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Xinhua

Over 1 million Afghans suffers from drug addiction: official

By Abdul Haleem

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More than 1 million Afghans have been suffering from drug addiction, an official said Wednesday.

"Around one million Afghans, aged 15 to 64, suffer from drug addiction throughout the country," Dr. Mohammad Tahir Sultani, head of a 200-bed drug addicts' hospital, told reporters during a campaign to collect drug users here.

Sultani also said that the causes of drug addiction in the country are poverty, illiteracy, conflicts, migrations, illusions about drugs as well as unemployment.

During the campaign launched by Afghan ministries of public health, counter-narcotics and interior affairs, several dozens of addicts were held and were shifted to the mentioned hospital.

"I have been using drugs for around 10 years and poverty and joblessness were the main reasons to cause me to use drugs," a drug user Naqibullah, 50, told Xinhua.

Sultani also urged the government and the international donors to invest more in the treatment of drug addicts and the eradication of poverty.

The government must speed up efforts to help the poor to improve their quality of life and education, he said.

The insurgency-hit Afghanistan remains the main producer of opium as about 90 percent of the world's opium, the raw material used in manufacturing heroin, according to officials, is produced here in this country.

According to officials, more than 5,800 tons of opium poppy was produced in Afghanistan last year.

Due to war on drug, 20 out of the country's 34 provinces have been announced poppy-free. However, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimates that narcotic trade generated a staggering 1.4 billion U.S. dollars in 2011, about 10 percent of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP).