

# SRI LANKA AS A TRANSIT POINT FOR DRUGS



Sri Lanka's tourism has a serious obstacle in current time. " Entrepreneurs" from other countries are taking advantage of Sri Lanka's location by using it as a means of illegal drugs hub..

Statistics were released by Sri Lanka's Police and it shows that the first 6 months of this year, over 19,000 were suspects to drug possession and were arrested accordingly.

Ajith Rohana, Sri Lanka's police media spokesman said that the Police Narcotics Bureau or PNB and the Special Task Force alongside the assistance of the local police have arrested about 19,057 people this year alone.

The amount of drugs confiscated was overwhelming. There were 12.37 kilos of heroin, 4.44 kilos of cocaine and 3 kilos of methamphetamine which was the possession of all suspects. These much drugs cost up to hundreds of millions of rupees according to Xinhua. Moreover, a lot of foreigners were involved in the smuggling process.

In comparison to last year, 23 kilos of heroin, 10 kilos of cocaine, 50,000 kilos of cannabis and 18 kilos of hashish were confiscated.

PNB strongly believes that illegal drugs, especially party drugs such as meth, are directly correlated to the supply of drugs for the tourism market. One gram of cocaine may be purchased for 150 US dollars which is why smugglers target this drug the most. In fact, last April, the customs department was able to arrest 2 Thai women because they tried to smuggle 1,498 grams of cocaine by using 160 capsules which they literally swallowed.

Two British nationals were arrested last May because of hidden hashish in magazines that were from South India. The other person was arrested when he went to the central mail to do the exchange and leads were gathered to capture the other British national.

Sri Lanka's tourism started to grow rapidly since the end of the 3 decade war last 2009. The government is looking at around 1 million in arrivals for this year but is being dragged down by the cost. Because of this, the PNB is placed on alert regarding the smuggling and transit of illegal drugs to other countries. Last February, special teams were sent to Bandaranaike International Airport or BIA to detect any suspicious behaviour.

In fact, many countries are taking advantage of Sri Lanka including Peru, Brazil, Nigeria and Thailand when it comes to transit for substances. Last 2011, the National Dangerous Drugs Control Board released a warning regarding the increasing circumstances of such actions which was a direct threat to the country. In this specific report, 58 foreigners were arrested for drug trafficking just from the last 5 years. Majority of this group were 25 Pakistanis including 4 Indians, 6 Maldivians and 5 Iranians.

According to Rohana, the increasing number of people being arrested can be attributed to the fact

that there is greater vigilance and public assistance when it comes to pointing out drug related charges. One of the greatest tactics they use is the rewards system for leads to such crimes.

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