borders of Rakhine State in Bangladesh and are involved in criminal activities including drug trafficking. The Rohingya problem has long encouraged drug trafficking along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. Numerous citizens of Chin State and Rakhine State have been displaced by the conflict between the government and the insurgents, and their opium production and yaba/crystal meth production and trafficking have been revealed. According to the UNODC report, opium production is reported in Chin and Rakhine state, and opium production is reported in India bordering Myanmar. The largest separatist organization of the Rakhine is involved in various trafficking activities including ATS along the Bangladesh-Myanmar-India border. Their involvement in opium production is also revealed. Rebel groups in the Chin state and Rakhine state have established their own administrative units outside the control of the central government. Bangladeshi security forces are destroying opium poppy fields in remote mountainous areas in Bandarban and Rangamati districts of Bangladesh adjacent to Rakhine State. Various non-state armed groups are operating independently in the region. Among them, the Arakan Army alone has more than 30,000 armed and trained troops (Aljazeera, 16 January 2024). Increasing trade activities of China and India centered on the region and their cooperation to separatist activities are increasing the problem in the long run. The remote Black Triangle border region of Bangladesh, India and Myanmar is home to many groups, whose borders are inhabited by indigenous communities. E.g. Rakhine (Marma in Bangladesh), Chin (Mizu in India), Daingnet (Chakma in Bangladesh). In addition to Rakhine, Rakhine State also has minorities Rohingya, Mro, Khami, Thet, Daingnet etc, minorities (International Crisis Group, 2020). The Khumis are dominant in the southern part of Chin State. In many cases, they have to pay taxes to the Arakan Army. Many Mro leaders were killed in Buthidong and adjacent areas. Bangladesh has already been embroiled in the Rohingya problem for a long time, one of which is the problem of ATS (methamphetamine) trafficking, for which the Rakhine and Arakan Army are no less responsible.

Manufactured drugs or supplied ATS have the opportunity to be trafficked through various channels across the borders of Bangladesh, India or Myanmar. Golden Triangle has connectivity with Black Triangle. Yaba, crystal meth, heroin and other drugs produced in the Golden Triangle are obtained and trafficked in the Black Triangle region. These two regions also correspond to political, economic and social realities. Due to its close links with drug producing regions, it is better known as a trafficking region. Just like the Mekong River in the Golden Triangle region, the Naf River, Kaladan River along with the Bay of Bengal play a role in drug production and trafficking in the Black Triangle. There is also a crowd of cargo ships including India and China to camouflage drugs trafficking here.

#### **10. Myanmar Forcibly Evicted and Refugees Rohingya Community in Yaba (ATS) Trafficking to Bangladesh**

Just as Myanmar's instability is turning the country into a drug state, instability for the Rohingya has resulted in the ATS market taking firm root in Rohingya camps and related areas in Bangladesh. The route through which the Rohingyas are deported along the Bangladesh border has become one of the main routes of yaba/crystal meth trafficking into Bangladesh. More than 1.20 million Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh and are living as refugees. Thousands of Rohingya citizens are still living inhumane lives in IDP camps in Rakhine. All of the 34 Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar have become hubs for organized and cross-border crime, and the Bangladesh-Myanmar border near the camps is used as an entry point for drug trafficking. As the Rohingya's drug involvement poses a threat to Bangladesh's security, the people of Bangladesh are widely resentful of them and see them as a source of troubles. The Myanmar military has subjected the Rohingya community to inhumane torture, killing and

burning their homes, and forcibly evicting them from the country, leaving them vulnerable and vulnerable to drug and human trafficking. The Myanmar army also wants to label them as drug criminals and terrorists, so that they don't have to repatriate the Rohingyas under the guise of criminals and terrorists. Bangladeshi law enforcement agencies are arresting hundreds of Rohingyas in the Chittagong and Cox's Bazar districts of southeastern Bangladesh during the ATS trafficking and its stockpiling.

The Rohingya camps in Bangladesh are now providing unfortunately the congenial environment for drug syndicates to determine the decision to traffic ATS into Bangladesh, deals and quantity of ATS trafficking, routes and means of trafficking, and storage and destination etc. Syndicates are largely dependent on camps. Conflicts, violence and killings are taking place in various groups over the meth trade and control. Rohingyas involved in ATS trafficking are working as part of transnational syndicates. It is said that about 80 percent of Yaba trafficking in Cox's Bazar uses Rohingyas in some way (Sahu, 2022). Rohingya traffickers in Teknaf and Ukhya are leading the criminal activities. Ambassador of Saudi Arabia mentioned that the Rohingya community of Bangladesh is trafficking drugs to Saudi Arabia.

The Rohingya camp's hundreds of houses lined up in long rows, their dense population, poverty and their connection to the interior of Myanmar made the camp a perfect place for ATS conservation. Organized groups in the camps communicate using Bangladeshi and Myanmar mobile and internet technologies, and linguistic advantages and free movement have Rohingyas in a vantage point in ATS trafficking, resulting Rohingyas refugees are using to commit drug trafficking and other crimes by the Arakan Army, transnational syndicates, predominantly Rakhine criminal gangs, and corrupted members of the Myanmar Army and the Border Guard Police. Bangladeshi drug dealers also use them in most certain cases. When ATS enter into Rohingya camps, most of them moving beyond the reach of Bangladeshi security forces. Drug dealers coming to buy yaba in Cox's Bazar are seen supplying yaba from Rohingya camps. There are reports of many Rohingya citizens earning huge sums of money by engaging in yaba trafficking in Rohingya camps. With drugs money, they are carrying out operations at home and abroad including procuring arms and equipment, and many are moving out of the camps.

The Myanmar government has prolonged and incomplete peace talks with various ethnic groups for decades, same approach and policy has been adopted in the case of Rohingyas, as a result this problem may continue for decades with other related problems, including drug problems may persist for decades. It is seen, transnational syndicates based in Rohingyas camps are involved in drugs, weapons, pornography, etc. criminal activities in Bangladesh and are likely to increase.

## **11. Use of Porous Indian Border in ATS Trafficking Into Bangladesh: Myanmar-India-Bangladesh Routes**

### *11.1 Long Porous Border Made Vulnerable for ATS Trafficking*

A major feature of drug trafficking in India is the trafficking of yaba & crystal meth from Golden Triangle of Myanmar to the north-eastern states of India. The development of India's connectivity along with Myanmar's 1643 km long, wide and inaccessible borders, and the large-scale seizures of ATS in India's north-eastern states have made India-Bangladesh 4096 km borders more important for yaba (ATS) trafficking. This border is still known for the trafficking of Cannabis, codeine based syrup (Phensidyl) etc. Drugs trafficked from Myanmar in the North-Eastern states of India go to other states of India including Bangladesh and some drugs including heroin are also trafficked to other countries (Das, 2022). The Director General of NCB points out that the synthetic drug problem along the North-East border of India is even worse from the North-West border. The North-Eastern states of Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh are among the ten states with the highest use of synthetic drugs in India (Sahu, 2022). These synthetic drugs are mainly yaba tablets (ATS). The nearby Indian states along the eastern border of Bangladesh are not new drug trafficking routes from Myanmar but have a centuries-old history as drug transit points for opium or heroin trafficking, which is used in recent times to trafficked yaba and other synthetic drugs. Simultaneously, precursor chemicals, cough syrup (codeine based) etc. are also trafficked into Myanmar from India. A major portion of trafficked yaba into India is somehow trafficked into Bangladesh. Yaba/crystal meth are not only a problem in Bangladesh, but a potential problem in India as well. UNODC South-East Asia and Pacific Representative Jeremy Douglas mentioned, the situation prevails in Bangladesh a few years ago, similar situation prevails in the states of the North-Eastern region of India (Das, 2022). As per reports, Attempts to set up ATS manufacturing plants in India were made at various times, particularly in Maharashtra and Gujarat, but were thwarted. By entering through Mizoram and Manipur states of India, Yaba is trafficked into Bangladesh using all the possible borders of Bangladesh with Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura as well as West Bengal states. It is also trafficked from India to Australia, Malaysia



(Narcotics Control Bureau, 2021). Drugs including cannabis, heroin, codeine have been trafficked from India for decades through these routes, but yaba's new trafficking routes includes rivers, such as the Roumari in Kurigram district in northern Bangladesh, drug traffickers are avoiding traditional and established routes, and using unconventional and less secure routes.

### *11.2 Northeast India Used for Trafficking to Bangladesh*

Despite India's recent strict measures along its Myanmar border, drug trafficking from Myanmar continues, even increases. Moreh in Manipur and Champai in Mizoram transit areas are the two main entry points for drugs transit from Myanmar to India. On 07 December 2021, 54 kg of brown sugar and 154 kg of crystal meth were seized from the house of an ethnic Burmese woman in Moreh town of Manipur State. It is stored for trafficking from Myanmar through India to other countries (Bhaumik, 2022). Assam's Director General of Police (DG) on 18 July 2021 at a massive drug busting event said, "Dimapur (Ursadhant), the commercial hub of Nagaland, is a major hub of Assam's drug trafficking and abuse problem. Dimapur, Dipu in Assam has been used as a drug trafficking corridor for decades after being trafficked from Myanmar through Manipur and Nagaland (Sarma, 2021). In the first week of August 2021, Assam Police seized 383 grams heroin, 01 kg Morphine and 02 kg crystal meth from Dillai of Karbi Anglong District in Assam while being trafficked from Myanmar to Siliguri in West Bengal via Manipur. According to Indian security and customs officials, the North-Eastern states are being used as corridors for trafficking Myanmar drugs to other Indian provinces, Bangladesh, Nepal and other countries of the world (Chakraborty, 2022). India's major consignments of ATS (methamphetamine) seizures are found mainly in Manipur, Assam, Kolkata, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. About all the cases, the sources of the yaba seized in India are found to be Myanmar origin (Bhadouria, 2022). Seizures of ATS destined for the United States, New Zealand and Australia have already been seized at Chennai and Chennai ports in India (Bhadouria, 2022). Moreh and Ukhrul, Thoubal, Chandel and Churachandpur districts of Manipur; Dimapur, Dipu in Assam; Champai district of Mizoram; and Shillong, Guwahati, Agartala, Imphal-Dimapur-Numaligarh are major drug trafficking routes of the region. Trafficking is also done from Myanmar through Manipur/Nagaland and then Dimapur/Diphu. The drugs of these routes are trafficked into Bangladesh through the borders including various points in Feni, Comilla, Brahmanbaria, Habiganj, Sylhet, Sunamgonj, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhati, Dinajpur, Joypurhat, Chapai Nawabgonj, Chuadanga, Jashore, Satkhira etc. districts of Bangladesh.

### *11.3 Non-State separatists in Indian Border Involved in Drug Trafficking*

ATS (Yaba) is trafficked into Bangladesh using all the possible borders of Bangladesh with Assam, Meghalaya, West Bengal, Mizoram and Tripura states. The trafficking of ATS to India has been reported to involve rebels or groups fighting for autonomy and transnational syndicate groups from countries on either side of Myanmar-India and they are also involve from trafficking to Bangladesh from India. Naga, Kuki, Manipuri, Kamtapur, Boroland and Assam separatists in north-eastern India have long been accused of financing their activities through drugs and arms trade and trafficking activities (Shivamurthy, 2021). From New Delhi International Airport on 02 April 2011, Napoleon Thockchom, Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) member of Lalihba Group in Manipur, was arrested with 200 kg of ephedrine (MP-IDSAs, April 13, 2011). Non-State Actors, the separatist Naga groups, Myanmar's ATS-producing non-state groups such as the UWSA etc. and their security forces are involved in the problem. Drug syndicates have been using the Indian city of Shillong as a hub for illegal drug trade from Myanmar via Mizoram for a long time.

### *11.4 Joint India-Myanmar Patrolling and Operations*

As the security forces are involved in corruption, they do not take proper action against the criminals. Children are also used as carriers (Mules) for drug trafficking through these borders with the hope of a better livelihood (Ashok, 2019). India and Myanmar signed an agreement to allow Indian forces to cross the Myanmar border to suppress insurgents. Later, the two countries signed an agreement on coordinated patrolling and intelligence sharing (Swami, 2022). Even in 2019, the Indian military and the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) conducted joint operations called Sunrise and Sunrise-II to control separatists along the Myanmar-India border. Joint operation has not been very successful against drug trafficking at the border, but it has created obstacles in the establishment of drug factories at the border. In the absence of joint border patrol agreement or intelligence sharing framework between Bangladesh and Myanmar, Both country are struggling to accurately present the problem.

## 12. Analysis of the Value and Price Level of ATS (Yaba/crystal meth) in Golden Triangle Region Including Bangladesh

ATS from Myanmar's Shan State are not only for Thailand or Bangladesh, but ATS trafficking and its prices are related to countries in the region of South, East and Southeast Asia. Moreover, prices and trafficking are also involved with countries' security systems, distance from Myanmar's Shan State, connectivity and communication systems, economic conditions, consumer habit, demand and supply chain for ATS etc. Outside of Myanmar, ATS prices are the lowest in Bangladesh and along the Myanmar border in Thailand among South, East and Southeast Asia regions. Yaba is trafficked to India from Myanmar's Shan State as a meth-trafficking route to Bangladesh, with Myanmar's Rakhine State emerged as an important transit route (UNODC, 2023).

### 12.1 ATS Tablet (Yaba) Prices in Bangladesh Are as Same as Myanmar Rakhine State Adjacent to Bangladesh

Increased supply of ATS (methamphetamine) in Rakhine has reduced its price by 50%. Prices are falling further in this region including Bangladesh. Currently (2023) in Sittwe, the capital of Myanmar's Rakhine State, bordering Bangladesh, the retail price of yaba is about 500 Kyat or \$0.24 dollar (1 US dollar = 2100 Myanmar Kyat), which is about BDT ৳26 Taka in Bangladeshi currency (USD \$1 = BDT ৳110 Taka) (BNI, March 18, 2023). The price increases almost 10 times as Yaba comes from Shan State to Mandalay, Mandalay is a major trafficking Hub in Myanmar (Marshall, 2016). So, Yaba/crystal meth prices are very low in Shan State in Myanmar, the center of ATS production. Most of the yaba trafficked to Bangladesh come through Mandalay. During research ATS price found that Yaba tablets are available in the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh at almost the same price as in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, i.e. BDT ৳22 – ৳30. It can be seen that Yaba is sold at BDT ৳30-৳40 Taka per piece in Teknaf and BDT ৳40-৳50 in Cox's Bazar exchanging one hand.

### 12.2 ATS Price in the Golden Triangle Region States

The price trend of yaba or crystal meth is similar or even lower in other countries around Myanmar, especially Thailand and Laos. The prices of ATS in Thailand are similar to that of Bangladesh, possibly due to the fact that both countries share the border with Myanmar and are located on the main trafficking routes for ATS produced in Myanmar. In a 2022 report to the UNODC, the Thai authorities reported that the wholesale price of yaba tablets is \$350 per 2000 pieces (৳38500 Bangladeshi taka, i.e. BDT ৳19.25 taka per piece), and the retail price is usually USD \$1 (৳110 taka), the retail price in Cambodia and Thailand is less than USD \$2 (UNODC, 2023). The Thailand report also states that crystal meth is \$4410 (BDT ৳485000 taka) per kg in 2022 in Thailand and up to USD \$1000 (BDT ৳110000 taka) per kg crystal meth is sold at the Myanmar border (UNODC, 2023). According to my research, it is seen that crystal meth is BDT ৳400000 - ৳500000 taka (\$3636 - \$4545) per kilogram in Cox's Bazar district of Bangladesh. According to Thailand's drug control officers, the price of ATS has fallen sharply, indicating a massive increase in supply. According to the Office of the Narcotics Control Board (ONCB) of Thailand in 2020, the price of 01 (one) gram of crystal meth had dropped to USD \$15 (fifteen) dollars, the price of yaba was 50-100 Thai baht (Reed, 2021). Crystal meth price in Cambodia was USD \$7,000 in 2020, but five years ago it had USD \$38,000 (Son, 2021). Thailand saw a 10-fold increase in ATS use and a 15-fold increase in arrests between 2016 and 2019, a similar trend in Vietnam (Son, 2021). Myanmar authorities reported in 2022 that the price of crystal meth per gram is USD \$10 (BDT ৳1100 Taka) (UNODC, 2023). On the other hand, the report states that the retail price of crystal meth in Japan is much higher, with Indonesia USD \$45 - \$225 per gram, South Korea USD \$250 - \$300 per gram of crystal meth (UNODC, 2023). Cambodian authorities reported the retail price of 1 gram of crystal meth was USD \$8 (BDT ৳880) (UNODC, 2023). Yaba/Crystal meth price has decreased but purity level of methamphetamine has not changed much. The purity level of crystal meth in Thailand is 90.7%, 94.3% and 95.6% in 2022, 2021 and 2020 respectively. Average purity level in Malaysia and Philippines is 75% - 80% and 75% - 90% respectively (UNODC, 2023).

### 12.3 ATS Tablet (Yaba) Price Analysis in Bangladesh

After collecting and analyzing data on drug prices and trafficking routes in 64 districts of Bangladesh in the first quarter of 2023 (via face-to-face interviews with 165 drug law enforcement officers and 135 yaba consumers and sellers, with more data collected later), it is seen that yaba (ATS tablet) prices within Bangladesh are comparatively less in the border areas of the districts (as per survey). Among them, the least price seen in Teknaf area, Cox's Bazar, BDT ৳22 - ৳30 taka in Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar district, Bangladesh, and by exchanging first hand, Yaba is seen to sell for BDT ৳30-৳40 taka per piece in Teknaf and BDT ৳40 - ৳50 taka in other places in Cox's Bazar district. Moreover, after two or three changes of hands, the wholesale price of yaba within Bangladesh is seen to be around BDT ৳50 - ৳90 (less than USD \$1) per piece and the price of yaba/crystal meth increases as more hands change. This wholesale price is also observed for 1000 pieces of yaba wholesale purchase price. The retail price of yaba ranges from BDT ৳80 - ৳200, and in some areas it is reported to sell for

up to BDT ৳250 under special circumstances, but most of the yaba consumers spend BDT ৳100 - ৳150 (USD \$1 and less than USD \$1.5) per yaba purchase price. Buying more than one piece at a time reduces per piece cost. In Cox's Bazar district near the Myanmar border, the retail price of yaba is much less than USD \$1. But in most cases yaba is sold at a lower price in the price range. Crystal meth users are few in Bangladesh, resulting in less seizure and supply. According to information provided by members of the drug law enforcement agency in Cox's Bazar district and yaba traders of this area, crystal meth price per kg BDT ৳4,00,000 - ৳5,00,000 taka ( USD \$3,636 - \$4,545), and in capital city Dhaka, the retail price ranges from BDT ৳1,500 - ৳5,000 per gram. However, it is mentioned in the interview that the purity level of ATS is adulterated. The local retail price of yaba varies slightly between the capital city and outside the capital, villages and towns or densely populated areas. Retail prices of yaba are similar in Chattogram, Rangpur, Dinajpur, Rajshahi, or Sylhet regions bordering or bordering districts. Buying yaba from a trader is cheaper, while retail price of yaba is slightly higher for home delivery, collection through a third party, or delivery in a protected area.

#### *12.4 ATS Tablets (Yaba) Prices Vary by Brand, Size and Colors*

If drug dealers in different districts in Bangladesh order for yaba supply to drug dealers in Cox's Bazar or Chattogram district without physical going themselves, traders deliver them to all parts of Bangladesh for Tk \$80-\$90 (less than USD \$1). Yaba prices vary by brand, size and color. Moreover, the wholesale price of yaba from India through various borders including Cumilla, Hobiganj, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Mymensingh, Sherpur, Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, Jaipurhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Jashore, Satkhira, Jhenaidah is also limited to ৳50-৳70 taka. Other than Cox's Bazar and Chittagong, the price of Yaba is almost the same in other parts of Bangladesh. The reason why Yaba prices are lower in different places in Bangladesh is because the wholesale prices are lower in places bordering Myanmar or India. Yaba is mainly collected from Cox's Bazar due to the ease of collection and less possibility of fraud and perceived good quality. According to some interviews, Yaba known as red or low quality is known to be wholesaled at BDT ৳20-৳30 taka in Cox's Bazar, it is also retailed at BDT ৳30-৳50 taka in Chattogram, but its demand is low. This type of Yaba is known as "Indian Yaba" in the districts of Bangladesh bordering India, especially red and small size yaba are known as Indian Yaba in the districts of Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, Jaipurhat, Kurigram, Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Jashore, Satkhira, Khulna, Pirojpur, etc. Drug dealers, drug addicts or security forces of Bangladesh do not have a clear idea about its source. If WY, W, R, R7, etc. are encrypted or written on the yaba and if it is a little bigger, it is known that the price and demand are high. Yaba prices are slightly higher in Barisal region due to its location away from Cox's Bazar and Indian border. The yaba that comes by sea in Patuakhali; Barguna, Bhola districts goes to Dhaka in the form of packed consignment. In the interview, it is known that there are big yaba traders in the sea transit area of Kalapara, Kuakata, Bangabali etc. in Patuakhali, Patharghata, Taltali etc. in Barguna and in Bhola districts, the reason is the association with the yaba traders from Cox's Bazar on the sea routes.

### **13. Golden Triangle and Lower Mekong Basin: World's Largest ATS Production and ATS Economy Region**

The region, the Golden Triangle from the Chinese border and along the lower Mekong River, is a hotbed for the production and trafficking of ATS and precursors. From the junction of the China, Myanmar and Laos borders, the Mekong River (Lancang in China) flows for about 100 km through the vast forest-mountainous inaccessible area of the Myanmar-Laos border and rejoins the Thailand-Myanmar-Laos border junction, a place known as the Golden Triangle and at the point, there is confluence with the Ruak River. The Mekong flows from the Golden Triangle to the borders or through the Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and through to the South China Sea, its banks become a hotspot of attraction for transnational drug syndicates for the production of ATS and other synthetic drugs. The Mekong River is a major maritime trade route between South China and Southeast Asia, particularly through the Golden Triangle, more than 300000 metric tons of goods are transported between China's Kunming and Thailand (UNODC, 2016). China, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, Myanmar have improved road communication system. As a result, drug syndicates do not have to face a major crisis in the production and trafficking of ATS and the precursors.

The Golden Triangle region has long been notorious for peak opium and heroin production and trade, and Myanmar became a major source of ATS before 2000. During China's strict measures against ATS in 2013-2014, production moved to Myanmar's Golden Triangle region and ATS production increased more in the region (Al Jazeera, November 07, 2018). Earlier, in the early 1950s, China took a strict stance against opium in its own country, since that decade, Myanmar has been one of the largest opium-producing countries (Washington Times, 2013). Drug production in the Golden Triangle has linked to China's domestic and regional anti-drug operations and initiatives. China's domestic action on precursor chemicals and action on drug production in the Golden Triangle, particularly in Myanmar, could largely curb drug production and trafficking in the region. China

declared a ban on all forms of fentanyl in May, 2019. Hence, Myanmar authorities seize 3,700 liters of methyl fentanyl from Loikan village in Myanmar's northeastern Shan State in April 2020, millions of people are dying in the United States because of fentanyl, an ominous sign for the region.

According to the ICG report, 250 metric tons of ATS is produced annually in the Golden Triangle region (ICG, 2019). Production of synthetic drugs including ATS, seen to be on the rise in Cambodia, outside Myanmar's highland Shan State. In 2020, 05 drug production labs were destroyed in Cambodia. The safe drug production area of Myanmar's Shan State of The Golden Triangle, Laos' Special Economic Zone along the Mekong River and Ban Mom Port, trade in the Makong river, the Thailand-Laos Friendship Bridge, cross-border transit corridors between the countries, the presence of transnational syndicates, precursor chemical trafficking, the China-Vietnam-Laos-Myanmar-Thailand- Cambodia's established infrastructure have made Golden Triangle an ideal location for ATS production and trafficking. In the past, ATS used to trafficking through established drug trafficking routes, mainly from Myanmar to Chiang Mai in Thailand via Bangkok to Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia etc. Although these routes is currently in use, due to Thailand's strict crackdown, the trafficking route finds its way to Laos-Cambodia-Vietnam (Luong, 2019). The excellent highway road from the Golden Triangle to Bangkok Airport and Port, 850 km away, has made the route one of the significant trafficking routes. Vietnam has also emerged as a hub for the transit of ATS and other synthetic drugs in the Mekong region. Golden Triangle drug was trafficked through the Vietnam-Laos border, especially the triangle point in the north-west areas of Son La, Dien Bien and Lai Chau. In a joint investigation of China-Vietnam, 89 people were prosecuted and 30 of them were sentenced to death for 12 tons of heroin seized in the border in 2014. Currently, these routes are also used for ATS trafficking (Luong, 2019). According to the China Drug Situation Report 2021, the source of 13.40 tons of 15 tons of methamphetamine seized in China in 2021 was the Golden Triangle, which is 89.30 percent of the total seizures (NNCC, 2022). China has better land and sea communication routes with Shan State. Chinese investment is also believed to have led to an increase in drugs and other trafficking.

Currently, one of the main routes of ATS trafficking in the Golden Triangle is the southern and western routes of Myanmar. On the western border, Bangladesh is a major market for golden triangle ATS, the golden triangle drugs are being trafficked through the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea to various regions including Southeast Asia, Australia, East Asia. On 13 December 2020, Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) seized 2114 kg of crystal meth while crossing the Coast of Penang Island in Malaysia by a recreational boat from Golden Triangle in Myanmar. According to residents of Tachileik, a border town in the Golden Triangle in Myanmar, drug production is outpacing demand (Reed, 2021). Golden Triangle drug producers have been able to quickly master the production techniques of methamphetamine, ketamine, fentanyl and creating market. In November 2022, another Yaba production factory was destroyed in Tachileik, Myanmar and 2.7 million tablets, 253 kg of methamphetamine powder, tablet making machinery and various chemicals were recovered. Laos is mostly used as a transshipment and Oudomxay is seen as one of the main drug production sites in Laos. In 2021, 07 Yaba tablet factories were destroyed in Laos. As a result, ATS is not limited to the UWSA or the Shan area rather in golden triangle and lower Mekong (UNODC, 2023).

#### **14. The Myanmar Military (Tatmadaw) and Its Allied & Supported Militias and Border Guard Forces (BGFs) Involved in Trafficking ATS Into Bangladesh and Southeast Asia**

The spread of Yaba/crystal meth in Bangladesh are the result of Myanmar's separatist activities in the region, and to be clearer, the result of immaturity, short-sightedness and greed for power in the state policies and activities of the Myanmar government and Military (Tatmadaw). However, all ethnic groups are benefiting from drug money. The military and the government have been involved in armed crime including drugs (International Crisis Group, 2020). Long ethnic conflicts have created criminal and opportunistic classes within each ethnics, whose main objective is to make money through drugs and other crimes. Drug money is being used by drug dealers to build land infrastructure in various cities including Mandalay, Yangon city. The military's plan to take control of new lands by forming militias with the lure of drugs, is a continuing plan. According to the demands of the military central command, funds were formed by collecting taxes from farmers, traders and traffickers, and using them to build and operate military station units rather than relying on central supplies (Weigand, 2021). The International Crisis Group (2019) found in their investigation that operations had so far remained stable and on schedule as long as the Myanmar military, large militia units involved in drug production up to small militias providing local security, and armed groups taxing trade all get their fair share of the profits. At times the system breaks down and violence breaks out. Analysts note that most of the key actors in trade control are military-backed traders and ethnic militias (Sahu, 2022).

#### *14.1 Allowing Drugs Business to KKY or People's Militia*

When peace talks broke down in 1963 after the Myanmar military took power in a coup d'état in 1962, the military government formed militias using some of the old and new armed groups known as the Ka Kwe Ye or Called KKY to control and fight the ethnic rebel group, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). They received no money, arms or other support from the government, instead allowing them to raise their own money by producing opium. Militias use government-controlled roads and towns for opium trafficking and finance themselves (Lintner, 2021 & Htet et al., 2020). Until now, the Myanmar government has used this method to exploit various ethnic groups and militias to finance themselves by producing and trafficking drugs. Myanmar's new military government's new ally is called the 'People's Militia' or 'Pyi Thu Sit'. The new militia groups are not as powerful as the KKY of the past, but their contracts and activities are essentially the same as they trade drugs and work with Myanmar's Security Forces against the rebels. But Militias have moved from the opium trade to the ATS trade and trafficking under national and international pressures and market changes. There are hundreds of armed militia groups across Myanmar, with thousands of armed members ranging from the Village Defense Force. Some militias are large in size, resourceful, armed and involved in a wide range of legal and illegal business activities. They have authority to bear arms and are allowed to trade; the military (Tatmadaw) pretends not to notice their illegal business. Because they don't get any money or other required help from the military. They operate check posts at entry into their areas. Police or civil servants also have to apply through the military to enter into their area (International Crisis Group, 2019). The area of Shan State can be broadly classified into three categories (International Crisis Group, 2019) -

01. Areas controlled by militia forces allied to the Myanmar Army.

02. Areas controlled by Border Guard Forces (BGFs), formerly part of various ethnic armed groups or militias. In a 2009-2010 declaration of the Myanmar military, it was converted into a paramilitary.

03. Areas of territory under the full control of ethnic armed groups, who held ceasefires in 1989 and again in 2011.

#### *14.2 Border Guard Forces (BGFs) Involve Illicit Activities Including Drugs*

BGFs are former ethnic rebels who now operate as military units under the command of the Myanmar military near rebel-held areas on the China-Thailand border. They receive little funding and supplies from the military. However, military personnel generally do not want to participate in activities with them. This is how BGFs function like militias. They move around with weapons and do various legal and illegal business in their area. Border Guard Forces (BGFs) are directly linked to the drug trade. The Myanmar Army attacked Laukaing, the capital of the Kokang Self-Administered Zone, in August 2009 and declared the rival group as the Border Guard Force (BGF), giving control of the casino city. BGFs are heavily involved in drug and money laundering (International Crisis Group, 2019). While methamphetamine production and trafficking are done by both pro- and anti-government groups, pro-government militias can roam freely across the country, using all borders and options to trafficking the drugs. These militias are using the Arakan Army and transnational syndicates to supply methamphetamine to Bangladesh.

A four-year investigation found that Myanmar's military-run Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) took more than \$60 million dollars from notorious drug lord Khun Sa into its Singapore account (Bernstein et al., 1996). Myanmar military aims to maintain control of the border areas by any means necessary as an economic gateway to China, the area is rich in natural resources and strategically important (Weigand, 2021). Through agreements with rebel groups, including Ceasefire, the military (Tatmadaw) has established relationships with them as partners in illicit goods, including drugs, gems, and timber. The Myanmar Military Elite has heavily involved in the illegal Gemstone business (Marrero, 2023). Opportunistic sections are lured or coerced by the military, in return for which they own huge sums of money through drug production and trafficking and other criminal activities. In exchange for relationships and control, drug crimes remain outside law enforcement (Su, 2018. Volume 63, Page 20-30). Militias and BGFs are granted significant amnesty status as military-affiliated and supported units, while also having privileges to deny by the military for their work (International Crisis Group, 2019). The Myanmar military is clearly a major contributor to drugs and other crimes. They are waging a drug war against relatively powerful factions, failing to bring them to compromise. The KKY policy made the cities of Lashio and Tangyan in Shan State the capital of drug trafficking (Su, 2018. Volume 63, Page 20-30). Drug production and trafficking have become strategic commodities for the Myanmar military's territorial control (Weigand, 2021). In The SHAN Drug Watch Newsletter (2012) mentioned that the Myanmar military wants drug money to go to the groups it supports rather than to armed insurgent groups. If necessary, the Myanmar military can meet local needs by taking money from the groups. As a result, opium and ATS



production and trafficking are more noticeable in areas controlled by their allied militias and Border Guard Forces (BGFs).

#### *14.3 Corruption, Ransom, Taxing for Illicit Activities Including Drugs Dealing*

There are many examples of Myanmar's border forces arresting drug traffickers and demanding ransom, then after having the ransom, keep the person off the government's blacklist for a certain period of time and out of arrest (LIN, 2022). Because of their contracts with the military, ethnic armed groups rarely allow counternarcotic operations on their territory. They run their organizational activities by collecting tax and toll directly and indirectly from vehicles including narcotics and precursors transiting their territory. According to the ICG (2019) report, the drug trade is not possible without high levels of corruption in the China, Laos, Thailand and the countries through which drugs or precursors are trafficked. A big question is whether the Myanmar forces sometimes seize yaba/crystal meth for actual drug control purposes or as a pressure tactic to achieve their objectives or to share more of the drug money, whereas leaving their territories and borders open for production and trafficking. The purpose of the military is not an effective solution to the drug problem but is using it as a tool to control the ethnic problem by keeping it alive. A report published by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (2014) claimed that the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) allowed militias to produce opium in return for their favor in attacking the Kachin Independence Army (Su, 2018, Volume 63, Page 20-30). The border guard forces (BGFs) are used to control rebel areas, suppress insurgents, collect intelligence on the battlefield, provide logistical support with members, spread military propaganda internationally, establish military's relation with China, Thailand, and Laos etc. Myanmar has more than 20 ethnic armed groups and hundreds of militias of various sizes affiliated with the army. Militias under the control of the military (Tatmadaw) are in no way behind the UWSA or the Mongla group in drug production and trafficking. A study in Taunggyi found that local authorities play a role in drug proliferation in Myanmar (Meehan et al., 2022).

#### *14.4 Splitting Non-state Groups for Drugs*

In 1991, the 4th Brigade of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) was split and renamed the Kachin Defense Army and signed a ceasefire agreement with the government. In 2010, under pressure from the military, they came under the control of the military and reorganized as Kaungkha militia. Like other militias, they did not receive financial, arms or any other support from the army. The group became a haven for transnational syndicates in drug production and trafficking. In January 2018, the largest drug bust in Myanmar's history was carried out in this area of Kutkai. 'Reuters' mentioned in its research article that one of the main regional drug syndicates in Asia, 'Sam Gor' (The Company), collects ATS from here. A large portion of yaba consignments trafficked into Bangladesh originate from the area (International Crisis Group, 2020). Numerous other armed groups control the territory within the 30 km radius of Kaungkha Militia control Kutkai Township, whereas the Myanmar military operates some permanent bases in certain locations. Ethnic Kokang Chinese Insurgent Group, The Panthay Militia, Tarmoenye Militia (who grew from a former Village Defense Force into a powerful armed organization), the KIO's 8th Battalion, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army–TNLA etc., in addition to the larger groups there are numerous small militia groups based in villages and Kutkai towns. Drug production and trafficking activities are one of the main sources of their activities including arms collection in this small area (International Crisis Group, 2020). Militias operate in liaison and coordination with both the military and local insurgents.

A Myanmar-based expert regarding the drug business in the Shan region says that military-affiliated militias centered on Shan's Kutkai, Lashio and Namkham towns and further east among the ethnic Lahu are believed to be heavily involved in drug production and trafficking (Clapp, 2022). Production areas have increased rapidly from rebel-held areas to military-militia controlled areas. Not only ATS production are taking place, but opium production are concentrated in pro-government militia and BGF areas, the KIA claims, and international research organizations point out in various reports (Lintner, 2022). But recent (2024) strengthening control in Shan state, Kachin state, Karen state, Karenni state, Sagaing region etc. by ethnic groups could increase their trafficking shares. The think tank 'US Institute for Peace' in their August 2021 report mentioned 'Kokang BGF' is controlling drug trafficking under the control of the military. The Kokang's economy has long been dependent on gambling (Clapp, 2022). Chinese courts have opened more than 800 drug cases related to Myanmar's 'Special Administration Zone' on the Chinese border since 2010 (Peter, 2022). The headquarters of the Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) along the Thailand border has become a hub for regional criminal operations after forming alliances with notorious Chinese criminal networks. Connectivity includes the important Mandalay-Lashio-Muse or Tchhileik-Kengtung-Mongla route and transport system with areas in China and Thailand, controlled by the pro-government Border Guard Force (BGF) and armed groups, which have been playing a role in their drug

trafficking and other activities. The aim of the military government is to maintain control of commercially important routes by any means necessary.

From Muse to Yangon, observers say, militia leaders can move unchallenged (International Crisis Group, 2019). Government-backed militias do not have much trouble producing and trafficking drugs. It is through these routes that the meth of the Golden Triangle is trafficked into Bangladesh. Along this route, pro-government groups and syndicates supply ATS to separatist groups and transnational syndicates across the border in Bangladesh as far as Yangon in Myanmar or Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine (the Black Triangle). Each group denies involvement in drug production and trafficking and points the finger at the other. But a large part of Shan Province's economy and several border areas are dominated by drug producers and traffickers. Myanmar's Shan region of the Golden Triangle has become the world's largest producer of ATS (methamphetamine).

### **15. ATS Trafficking in Bangladesh: ATS Production by Myanmar's Ethnic Insurgent Groups**

ATS is not producing for inaccessibility but rather the absence of the state and the political disorganization or disorder, and the central political philosophy of the Myanmar state created by the military that has long given place to drug production and trafficking, and organized crime circles. The drug is predominantly produced in the highlands of eastern Myanmar, an economically impoverished region under the control of armed groups. The adjacent areas (Golden Triangle) under Thailand and Laos, on the other hand, are remote and poorly controlled, allowing traffickers to easily use those borders for transit (Kipgen, 2020). Among more than 20 (twenty) opposing ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, some of which have been at war for more than half a century. Their objectives and strategies also differ and their drug policies also differ. About 90 percent of opium in Shan State is produced in Myanmar's northeastern Shan State, where methamphetamine (ATS) are produced at a similar rate (Aljazeera, January 11, 2021).

#### *15.1 Northern Shan and UWSA Alleged Kingpin*

After the collapse of Burma's Communist Party (CPB), the Kingpin of the Golden Triangle region, The Wa and Kokang groups became powerhouses in drug production. The Southern Enclave of the UWSA is the center of the ATS-based drug manufacturing industry. Under pressure from China and following the Cangyuan Agreement in 1997, the UWSP announced their occupied territories free of opium in 2005. Since then, countries in the region including Thailand, have alleged that the UWSA has set up large-scale ATS factories in the southern jungle area occupied by the Thailand border, and trafficking ATS through the border town of Techileik and using the various borders in the Golden Triangle. ATS is also trafficked using the Chinese border (Kai, 2016). Later, Wa produced yaba come to ATS market in Bangladesh. 'WY (World Is Yours)' 'W' 'Y' brands yaba in the Bangladeshi market actually refers to ATS (methamphetamine) produced in the Wa region. The Wa has no choice but to manufacture and trade ATS to support its armed forces of about 25,000 and various projects. Similarly, The Arakan Army, an armed organization based on Bangladesh border in Myanmar, need money from drug trafficking to operate its large force. UWSA, The National Democratic Alliance Army (NDAA) have been controlling the border between China, Thailand and Myanmar for decades and has been involved in the drug trade (Ebbighausen, 2020). The territory controlled by Wa has been identified by Thai authorities as the primary location for ATS labs (Reed, 2021).

Pangsang, the capital of Wa State, is a city full of Casinos and it has become a haven for gambling, drug lords and fugitives from state persecution (Chaudhury, 2020). The agreement between Myanmar Army and the UWSA promised that the UWSA would not war against Myanmar military in exchange for the freedom to do whatever business they wanted (Uhlmann et al. 2020). In the late 1990s, after the defeat of drug lord Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) in a joint war with the Myanmar military and UWSA, the UWSA moved 1,00,000 (one hundred thousand) Wa citizens to the Mong Yown area on the Thai border and took over that area. Since then, along with other ethnic militias, the UWSA has been a major player in Shan State's drug economy. A research paper published in 2021 by UK-based Defense Intelligence Analysts, Janes, states that the Wa derives huge profits from territories linked to drug production and trafficking, with some of the profits flowing into their mainstream business (Reed, 2021). Further mentioned, the group is now a major drug producer and various branches of trafficking have begun to expand and produce precursors for themselves and others (Peter, 2022). The US Treasury Department in 2008 called the UWSA "Southeast Asia's largest and most powerful drug-trafficking organization" and issued sanctions against more than two dozen leaders and alleged associates and organizations (Peter, 2022). Syndicates based in China, including Hong Kong, Macau have moved from Heroin to meth production and trafficking. Son-in-law of UWSA chief Bao Youxiang owns Yangon Airways, chain hotel company Tatkham Co Ltd, Gems, among other businesses, fled to Pangkham in Wa district after his accomplice

was arrested in 2009 on drug-related charges. The Hong Pang Group, a large national-level conglomerate based in Wa, is said to have been founded on drug money (Bangkok Post, 6 July 2008).

### *15.2 Kokang Special Administrative Zone (Kokang BGF): A Major Drug Kingpin Area*

The commanders in the Kokang BGF, formed under the military with about 6000 (six thousand) members in Myanmar's Chinese-speaking Kokang Special Administrative Zone (SAZ) on the border with China, have made the area a crime haven for drug trade, casinos and money laundering. Kokang Border Guard Force (BGF) commander Bai Soucheng's son is deputy director of the Kokang Gaming Commission and chairman of Xinbaili Company, which owns hotels and casinos with online gambling operations. Liu Zhengxiang (Lee Kyein Chan), one of the founders of "Kokang BGF", is best known as the chairman of the multi-billion dollar business group 'The Fully Light Company' and a major player in China's illegal online gambling market with others. Criminal money is also used to finance wars, support military elites and controlling territories. More than 80 percent of crimes here are drug-related. Adjacent to Kokang BGF is the WA controlled area. China's crackdown on drugs and gambling in 2009 led to an increase in Kokang's gambling business.

### *15.3 Different Non-state Groups' Drugs Production and Trafficking*

In the Ta'ang (Palaung) area of northern Shan State, local authorities encourage farmers to grow opium. For example, U Kyaw Myint, a Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) member of parliament, is accused of leading opium cultivation in the Pansay area of Namkhan Township (Lintner, 2021). Areas controlled by the TNLA, SSPP, and RCSS in northern Shan State are heavily drug producing and trafficking prone area. The banks of the Salween River are suitable places for the production of opium and other drugs. Rakhine State bordering Bangladesh is one of Myanmar's most drug-trafficking areas in Myanmar which procure drugs from the Shan areas especially meths. Myanmar's northern Sagaing Region has an illegal and gray economy along the border with India, where various ethnic separatist groups along the India-Myanmar border are involved in drug production and trafficking. Being bordering with Chin State of Myanmar, Sagaing region also affects drug trafficking 'Black Triangle' areas. Many ethnic groups see drugs as one of the main obstacles to their activities (Beech et al., 2020). Saw Lah Pwe, The leader of Brigade-5 Myanmar's ceasefire group-The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA), was included in Thailand's top five drug traffickers list in 2012 for his involvement in drug trafficking across Thailand border in the Karen region, closed the border with the DKBA and asked him surrender or threatened kill (Zar, 2015).

### *15.4 Factions for Drug Trade*

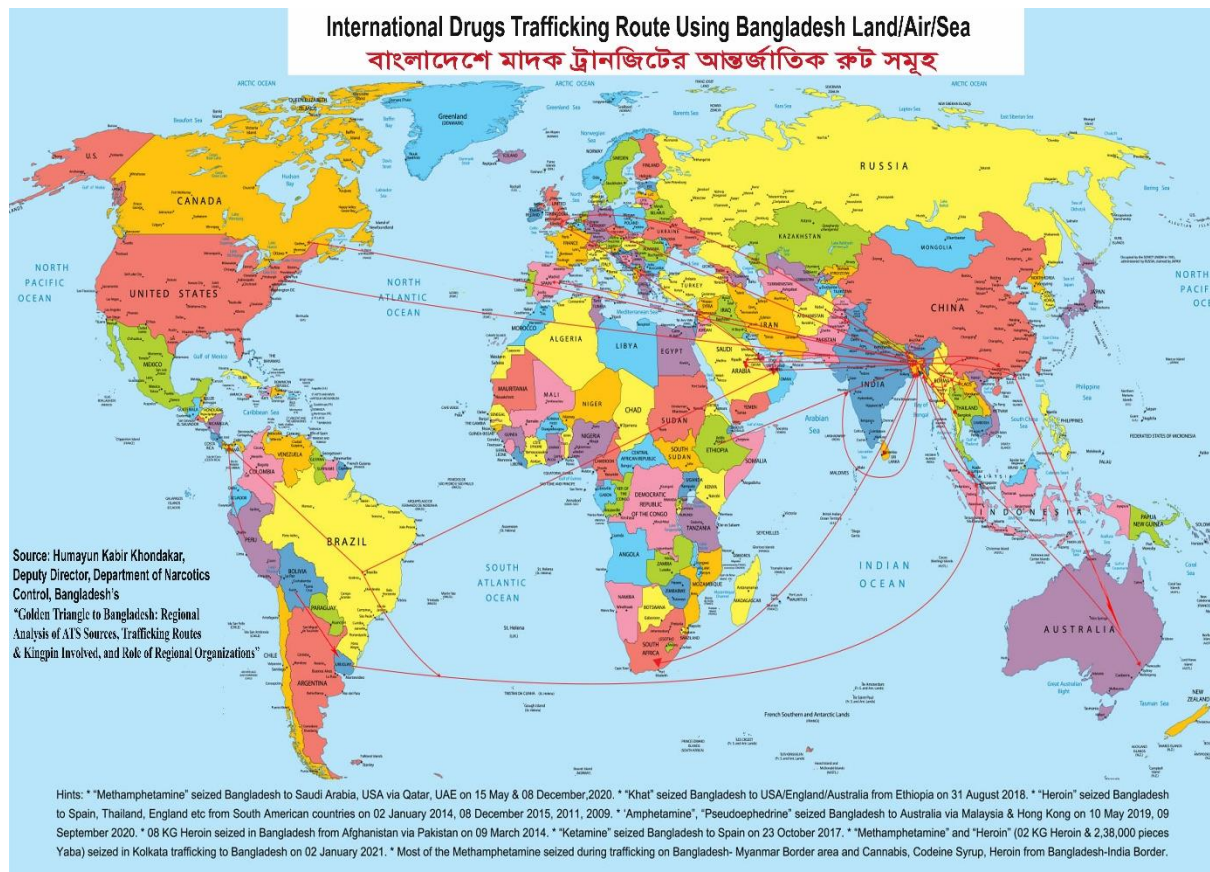
The UWSA and numerous sub-contractors militias and factional groups of ethnic armed organizations (such as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army-DKBA) work to rapidly increase ATS production in other ceasefire areas of eastern Myanmar. Along with fighting with military, the TNLA has clashed with pro-government militias, particularly the Pansay militia, over its anti-narcotics stance to destroy opium. Those currently involved in the ATS trade, including heroin. Thus there is a link between the drug trade and armed conflict (International Crisis Group, 2019). Opium production occurs in the Magwe Region, Sagaing Region and Kachin, Kayah, Karenni, Chin and Rakhine States (Meehan, 2016). It is well known that some members of the Karen Armed Forces and Mon Armed Forces are involved in drug trafficking. Sometimes there are conflicts over the drug trafficking of other groups in the territory they occupy. On September 24, 2020, KNU/KNLA-PC (The KNU/KNLA Peace Council-KPC) members clashed with gunfire when they were caught during trafficking drugs through Kawkaik Township in The New Mon State Party (NMSP) controlled Thaton district of Karen State.

The New Mon State Party (NMSP) armed group, The Mon National Liberation Army (MNLA), violated the NCA with the government in March 2019 by arresting 08 people with 500 pieces of Yaba and 06.50 kg of Kratom in government-controlled Moudon Township, and in response of their detained, the military protested and requested their release. Authorities in neighboring countries like China, Thailand, Bangladesh, India etc. are concerned about the ATS and other drugs. The drug problem is so widespread here that the government and ethnic insurgent groups are placing drug prevention in their policies, and in 2018, the government of Aung San Suu Kyi announced the first national drug control policy in Myanmar.

## **16. Transnational Drug Syndicate in Bangladesh ATS Trafficking**

The massive drug production and trafficking activities of international drug production and trafficking rings next to Bangladesh have causes to be concerned. Myanmar's pro-military and rebel-controlled areas would not have become the world's largest producer of ATS without the direct intervention, support, connections and technology of transnational gangs. Myanmar's criminal network is part of Southeast Asian criminal network, their illicit markets stretching from Asia, Europe to North America (Marrero, 2023). According to The Global Organized

Crime Index, Asia ranks highest among all continents in crime scores. Asia also leads the synthetic drug market and the heroin trade, with Myanmar leading the synthetic drug market with a particularly high score (Coyne, 2022). The index assesses each of the Mekong States—Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, China, and Vietnam—contains with particularly high crime rates. China's recent crackdown has pushed transnational drug networks to the relatively weak capacity of the lower Mekong region, particularly in Myanmar. If the trend continue and Black Triangle become a major source of production, Bangladesh crime index position would be in vulnerable position.



Graph 2. International Drugs Trafficking Route Using Bangladesh Land/Air/Sea

Source: Compiled by the author

### 16.1 Small and Horizontally Structured Groups in Drugs Production and Trafficking

Drug lords are producing record amounts of ATS in Shan State as militias and insurgent groups need large sums of money to consolidate and strengthen their positions on the territory they control, and the Lawless Borders and finance their forces. According to analysts, the groups collect 'tax' or 'protection money' on drug production or drug production and supply (Duangdee, 2021). Currently, ATS market in the region is over \$70 billion and growing, making drug crime syndicates increasingly wealthy and influential (Duangdee, 2021). In the past, Thai Chinese and Burmese Chinese nationals controlled production and trafficking, but now many lesser-known and less dominant traffickers operate internationally. Two renowned American criminologists, Ko-lin Chin and Shelden X Zhang analyzed, in their seminal books 'The Chinese Heroin Trade' and Analyzing in 'The Golden Triangle: Inside Southeast Asia's Drug Trade' and various papers and articles, the Chinese (drug and crime) network is Horizontally Structured, Fluid and Opportunistic (Lintner, 2021). The drug dealers or syndicates in Bangladesh or the region are not large but the nature of business control is seen in small syndicate groups. Drug lords like America's El Chapo or Pablo Escobar are not seen in the region. Although the region's criminal triads are involved in drugs, their significant money comes from various enterprises including construction, extortion, gambling, prostitution and fraud (Lintner, 2022). The region's drug syndicates or triads have links with global

transnational criminal organizations such as the Japanese Yakuza, Vietnamese gangs, Nigerian groups, and Colombian and Mexican Cartels (Kipgen, 2020).

### *16.2 San Gor and Various Other Regional & Global Drug Syndicate Working*

In October 2019, Reuters published an in-depth investigative report alleging that Chinese-Canadian Tsi Chi Lop, known in Cantonese as 'Sam Gor or Brother No 3,' was running a 'huge multinational drug trafficking syndicate' in collaboration with the 'Five of Asia's Triad Group' (Lintner, 2022). Tsi Chi Lop was sentenced to nine years in prison by a US court in 2000 for serious drug-related offences. The Austrian Federal Police (AFP) issued the warrant against him in 2019 in a 2013 drug case. Chinese national Meng Hongwei, former Interpol president, and various senior officials from Asian countries were accused of assisting Tsi Chi Lop (Quintero et al., 2021). Tsi Chi Lop was arrested and he later denied involvement in a large syndicate (Lintner, 2022). His top lieutenant, Hong Kong national Lee Chung Chak, was arrested in Thailand in 2020. New networks have taken its place, along with trafficking in their established networks, increasing drug supply and trafficking. In Myanmar's current situation, there is no shortage of ATS producers and there are numerous small and large syndicates in the region trafficking in gold, gems, animal parts including elephants, timber etc. There is no doubt that organized crime gangs have expanded drug production in the area. Apart from The Company (Sam Gor), syndicates operating in the region include #Teochiew, Hakka, 14K Traid, Ma Hseuh-Fu (Jeen Haw-heroin drug lord) of Yunnan Province, China, The Panthay etc. production groups and syndicates produce synthetic drugs, such as Heroin, Methamphetamines, Fentanyl etc.,. Along the Moei River, that separates southeastern Myanmar from Thailand, Murky Chinese business networks partnered with local hostile armed groups to establish unauthorized special economic zones, including hotels, casinos and joint-owned enterprises known to be under the control of Chinese enterprises and linked to gambling, money laundering, crypto currencies and even criminal networks (Clapp et al., 2020).

### *16.3 Kings Roman Group and Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone in Laos*

Zhao Wei, chairman of Hong Kong-based Kings Roman Group's Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone (GTSEZ) on the Laos border of the Golden Triangle, and Kings Roman Casino were charged by the US Treasury Department with charges of child sex, illegal wildlife, money laundering and drug trafficking. GTSEZ leases 3,000 hectares of agricultural land from the Lao government for 50 years in return for employment and development. Moreover, just 12 kilometers from 'Kings Roman' owner Zhao Wei's GTSEZ, his partnership organization 'Osiano Trading Sole Company' has built a US\$50 billion dollar port on the banks of the Mekong River in Ban Mom, Laos, in the Golden Triangle area. UNODC representative Jeremy Douglas said in this context, it could increase the production and trafficking of illegal drugs from the Golden Triangle. Precursor chemical trafficking, Chinese presence in the Kings Roman Casino and trade may increase (Berlinger, 2021). The State is responsible for leasing to a criminal enterprise, and in turn it falls under the auspices of the State.

### *16.4 Regional Countries Joint Patrol*

Shan's drug lords killed 13 sailors on two Chinese cargo ships in the Golden Triangle region of the Mekong River on 05 October 2011 (Armstrong, 2013). A drug lord from Myanmar's Shan State and three of his associates were tried and hanged by the Chinese government for this. As a result, the Mekong countries began conducting joint patrols on the Mekong River. Various states in the region have adopted various joint operations measures against illegal drugs and precursors, such as Thailand's Task Force Storm (STORM), China's Task Force Blaze (BLAZE), Cambodia's Task Force Dragon (DRAGON), Vietnam's Joint Transnational Crime Center and Myanmar's Drug Crime Center. From 2010 to 2014, most of the ATS trafficked into Australia came from China's southern provinces, China's strict anti-meth operations moved production to Myanmar border areas, from which transnational syndicate crime networks now produce and trafficking most of the ATS and other drugs in the region.

### *16.5 Transnational Syndicates Use Distinct Signs to Drug Shipments*

Most producers provide unique codes on the brand of their ATS packages, so that gangs can track trafficking lines. Brands like '999' and 'Y1' are more common, but the reason for this is not fully understood (Peter, 2022). In 2022, Thai forensic experts found that the '999' logo accounted for 59.2%, the 'Y1' logo for 14.2% and other logos for 23.3% (UNODC, 2023). The inscription 'WY' on the yaba indicates production under the control of The United Wa State Army (UWSA). Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai in Thailand, Bokeo Province in Laos and Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh are three major export areas of ATS trafficking in Myanmar. The UNODC South-East Asia representative said there has been an "unprecedented increase" in small-scale producers, who buy methamphetamine powder from large groups and make their own yaba tablets, which may have led to a huge increase in production and trafficking. More producers means more networks, he said (Peter, 2022). This



may concern Bangladesh, as the Arakan Army or Myanmar insurgents in the region, pro-government militias or organized crime groups could collect ATS powder in Arakan or Chin State and manufacture yaba/crystal meth.

### **17. ATS Problem in Bangladesh and the Region: The Role of Precursor Chemical Production and Trafficking**

Industrial ATS production in Shan State requires large quantities of precursor chemicals, ATS production is dependent on the supply of precursor chemicals. The sources and destinations of precursor chemicals indicates the production centers of yaba/crystal meth. There found no evidences that precursors destined for Bangladesh-Myanmar border drugs production centers. China and India are the world's chemical supply centers. Precursors and pre-precursors are trafficked through Thailand and Laos to Shan State's ATS production facilities. According to UNODC report, Laos has become a major center for chemical trafficking (Son, 2021).

#### *17.1 China Is the Major Source of Precursors for Golden Triangle Meth Production*

Laos seized 150 tons of chemicals in 2020. Among them in July 2020, Propionyl Chloride was intercepted in remote northwest Laos, arrived from Jiangsu Province north of Shanghai, China via the Thai port city of Liam Chebeng near Bangkok by road to Huay Xai District of Laos along the Mekong River (Berlinger, 2021). It is used to make fentanyl and ephedrine. A broker based in UWSA procured the product, which was destined for Northern Shan State. Criminal syndicates smuggle precursors and pre-precursors from Chinese factories into the Golden Triangle using Thai ports (Duangdee, 2021). As Laos has no a sea port, Laos' chemical and commercial products are seen using Thai ports and containers. According to Thailand's drug officers, containers are not allowed to be opened without a warrant or at least reasonable cause. Drug manufacturers exploit this opportunity without any hindrance. They move to drug production sites using the increased communication infrastructure (Duangdee, 2021). Although new routes have emerged, these ports in Thailand are also used as a major transit point for drugs produced in Myanmar. Information is available about trafficking of precursor chemicals from China to the Golden Triangle and the lower Mekong region, West Africa, North America, South America, Europe, etc (Duangdee, 2021). For example, the U.S. blames its mass overdose deaths on China's supply of fentanyl, which enters the United States directly or via Mexico. China has between 160,000 and 400,000 chemical producers and sellers, some of whom are involved in the trafficking of precursors or pre-precursors to Myanmar or the Mekong region through intentional or unintentional brokering for drug production purposes (Felbab-Brown, 2022).

#### *17.2 India Is Another and Alternative Sources of Precursors for Golden Triangle*

A major challenge to drug control in the region is that South, East and South-East Asia have become a major global production center for licit chemicals. Precursor chemicals of meth produced in Myanmar are trafficked from Myanmar's neighboring countries. In 2022, Myanmar authorities recovered 3.05 million pseudoephedrine tablets in Mandalay, and 360 kg of ethyl ether in Sagan region on 30 August which trafficked from India. Precursor chemical also enters Shan State by sea from India via Yangon and Transit through Kalay by Tamu–Moreh border crossing in Sagaing area (UNODC, 2023). India's chemical industry produces over 80,000 different chemicals products, making India one of the leading countries in chemical production (Chemicals Industry Report, 2023). According to the INCB (2022) report, India's large chemical and pharmaceuticals industry is at high risk of diverting precursor products into illegal channels (Chakraborty, 2022). High meth production in golden triangle indicates high precursor or pre-precursor supply. Drug producing syndicates in the region have mastered the use of pre-precursors. According to experts, the cartels import pre-precursor chemicals such as Propionyl chloride and employ world-class chemists to turn them into precursors for making meth. On the other hand, 'Designer precursors' are synthesized to avoid government oversight. The BIMSTEC meeting expressed concern about the pharmaceutical industry being vulnerable in the region and trafficking using the dark net.

#### *17.3 Myanmar Accusing of Neighboring Countries for Precursors Supply*

Myanmar has been blaming neighboring countries responsible for supplying precursor chemicals to its country. Most of the precursor chemicals come from China, but India, Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan ingredients are also found in drugs produced in Myanmar. Myanmar medicine market is largely dependent on China and India. Among these drugs, ephedrine or pseudoephedrine tablets or powder are not difficult to trafficking and are beyond the ability of the Myanmar authorities to verify or scan them. According to the data of Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), India is seen as a source of recovery of methamphetamine precursor ephedrine and pseudoephedrine going to Myanmar, Thailand and even Malaysia. At the Sixth bilateral 'Drug Control Cooperation' meeting of Myanmar-India, the representative of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC) mentioned, Drug production is increasing due to illegal precursor chemicals. Drug production cannot

be controlled if the trade, transport and control of precursor chemical cannot regulated (Bhadouria, 2022). As evidenced by the small amount of precursor chemical recoveries, traffickers are crossing national and international borders almost freely. Not all countries in the region are equally capable of identifying precursors or pre-precursor chemicals, and industries or factories can easily trafficking various chemicals under the cover and it is not possible to conduct testing such a large amount of chemical.

### **18. Drug Economy and Money Laundering in the Golden Triangle: Relevance of the Drug Economy of Bangladesh**

Myanmar's massive informal economy produces and creates products, such as opium, methamphetamine, illegal timber, endangered wildlife, human trafficking, gems, etc. that are in high demand in various countries including South, East and South-East Asian countries. Taking advantage of state instability and weakness, the Myanmar military, various ethnic groups, and transnational syndicates are exploiting these illegal trades with legitimate natural resources in various ways for their own interests. The Golden Triangle's ATS economy, with more than \$71 billion a year in revenue, is helping transnational syndicates and armed groups and militias solidify their economic backbone, concentrating money and power in their hands. For ages, the involved groups have been dominating various fields including social and political by standing on the drug economy, it has been having a negative impact on the social, orderly and economic fields of the neighboring countries including Bangladesh. The 'Country Commercial Guide' published by the United States Embassy in Yangon in 1996 noted that "the value of opiate exports alone is equal to all legitimate exports from Myanmar (Duangdee, 2021)." Currently, Myanmar ranks first in the world in the production of ATS and second in the world in the production of heroin, becoming the biggest player in the drug economy. Golden Triangle's ATS has created a large market in Bangladesh, contributing to instability along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. ATS have been at the center of discussions on Bangladesh-Myanmar state relations on the one hand, and by financing armed insurgent activities of the Arakan Army along the Bangladesh border, have been working as an obstacle to Bangladesh-Myanmar trade route. The economy of the Rohingya population in Bangladesh is entirely based on the drug economy, as the main source of income for the Rohingya is ATS trafficking on the other hand. According to United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD 2023), every year USD \$481 million dollars drug money is being trafficking outside from Bangladesh.

#### *18.1 More Than 200 Casinos Influencing the Drug Economy*

The Golden Triangle's drug pattern has changed for profit. Drug money is laundered in more than 200 casinos in Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, and showing as casino earning, the proceeds are invested in various institutions. More than 30 casinos are creating platforms for illegal activities in the Kokang region (Swami, 2022). Casinos are involved in economic activities related to gambling, money laundering, including racketeering, drug distribution, human trafficking, prostitution, wildlife smuggling, etc. in the region (ICG, 2019). The way money stolen from Bangladesh Bank is laundered from casinos in the Philippine, Casinos are used in a variety of ways to facilitate the laundering of drug money, and serve as banks kept in the account of regional financial centers. Billions of dollars of ATS money are deposited in banks and financial institutions in East and Southeast Asia (Sahu, 2022). A large portion of Myanmar's rebel and militia groups' income is invested in major cities within Myanmar, with the government serving as the biggest beneficiary. In addition to casinos, syndicate money is laundered through Asian hotel chains and resorts, commercial construction companies, property companies in Hong Kong and Vietnam, and elsewhere compatible (Quintero, 2021). Drug production is an integral part of Shan State's political economy. The lack of state regulation of the economy and monetary system in the mountainous regions of Shan State, and the dominance of the Myanmar military's militia strategy and impunity for armed groups have created a deteriorating political economy across Myanmar. Unable to survive, many businessmen and individuals in the legitimate economy have turned to drugs and other illicit activities (Kipgen, 2020). For a long time, the Myanmar military has been busy dealing with political problems, groups have used drugs as a tool to achieve political ends. Today Myanmar's armed groups have splintered into so many groups, all focused on making money from drugs.

#### *18.2 Regional Connectivity Expanding the Drug Economy*

Myanmar has modern road, rail and air links from Mandalay to Yangon, so drugs from the Golden Triangle can easily reach the border of Bangladesh and be trafficked southward to Southeast Asia. In 2016, Myanmar released a Master Plan, in which the Myanmar government plans to develop economic corridors with China, India, Thailand and Bangladesh (The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2020). Myanmar's plan includes developing relations through the development of roads, railways, waterways and airports. India plans to establish a transnational rail network in 2016. Whatever, the solution to the drug problem is intertwined with the state's

federal-based solution of Myanmar's ethno-political problems. Connectivity with Myanmar may further increase drug flows, but economic development and improved communications are likely to open up new horizons for solutions. Drug production and traffickers are involved in drug trafficking in neighboring countries including Bangladesh using advanced technology-online messaging and payment apps, no external obstacles and controls including Covid-19, are causing any problem in their communication and money exchange.

### *18.3 Money Laundering as a Means of Drug Economy*

Money laundering methods and techniques used by organized crime groups, like drug trafficking, are constantly changing. Drug trafficking and money laundering is an interconnected global issue and problem. Increased drug trafficking positively effects money laundering, which is difficult to trace. In many cases, we assume that trends in drug trafficking in Bangladesh indicated Myanmar's huge ATS trafficking money constantly laundered by various means using different countries and regions. Drugs and drug money flow in opposite directions. There have been reports of drug payments in exchange for the export of commercial goods from Bangladesh to India. On the China border of Myanmar, drug money is laundered through casino transactions of visiting clients in Myanmar, these money goes to various banks including Hong Kong, Macao, Singapore.

### **19. Bangladesh and Regional Drug Problems: Role of Regional and International Organizations**

Myanmar remained on the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) money laundering watch list since February 2020. For inadequate implementation of anti-money legislation and procedures. Organized crime, cybercrime & dark net based criminal activities are widespread and Reports mentioning drug money has been using for terrorist financing (ICG, 2019). Profits lead to more groups in drug production and trafficking. Golden Triangle drugs kingpin are rich but socioeconomic situation of the area is poor. The roots of the problem is different capacities for countries and geopolitical stance, and political instability leads to more drug production opportunity. Whatever, The countries of the Golden Triangle and Mekong region have been taking individual and joint measures to announce a drug free region. 06 countries of the Mekong region signed the Mekong MOU with the assistance of UNODC, Based on The Sub-Region Action Plan (SAP), established in 1995 for the purpose of drug control, which aims to formulate the necessary laws in the countries for drugs. The countries have been conducting Joint Patrols since December 2011, following the 2011 killing of 13 crews on two Chinese ships by drug lords in the Mekong River (Xinhua, July 20, 2021).

Golden Triangle is a part of the ASEAN countries that are called a region of rapidly developing Southeast Asia. ASEAN countries have taken massive steps to control drugs in their region, but increased ATS production and trafficking in Golden Triangle is the evidence that it is not enough. Golden Triangle area needs direct political and anti-drug measures by ASEAN, which they failed to take. In 2010 ministerial meeting, ASEAN countries mission was to make the region drug free by 2015 and in 2012, ASEAN countries launched ASEAN's Plan of Action on Drug Abuse Control (CTG, 2021). ASEAN's selective coordinated measures with China, India and Bangladesh would help to improve the drug and ethno-political problem of Myanmar. The solution of Myanmar ethno-political problems would ultimately increase the pace of Mekong drug problem.

Bangladesh need to effectively engage Myanmar in policy and strategy platforms and, where necessary, provide reasonable direct regional cooperation to address Myanmar's internal drug, ethnic and political problems. Improvement of the situation is possible if action is taken by assigning responsibilities and monitoring the progress from time to time. The solution to the drug problem in Bangladesh and the region is largely dependent on ethnic conflict in Myanmar and drug control in the Golden Triangle region and the lower Mekong Delta.

In 2020, the 'Conference on Combating Drugs Trafficking' was held in New Delhi, India, with BIMSTEC member countries, stating that the BIMSTEC region is one of the fastest growing centers for pharmaceutical production and trade. This makes the BIMSTEC region very vulnerable to pharmaceutical drug diversion and trafficking (Bhadouria, 2022). Besides, trafficking communication is being done especially using darknet marketplace. In the conference, the increase in the production and trafficking of ATS and heroin in the Golden Triangle near the Bay of Bengal and drug trafficking in the trade route of the Bay of Bengal including the pharmaceutical industry, were discussed and decision taken. China is leading another fast-growing pharmaceutical industry in the region. With the presence of Bangladesh, India, Myanmar and Thailand in BIMSTEC, it has created a suitable platform to discuss ATS trafficking in Bangladesh. Coordinating, implementing, and sharing policies and strategies adopted by the Mekong Platform and BIMSTEC Platform will increase political commitment to drug control in the region, which is needed to solve Myanmar's problems.

### *19.1 BIMSTEC Need to Play Major Role to Coordinate South and Southeast Asia*

'BIMSTEC Convention on Cooperation in Combating International Terrorism, Transnational Organized Crime and Illicit Drug Trafficking' came into effect in March 2021 after ratification by BIMSTEC countries. Under this convention, member states will be able to share information about people involved in drug trafficking, coordinate their processes and procedures, and create opportunities for mutual cooperation in law enforcement. Overcoming limitations of Bangladesh-Myanmar cooperation, it presents a great opportunity for Bangladesh to enhance bilateral and multilateral relations, which is equally needed by Myanmar. In October 2021, the meeting of BIMSTEC sub group 'Prevention of Illicit Trafficking in Narcotics Drugs, Psychotropic Substances and Precursor Chemicals' was held, which to establish a BIMSTEC focal point and BIMSTEC Drug Offenses Monitoring Desk for intelligence sharing (Sahu, 2022). By setting up this desk, Bangladesh can shape joint arrangements with Myanmar and India by prioritizing mutual information exchange and joint action. Investments in joint capacity building in logistics, border security, identification of vulnerable people, investment in treatment and awareness etc. are needed to control the inter-state drug trade, so that all countries, including Myanmar, can play a role in mutual partnership in controlling drug trafficking (Sahu, 2022).

The United States and European countries have jointly played a significant role in combating drug trafficking on the darknet. Bangladesh has been holding bilateral meetings on drugs with Myanmar and India along with SAARC Drug Offenses Monitoring Desk, Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Program, BIMSTEC, UNODC, INCB etc. it will remain an infinite problem for the countries alone without the coordinated action of regional initiatives and international support.

### *19.2 Role of Bangladesh Drug Control Agency and International Agency*

Bangladesh Department Narcotics Control (DNC) should constantly work with the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), Myanmar's responsible agency for drug control, to attract their attention, increase cooperation and strengthen mutual relations by presenting sensitive information. Bangladesh has to play a leading role in the regional scale for taking joint measures by identifying places of drug trafficking and vulnerable people on the border, identifying the modus operandi of drug trafficking, identifying the necessary logistics for border security and countering drug trafficking, investment in rehabilitation, etc. on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. There is no alternative to increasing Bangladesh's relationship with Myanmar, be it bilaterally, trilaterally or multilaterally, to deal with the flow of ATS. Cooperation initiatives at the level of Bangladesh-Myanmar, Bangladesh-India, Bangladesh-Myanmar-India, BIMSTEC, Mekong-BIMSTEC, etc. will provide greater support in determining Bangladesh's action on ATS. UNODC and regional organizations should work with Myanmar's all neighboring country with equal emphasize as these countries suffers almost equally, and these countries can play political and economic reconciliation. Bangladesh can be a stakeholder to solve Myanmar military problem with Arakan Army, Thailand for Karen and Karenni, China for Kachin, UWSA etc. India for Sagaing region, Chin state etc., so that political as well as drug problems can be mitigated.

### *19.3 China 'One Road -One Belt' Policy and Myanmar Drug Strategy Implementation*

China has increased regional law enforcement cooperation with regional countries for increased meth production and trafficking, and precursor chemical trafficking (Felbab-Brown, 2022). China is dependent on Myanmar for its 'One road -One belt' policy and commercial and strategic reasons, similarly, Myanmar is dependent on China for its internal reasons. In the case of Bangladesh, establishment of long-term win-win relations with Myanmar can be fruitful only by establishing multiple connectivity with neighboring Myanmar and becoming a positive and influential partner in Myanmar's economy and strategy. A report by the International Crisis Group (2019) noted that the drug trade would not have been possible without the high level of corruption in countries including China, Laos and Thailand, through which large shipments of drugs and precursor smuggling take place. China in particular has a role to play in preventing precursors. Large scale drug production and trafficking in Myanmar is not possible without the cooperation of the Myanmar government. Drugs have become geopolitical regulators as they are used to achieve political ends. Actions and positive implementation in Myanmar and countries in the region are largely linked to solving drug and other related problems. The solution to the drug and other related problems of Myanmar and countries in the region, is largely involved with the steps taken and positive implementation in Myanmar.

## **20. Recommendations**

**Bangladesh need policy priority, and More Practical steps needed in the Golden Triangle and Lower Mekong region**

The production, trafficking and use of drugs including methamphetamine could not be stopped even during the standstill period of covid-19 lockdown by closing borders, stopping imports and exports, stopping movement of vehicles and people, forcing people to stay at home. ATS (Methamphetamine) supply shortage was not observed in Bangladesh during the period. Therefore, following and enforcing drug control policies and laws against “War on Drug” are the right course of action and should remain part of the ongoing drug control process. [1] In Bangladesh-Myanmar bilateral relations including drugs problems, solution to the problems lies in “Connectivity Policy”. According to the concept, Bangladesh will establish permanent and unquestionable win-win state and independent institutions’ bilateral and multilateral relations with all state, economic, social, political, military, communication, technical institutions of Myanmar, so that Myanmar cannot ignore the interests and requests of Bangladesh. [2] As Bangladesh suffers from the regional methamphetamine problem in Southeast Asia, it is better to think of solving the problem by coordinating the joint plans and actions of the Southeast Asian countries, but joint action with India and Myanmar should be prioritized. [3] Joint patrols and information sharing on the Naf River and along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border along with India and the participation of other countries in the Bay of Bengal should consider to improve the security system against trafficking. [4] Bangladesh Meth-trafficking prevention efforts can be made more effective by establishing cooperative relations with the local administration of Rakhine State as well as ethnic groups particularly Arakan Army on Black Triangle area. [5] National and regional coordinated supervision mechanisms and regulations for the pharmaceutical and chemical industries need to develop, so that precursor & pre-precursor chemicals control can be one of the tools of ATS control in this region. [6]

Myanmar's drug problem is largely political in nature and associated with political solutions, the primary solution to the drug problem can only begin when ethnic conflicts are resolved. Undemocratic and discriminatory policies adopted by the state pushing them away from their normal livings. Myanmar's ethnic armed groups may have a legitimate right to claim hundreds of years of autonomy for their ethnic and regional diversity. [7] Ethnic groups and communities should not be adversaries but should be encouraged, supported and given responsibility for drug prevention, seizure, treatment and awareness, and international cooperation should also be prioritized in this regard. [8] Myanmar's ethnic, political, state and military problems are unlikely to be resolved soon. So, border countries need to develop their own policy and control mechanisms for long time. [9] Myanmar has been accusing China of supporting UWSA, MNDAA and Arakan Army. China, using its influence in Myanmar, needs to do more to stop ethnic groups’ drug production and trafficking and to change policies that serve political purposes by indirectly sanctioning on the drug trade. [10] Bangladesh-Myanmar & Bangladesh-India bilateral, and Bangladesh-India-Myanmar trilateral strategic drug control mechanism as well as multilateral strategic mechanism including Myanmar’s neighboring countries such as China, Thailand, Laos etc. can help to stir the Golden Triangle and rising Black Triangle problems tremendously towards dreamed solutions. [11] A coordinated effort is needed, prioritizing Myanmar's domestic rule of law, political stability and economic security, along with international cooperation. [12]

As current stringent measures have not improved the situation, it is time to think about coordination, information sharing, new ideas of capacity building, and action plans. Sustainable and long-term policies is needed, which will keep the problem under control. [13] Under UNODC with BIMSTEC and Mekong MOU countries, States will take steps on a problem basis similar regional program with equal emphasis on identifying and dismantling illicit drugs, precursor chemicals and money laundering networks. [14] Steps needed for Myanmar military’s policy to controls the land of political and ethnic groups in exchange for drug production facilities. labeling non-state ethnic groups as drug producers and traffickers domestically and internationally for political purposes hinder policy implementation, which also facilitates opportunities for transnational syndicates. [15] Bangladesh in cooperation with UNODC can increase its presence in Myanmar and can take initiatives in transnational drug control by appointing narcotics liaison officers and developing transnational policies and procedures. [16]

## 21. Conclusion

ATS from Golden Triangle made a medium to long-term social and non-traditional security threats in Bangladesh and the region. There are very limited resourceful research on Synthetic drugs and routes in South Asia and Bangladesh. Major limitation of the research is that it had to depend on seizure information for synthetic drugs trafficking routes and sources. Therefore secondary data dominates the available information on synthetic drugs. However, the research will expedite and open up the routes to other areas of research and help the Government and other stakeholders to make productive decisions. As discussed above, ATS in Bangladesh is linked to Golden Triangle ATS production and trafficking with newer routes including India, Bay of Bengal. Regional policy makers and drug law enforcement agencies need to rethink the traditional drug problems in the region in correspondence with the changing of Golden Triangle drugs which has been shifting to synthetic drugs.

ATS has been trafficking to Bangladesh using northeast Indian Territory bordering Myanmar and also passing hundreds kilometers east to west Myanmar bordering Bangladesh. Transnational syndicate such as Sam Gor, Non-state actors such as UWSA, Arakan Army, MNDAA or Kaungkha militia etc. multinational organization such as Kings Roman Group, moreover Myanmar military, which are alleged major ATS kingpin producing, trafficking and benefitting in this region. In Myanmar's Rakhine and Chin states bordering Bangladesh, no meth factories have been destroyed or identified during the recent wartime with the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army or ethnic Chin groups, and under normal circumstances. Local communities in Rakhine blame security forces for failing to prevent the entry of ATS from other towns in Myanmar. Low price level of ATS in Golden Triangle means the supply flooded to the region, more production. The huge poppy cultivation to the hilly areas of Chin State and Rakhine State, which has extended in the border areas of Bangladesh and India. The region may shift towards ATS production. As the Rakhine region has become commercially important to China, India, Myanmar and Bangladesh, drug producing and trafficking syndicates are likely to become more active. Unstable Myanmar, especially in bordering Bangladesh, is harmful to Bangladesh's economy and stability including drugs problem. Countries and organizations working in the region should support political reconciliation, and Myanmar's adoption of a zero-tolerance policy on drug production.

**\*Black Triangle:** A new 'nomenclature' provided by the author, where the Myanmar-India-Bangladesh border converges to become a safe haven for drug production and trafficking.

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**Annexure 1 (Questionnaire). Drug trafficking routes and District wise price level of drugs in Bangladesh**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Serial No.- \_\_\_\_\_  
 [Methamphetamine Price & Trafficking Route Information Collection]

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male/Female: \_\_\_\_\_

Father’s Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile No: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Stakeholder: \_\_\_\_\_

District: \_\_\_\_\_

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Drug Price in Bangladesh :

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1) Per Piece Yaba (Retail): \_\_\_\_\_ 2) Per Piece Yaba (Wholesale): \_\_\_\_\_

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3) Ice Per Gram (Retail): \_\_\_\_\_ 4) Heroin Per Gram/KG (Retail): \_\_\_\_\_

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5) Cannabis Per kg Price (Retail): \_\_\_\_\_ 6) Cannabis Per kg Price (Wholesale): \_\_\_\_\_

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7) Other Drug Price: \_\_\_\_\_

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8) Other Comments:

Yaba/Crystal Meth Trafficking Route in Bangladesh:

9) Yaba/ Crystal Meth Trafficking Route):

▪ Myanmar → Cox's Bazar/Bandarban → Chottogram →

▪ Myanmar →

▪ Myanmar → India →

▪ India →

•Other Routes:

10) Other Drug Trafficking Routes:

11)Comments for above information:

12) Do you certain about the source of Yaba/Crystal Meth?   ▪ Yes   ▪ No

13) Explanation:

(Signature of Information Collector)

**Annexure 2. Poppy plantation destroyed/opium seized in Bangladesh  
(Mostly in Black Triangle region)**

SN	Date	Poppy Garden Destruction/Opium seized Amount	Destruction/Recovery District	Poppy Garden Destroyed/Opium seizure Location
01	24.01.2023	05 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kaika Khuchi Para, Tindu Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
02	02.02.2023	07 Acre Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Piring Era Para Area, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
03	16.02.2023	30 Acre Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kaika Khuchi Para, Ward-2, Tindu Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
04	16.02.2023	03.40 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kuhalang, Sadar Upazila, Bandarban (detained during Rangamati smuggling from Bandarban)
05	23.02.2023	45 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	01 No. Co. Khumipara, 02 No. Tindu Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
06	24.12.2022	03 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Baghmara Bazaar area, Sadar Upazila, Bandarban.
07	04.11.2022	02 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	01 No. Ward adjacent to Meghbaty Resort, Sadar Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
08	13.09.2022	02.80 kg opium seized	Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh	In front of Banglabazar Paschim Muktarkul shop, Jhelongja Union under Sadar Thana, Cox's Bazar.

09	28.08.2022	03.58 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	Chittagong- Bandarban road, Keranihat, Satkania upazila, Chittagong.
10	01.08.2022	03.35 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	In a passenger bus in Shikalbaha area, Karnaphuli police station, Chattogram.
11	26.07.2022	0.53 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	From an autorickshaw in Narayanhat Akbar Para area, Bhujpur police station, Chattogram.
12	02.07.2022	03 kg opium seized	Dhaka, Bangladesh	Purana Paltan and Banshree residential area, Dhaka
13	19.04.2022	01 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Thanchi Bazar area, Thanchi police station, Bandarban.
14	29.03.2022	01.50 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Changdak Para area, Ward No. 02, Sadar Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
15	27.02.2022	01.80 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	market area, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
16	09.01.2022	0.20 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Scientist Mangsanu Marma Para, Sadar Union, Bandarban.
17	31.10.2021	03.45 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	Dasmile area, Rangunia Upazila, Chattogram.
18	18.10.2021	03.70 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	In passenger bus, Ramjadi Vihar area, Rowangchari upazila, Bandarban.
19	03.10.2021	01.80 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Bolipara road in deep forest, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban
20	22.08.2021	04.30 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kachchapati area, Rowangchari upazila, Bandarban.
21	17.04.2021	03.85 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	zero point, Thanchi upazila, Bandarban.
22	09.03.2021	03.70 kg opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	No. 02 Ward Bridge Microsatand, No. 03 Sadar Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
23	19.02.2020	01 Acre Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Tendumukh Area, Bandarban District
24	16.02.2020	03 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Dense forest of Koangpara Erak, Bolibazar, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
25	15.02.2020	01 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Tuikkazhiri area, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.
26	11.02.2020	05 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kaiyatak Para, Tindu Union, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
27	06.02.2020	01 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Koangpara Eraka forest, Bolibazar, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban
28	04.02.2020	10 acre poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Shaikatpara and Khulian Khumi Para, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.
29	31.01.2020	01 Acre Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Tangri Para and Shairatang Para, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.
30	28.01.2020	04 Acre Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kaytoi Khumi Para, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.

31	24.01.2020	04 acre poppy field destroyed and 60 kg crude opium seized	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Kewkradang hilly area, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.
32	06.03.2019	35 decimal poppy field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Learning Para, Kurukpara Union, Alikadam Upazila, Bandarban.
33	24.01.2019	02 decimal Poppy Field destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Hilly area adjacent to Bagamukh Para, Ruma Upazila, Bandarban.
34	01.08.2017	01.10 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	Chadgaon residential area, Chattogram city, Chattogram.
35	22.09.2016	02 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	Bahaddarhat area, Chadgaon police station, Chattogram city, Chattogram.
36	08.03.2016	01.00 kg opium seized	Chattogram, Bangladesh	Chawkbazar area, Chattogram city, Chattogram.
37	26.02.2015	02.50 acre poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Sangu Reserve area Panjhiri, Bulupara and Leikrijhiri areas, Thanchi, Ruma and Alikadam upazila, Bandarban.
38	04.02.2014	14 acre poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Sangu Reserve area Panjhiri, Bulupara and Leikrijhiri areas, Thanchi, Ruma and Alikadam upazila, Bandarban.
39	23.02.2011	07 poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Ibanman Jhiri, Karaikhasan, Rimakri, Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban.
40	07.07.2010	20 acre poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Sangu Reserve area, Thanchi, Ruma and Alikadam upazilas. Bandarban.
41	22.02.2009	hundreds poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Bandarban-Myanmar border area, Bandarban.
42	24.02.2008	11 acre poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Sangu Reserve area, Bandarban.
43	24.02.2007	some poppy fields destroyed	Bandarban, Bangladesh	Alikadam Upazila, Bandarban.
Isolated destruction of some poppy fields in other parts of Bangladesh (except Black Triangle)				
44	07.03.2021	11 acre poppy fields destroyed	Joypurhat, Bangladesh	Bankhur and Bara Tajpur villages, Sadar Upazila, Joypurhat.
45	08.03.2020	03 acre poppy field destroyed	Munshiganj, Bangladesh	Charbanial, Banglabazar Union, Sadar Upazila, Munshiganj.
46	11.03.2014	05 Bigha Poppy field destroyed	Dinajpur Bangladesh	Kushdah Union (on border area), Nawabganj Upazila, Dinajpur.
47	22.02.2009	poppy field destroyed	Jhenaidah, Bangladesh	Nepaghoshpur (border village of Jhenaidah), Maheshpur Upazila, Jhenaidah.

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