

Poppy pods seized by Surrey RCMP last November. Doda is made from crushing the opium poppy pod into a fine powder and then mixing it with a liquid, usually tea. SURREY RCMP

Doda, or 'poor man's heroin,' a growing problem, says MLA

By JOAN DELANEY
Epoch Times Staff

A British Columbia MLA is sounding the alarm about an addictive drug that he says is being openly sold throughout the province's Lower Mainland.

Harry Bains says dode or doda, an opium-derived drug popular in Canada's South-Asian community, is easily available and can be bought cheaply by anyone—including minors—in many retail stores.

"Anybody could walk in any day of the week and purchase it no matter how old they are, and then they take it just like any other type of drug," he said. "It's been a very big problem and it's a growing problem."

The drug, also known as "poor man's heroin," is popular among taxi drivers, construction workers, and truck drivers who say it gives them energy and helps them stay awake for long stretches.

But it can also impair one's ability, and Bains believes it could be the cause of any number of work-related accidents.

"They drive taxis, they drive trucks, they go on construction sites or whatever else they're doing. They put themselves and the people around them in quite an unsafe situation."

Although doda produces a quick high followed by feelings of relaxation and calm, it can also cause loss of concentration, slurred speech, drowsiness, impotence, constipation, and mood swings, according to police. And as with other derivatives of the poppy plant, it is addictive.

"It is no different than opium—it is highly addictive," says Bains. "Because it has lower concentrations of [opium] it takes more time to get hooked, but once you're on you're on it."

Imported from countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India where it has been used for decades,

doda appeared in Canada only within the last 10 or 15 years, largely in Indo-Canadian communities.

"It started out originally back east in the Toronto area and started to spread quickly to the west," Bains said.

Made from ground poppy pods, doda comes in the form of a greyish powder and is usually prepared as a tea. The drug can also be used as a kind of meat seasoning, and doda users most commonly obtain the powder from South Asian meat shops.

Dr. David Mowat, Medical Officer of Health for Ontario's Peel region, said he has been hearing of increasing numbers of cases of doda addiction from physicians who specialize in addiction.

"They say they're seeing a lot of people who are having problems with this drug—problems with work, sleeping, withdrawal symptoms, and family problems," he told CTV News.

"There's a concern that people don't really know what they are consuming. People don't know that this is a morphine derivative."

Doda is illegal in Canada and anyone found selling or using it can be charged, with penalties ranging from fines to jail. However, because it can contain very small amounts of opium, the legality in some cases remains unclear.

A letter Bains received from the office of B.C.'s solicitor-general said that some samples of doda seized in the Toronto area "did not contain enough opium to rate a positive test. Consequently, some of the seized product did not merit the laying of charges on the seller."

On March 15, Peel Regional Police raided three addresses in Brampton, Mississauga, and Toronto, seizing more than 1,200 kilos of doda worth about \$2.5 million.

Doda seizures have also taken place in Calgary and Edmonton. The first large-scale seizure of the drug in B.C. occurred in Surrey last November when Surrey RCMP confiscated hundreds of kilos of poppy pods and finished product, along with crushing and grinding equipment.

The seized product has been forwarded to a Health Canada lab to confirm the presence of drugs that are prohibited under the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

"I think police all across Canada are much more aware of this, the communities are much more aware of this, and they're starting to treat this issue seriously and they're starting to pay attention that this is no different than any other drug," says Bains.

NDP MLA for Surrey-Newton, Bains has been working to raise awareness of the prevalence of the drug in response to concerns raised by his constituents. A big part of his motivation, he says, is the fear doda will end up finding its way into schools.

"I think what they need to do is treat this substance just like any other illegal drug and act accordingly for the sale, for the possession, and the importation of this. That's how you can nip it in the bud—no pun intended."

Judge dismisses motion on immunity of foreign officials

By MATTHEW SIMON
Epoch Times Staff

TORONTO—An Ontario Superior Court judge on Tuesday dismissed a motion put forward by plaintiffs regarding the inapplicability of state immunity for Chinese officials accused of torture.

Judge Pollak was concerned that the issue of immunity would be re-examined at a later trial, and therefore making a ruling now would not be efficient in terms of costs.

Matt Eisenbrandt of the Canadian Center for International Justice (CCIJ), believes the judge made more of an "administrative decision" in order not to cause duplication of the court's resources.

"We'll get another opportunity hopefully in a few months to make our arguments again," he said.

Judge Pollak caused a stir Tuesday morning when she stated her concerns, disallowing interveners on both sides to make their presentations. The CCIJ and the All-China Lawyers Association (ACLA) had been scheduled to speak.

Kate Kempton, lawyer for the plaintiffs—six Falun Gong practitioners who were tortured for their beliefs in China—was surprised by the judge's decision. Ms. Kempton's team had spent all Monday arguing that current state immunity laws do not apply to foreign officials when it comes to torture, saying that torture is an individual act, not a state act.

"We thought that we were well prepared [in arguing] it," she said.

Ms. Kempton said that a possible next step is to bring forward a new motion that could lead to a trial. "But that would have to include everything that we've raised [Monday and Tuesday], whether state immunity applies to acts of torture of these defendants."

The \$20 million lawsuit against five high-ranking Chinese Communist officials, including former president Jiang Zemin, was originally filed in November 2004. After the Chinese regime refused to acknowledge the suit, the ACLA filed a motion arguing state immunity in 2007.

Four of the plaintiffs were in the courtroom anxiously awaiting a decision from the judge, which took a few hours after the brief morning discussion. Lizhi



Falun Gong practitioners re-enact the illicit harvesting of the organs of their counterparts in China, on Parliament Hill in Ottawa. THE EPOCH TIMES

He was among them.

An award winning engineer in China, Mr. He was sentenced to three and a half years in prison after appealing to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to stop its suppression of Falun Gong. He was detained in a small cell with 25 others, denied showers, and forced to sit in fixed postures for long periods of time. In addition to suffering various ailments due to the poor conditions in the prison, he was tortured repeatedly.

"I almost lost my life," he told the Canadian Press on Monday.

Falun Gong is a Chinese qigong practice with a spiritual foundation that grew in popularity in the 1990s. Jiang Zemin launched a campaign of persecution against the group 11 years ago after he claimed the practice was a threat to the CCP. The five defendants in the lawsuit are considered by the Falun Gong to be the main instigators of widespread torture and hate crimes against them in China.

"People who are victims of torture should be able to go into court and should be able to get justice for what happened to them. Just applying a blanket immunity simply doesn't make sense as a legal matter, and also is not putting Canada on the side of the people it should be protecting," Mr. Eisenbrandt said on Monday.

The lawsuit against the Chinese officials is different from the Bouzari case against the Iranian government in 2000 in that the Bouzari lawsuit was filed against a state government whereas this case is against specific individuals.

Ms. Kempton argued that there should be no immunity for state officials when it comes to matters of torture, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide, because the immunity does not apply to the status of the official but rather the act.

David Matas, a lawyer representing the plaintiffs, stated before the judge Monday that the defendants acted as CCP officials rather than as state officials. In particular,

Luo Gan, who was responsible for creating the 610 Office—an extra-legal police task force used to suppress Falun Gong—had no state functions at the time of his alleged crimes.

"The notion of state immunity applying to Luo Gan or [Chinese official Wang] Maolin, to me, was far-fetched," said Mr. Matas after the hearings. "With Jiang Zemin and the other two, there was an overlap between the state functions and Party functions, in the sense that in theory they could have used their state functions to suppress the Falun Gong. In reality, they were using their Party functions."

According to the original Statement of Claim, one of the plaintiffs, Kunlun Zhang, was told by his torturers, "It is Jiang Zemin who instructed us to do this; it is not what we like to do."

More jail time won't stop aboriginal gang growth, says expert

ABORIGINALS CONTINUED FROM P1 One of the differences between aboriginal gangs and most other gangs in Canada, he adds, is that "almost all have grown up in severe poverty. It's not just a little bit of poverty, but it's very, very deep, grinding poverty, and they grow up in families where they don't know where the next meal is going to come from, or maybe the family is homeless."

INCREASE ACROSS THE COUNTRY With names such as Indian Posse, Red Alert, Native Syndicate, and Native Syndicate Killers, aboriginal gangs are operating not only in the big cities but also in many rural areas including in the Far North.

"Right across Canada we're seeing an increase in aboriginal gangs," says Cpl. Mike Moyer, aboriginal gang coordinator for the RCMP in British Columbia.

"All our agencies and RCMP detachments and our national headquarters and all our police services really are having to look at this issue at a lot more serious rate than what we did say 10 years ago."

Native gangs get up to much the same illegal activities as any other gangs, such as drug distribution, theft, and prostitution, he says.

"You're going to see them involved in all kinds of crimes and criminal activity that are out there. All gangs, no matter what nation-



Montreal police officers arrest a man in connection with street gang activities and drug distribution. With aboriginal gangs increasing across Canada, a gang expert says it's time for an approach other than incarceration. CHRISTINNE MUSCHI /REUTERS

ality they are or ethnic group they come from, are basically looking at how to make money really quickly. And unfortunately a lot of it is drug-based."

However, one difference is that aboriginal gangs have been known to make use of powwows and other traditional ceremonies to recruit members, he says.

Most gangs are fluid, and will move to wherever they can make money, including areas that have oil and gas exploration.

"It's really a marketing thing," says Moyer. "Sometimes the market is saturated with other gangs and other criminal activities so they go wherever the next market is."

Aboriginal gangs have been making steady inroads into some smaller communities across the country as well, Moyer says, adding that police are working to assist communities where gangs are an issue "to kind of create tools in their toolbox."

"We've been really trying to take a proactive approach and work with

a lot of our communities and when we start to see little, tiny problems, trying to get in there and work with the community, to be proactive so that they're not left trying to deal with the problem after, because after the fact it's too late."

He agrees that more jail time is not the answer.

"Definitely the government and other agencies really need to, when they start to see issues, take a strong stance and look at alternate solutions and other programs that can be implemented, because as we've seen over and over again, gangs are not going to be solved or eradicated by enforcement issues alone."

ANTI-GANG STRATEGIES Most provinces have anti-gang strategies that apply various approaches. One recently implemented in Manitoba includes a component that helps parents understand how gangs operate in order to keep their kids from joining up.

Totten, who is currently evaluat-

ing a number of anti-gang projects, says this is a very important step, as are early intervention and prevention programs.

He says more effort should be put into keeping aboriginal children in schools that are culturally based, addressing health problems such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and keeping children from troubled families in the home if at all possible rather than placing them in care.

Because gang members see the gang as their identity, giving aboriginal children and youth a sense of their own culture helps increase their attachment to community and in turn decrease their need for an alternative source of identity.

But some aboriginals are born into gang families, and for them there's no choice whether to join or not, says Totten.

"When you are born into a gang it's not like there are any other options. It's not like you can choose not to be a gang member."

Getting out is also very difficult for female aboriginals who have been recruited into gangs. Female gang members—who Totten notes are a very small minority—are usually initiated through gang-rapes and beatings. In order to leave, they have to go through the same treatment.

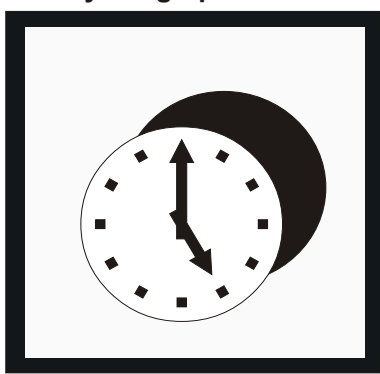
"Quite often the way to get out of a gang if you're a young woman and if you don't have these family ties is that you get beaten to within an inch of your life, or you get gang-raped again."

Typically, says Totten, gang members who decide to leave have been shot one too many times, want to get their children back from child welfare, or are tired of sticking a needle in their arm.

"The reasons why these young adults choose to get out of gangs are not dissimilar from what you or I, our hopes for the future would be—to have a job, to support a family, to be a good community member."

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