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About the Centre for Governance Research (CGR)

CGR is a forum for studies and debate on strategic and tactical issues related with good governance and the rule of law. It is a non-governmental civil society advocacy centre dedicated to reforms in the justice and governance sectors.

As an independent think tank, CGR sets its own agenda, publishing and disseminating its findings regularly for national and global audience. Using an interdisciplinary approach, CGR brings together rule of law, justice and governance experts, researchers and internationally renowned professionals to animate its debate and research activities.

It aims to stand out as one of the rare Pakistani think tanks to position itself at the very heart of the debate on governance and justice issues.

CGR focuses on advocacy, research and studies in the following areas:

- Governance and Rule of Law
- Public policy
- Policing and Justice Sectors
- Serious and Organized Crimes
- Counterterrorism and Counter Extremism (CT and CE)

Meanwhile, the National Initiative against Organized Crime (NIOC) launched in November 2019 continues as a Project from the platform of the Centre for Governance Research (CGR). It is led by a group of committed professionals and experts with law enforcement, media and other public service backgrounds. Through developing an empirical evidence-base and conducting hands-on consultations, NIOC aims to build community resilience and influence public policy to combat organized crime in Pakistan.

Since inception, NIOC has produced eight major research studies and policy briefs on the critical topics of terror financing, drug trafficking, terrorism in Pakistan during COVID-19, migrant smuggling and human trafficking, cybercrimes and countering extremism etc.

NIOC's 30th Advisory Board Meeting



The 30th Advisory Board Meeting was held virtually on Wednesday 27 April 2022. The following participated:

Advisory Board: Tariq Parvez, Zahid Hussain, Samina Ahmed and Jawaid Akhtar. Zubair Habib could not attend as he was in Saudi Arabia.

NIOC Directorate was represented by Tariq Khosa, Sarmad Saeed, Ammar Jaffri, Vaqas Ali, Azam Khan, Nawaz Nadeem and Hassan Sardar.

The following issues were discussed:

- 1) Pakistan UNTOC Review Process is under way. NIOC has supported the GOP Focal Person Dr Ehsan Sadiq since January 2022. The country is required to respond to 8 articles of UNTOC Convention 2000 during Cluster-1 Review and not the questions related with the three Protocols on Migrant Smuggling, Human Trafficking and Firearms due to non-ratification so far.
- 2) Focal Person, assisted by NIOC experts Azam Khan and Nawaz Nadeem, will put up the first draft responses to 8 articles under review by the first week of May 2022.
- 3) NIOC Civil Society Engagement Strategy has been drafted by Kashif Noon. It will come into play during May-July 2022. Saroop Ijaz, Sarmad Saeed, Kashif Noon and Vaqas Ali will identify CSOs, experts, lawyers, academicians and representatives of the private

sector for further interaction on transnational organization crime challenges facing Pakistan.

- 4) A roundtable on SDG 16 will be planned by mid-May 2022 by Ammar Jaffri.
- 5) Tariq Khosa, Director NIOC-CGR has become a member of GITOC Task Force on Cybercrime. NIOC will further explore constituting a Working Group on UN Cybercrime Negotiations under way as part of an advocacy campaign with different stakeholders of the Government of Pakistan.
- 6) NIOC-CGR Annual Report 2021 has been released and disseminated to relevant domestic and international organizations.

No access to justice

BY pardoning those suspected of involvement in her husband's murder, Shireen Jokhio, in her simple but heartbreaking video message released on Wednesday, presented a piercing indictment of the country's criminal justice system. Giving reasons for her pardoning the suspects, Ms Jokhio said she had four children and was unable to run from pillar to post to seek justice from the courts. Her decision, she said, was not based on greed, and that she had not been offered any financial compensation. She had wanted to fight the case but had been abandoned even by those close to her. There was no justice in Pakistan, Ms Jokhio lamented, and said that she had left matters to God. Activist Nazim Jokhio had been found murdered last November at PPP MPA Jam Awais's farmhouse in Karachi. The autopsy report had revealed that the deceased, who had been allegedly kidnapped shortly after filming the illegal hunting of the houbara bustard, had been brutally tortured. The family also accused PPP MNA Jam Abdul Karim of involvement.

Though Ms Jokhio's pardon is not legally binding, her distress underscores how difficult it is to ensure that justice is done, even in high-profile cases such as this one. Evidence of this lies in the words of the attorney general himself who said in 2020 that the criminal justice system tends to favour the perpetrators over the victims. It is no wonder that people who do not possess the resources to access strong legal counsel, when facing pressure from powerful elements, give up their desire to seek justice for their loved ones or for themselves. Ms Jokhio's decision to pardon the perpetrators is simply a call of distress. Her helplessness in the face of many odds is what a large number of people, especially those without means, encounter. The challenges are myriad and range from political interference in the justice system, to shoddy investigation, unprofessional lawyers and an unsympathetic police force. The question is: who is ready to address these deficiencies?

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 1, 2022

In the line of duty

The recent upsurge in terrorist activity continues taking its toll, with six soldiers martyred on Wednesday in an incident that the ISPR described as an attack on a military compound in Tank district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Three terrorists were attempting to enter a military compound but were encircled and killed. According to some earlier reports attributed to the district police officer, the terrorists were targeting a Frontier Constabulary fort. At the time of those reports, three soldiers had been martyred and 18 injured.

The same day, the ISPR said two soldiers, including an officer, were martyred and four terrorists killed in a shootout in Makin, South Waziristan. Last week, four soldiers were martyred in Hassan Khel, North Waziristan, in a gunbattle that caused “heavy casualties” to the terrorists. A month earlier, a terrorist also tried to enter a military checkpoint in North Waziristan district but was shot and killed after firing at soldiers and attempting to lob a grenade at them. Other similar lesser incidents, where no loss of life was recorded on the military side, have also been occurring with worrying frequency. But these attacks, which often get downplayed because of the avoidance of military losses, still matter.

The frequency of attacks should be an absolute concern for policymakers. Even if we were able to eliminate every attacker before they had had the opportunity to inflict any losses on our soldiers, the fact of the matter is that the best use of military force is not needing to use it. We know that while the parents, siblings, wives and children of thousands of soldiers and other security officials martyred in the long-running conflicts against the fundamentalist and separatist terrorists may be proud of their sacrifices, at the same time, many would rather hear that their loved ones returned home safe and sound, having never seen battle, because true peace had been achieved.

And while peace as an absolute state may only exist in an idyllic dream, the reality is that we do not seem anywhere near reducing the chances of martyrdom for any frontline security officials in much of Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 1, 2022.

Gang involved in child pornography busted



A gang allegedly involved in earning money from the dark web through child pornography has been unearthed in Lahore.

At least 10 victims have been sexually exploited as revealed in the initial investigations by Federal Investigations Agency (FIA) Cybercrime Cell.

The suspects living in a private housing society in a peripheral area of Lahore would lure a victim through money or other means, rape him and filmed the whole incident.

The suspects afterwards would blackmail the victim to give them money and also coerce them into sexual exploitation again and again. If he resisted, the suspects would threaten him to viral his video on the internet.

The suspects would also earn money (in dollars) by selling these explicit videos on the dark web. The gang consisted of four members including a woman. So far, only one suspect has been arrested.

The FIA Cyber Wing was alerted after the organisation received a complaint regarding child pornography and sexual abuse.

The complainant, the father of a victim, had said that the suspects identified as Arslan Arshad and Ammad Shahzad, living in a private housing society, had formed a gang to persuade and lure the teenagers of the neighbourhood for sexual exploitation and capture their videos without their consent. They would upload the content over the internet for money

The man said his son was trapped by the gang. The suspects on February 15, took the victim to the upper portion of their house and sexually assaulted him and also filmed the act.

Later, a suspect identified as Arslan shared the video with his friend Abid through a social media app. The FIA after receiving the application launched the investigations and took a suspect named Abid Ali, from Arifwala District Pakpattan, into their custody. A huge cache of videos containing child pornography content was recovered from his cell phone.

There were several victims children. Arslan, the prime suspect, could also be seen in the videos raping the children. A spokesman for the FIA Cyber Wing said the arrested suspects revealed the details about gang members. Arslan, Ammad, Moazam and Talha lured minor children by offering them money and precious gifts and capturing their videos.

They would share these videos with a lady named Asma and her driver namely Qamar alias Doda. Asma and her driver would upload the content on the dark web to earn money. The arrested suspects also revealed to the investigation teams that the suspects would buy a lot of money and also bought branded gadgets, expensive clothes and other items from this money.

FIA Cybercrime Cell has registered a case against the accused under sections 20, 21 and 22 of The Prevention of Electronic Crime Act (PECA) 2016 and section 109 of the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC). FIA Cybercrime Cell was conducting raids to arrest the other accused persons.

Further evidence about the accused persons and their acts would ascertain after their arrests, revelations and analysis of electronic gadgets recovered from their custody.

Pakistan has been quite notorious for child pornography scandals in the last few years. In 2018, a man from Sargodha had been convicted by a court for raping and earning money through child pornography using the internet.

An organisation from the United States had alerted the authorities about the case. Last year, four accused persons were arrested from Faisalabad for a child pornography offence.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 2, 2022

Illicit ammunition trade creeps up in Punjab



Illegal arms flowing in from the country's tribal belt appear to have found a lucrative market in major cities of the Punjab province. These deadly firearms, which include knockoffs of AK-47s, M-16 rifles, Beretta pistols and Kalashnikovs, are hand-manufactured without safety standards in villages like Darra Adam Khel, and have become increasingly popular in urban centres for their cut-price. Their biggest buyers are said to be petty criminals and youths on a budget.

Unlicensed firearms like such are next to impossible to trace, which makes them the perfect choice for anyone with a devious agenda. While the law shuns their trade, a significant number of arms dealers in Lahore, licensed to operate by the Home Department, are said to be involved in their trade right under the authority's nose.

In addition to that, while the inauthenticity of these guns is common knowledge in villages where they are produced, it is believed that urban buyers at times are also duped into buying these state-of-the-art replicas for millions of rupees, taking them to be original.

The buying and selling of these firearms has taken wings in the provincial capital in recent times, owing to an ad hoc registration process and poor investigation and prosecution related to cases of illegal arms trade. The police are often seen as an accomplice to the crime, arresting offenders of the category only to let them out in a few hours or assisting their bail, which has encouraged more and more registered traders to invest in this lucrative business on the side.

Furthermore, despite trying for quite some time now, the Punjab Home Department has also failed to complete the computerisation of records of arms dealers allowed to operate in the province. Per estimates, out of 156 dealers in Lahore, 104 have not yet undergone NADRA computerisation, while the easy availability of forged licenses has also pushed the proliferation of illegal weapons.

Market surveys reveal that a forged license, available in booklet form in Lahore or card style in Islamabad, can be acquired for anywhere between Rs30,000 to Rs50,000, while most small firearms come at a price tag ranging between Rs10,000 to Rs35,000.

“Most of the dealers around Ravi Road in Lahore are involved in the illegal trade of firearms as a secondary business and belong to Peshawar and tribal areas. A lot of street criminals buy these guns because they are low-investment and can be easily ditched after committing a crime without worrying about being traced,” a source privy to the gun trade explained.

Per retired Additional Sessions Judge Misbah Bhatti, sale of illicit arms after the amendments made under the National Action Plan is a non-bailable offense under sections 13-20-65, but due to the negligence and collusion of the police and the prosecution, bail is granted in a few hours.

Sources further informed that the check and balance by government departments on the manufacture and sale of IEDs is very weak, as these weapons are manufactured in unlicensed arms workshops set up in houses or shops in the tribal areas. “They lack serial numbers and specific tracing codes are also not engraved on them,” he added.

Speaking in this regard, Pakistan Arms Traders and Manufacturers Association Chair Farhan Anwar said that the Punjab government in collaboration with NADRA had started the process of computerisation of arms dealers which if and when completed will fully digitise the sale and purchase of firearms. “However, many of our dealers are trying to evade the process of computerisation. According to the law, the person who has been issued the license for arms dealership by the Home Department is solely responsible for it, but many people have given the license on contract and according to the law, even the sale purchase agents have not been registered by the Home Department,” he told adding that the government should increase the issuance of arms licenses so that fake licenses can be stopped.

Per Punjab Police’s senior officer Qaiser, it is the loopholes in the law that allow for offenders of the illegal arms trade to secure bail in a few hours, which he believes is a big reason behind the crime’s growth.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 3, 2022.

Dealing with militants

IN two recent back-to-back attacks in the southern district of Tank and neighbouring South Waziristan tribal district, eight security personnel were martyred while several others were wounded. Both attacks were claimed by the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan. Significantly, it was after a long time that the TTP, which had largely restricted its operations to guerrilla-like hit-and-run tactics, sniping and roadside bombings, deployed multiple suicide bombers to attack the fort used by the paramilitary FC. These attacks show that the capacity of the Afghanistan-based terror outfit is far from diminished and that it can launch attacks whenever it pleases. This should be a cause of deep concern to the political and military authorities. Pakistan's security forces have done well to go after the sleeper cells, capturing and killing many militants in intelligence-based operations, but the TTP's presence in Afghanistan presents a huge challenge that will continue to test the resolve and capabilities of the security apparatus. It is evident that the overtures on the part of the state to negotiate with the militant network through the Afghan Taliban have not yielded the desired results. The authorities here made several attempts through tribal notables, and in some cases, even sent close family members to persuade militant leaders to return to give up their arms and return to a life of normality. While, reportedly, some leaders of the umbrella organisation had showed an interest in laying down their weapons and returning to Pakistan, others simply refused to listen – among them the TTP chief Mufti Noor Wali. He is the leader of the terrorist organisation's largest Mehsud group which has been behind the attacks in the Mehsud hinterland as well as in the adjoining areas. There is little doubt that both these attacks were carried out by his group – and more can be expected.

For now, Pakistan appears to have few choices, especially given its relations with the hard-line regime in Kabul; a tactical operation to take out the TTP leadership in Afghanistan seems out of the question. Engaging with the militants is not an option either at this stage. The state's own history of negotiating with militants has been defined by failures and broken pledges, as terrorist groups have invariably returned to violence after striking a 'deal' with the authorities. It took large-scale military operations to clear the affected areas, but the militants are once more posing a threat. The TTP presented several demands – some of which were met, such as the release of some of its foot soldiers. But there are other demands that impinge upon democratic freedoms, which cannot be accepted by the state. It seems that for now, the best course of action is keep up the pressure on the Afghan Taliban to not allow their country to be used as a launching pad for terrorists who are targeting this country, and for political and military authorities to arrive at a long-term plan to end militancy.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 4, 2022

A sensitive approach

MARIA TAIMUR

WHEN we celebrate women, as we did last month on International Women's Day, it is important to include women in law enforcement in the conversation. Women in law enforcement bring their own set of skills to a traditionally male-dominated policing culture, according to Chuck Wexler, director of the Police Executive Research Forum in the US.

Globally, there is a growing recognition of the benefits of recruiting, training and promoting more women in law enforcement. Not only do they represent half the population, they also bring diversity to law-enforcement teams and expand the scope of policing initiatives.

Almost three decades ago, when more women started opting for the law-enforcement profession, they were required to be as tough, if not more, as their male counterparts. The whole emphasis of training and work remained on masculinising women officers. They were expected to reinforce and exercise the existing police culture and organisational ethics.

It was only after women officers started making inroads into local communities and employing nonviolent methods of policing that their unusual aptitude was recognised. Police-community interactions, when conducted by women, showed that women have true potential for exercising soft power. The latter term denotes the ability to co-opt rather than coerce, and involves shaping the preferences of others through honest appeals and overtures – which are essentially a shift from the traditionally material approaches to law enforcement.

Research has shown that women are better able to engage with communities through dialogue, negotiation and effective communication. These valuable skills come in handy in de-escalating tense situations, mitigating conflict and defusing tensions – hence, maintaining law and order.

Communities and people also feel safe around women officers who reach out to them, as they are accessible besides being brilliant listeners. Both victims and criminals are aware that women are less likely to use force and even less likely to use excessive force; they keep away from human rights violations and hardly indulge in the misconduct often seen in their male counterparts.

As effective as policewomen are in dealing with communities, they are also useful when it comes to investigations in general and investigations into gender-based violence in particular. Crime investigations demand a different subset of skills, including attention to detail, the collection of ocular, circumstantial and forensic evidence, recording of statements, preparation of case diaries and corroboration of evidence. Women officers are known to possess a natural ability to delve

into minute details and to listen patiently to both the victims and perpetrators – which is particularly helpful in cases of gender-based violence. This, in turn, leads to a reduction of crimes against women in a particular area.

Diversity in the workforce is increasingly seen as more effective, creative and resilient than homogeneity. Inclusive workforces have a broader perspective of the prevalent circumstances, which helps with better decision-making and problem-solving. A gender-inclusive police department improves the police's image in general besides enhancing community trust in the law enforcers.

Additionally, many studies have shown that women have superior problem-solving skills, a critical ability for law-enforcement professionals. They lead their teams on the basis of democratic principles and focus on the individual needs of the members. Once they win the trust of their team members, it becomes easier to take high-risk decisions for crime control.

Certainly, there is much to be said for their qualities of compassion and empathy towards vulnerable groups, including women, children, transpersons, minorities, senior citizens, disabled persons and other marginalised groups. There is an effort to study the social reasons of crime in a community and to engage all stakeholders. Such affirmative action helps restore the trust of weaker sections of society in the criminal justice system as a whole. Many a time, girls and women from the community come forward to join hands with policewomen to counter social evils which give rise to crime.

It makes sense, then, for police organisations in the country to encourage more women to be a part of law enforcement. After recruitment, issues related to retention, mainstreaming, visibility and role positioning must also be addressed through strong policies. In this context, a national gender policy is needed to prepare the ground for an enabling environment for both women in law enforcement and women at large. Enabling one woman in law enforcement means enabling many women in the community. The greater visibility of women in law-enforcement is a huge source of inspiration for other women, who feel more confident about claiming their legitimate public space.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 7, 2022

IHC strikes down Peca ordinance, terms it 'unconstitutional'

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) struck down the controversial Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Ordinance, 2022, terming it "unconstitutional".

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah issued a four-page order while hearing identical petitions filed against the controversial Peca ordinance and its section 20, which criminalises defamation. The court had earlier reserved its verdict.

In the written order, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, Justice Minallah said that freedom of expression was a fundamental right and reinforces all other rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

Free speech and the right to receive information are essential for development, progress and prosperity of a society, he said, adding that their suppression was "unconstitutional and contrary to the democratic values".

"The criminalisation of defamation, protection of individual reputations through arrest and imprisonment and the resultant chilling effect violates the letter of the Constitution and the invalidity thereof is beyond reasonable doubt," the order stated.

Justice Minallah said the Peca ordinance was "promulgated in derogation of the Constitution and the fundamental rights guaranteed thereunder, particularly Articles 9, 14, 19 and 19-A". The jurisdictional preconditions were also not in existence, he observed.

The IHC CJ declared the Peca ordinance and its promulgation as "unconstitutional" and struck it down.

He further declared "the offence under section 20 of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 to the extent of the expression 'or harms the reputation'" unconstitutional.

Section 20 of the Act states: "Whoever intentionally and publicly exhibits or displays or transmits any information through any information system, which he knows to be false, and intimidates or harms the reputation or privacy of a natural person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years or with fine which may extend to one million rupees or with both."

Justice Minallah said in his order that the punishment for the offence was also "unconstitutional" and hence, both, the offence and punishment, were "struck down".

Consequently, he stated, "proceedings against petitioners in connected petitions" were a "nullity and thus quashed".

However, he added, the aggrieved complainants may "avail remedies provided under respective laws in the context of defamation".

The judge said the federal government was expected to review defamation laws, particularly the Defamation Ordinance, 2002, and suggest appropriate legislation for effective implementation of the laws.

He also directed the interior ministry secretary to probe the conduct of officials of the Federal Investigation Agency's cybercrime wing, "which led to widespread abuse of powers and the consequent grave violations of fundamental rights of citizens".

Justice Minallah said that the secretary should complete the probe within 30 days after receiving a certified copy of the court order and inform the court registrar about the action taken against delinquent officials.

The Peca law

Peca was passed by the National Assembly in 2016 amid the opposition's protest.

The PML-N, which was in the government at the time, had used its majority to bulldoze the controversial bill. The opposition, meanwhile, criticised the legislation for giving the executive what it called sweeping powers that could be misused against anyone and further curb freedom of expression in the country.

The legislation stated that parody or satire-based websites and social media accounts can be proceeded against on 'spoofing', which makes it an offence to run a website or send information with a "counterfeit source". It also authorised Federal Investigation Agency officers to unlock any computer, mobile phone or other device that may be required for the purpose of investigating a crime or offence, and said that defamation would be treated as a punishable offence.

In November 2020, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government framed social media laws under Peca, drawing criticism from digital rights activists, the Internet Service Providers of Pakistan and the Asia Internet Coalition, who had termed the laws draconian.

President Dr Arif Alvi had promulgated the ordinance to amend the Peca, 2016 on February 20, a day after the federal cabinet had given approval for a presidential ordinance to amend the Act.

Among some of the most consequential changes to the Act was an amendment to Section 20 of Peca, which increases the jail term for defaming any person or institution from three years to five years.

Further, the complainant was defined as the aggrieved person, his authorised representative, his guardian in case he was a minor or "a member of the public in respect of a public figure or a

holder of public office". Online public defamation had also been made a cognisable and a non-bailable offence.

The definition of a "person" was expanded to include any company, association or body of persons whether incorporated or not, institution, organisation, authority or any other body established by the government under any law or otherwise.

The government's move to amend Peca had drawn strong criticism from opposition leaders and media bodies, who said the measure was directed at curbing the freedom of expression and silencing the media.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 8, 2022

Establishing deterrence in cyberspace

AREESHA ANWER

According to the Identity Theft Resource Centre (2021), the total number of data breaches in 2021 was 1,291 as compared to 1,108 in 2020. Cybersecurity experts estimate that global cybercrimes would cost \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025. This requires states to adopt robust and efficient strategies and maintain effective deterrence to mitigate cyber-related threats.

The threat of cyber Pearl Harbor can be traced back to the World Wide Web's (www) prominence since the 1990s. Sean Lawson and Michael K Middleton (2019) explain cyber Pearl Harbor as "catastrophic physical impacts from cyberattacks on critical infrastructure". Terminologies such as cyberwars, cyberattacks, and cyber-intrusions have penetrated into the discourse of state security as they threaten countries with novel aspects of warfare. Having said that, a cyber Pearl Harbor as of yet remains hypothetical. However, low-stakes cyber-operations involving state- and non-state actors, as well as high-stakes cyber-operations among big powers, are carried out frequently.

Pakistan ranks 79th in the Global Cybersecurity Index. However, in the global trend of cyberattacks, Pakistan is no exception. For instance, some recent major cyber-incidents in Pakistan have been directed toward banking and energy infrastructures. These include K-Electric, Federal Board of Revenue, and National Bank of Pakistan. Moreover, the intercept in 2016 reported that Pakistan's senior civilian and security officials have remained a constant target of cyber-espionage by the US National Security Agency (NSA). It was also reported by ISPR in 2020 that Indian intelligence agencies were involved in cybercrimes against government officials and military personnel in Pakistan.

In the same context, a 2021 report by Amnesty International highlighted that Pegasus spyware was used by India against Pakistan. A related article published by in November last year highlighted how a hacker group based in India launched cyberattacks on government and security departments in Pakistan and China.

Pakistan's National Cybersecurity Policy 2021 mentions taking retaliatory measures in case of aggression on Pakistan's critical infrastructure. Its objective states, "[It] will regard a cyberattack on Pakistan CI/ CII as an act of aggression against national sovereignty and will defend itself with appropriate response measures." However, the deterrence mechanism mainly followed by the policy is deterrence by denial – denying any benefit to the attacker. This does not maintain complete cyber-deterrence. An asymmetric cyberattack may require adequate defence, but to

deter a large-scale symmetric cyberattack, cyber-defence coupled with non-cyber means of retaliation would maintain an effective deterrence. Hence, states have incorporated retaliatory measures in their cybersecurity policies and nuclear doctrines. For instance, the US Department of Defense 2018 Cyber Strategy is offensive in nature and states the development of a lethal joint force for countering malicious cyber-actors.

According to a recent statement by Pakistan's leadership, Pakistan's IT exports are expected to reach \$50 billion within the next few years. This is certainly a path to a resilient digital infrastructure. However, to defend the cyber frontiers, earnest implementation of the cyber security policy will be helpful in deterring cyberattacks.

Maintaining deterrence in cyberspace is an uphill climb, yet not impossible. Strong cybersecurity infrastructure is integral to minimising cyber-vulnerabilities. Alongside policy implementation and strengthening the regulatory mechanism, further investments in emerging technologies must be made. This will help augment cyber-defence, create an effective deterrence posture, and enhance the indigenous cyber-capability of Pakistan.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 9, 2022.

Hafiz Saeed sentenced

IN Pakistan's ecosystem of religiously inspired militant groups, the Lashkar-e-Taiba/Jamaatud Dawa brand was, until a few years ago, one of the biggest. It had the blessings of the establishment and was given free rein to operate in the country. Following 9/11, it was banned but continued to operate – until the 2008 Mumbai attacks, in which LeT was accused of having played a central role. Since that time, the state apparatus has banned the group's operations and maintained a close watch on its leadership, particularly its supremo Hafiz Saeed – albeit in a half-hearted manner.

On Friday, Hafiz Saeed was sentenced to 33 years in jail in two cases of terror financing. The sentence comes in the wake of pressure applied by the FATF on the state to 'do more' against militant actors. As compared to the more violent and unruly militant groups, Hafiz Saeed's operations have been tougher for the state to address, as he once enjoyed cordial relations with the powers that be. At one point, there were even attempts to mainstream LeT/JuD through the Falah-i-Insaniat Foundation, the outfit's humanitarian arm, as well as the Milli Muslim League political party.

His sentencing comes as a sombre reminder of the state's erstwhile policy of embracing militant groups. While 'good' militants like the LeT/JuD were amenable to 'suggestions' from the establishment, the more virulent and sectarian actors actually declared war on Pakistan and still pose a major security risk to this country. In particular, the Punjabi Taliban – many of whom are disgruntled ex-members of pro-state jihadi groups – are a real security challenge, as are militant groups in the newly merged districts.

These groups have brought nothing but trouble – domestically, as well as in the context of Pakistan's foreign relations. Locally, they have been instrumental in radicalising the population and increasing sectarian fissures in society. Internationally, they have brought disrepute to the country, with inimical states trying to have Pakistan branded as a sponsor of terrorism. Being retained on the FATF 'grey list' is also linked to these policies of old.

It is hoped the establishment has learned its lesson and will never again encourage jihadi actors – though its tolerance of Tehreek-i-Labbaik has not inspired confidence. Simply banning groups on paper is not enough; the militant infrastructure must be dismantled so that society can be deradicalised, and Pakistan does not have to face embarrassing accusations at the global level.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 10, 2022

Fourth worst passport

For the third consecutive year, Pakistan has been ranked fourth worst in the world in terms of passport value, surpassing only Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Our international image, according to Henley Passport Index, is equivalent to war-ridden countries ravaged by terrorism and invasion which is a matter of grave concern. Citizens have not shied away from expressing their discontent, with some terming this as an “international embarrassment” while others criticising the Naya Pakistan.

The sad reality is that what started after 9/11 still continues. There is a rampant culture of singling out Pakistanis at airports all around the world, where they are frequently frisked, detained and vigorously questioned. It is indeed an embarrassment. But apart from the very obvious “security threats” exuding from Pakistan, the index also indicates how much access our citizens have to the rest of the world. With a visa-free score of just 31, the index highlights that citizens have limited access to other countries in turn affecting business, lifestyle, education and healthcare opportunities. It is particularly difficult for the common man to visit First World countries in general and in some cases, one has to go through heaps of paperwork and multiple background security clearances before being issued a visa. This restricts connectivity and increases isolation which impedes national development and global competition. Organic growth is required in order to secure investments and create collaborations. This can only be done if Pakistani citizens are able to frequently travel abroad to further their ventures and businesses.

Unfortunately, the PTI government has not acknowledged the severity of the problem and our foreign ministry has failed to enhance travel freedom. Irrespective of who comes to power, prudent efforts must be made in order to improve Pakistan’s passport ranking. The foreign minister must constitute a taskforce and devise an action plan to negotiate with other countries in giving Pakistani citizens easier travel access. This will go a long way in aiding national progress.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 11, 2022.

IMU's journey

MOHAMMAD ALI BABAKHEL

THE withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has changed the dynamics of terrorism and counterterrorism (CT) in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood: while the operational capabilities of Al Qaeda appear weakened, the Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-K) has gained space, and the status of the Taliban has changed from insurgents to the ruling elite. Meanwhile, Central Asian jihadis, particularly the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and other groups, continue to pose a threat to regional security.

The IMU has a peculiar story – one of persistent transition; from Tajikistan to Afghanistan, the tribal areas of Pakistan, to Syria and Iraq. It has had marriages of convenience with Al Qaeda, the Taliban and even IS. It was born in Uzbekistan, which shares borders with Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The country spent most of the past 200 years as part of the Russian empire and then the Soviet Union. Living under the authoritarian USSR, the Muslims of Central Asia experienced an identity crisis. This, coupled with political marginalisation, weak institutions, growing inequalities, poor governance and porous borders, resulted in the rise of violent extremism.

IMU's co-founders, Tohir Yo'ldosh and Juma Namangani, had initially established a group called Adolat (Justice). In 1992, Islam Karimov banned Adolat and Yo'ldosh and Namangani left Uzbekistan for Tajikistan. The Tajik civil war ended in 1997. By 1998, they had rebranded Adolat as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In August 1999, Namangani, leading a contingent of 700 fighters, left Tajikistan and seized the Kyrgyz portion of the Ferghana Valley. It hoped to use the territory as an operational base to launch attacks into Uzbekistan. That same year, IMU was blamed for a series of bombings in Tashkent.

From 1998 to 2001, the IMU tried to integrate itself into Al Qaeda's global jihadi movement and fought alongside Al Qaeda and Taliban forces in Afghanistan, first against the Northern Alliance and then the coalition forces. After the arrival of US troops, it relocated to Pakistan's tribal areas. Prior to military operations, the IMU took refuge in the Taliban-influenced Pakistani tribal belt, but quickly earned the hatred of locals.

Ideologically, the IMU remained aligned to external groups like Al Qaeda and IS. In 2000, the US placed the IMU on a list of designated foreign terrorist organisations. In 2001, Namangani died while defending the Taliban. After his death, Yo'ldosh became IMU's sole leader. By 2006, the IMU had birthed three new groups. A significant number of dejected IMU fighters left IMU for good and settled in neighbouring countries. Another group of demobilised IMU fighters returned

to Central Asia and took advantage of amnesties offered in Uzbekistan. However, numerous IMU fighters remained scattered in pockets of Central Asia, Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Drone attacks and CT operations eventually damaged IMU's command and operations. Key leaders Tahir Yuldashev (2009), Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov (2009), and Abu Uthman Adil (2012) were killed in drone attacks. The Afghan Taliban, too, punished the IMU for its betrayal in developing an association with IS. In 2015, Usman Ghazi, the emir of the IMU, had pledged his loyalty to Al Baghdadi as the IMU needed recognition and funds. As punishment for his disloyalty, Usman was killed in Zabul, Afghanistan, in 2015.

Though the IMU ultimately failed to attain its primary objective, other militant groups greatly benefited from its strength. Under the command of Baitullah Mehsud, the IMU and TTP had a cordial operational equation under which they carried out joint attacks. Attacks on the Mehran Naval Base in 2011 and the airbases at Kamra and Peshawar in 2012 reflected their synergetic relationship.

The withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan has transformed the role and responsibilities of the Taliban. The insurgents of yesterday now have to prove that they also have the capabilities to counter terrorism, especially from the vestiges of groups like the IMU. Delivering on their counterterrorism commitments will not only bring stability to Afghanistan, but also qualify them to be recognised by the international community.

The question is, how will the Taliban distance themselves from militant groups? Operational disengagement may be an option, but in an uncertain situation, how will the group sever its ideological linkages? A peaceful neighbourhood is beneficial for Afghanistan, but a mere desire to have friendly relations with neighbours may not yield dividends, as the presence of militant organisations in Afghanistan erodes the credibility of the Taliban government. A reduction of space for militants will push them to return to their homes; however, that will not be possible to do without fulfilling counterterrorism commitments.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 11, 2022

Hafiz Saeed's sentencing

Jamaatud Dawa and Lashkar-e-Taiba chief Hafiz Saeed was sentenced to another 33 years behind bars over the weekend, after an anti-terrorism court found him guilty on several counts of terror financing. However, since the sentences will run concurrently, Saeed might not end up spending any additional time in prison since he is already in prison after several convictions, the longest of which still has about eleven years of jail time remaining.

Still, the government will be hoping that the latest sentence is enough to convince FATF that the country is meeting, if not exceeding, its conditions to remove Pakistan from its grey list. It is no coincidence that Saeed, who is accused by India of being the mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks, was first convicted in a case just a few weeks before an FATF review meeting. However, while it is easy to claim that Indian pressure led to Saeed's conviction, the truth is that he is wanted in several terrorism cases. Saeed's avoidance of extended jail time in the past was always a problematic subject, with blame thrown at every arm of the government and the justice system, despite Saeed and several other extremists having lost state patronage several years ago.

Unfortunately, while better-known figures such as Saeed have been prosecuted – successfully and unsuccessfully – in recent years, the networks they had set up remain a problem, not just for the world community but also for everyday Pakistanis. These groups are, after all, the major contributors to radicalisation and terrorist recruitment. But while they have obviously grown too large to be nipped in the bud, there are still opportunities to solidly address them, if only the political will were there. The problem is that, in the absence of such will, these groups will continue the cycle of being banned and then popping up with new names and – on paper – new leadership. Government machinery needs to be proactive to ensure that this stops happening. While recruiting networks have most certainly been weakened in recent years, they need to be destroyed.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 12, 2022.

Chilling tactics

IT seems that some forces attempted to exploit the power vacuum during the absence of a government in Islamabad. In the early hours of Sunday, about a dozen unidentified men 'raided' the home of Arsalan Khalid, recently ousted prime minister Imran Khan's focal person on digital media. The 'raid', if it can be called that, happened shortly after Mr Khan was voted out of office. The intruders reportedly threatened Mr Khalid's family and seized their phones and laptops. Judging by the remarks of former SAPM Shahbaz Gill, it seems the party is aware of who ordered the raid and also that it was expecting it. It is telling that the PTI publicly addressed its concerns on the matter to the FIA, a civilian security agency.

This is a condemnable development. For too long, arbitrary raids, seizures and detentions have been employed as a tool of choice by elements within the state for 'objectives' that they may not otherwise be able to legally achieve. These extrajudicial actions have a chilling effect on voices critical of policies favoured by powerful factions within the state, not to mention they violate fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the Constitution. Clearly, whoever ordered the raid wishes to keep Mr Khalid under their control. In the same context, it is strange that the FIA, which otherwise operates under the interior ministry, seems to have independently decided to place the names of five individuals considered close to Mr Khan on a 'stop-list', if a newspaper report is to be believed. Apart from Mr Khalid and Mr Gill, the former prime minister's principal secretary, the DG anti-corruption Punjab, and former DG FIA Punjab Zone II, who had been investigating now Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab chief minister hopeful Hamza Shehbaz, have been barred from leaving the country, according to the report. It has not been forgotten that the PTI itself oversaw the suppression of critical voices and silencing of dissent through very similar means. It was wrong then as it is wrong now. The incoming government had taken the higher ground by assuring there would be no victimisation of political opponents; however, this clearly is not going to be enough. It is time for all parties which derive their legitimacy from the power of democracy to unanimously condemn and prevent such occurrences from happening again and again. The vicious cycle of the state silencing citizens and depriving them of their freedoms must stop.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 12, 2022

Major, sepoy martyred, two terrorists killed in South Waziristan

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: An army major and a soldier were martyred and two terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire between members of security forces and a group of terrorists in the Birmal area of South Waziristan tribal district.

Officials told the media in Wana that two soldiers were wounded in the clash.

In a statement, the military's media wing ISPR said two terrorists were killed in the exchange of fire between security forces and terrorists in the Angoor Adda area.

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the insurgents, who had been actively involved in terrorist activities against members of security forces.

The ISPR said that during an intense exchange of fire, 30-year-old Major Shujaat Hussain of Toba Tek Singh and 27-year-old Sepoy Imran Khan of Naseerabad were martyred.

Their bodies and the two injured soldiers were brought to Scout Camp in Wana in a helicopter.

Officials said that security forces launched a search operation in the area after the clash and some suspects had been arrested.

The ISPR said security forces were combing the area for more terrorists.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 13, 2022

Promoting civilian victims of terrorism

FAISAL ALI RAJA

The fight against terrorism and extremism is multidimensional in nature. It is waged by a living force against a living mass. The trinity of its components includes victims of terrorism, law enforcement agencies and terror operators. It cannot be restricted to raising, developing and deploying an effective counterterrorism force at national or sub-national levels. Nor can it be limited to a significant number of measures to support officials of law enforcement agencies and their families who have lost their lives or suffered physical harm during counterterrorism operations. Hence, the civilians who are killed or injured during incidents of terrorism still require government's attention and establishment of a social support mechanism for their assistance. The data on casualties of terrorism is not segregated and is often cited in aggregate numbers without providing details of victims on the basis of their gender, age bracket, district of domicile or regional affiliation, ethnicity, religion or sectarian association. The civilian victims of terrorism do not often appear significantly in provincial or national discourse against terrorism and extremism. It is important that the public sacrifices should be acknowledged and projected on an even footing, comparable to the sacrifices made by officials of law enforcement agencies.

The data indicates that 135 civilians were killed and 469 injured in terror acts in 2021. If we compare these figures with civilian fatalities and injuries in 2020, an increase of 32% in civilian killings and 15% in civilian injuries was reported in 2021. At provincial level, 40% increase in civilian fatalities is seen in Balochistan and 38% in Sindh whereas in K-P it remained almost the same. In Punjab, the civilian fatalities also increased minutely. Similarly, the number of civilians injured in incidents of terrorism in 2021 indicates a rise of almost 50% in Balochistan and 54% decrease in K-P, respectively. However, a marked spike of 43% is observed in Punjab in civilian injuries. The compensation given to these individuals may be expanded to win public confidence in the fight against terrorism. The support mechanism needs to be broadened and developed on the lines of policies currently being pursued by different law enforcement agencies in extending all types of assistance to their officials who are either injured or martyred in the line of duty.

For example, the sixth day of September is celebrated to commemorate the sacrifices made by our soldiers including those who have lost their lives in counterterrorism operations. Similarly, all provincial police departments eulogise services of their officers and officials on third day of August who have laid down their lives in the line of duty. The civilian victims should be projected through a special day celebration at provincial level. The victims of APC massacre have been given due media coverage but that too was because the educational facility was directly related

to a particular organisation. The survivors of such horrendous acts should also be promoted as national heroes from various geographical dispensations in the country. This cannot be done unless we map the complete data of civilian casualties at district or regional levels. It should include proper ethnic, provincial and social cross-sectional selection of such individuals who can be reckoned as national civilian counterterrorism champions. Here special attention should be given to those individuals who have tried to mitigate terror incident through bravery. The story of Aitzaz Hassan Bangash may be made part of provincial syllabi. Special measures be introduced in criminal justice system while interacting with these victims or their families. The blood relations of the victims of terrorism should also be preferred in employment avenues through special quotas. Moreover, a proper CTE communication strategy needs to be devised which covers all aspects of counterterrorism measures. It must also highlight sacrifices of the civilian victims of terrorism. The individual stories of such men or women of prominence may also be recognised through media. We must understand that the resilience of law enforcers can sustain the CT operations but determination of civilian victims of terror can forge a social response against terrorism and extremism.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 13, 2022.

India, US call on Pakistan to take 'immediate, irreversible' action against terrorism



The United States of America and India in a joint statement on Tuesday urged Pakistan to take "immediate, sustained, and irreversible action" to ensure that no territory under its control was used for terrorist attacks.

"[India] strongly condemned any use of terrorist proxies and cross-border terrorism in all its forms and called for the perpetrators of the 26/11 Mumbai attack, and Pathankot attack, to be brought to justice," the statement – issued by the US Embassy and Consulates in India – read.

It was issued as a part of the fourth '2+2' dialogue between India and the United States, which ended yesterday in Washington DC. India's external affairs and defence ministers, S Jaishankar and Rajnath Singh, held meetings with their US counterparts, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Ahead of the dialogue on April 11, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Joe Biden met virtually.

According to The Indian Express, the 2+2 dialogue is a format of talks between the foreign and defence ministers of India and its allies on strategic and security issues. India holds dialogues on this format with four of its strategic partners – US, Russia, Australia, and Japan.

"The 2+2 Ministerial is an important opportunity to advance our shared objectives across the breadth of the US-India Strategic Partnership, including enhancing our people-to-people ties and education cooperation, building diverse, resilient supply chains for critical and emerging technology, scaling up our climate action and public health cooperation, and developing a trade and investment partnership to increase prosperity for working families in both countries. It is also a chance to highlight the growing major defence partnership between the United States and India," a statement issued by the US ahead of the meeting had said.

In the joint statement issued yesterday after the meeting, both countries called for concerted action against all terrorist groups, including those proscribed by the UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee, such as al Qaeda, ISIS/Daesh, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), and Hizb ul Mujahideen.

"The ministers committed to continued exchange of information about sanctions and designations against terror groups and individuals, countering violent radicalism, use of the Internet for terrorist purposes, and cross-border movement of terrorists," it read.

India further highlighted the importance of upholding international standards on anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism by all countries, consistent with Financial Action Task Force (FATF) recommendations.

"The ministers also reaffirmed their support for the early adoption of a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) that advances and strengthens the framework for global cooperation and reinforces that no cause or grievance justifies terrorism," the statement added.

Inclusive Afghan government

India also called on the Taliban to abide by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution (2021), which demands that Afghan territory must never again be used to threaten or attack any country or to shelter or train terrorists, or to plan or finance terrorist attacks.

It urged the Taliban to adhere to these and all other commitments; respect the human rights of all Afghans, including women, children, and members of minority groups; and uphold freedom of travel.

"They also emphasised the importance of an inclusive Afghan government and unhindered access for the United Nations and its implementing partners to deliver humanitarian assistance. The Ministers recommitted to close consultations on Afghanistan to help facilitate an inclusive and peaceful future for all Afghans."

Humanitarian crisis in Ukraine

The countries further discussed the "worsening humanitarian crisis in Ukraine" and India demanded an "immediate cessation of hostilities". It underscored that the contemporary global order has been built on the UN Charter, respect for international law, and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

"The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific in which the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states are respected, and countries are free from military, economic, and political coercion," the joint statement said.

They, it added, further reaffirmed their dedication to promoting regional stability and prosperity, with an inclusive regional architecture, abiding by the rule of law, the freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality. They also reiterated the importance of adherence to international law to meet challenges to the rules-based order, including in the South China Sea.

The two countries also discussed collaboration in the fields of space science, medicine, nuclear energy, and health.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 13, 2022

Another TTP attack

IN yet another deadly attack, militants targeted a police van in Kulachi, Dera Ismail Khan, on Monday. Five policemen were martyred and four others wounded. Like many previous attacks, the outlawed TTP accepted responsibility for this incident too. More likely, the attack appears to have been carried out by the Gandapur group, previously associated with the banned Sipah-i-Sahaba and Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, but which has been part of the TTP since 2001. This group has been active in the southern district of KP, carrying out attacks lately targeting the police. The law-enforcement agencies have also carried out successful intelligence-based operations recently, and killed some group members. Monday's attack, thus, appears to be in response to the IBOs. But the most disturbing aspect was the use of a rocket-propelled grenade that hit the van which caught fire, burning the policemen to death. This is probably the first time that militants have used an RPG in a settled district. It is, however, known that militants and criminals operating in Kulachi, an extremely backward area, parts of which have no administrative access, have been carrying such weapons. Reports coming from South Waziristan say that the Mehsud-led TTP launched another attack on a military post in Barmal tehsil on Tuesday, and there are indications that there might be some fatalities on our side.

These back-to-back incidents, which, unfortunately, have become a frequent phenomenon, are extremely disconcerting and alarming. The TTP, in a statement in March, had announced the launching of the so-called Al-Badr spring offensive, making it abundantly clear that its militants would target the security agencies and their associates. It is now also clear that no matter how many IBOs are conducted to bust and eliminate active and sleeper cells, unless Pakistan takes effective and practical steps to address the root of the problem, such attacks will continue, with far-reaching consequences. Pakistan has been urging the Afghan Taliban to live up to their word, rein in the TTP and other militant groups and stop them from using Afghan soil to launch attacks against a country that continues to be home to millions of Afghan refugees. The hard-line regime, however, has done nothing tangible in this regard. In fact, to the contrary, the TTP has been allowed to carry out fundraising activities in Afghanistan for what it calls a 'jihad' in Pakistan. It is time that Pakistan dropped diplomatic niceties and spoke openly and bluntly to the Afghan Taliban.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 13, 2022

‘Proactive policing’

STUNG by public uproar over rising street crimes, Karachi police appears to be resorting to a ‘quick fix’ – encounter killings. Since the beginning of the year, there have been 254 alleged police encounters in the city, resulting in the death of 27 suspects and injuries to around 300. In March alone, there were no less than 96 such incidents, in which 11 suspects were killed and 125 wounded. When asked about the startling number of shootouts, the city police chief described it as “proactive policing” that involves collecting “CCTV footage, identification of the criminals and their hot chase to pre-empt” them from committing further offences. Some questions immediately arise: firstly, if these are genuine ‘encounters’, how many casualties have the cops suffered, and secondly, how many civilians have been caught in the crossfire? It is unlikely that casualties would only occur on the suspects’ side unless the old modus operandi practised in the metropolis by infamous ‘encounter specialist’ Rao Anwar has once again been dusted off. In that instance, purported terrorism suspects were targeted in hundreds of ‘encounters’ overseen by the former SSP. However, the murder in January 2018 of aspiring model Naqeebullah Mehsud and three other innocent men lifted the veil on the sordid reality of what can happen when extrajudicial killings are normalised.

Sadly, the tacit acceptance of fake encounters to plug the loopholes in the judicial process – and no doubt, to dispense with the hard work of collecting prosecutable evidence – is widespread in the country as a whole. The result is a brutalised, trigger-happy law-enforcement apparatus that knows it can get away with murder. Punjab has been particularly notorious in this respect. In January 2019, a couple and their daughter along with a family friend were gunned down while travelling in their car near Sahiwal by the provincial counterterrorism police; the cops were acquitted by an anti-terrorism court. While the Karachi police is trying to gain the citizens’ trust by tackling street crime, which is its responsibility, breaking the law in the attempt to do so is self-defeating and short-sighted. The expedient tactic inevitably corrupts the criminal justice system further by affording the police impunity in their violation of fundamental rights to security of person and to due process. Extrajudicial killing is the shortest route to a scenario where even law-abiding citizens will have good reason to be afraid for their lives and property – from law enforcement itself.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 14, 2022

US report paints a grim picture of human rights in Pakistan



The State Department has painted a grim picture of human rights in Pakistan, citing numerous cases of extrajudicial killings, suppression of media freedom and highlighted ‘pervasive corruption’ in politics and the government.

Pakistan 2021 Human Rights Report, which the State Department released on Wednesday as part of its series of reports on countries, listed gross human rights violations committed against various groups, including journalists. There was no respect for civil liberties, according to the report.

It noted that law provides criminal penalties for official corruption but the government generally did not implement the law effectively and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government had come into power on the promise to end corruption but it could not take one case to logical end despite having the National Accountability Bureau

on its side and spending millions of dollars in the name of unearthing offshore assets of politicians.

“Corruption was pervasive in politics and government, and various politicians and public office-holders faced allegations of corruption, including bribery, extortion, cronyism, nepotism, patronage, graft, and embezzlement,” according to the State Department.

The State Department said that there was lack of government accountability, and abuses, including corruption, often went unpunished, fostering a culture of impunity among perpetrators, whether official or unofficial. The authorities seldom punished government officials for reported human rights abuses or acts of corruption, it added.

The report noted that the government continued its corruption investigations and prosecutions of opposition political party leaders during the year, with high-profile actions brought against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, former president Asif Ali Zardari, and senior members of the opposition parties, including the JUI-F.

But, it added, the opposition parties alleged that the prosecutions selectively targeted their leadership. On April 27, NAB filed a 5th case against former president and co-chairperson of the Pakistan Peoples Party Asif Ali Zardari as part of a probe into a multimillion-dollar banking scandal.

On May 18, citing an ongoing investigation, the Ministry of Interior placed Shehbaz Sharif (now prime minister) on the Exit Control List. Shehbaz continued to face several investigations.

The State Department has mentioned corruption allegations against the then PM’s Special Assistant, Asim Saleem Bajwa. “On August 3, Lt-Gen (retd) Asim Saleem Bajwa resigned from his position as chairman of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Authority due to media allegations he had amassed a family fortune linked to his positions in the military,” it noted.

The State Department added that reports of corruption in the judicial system persisted, including reports that court staff requested payments to facilitate administrative procedures. Lower courts reportedly remained corrupt, inefficient, and subject to pressure from higher-ranking judges as well as prominent, wealthy, religious, and political figures, according to the report.

Imran Khan’s government had promised to ensure justice, but it could not improve the conditions in the judiciary, neither could it end corrupt practices.

The State Department added that significant human rights issues in Pakistan also included credible reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings, political prisoners; politically motivated reprisal against individuals in another country, including killings, kidnappings, or violence; arbitrary interference with privacy and support to the Taliban.

There were also serious restrictions on free expression and media, including violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and disappearances of journalists, censorship, and criminal defamation laws; serious restrictions on internet freedom including site blocking.

Journalists faced threats, harassment, and violence. The State Department has mentioned false cases and harassments faced by many journalists, in its report.

According to the report, both the military, through its media wing, and government oversight bodies, such as the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority, enforced censorship.

Journalists alleged PEMRA issued editorial directives to television stations, and media outlets claimed the government pressured stations to halt broadcasting of interviews with selected opposition political party leaders.

Security forces, political parties, militants, and other groups subjected media outlets, journalists, and their families to threats and harassment, according to the State Department. Female journalists in particular faced threats of sexual violence and harassment, including via social media, where they had a particularly strong presence. Security forces allegedly abducted journalists.

According to observers, journalists were subjected to a variety of pressure tactics, including harassment and intimidation.

Media organisations generally engaged in self-censorship, especially in reporting news regarding the military, religious extremism, and abuse of blasphemy laws. Journalists stated they were under increased pressure to report the predetermined narrative during the year, and PEMRA issued editorial directives to media outlets, according to the report.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 14, 2022

Think tank on violent extremism convenes

The 1st meeting of the Board of Governors (BOG) of the Centre of Excellence on Countering Violent Extremism was held with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) chief Minister Mahmood Khan in the Chair.

Provincial Minister for Higher Education Kamran Bangash, Special Assistant to CM on Information Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif, MPA Dr Ayesha Asad, administrative secretaries of higher education, home and law departments chief coordination officer centre of excellence and other board members attended the meeting.

Briefing the meeting about the aims and objectives of the Centre of Excellence on countering violent Extremism, its would be functions and organogram budget estimates powers and other important aspects of the centre, the forum was informed that the centre would work as a research-based institute to cope with the issued emerging from terrorism, subversive activities, hatred, extremism, in-tolerance and radicalization etc.

The vision behind establishing the centre was to create a society free of violent extremism and terrorism the official informed the participants and added that this would be a unique initiative of its nature not only in Pakistan but across the Asian continent.

The forum while agreeing to the need and importance and the proposed functions of the centre directed necessary steps to make it functional as soon as possible due to its importance for the province and country.

The chief minister has also directed the officials to immediately formulate finance and human resource committees under the board of centre of excellence so that financial budget, organogram and other important matters could be finalized without any delay.

He said that his government was taking every possible step to create a peaceful and violence free society adding that establishment of the centre of excellence was also a part of this well thought out strategy.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 14, 2022

Eight soldiers martyred in North Waziristan attacks

NORTH WAZIRISTAN: Eight soldiers were martyred in two terrorist attacks in North Waziristan.

In one incident, seven soldiers were martyred when terrorists ambushed a vehicle of security forces in Datakhel tehsil of North Waziristan tribal district. In the second incident, which took place in Isham area of the district, a soldier was martyred in a clash between security forces and terrorists.

As for the first attack, officials said the terrorists attacked a moving vehicle of the security forces in Datakhel near the Afghan border. Sources said the insurgents used a rocket-propelled grenade launcher and assault guns in the attack.

Seven soldiers embraced martyrdom in the attack, officials told the media in Miramshah, the district headquarters of North Waziristan.

The martyred soldiers have been identified as Havaladar Tariq, Sepoy Arshad, Sepoy Kashif, Sepoy Junaid, Sepoy Ijaz Ali, Sepoy Waqas and Sepoy Jawad Mir. Their bodies were shifted in a military helicopter to Miramshah.

Sources said that a search operation in the area was in progress. According to reports, security personnel also retaliated but casualties on the militant side could not be ascertained.

The ISPR has yet to confirm the attack or issue a formal statement.

This major attack comes at the heels of a deadly attack in the southern district of Dera Ismail Khan three days ago which left five policemen dead and four wounded.

Unlike other areas of North Waziristan, Datakhel is considered a relatively safe sanctuary for terrorist groups. Security forces have yet to clear the area and hundreds of displaced families are still waiting to return to their homes.

In the second attack, a fire exchange took place between troops and terrorists in the Isham area of North Waziristan district, in which 28-year-old Sepoy Asmatullah Khan of Mianwali embraced martyrdom, military media wing ISPR said.

Sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area.

Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve, said the security sources.

The incidents on Thursday have raised the tally of terrorist attacks on security forces to three this week in the Waziristan region of erstwhile Fata.

On Monday, a check-post of security forces came under attack in the South Waziristan district, in which an army major and a soldier were martyred while two personnel were wounded. Two terrorists were also killed during the exchange of fire with the security forces in that attack.

The DG ISPR told a presser on Thursday that 97 officers and soldiers had embraced martyrdom in the first three months of this year. With eight more embracing martyred on Thursday, the tally goes up to 105.

He said 128 militants had been killed in the corresponding period, while 270 had been arrested.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 15, 2022

Priyantha Kumara lynching: ATC awards death sentence to 6, life imprisonment to 9



An anti-terrorism court awarded death sentence to six and handed life imprisonment to nine as it announced its verdict in Sri Lankan citizen Priyantha Kumara's lynching case.

Seventy-two others nominated in the case were given two years of jail sentence of each, one person was given a sentence of five years while another was acquitted, Punjab Prosecution Department Secretary Nadeem Sarwar said in a press conference held in Lahore.

Kumara was lynched by a mob comprising hundreds of protesters, including the employees of the factory in Sialkot he was the manager of, on December 3. The mob had tortured him to death and later burnt his body.

The details of the fines and sentences are as follows:

- Six convicts awarded death sentence on two counts and payment of Rs200,000 as compensation to the deceased's legal heirs
- Nine convicts awarded life imprisonment along with payment of Rs200,000 as fine and Rs200,000 as compensation to the legal heirs
- Seventy-two convicts sentenced to two years of rigorous imprisonment each on three counts and one year each on two counts
- One convict awarded sentence of five years
- One person acquitted in the case

A first information report was registered against 900 workers of Rajco Industries on the application of Uggoki Station House Officer Armaghan Maqt under sections 302, 297, 201, 427, 431, 157, 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code and 7 and 11WW of the Anti-Terrorism Act. Scores of suspects were arrested in the following days.

The incident had seen widespread outrage and condemnation across Pakistan with politicians, scholars and civil society members calling for swift punishment to be meted out to the perpetrators.

"The prosecution team presented a total of 43 witnesses in order to prove the crime against suspects," Sarwar said in the press conference today, adding that forensic, audio and video evidence was also used to prove the crime.

"In less than a month, the prosecution completed the testimonies of witnesses. After that, the court gave them full chance to defend themselves. Today, the ATC Gujranwala, upon the crime being proven, has punished 88 accused while one has been acquitted.

"This is a very good day as the law punished those who took away an innocent life. It is now hoped that the elements spreading religious extremism will be dealt in the same manner."

The ATC had indicted 89 individuals on March 12. According to the challan submitted by the police, 80 of the accused are adults while nine of them are minors.

Judge Natasha Naseem had conducted the trial in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat jail.

The statements of the accused had been recorded under Section 342 of the Code of Criminal Procedures (CrPC).

Five prosecutors, including Senior Special Prosecutor Abdul Rauf Wattoo, appeared during the trial. The prosecution had made 46 eyewitnesses part of the challan.

According to the challan, a copy of which is available with Dawn.com, videos, digital evidence, DNA evidence, forensic evidence, eyewitnesses, including Kumara's colleague who had tried to save him from the mob, were made part of the investigation.

It stated that footage from 10 digital video recorders in the factory was sent for forensic analysis, while the accused were traced via videos from social media and footage recovered from the mobile phones of 55 accused.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 18, 2022

Priyantha lynching case

IN the long list of dark moments this country has seen, the lynching of Sri Lankan national Priyantha Kumara by a mob in Sialkot last December is among the worst. A mob of hundreds had surrounded the factory manager after spurious allegations of blasphemy had been raised, and in the gruesome spectacle that followed, he was tortured to death and his body set alight. The incident elicited revulsion at home and abroad as Pakistani society sought to question itself about how it had plunged to such depths. Monday's sentencing in the case should bring some closure to the slain man's family, as a number of culprits have been given the strongest penalty on the law books. An anti-terrorism court awarded capital punishment to six convicts while giving life terms to nine. Seventy-two others have been given jail terms of varying duration. While the culprits needed to pay heavily for their crime, it should be reiterated that this paper opposes the death penalty.

Though the justice system has wrapped up this key case within a reasonable period of time, the underlying factors that fuel mob mentality and extremism need to be addressed by society so that such an outrage is not repeated. Of course, one of the key matters that needs to be addressed is a review of the blasphemy laws, as too often flimsy charges are used to settle personal scores, with deadly consequences. Moreover, perhaps due to the constant political upheavals in the country, the deradicalisation agenda set forth in the 20-point National Action Plan has been lost sight of. State and society need to revitalise the plan to wean the country away from extremism and barbarism of the sort witnessed in Sialkot. Also, as the ATC noted in the Priyantha Kumara case, had the local police moved in quickly, the tragedy could perhaps have been avoided. Therefore, in cases where blasphemy allegations are made, timely action by law enforcement can help defuse an explosive situation and save lives.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 20, 2022

Revisiting media laws

WITH the new government setting about swiftly dismantling its predecessor's information policy, the sword hanging over the media's head seems a little less menacing.

On Tuesday, Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb announced that the Pakistan Media Development Authority – which, had the PTI government had its way, would have been armed with draconian powers to control the media – was being disbanded “in whatever shape or form it was working”. No black law, she declared, would henceforth be proposed or enacted to stifle the constitutionally protected right to freedom of expression. Ms Aurangzeb further said that the Digital Media Wing set up by the PTI government to disseminate official information on social media platforms would also be shuttered.

The move was welcomed by many who accused the DMW of instigating vicious trolling of the opposition as well as journalists, bloggers – in short, anyone expressing views critical of the party.

The assault on the right to freedom of speech in this country during the PTI's tenure was perhaps unprecedented for a civilian dispensation to engage in. But let there be no mistake – the PML-N has been no champion of free speech either.

In fact, the draft of a print media regulatory law that surfaced in 2017, during the party's previous stint in power, was so similar to the PTI's proposed PMDA law that it could have conceivably been authored by the same hand. It included measures such as publishing licences to be renewed annually, possibility of jail terms for journalists and publishers and raids on the offices of publications that were deemed to have violated the law in question. It was only an uproar in the media and civil society that forced the government to backtrack.

And how can one forget that the restrictive Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016, is actually the PML-N's brainchild? Or that its government, when the draft was formulated, sidelined stakeholders despite promising to hold meaningful discussions with them and ultimately bulldozed through a bill that is a vehicle for unabashed censorship? That law was then 'improved' upon by the PTI government through an ordinance, bringing Pakistan even closer to the most repressive countries on the planet.

Earlier this month, the Islamabad High Court reclaimed to some extent the people's right to free speech stolen by successive governments. It struck down a part of Peca's Section 20, thereby excluding reputational damage as grounds for a criminal defamation charge, and declared the

entire amendment ordinance as unconstitutional. However, there are still several landmines strewn across Peca that are not conducive to a healthy exchange of views.

Ms Aurangzeb has given assurances that Peca will be revisited in consultation with stakeholders, and this is to be welcomed. In such an exercise, misinformation and disinformation must be clearly defined, for they are very different things, and there must only be reasonable restrictions on free speech.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 21, 2022

FATF begins review of terrorist financing, money laundering

WASHINGTON: Ministers and officials from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) 37-member countries and affiliates met in Washington to discuss actions to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing.

The meeting will decide FATF's strategic direction for the next performance assessment of the countries on its watch list. Pakistan is also on this so-called grey list of countries that are still monitored for terrorist financing and money laundering activities within their jurisdictions.

The discussions are part of the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the Board of Governors of World Bank Group that are held annually in Washington.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen is also attending the meeting, which marks the first time FATF ministers meet in-person in three years.

Before the meeting, the FATF issued a report pointing out that "most countries have passed laws and regulations to tackle money laundering and terrorist financing but face major challenges to use them effectively".

The report also highlights that "many countries still face substantial challenges in taking effective action in line with the risks they face". This includes difficulties in investigating and prosecuting high-profile cross-border cases and preventing anonymous shell companies and trusts being used for illicit purposes.

The FATF said this strategic review would make the next cycle of its assessments more timely, risk-based and effective.

Earlier this month, a court in Pakistan sentenced Hafiz Saeed, founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba, a group blamed by the United States and India for the deadly 2008 Mumbai siege, to 31 years in prison in two cases of terrorism financing.

Commenting on the conviction, a US scholar of South Asian affairs, Michael Kugelman, said the sentencing "could help Pakistan escape the FATF grey list as its last action item to be completed involves convictions".

An FATF report issued last month noted that since June 2018, when Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF to address its deficiencies, the country's "continued

political commitment has led to significant progress across a comprehensive counter-terrorist financing action plan”.

Pakistan has completed 26 of the 27 action items in its 2018 action plan. The FATF encourages Pakistan to continue to make progress to address, as soon as possible, the one remaining item – prosecutions and convictions – to demonstrate that its investigations and prosecutions target senior leaders and commanders of UN-designated terrorist groups.

In response to additional deficiencies later identified in FATF’s 2019 report, in June 2021, Pakistan provided further high-level commitment to address these strategic deficiencies pursuant to a new action plan that primarily focuses on combating money laundering.

The FATF noted that “since June 2021, Pakistan has taken swift steps towards improving its deficiencies and completed 6 of the 7 action items ahead of any relevant deadlines expiring”.

Pakistan also demonstrated that “it is enhancing the impact of sanctions by nominating individuals and entities for UN designation and restraining and confiscating proceeds of crime in line with Pakistan’s risk profile”, the FATF added.

The FATF urged Pakistan to “continue to work to address the one remaining item in its 2021 action plan by demonstrating a positive and sustained trend of pursuing complex money laundering investigations and prosecutions”.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 22, 2022

Army officer martyred in gunfight with terrorists in Balochistan's Awaran



A Pakistan Army major embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire with terrorists in Balochistan's Awaran area, the military's media affairs wing said.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), a group of terrorists "fire raided" a security forces' checkpoint in the area of Kahan, near Awaran. However, the forces repulsed the attack and went after the terrorists in the nearby mountains.

"At one of the cordons established to block the passage of fleeing terrorists, a heavy exchange of fire took place between terrorists and security forces," the ISPR added.

During the skirmish, the military said, a valiant son of the soil, Major Shahid Basheer, lost his life while another soldier sustained injuries.

The ISPR said the forces caused heavy losses to the terrorists.

"Security forces, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability, and progress of Balochistan."

In January this year, ten soldiers were martyred after terrorists attacked a security forces' checkpoint in Balochistan's Kech district.

The ISPR had said the "fire raid" by terrorists occurred on the night of Jan 25-26. One terrorist was also killed in retaliatory fire by the forces.

Last month, four soldiers had embraced martyrdom in North Waziristan's Hassan Khel area during an exchange of fire with terrorists who attempted to infiltrate into Pakistan from Afghanistan on the night between March 23 and March 24.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 22, 2022

Dangerous IS-K

THE Islamic State's Khorasan chapter has struck again. The victims of its most recent attacks in Afghanistan are predominantly the Shia Hazaras. This week has seen a series of bombings across Afghanistan. First, there was a series of blasts, believed to have been carried out by the IS-K, that targeted a school in the Hazara neighbourhood of Dasht-i-Barchi in Kabul – the same area where bomb explosions last May killed 85 people, mostly female students. Tuesday's school bombing was followed by two more blasts, one of them in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif where the detonation of a booby trap device placed inside a Hazara mosque left 11 dead and scores injured. The same day, a bomb targeted an Afghan Taliban military van carrying mechanics, killing six more. Yet another blast took place at a Sunni mosque in Kunduz yesterday in which over 30 people died. At the time of writing, there had been no claim of responsibility. The attacks on the Hazara mosque and the military van, meanwhile, were claimed by IS-K. There has been no formal word from Afghanistan's rulers on IS-K's claims. Indeed, the Afghan Taliban have been brushing aside concerns over the presence of the extremist group in Afghanistan, claiming to have overcome the problem through the summary executions of scores of IS-K suspects. But the recent attacks belie the Taliban claim. What is more troubling is that this past week, the IS-K also claimed to have launched a rocket attack on Uzbekistan from Afghanistan's Balkh province that borders the Central Asian republic. The group backed its claim by releasing images of the attack on a military base in Termez. Uzbekistan denied the attack.

IS-K's growing activities in the region – including Pakistan where the group struck a Shia mosque in Peshawar last month, killing over 60 worshippers – presents a clear and present danger. For too long, the Afghan Taliban had the sole monopoly on violence in Afghanistan. Not anymore. They have a rival, a shadowy challenger that is not only capable of perpetrating violence but also of demolishing the myth that all is well under the Taliban. Indeed, all is not well. Not only is the IS-K using Afghanistan to launch attacks inside and outside Afghanistan, the TTP too, have ratcheted up violence inside Pakistan, launching their attacks from neighbouring countries. Kabul's hard-line rulers must wake up to reality and become part of a regional framework to address terrorism. The time for denial is over.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 23, 2022

3 soldiers martyred in N. Waziristan during gun battle with terrorists from Afghanistan



This combination photo shows Havaldar Taimoor (L), Naik Shoaib (C) and Sepoy Saqib Nawaz (R). –

Three soldiers were martyred in the Dewagar area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district during an exchange of fire with terrorists from across the Afghan border, the military's media affairs wing said.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), terrorists opened fire on Pakistani troops from across the Afghan border and the latter "responded in a befitting manner".

"As per credible intelligence reports, due to fire of own troops, terrorists suffered heavy casualties," the ISPR said, adding that three soldiers embraced martyrdom after fighting gallantly.

The martyred soldiers have been identified as 30-year-old Havaldar Taimoor, a resident of Jhelum; 38-year-old Naik Shoaib, a resident of Attock; and 24-year-old Sepoy Saqib Nawaz, a resident of Sialkot.

"Pakistan strongly condemns the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for activities against Pakistan and expects that [the] Afghan government will not allow conduct of such activities in [the] future," the ISPR said, adding that the Pakistan Army "is determined to defend Pakistan's borders against the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve".

Earlier on April 14, eight soldiers were martyred in two terrorist attacks in North Waziristan.

In one incident, seven soldiers were martyred when terrorists had ambushed a vehicle of security forces in Datakhel tehsil of the North Waziristan district by terrorists operating from Afghanistan, according to the Foreign Office.

Separately, another soldier was martyred during a clash between security forces and terrorists in the district's Isham area.

Last month, four soldiers had embraced martyrdom in North Waziristan's Hassan Khel area during an exchange of fire with terrorists who attempted to infiltrate into Pakistan from Afghanistan on the night between March 23 and March 24.

In the last few days, incidents along Pak-Afghan border had significantly increased, in which Pakistani security forces were being targeted from across the border.

Last week, the Foreign Office had urged the Afghan government to secure the Pak-Afghan border region and take stern actions against the individuals involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan, in the interest of peace and progress of the two brotherly countries.

The FO, in the statement, had recalled that Pakistan had repeatedly requested the Afghan government over the last few months to secure the Pak-Afghan border region. "Terrorists are using Afghan soil with impunity to carry out activities inside Pakistan."

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 23, 2022

Darra Adam Khel: Centre for illegal arms-makers in Pakistan



Various kinds of firearms manufactured in homes and workshops throughout the town are sold from over 2,000 stores.

Around 200 kilometres (125 miles) from Islamabad, the northeastern town of Darra Adam Khel has been functioning as the centre of the illegal arms trade in this corner of the world for over 150 years.

Various kinds of firearms manufactured in homes and workshops throughout the town are sold from over 2,000 stores.

It is estimated that more than 25,000 people are involved in making the arms, including pistols, specialized sharpshooter rifles, and automatic guns.

Armed conflicts in the region and a lack of state authority up until 2018 played a major role in the rise of the illegal arms trade in the town.

A knock-off pistol can be cheaper than a cell phone in Darra Adam Khel, where the price of most imitation rifles starts at around 30,000 Pakistani rupees (\$160).

An imitation AK-47, one of the most in-demand firearms across the country, costs about \$110.

Apart from firearms, customers can also find various types of bullets, magazines, flak jackets, binoculars, and other equipment.

Workshops here are usually attached to the stores selling arms. While a weaponsmith can make a pistol in a matter of hours, production of a rifle can last up to six days.

Many gunmakers, however, are killed due to the dangerous use of outdated technology and machinery.

Mohammad Awais, a resident, confirmed that gunpowder is a major cause of such deaths especially in hot weather.

Still, this industry is major source of income for many in the town, he said, adding that the arms trade also employs a significant number of children.

Though the industry is illegal, most firearms produced here are sent to other parts of the country or even to beyond Pakistan's borders.

The town also attracts many local and foreign tourists, adding to Dara Adam Khel's renown with videos and photos they take and shared on social media.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, APRIL 25, 2022

3 Chinese nationals among 4 dead in suicide attack at Karachi University



This image shows the officials at the site of the incident

At least four people, including three Chinese nationals, were killed while four others were injured in a suicide attack outside the University of Karachi's (KU) Confucius Institute.

The incident happened as a van, carrying staff members, was about to enter the Confucius Institute, located next to the commerce department.

Television footage showed a white van in flames with plumes of smoke rising from its remains. The windows of nearby buildings were also seen shattered from the impact of the explosion.

CCTV footage of the attack showed a burqa-clad woman standing outside the entrance of the Confucius Institute. The woman detonated herself just as the van neared the institute's entrance.

Sindh Inspector General of Police (IGP) Mushtaq Ahmed Mahar confirmed that four people had died. A handout from Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah's office quoted the IGP as saying that the blast took place at approximately 2:30pm.

The banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the attack.

A spokesperson for the university confirmed that three of the victims were Chinese nationals. They were identified as Confucius Institute Director Huang Guiping, Ding Mupeng and Chen Sai. The fourth victim was the van's driver, Khalid.

The spokesperson also identified two of the injured as Wang Yuqing, a Chinese faculty member, and Hamid.

"Academic activities and public dealings will remain suspended at KU on Wednesday (tomorrow) to mourn the loss of the Confucius Institute's faculty members," the spokesperson said.

Earlier in the day, SSP East Syed Abdul Rahim Sherazi had hinted that a "couple" of Chinese nationals, who were part of KU faculty, were among the deceased.

Ball bearings found

Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) official Raja Umar Khattab said that the suicide attack was carried out by a woman, adding that ball bearings were found at the site of the blast.

He said the van was properly guarded as a Rangers team was escorting it which was why an improvised explosive device (IED) was not used.

Responding to a question, the CTD official said he did not believe a security lapse was the reason behind the attack since thousands of students were coming and going out of the university and checking each of them was a problem.

Karachi police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon said that it was unfortunate that teachers had been targeted. Speaking to the media, he said that four others had been injured, including a Chinese national, a private security guard and a Rangers personnel.

Memon said that a Rangers team was accompanying the Chinese nationals. Asked whether a threat had been issued prior to the attack, the senior officer said that there was "always a threat".

He said tight security arrangements were already in place at the varsity, adding that any lapses would be "revisited". "Give us time to look at the CCTV footage and interview witnesses," he said.

Speaking to the media earlier, DIG East Muqaddas Haider said initial information showed the van was headed to the institute after leaving the hostel.

"The explosion took place at the van's right side at the [institute's] entrance," Haider said, confirming that four people had been killed.

'Cowardly incident direct attack on Pak-China ties'

Later in the day, the Foreign Office (FO) issued a statement condemning the "reprehensible terrorist attack".

In a statement, FO spokesperson Asim Iftikhar said the government and the people of Pakistan extend their deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims.

"The law enforcement agencies are investigating the incident to apprehend the culprits and bring them to justice. Local authorities are also providing all possible assistance to the injured," he said.

The FO spokesperson termed the incident a "direct attack on the Pakistan-China friendship and ongoing cooperation".

Calling the two countries "close friends" and "iron brothers", he said Pakistan attached great importance to the safety and security of Chinese nationals, projects and institutions in the country.

'Amazing teacher'

Mustajab Hussain, a 25-year-old student hailing from Gilgit-Baltistan, was heartbroken over the death of one of his teachers.

Hussain, who has been studying at the Confucius Institute for the past three years, said that two female faculty members were among the deceased while the third one was the director, based on the identities shared by the KU spokesperson. The director had just come around a month ago.

"Chen Sai was my teacher. Her class was at 2:30pm. She was an amazing teacher and very friendly. Whatever we found difficult, she would always explain very nicely. She was very young, in her early 20s," he said.

According to Hussain, the Chinese faculty members used to live at a guest house inside the KU premises. They were coming from the guest house to the institute when the explosion occurred at the gate.

Sindh CM visits Chinese consulate



Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah calls on Chinese Consul General Li Bijian. —

Meanwhile, the Sindh chief minister paid a visit to the Chinese Consulate where he briefed Consul General Li Bijian about the blast.

Shah expressed grief over the death of the Chinese nationals, a statement issued by the CM's office said. The chief minister also assured the Chinese official that the incident would be fully investigated, the statement added.

"Those involved in the incident will be brought to justice. We value the services rendered by Chinese experts in the country and the province," Shah said.

"Some elements do not like the partnership between the two countries," he said, adding that the miscreants behind the incident would be dealt with an iron hand.

Separately, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the blast in a telephone call with the Sindh chief minister. The premier assured Shah of the Centre's full help and cooperation in dealing with such incidents.

Condemnations

According to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM Shehbaz called Shah to collect information about the "terrorist incident".

"The prime minister said that terrorists are [the] enemies of Pakistan. He vowed to eliminate the remainder of terrorists through collective efforts and unity. He directed for the provision of the best medical facilities to the injured," the PMO said.

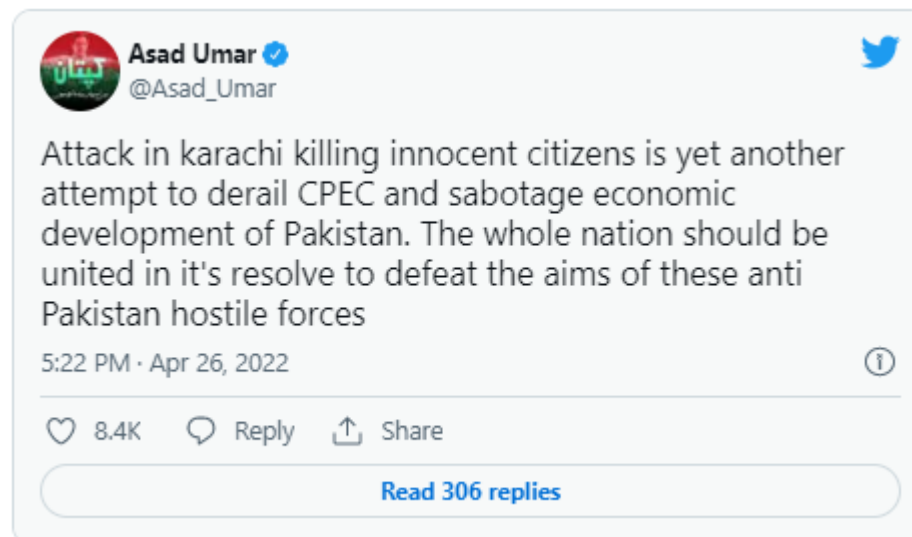
The prime minister also issued a statement on Twitter, saying that he was "deeply grieved" over the loss of precious lives and termed it a "heinous attack".

"My heartfelt condolences go to the bereaved families. I strongly condemn this cowardly act of terrorism. The perpetrators will surely be brought to justice," he said.



PTI leader Asad Umar said the attack was "yet another attempt to derail the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and sabotage the economic development of Pakistan."

"The whole nation should be united in its resolve to defeat the aims of these anti-Pakistan hostile forces," he said.



PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari also condemned the attack and prayed for the lives lost. "Sindh police will soon get to the bottom of the incident," he said, adding that the perpetrators would be punished.

He called for steps to be taken to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 26, 2022

Two Pak Army soldiers martyred during gun battle with terrorists in South Waziristan

Two Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom in the Sararogha area of South Waziristan district during a gun battle with terrorists.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), armed terrorists attacked the soldiers in the Sararogha area, prompting immediate retaliation from the troops and an intense exchange of fire ensued.

The soldiers, after fighting gallantly among others, lost their lives, the statement said.

The martyred soldiers have been identified as 26-year-old Lance Naik Umar Ali Khan, a resident of Bannu; and 23-year-old Naik sepoy Muhammad Siraj ud Din, a resident of Dera Ismail Khan.

The military said a clearance operation was being carried out in the area.

"Pakistan Army is determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," the ISPR added.

On April 23, three soldiers were martyred in the Dewagar area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district during an exchange of fire with terrorists from across the Afghan border.

Similarly, in January this year, ten soldiers were martyred after terrorists attacked a security forces' checkpoint in Balochistan's Kech district.

The ISPR had said the "fire raid" by terrorists occurred on the night of Jan 25-26. One terrorist was also killed in retaliatory fire by the forces.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 26, 2022

Attack on Chinese

A NEW wave of terrorism has been unleashed in the country. While the attacks are mostly aimed at our border regions by religiously motivated terrorist groups based in Afghanistan, there are frequent reminders that Baloch militancy, too, is on the rise.

Yesterday's shocking suicide bombing that targeted a van carrying Chinese academics near the Confucius Institute in Karachi University was not the first time Baloch militants have attacked Chinese interests in the city.

In 2018, Karachi police foiled an attack by insurgents of the outlawed Balochistan Liberation Army on the Chinese consulate. Another attack, also claimed by the BLA, was similarly stymied in 2020 at the Pakistan Stock Exchange where the Chinese have major investments.

Both the attacks indicated that the militants' strategy was evolving as the attackers appeared ready to adopt fidayeen tactics. However, with the deployment of a woman suicide bomber, the BLA attack on the university premises has added yet another dimension. It was from the terrorists' point of view a far more effective attack than the previous two had been, as it killed at least three Chinese nationals.

As the clouds of terrorist violence in Karachi start to gather once more, it is time for law enforcement to assess their own capabilities – even if they had managed to thwart the two earlier attacks.

The Chinese are no stranger to attacks in other parts of the country either, where the development projects they have initiated are viewed with suspicion by many of the locals as well as militants. Because of this, security has been provided to them as it had been to those at the university yesterday.

The Chinese faculty were being escorted by Rangers personnel. The university itself has been under the paramilitary force's vigilance for decades now, on account of student violence. However, over time, the security system has become lax – otherwise, how could the suicide bomber, with her bag of explosives, have entered the university?

For years, the Baloch insurgency had been regarded as a low-intensity conflict. But this is no longer the case. The attacks are growing more audacious – as seen earlier this year when 10 soldiers lost their lives in an attack on an FC post in Kech. The militants' reach is also growing as an earlier attack in Lahore demonstrated.

Meanwhile, disparate Baloch militant groups are coming together in a bid to restructure the insurgency and beef up their numbers and fine-tune their tactics.

While issues such as the underdevelopment of Balochistan, the Baloch missing persons, and the military footprint stamped on large parts of the province must be addressed, these should not provide a pretext to whitewash such violence. Indeed, the nexus between poverty and violence runs deep. But that should not stop the mainstream Baloch nationalist parties from coming forward to roundly condemn such attacks, even as they continue to put pressure on the centre to ensure Balochistan's welfare.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 27, 2022

24 law-enforcement officials martyred in TTP attacks since late last month in KP

At least 24 law-enforcement personnel have been martyred and 26 injured in several terrorist attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since the banned terrorist outfit Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) launched the Operation Al-Badar late last month, say the police.

The TTP's March 30 announcement for the launch of a special operation against law-enforcement agencies has led to a surge in its attacks in tribal districts, southern region and other parts of the province.

A senior police official told Dawn on condition of anonymity that the law-enforcement agencies were working on a multi-pronged strategy to defeat terrorism amid growing attacks.

"Terrorists are attacking soft targets to sow fear among them. It shows that our strategy of denying land and resources to them [TTP] is working," he said.

The official said that the TTP attacks against law-enforcement agencies in the province had surged compared to last year when the banned militant Islamic State group's Khorasan chapter (IS-K) was carrying out most of such attacks.

The official said that the TTP issued around 35 'threats' to attack law-enforcement agencies in the current month and the IS-K three only.

He, however, said that the IS-K appeared to be 'less of a threat' in future as its roots lied in Middle East.

"I do not foresee the IS-K to be a bigger threat than the TTP," he said.

The official said that four hand grenade attacks, 12 incidents of firing, three targeted killings and a rocket attack took place in different parts of KP last month.

The official said that these attacks resulted into martyrdom of 24 LEA personnel as well as 26 others were injured.

He said that the TTP claims of martyring over 40 security personnel during this period were not true.

He said that the law-enforcement agencies were working on a strategy against terrorists and that included the denial of land and sanctuaries to terrorists, limit their capacity, defeat and eliminate them through intelligence-based operations, and protect public life.

The official said that the law-enforcement agencies also arrested 192 terrorists and killed 51 in operations, while 17 most wanted terrorists carrying head money were also taken into custody in the province.

He said that the merger of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas with KP was one of the most significant milestones, which expanded the role of the writ of the government to previously ungoverned large swaths of territory.

The official said that the police had imparted really good training to the Khasadar and Levies personnel.

He, however, said that counter-terrorism required a multi-pronged strategy and the law-enforcement was its only one aspect.

The official said that the government needed to focus on educating people, countering the terrorists' narrative as well as improving service delivery and ensuring the development of the areas to defeat terrorism.

Last Friday, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government had expressed concern about the deteriorating law and order situation and attacks on the personnel of law-enforcement agencies in the province and decided to form a high-level committee to regularly oversee the implementation of the recommendations made in the National Action Plan to counter terrorism.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 27, 2022

China condemns suicide attack at Karachi University, demands punishment for perpetrators



Police officers and members of the investigation team gather near a passenger van, after a blast at the entrance of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi on April 26. —

China expressed "strong condemnation and indignation" over the suicide attack outside the University of Karachi's (KU) Confucius Institute a day earlier in which four people, including three Chinese nationals, were killed.

The incident had taken place as van, carrying three Chinese teachers, was about to enter the Confucius Institute. CCTV footage showed a burqa-clad woman standing outside the entrance of the Confucius Institute who detonated herself just as the van neared the institute's entrance.

Resultantly, three Chinese teachers, including Confucius Institute director Ding Mupeng, who were travelling in the van, and the vehicle's driver were killed.

Later, the Balochistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson, in response to a question about the incident during a press briefing on Wednesday, said the attack had left three Chinese teachers dead and one injured.



Acknowledging that there "are also casualties on the Pakistani side", he went on to say that the "Chinese side expresses strong condemnation and indignation over this major terrorist attack, and extends deep condolences to the victims and sympathies to the injured and bereaved families".

He further said the Chinese foreign ministry and diplomatic missions in Pakistan activated the "emergency response mechanism" immediately after the incident, and that Chinese Assistant Foreign Affairs Minister Wu Jianghao made an urgent phone call to Pakistan's ambassador in China.

The spokesperson said that the Chinese minister expressed "grave concern" over incident during the call and demanded that Pakistan conducted a thorough probe immediately. The minister further demanded that the perpetrators of the attack should be apprehended and punished to full extent of the law and all possible measures be taken to ensure the safety of Chinese citizens in Pakistan so that such incidents were prevented in the future.

"The Chinese embassy in Pakistan and consulate-general in Karachi are working with the Pakistani side to deal with the follow-up matters of the casualties," the foreign ministry spokesperson said.

He also mentioned Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit to the Chinese embassy in Islamabad on Tuesday evening, saying that the premier had conveyed his condolences and the Pakistan government would conduct an "in-depth probe" into the incident, "give exemplary punishment to the perpetrators and strengthen the security of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in Pakistan in an all-round way".

The spokesperson quoted PM Shehbaz as saying that the Pakistan government would "never allow any force to undermine the Pakistan-China friendship".



According to the spokesperson's statement, local authorities in Sindh and Karachi have already launched a "full-scale investigation to hunt down the perpetrators".

"The Chinese foreign ministry and Chinese diplomatic missions in Pakistan will continue to urge relevant Pakistani departments to handle properly the follow-up matters of those killed, treat the injured, and resolutely crack down on the terrorist organisation involved," the spokesperson said.

"The blood of the Chinese people should not be shed in vain, and those behind this incident will surely pay the price."

Earlier, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had also paid a visit to the Chinese consulate in Karachi where he briefed Consul General Li Bijian about the blast.

The CM had expressed grief over the death of Chinese nationals, assured that the incident would be fully investigated and those involved in the incident would be brought to justice.

According to state-run APP, Pakistan Ambassador to China Moinul Haque has also expressed shock over the incident and expressed sorrow over the death of Chinese nationals.

"The entire nation is in shock and mourns the loss of these precious lives including our Chinese friends," he said in a message, adding that this cowardly act was a direct attack on the Pakistan-China friendship and ongoing cooperation.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 27, 2022

An unlikely profile

TUESDAY's suicide bombing at the Karachi University may be the harbinger of a new and unexpected dimension in the dynamics of terrorism in Pakistan, particularly the Baloch insurgency.

It was appalling enough that a suicide bomber had targeted the faculty of the Confucius Institute on campus, killing three Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver on the spot. But the shock was further compounded when the identity of the attacker came to light. Less than an hour following the incident, the banned Baloch Liberation Army took to social media to claim responsibility and announce that the bomber was a woman named Shaari Baloch.

Details emerging later revealed her to be a highly educated mother of two young children, belonging to a well-established family and working as a school teacher in her native Turbat, Balochistan. Moreover, it appears that no one in her close family was missing or had ever been forcibly disappeared – all of which adds up to an unlikely profile for a suicide bomber. It does, however, suggest that the insurgency is evolving in a direction that makes it imperative for the authorities to revisit their approach to it.

Suicide attacks, which involve an implicit belief in a reward in the afterlife for the act of 'self-sacrifice', have almost always been the preserve of religious extremist groups, with some notable exceptions such as Sri Lanka's Tamil Tigers. Much like the latter, the Baloch insurgency too is based on a secular ideology, and the KU bombing is among few such attacks perpetrated by the separatists.

The phenomenon of female suicide bombers is also rare in Pakistan, and except for the very first instance in the 1980s – the details of which remain unknown – three other such attacks, in 2010 and 2011, were claimed by the TTP. For a woman like Shaari Baloch to choose to go down this route despite her not disadvantageous circumstances is significant, and speaks to an increasing frustration in Baloch society.

Enforced disappearances, profiling of Baloch students at university campuses, the province's lack of agency over the proceeds of its natural resources, etc have exacerbated the yawning deficit between the people and the state. That combined with increasing access to information via social media and deeper engagement in nationalist discourse has seen young Baloch become less reticent about expressing their anger and resentment, even in interactions with the military's senior leadership. It is a critical point in time.

That said, to attack soft targets is utterly reprehensible. And for teachers to be singled out, as happened in the latest instance, is all the more surprising given that the current insurgency is

distinguished from its previous iterations by the fact that its support base largely comprises educated young Baloch.

For there to be any possibility of peaceful coexistence, the Baloch must shun such acts of senseless violence and the authorities reach out to them.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 28, 2022

Who are the perpetrators of the recent attack on Chinese citizens?

The banned militant Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), which claimed deadly attack on Chinese citizens in Karachi, is a rebel group operating against the Pakistani state in Balochistan.

BLA's stated aim is complete independence for Balochistan. The province has seen a decades-long insurgency against what rebels call the unfair exploitation of resources in the mineral-rich region.

Balochistan borders Afghanistan to the north, Iran to the west and has a long coastline on the Arabian Sea. It has Pakistan's largest natural gas field and is believed to have many more undiscovered reserves.

It is also rich in precious metals including gold, the production of which has grown over recent years.

Pakistani security forces have been the BLA's main focus, but in recent years they have also targeted Chinese interests.

The group demands that all Pakistani security forces withdraw from Balochistan and has suggested negotiations in the presence of an "international guarantor".

It claims its guerrilla fighters are made up of young, educated Baloch who are disillusioned by hardship and being sidelined from economic development.

Under its current guise, the BLA was led by Balach Marri, scion of an influential Baloch family. Security officials said Marri was killed in neighbouring Afghanistan in 2007, where he had established a base and hideout.

After initially being hampered by Marri's death, the BLA has accelerated its attacks, particularly in the last year.

The group says it is currently led by a man named Bashir Zeb Baloch, the organisation's shadowy commander-in-chief about whom little is known.

Most of the BLA's attacks take place in Balochistan or in Karachi. The BLA claimed attacks on the Pakistan Stock Exchange Building in 2020 and the Chinese consulate in 2018 – both in Karachi.

What is the Majeed Brigade?

The Majeed Brigade, which was formed in 2011, is a particularly lethal guerilla cell of the BLA. It was named after a guard of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was killed while attempting to assassinate the PPP founder. Its presence in Afghanistan is also well documented and even reported by Indian media.

Some allege that the group also maintains sanctuaries in areas along the Pak-Iran border.

The so-called brigade, which is the suicide squad of the BLA, mostly targets security forces and Chinese interests in Pakistan. It also claimed responsibility for Tuesday's suicide attack outside KU's Confucius Institute.

It has carried out a number of attacks this year, including those targeting military camps in Balochistan's Naushki and Panjgur districts, where the militants kept security forces engaged for three days.

Twenty terrorists were killed during clearance operations after the Naushki and Panjgur attacks, the military's media affairs wing had said in a statement, adding that nine security personnel had embraced martyrdom.

Who was the Karachi University attacker?

CCTV footage of Tuesday's attack had shown a burqa-clad woman standing outside the entrance of the Confucius Institute. The woman detonated herself just as the van containing the Chinese nationals neared the institute's entrance.

Raja Umar Khattab, a senior official of the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD), had said that the suicide bomber, identified as Shari Baloch alias Brimash, was born in Turbat in 1991. She was married and had two children.

He had said that her husband – Dr Haibatan – originally hailed from Kech, was currently doing a public health course at Karachi's Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and was staying at a nearby five-star hotel. However, his wife lived in Gulistan-i-Jauhar with her children.

Khattab said that she and her husband had left their places a week before the attack and the husband's whereabouts were not known. Raids were being carried out to find the husband and other facilitators, the CTD official had said.

The official had also clarified that the suicide bomber was not a student of KU. He said the woman got all her education up to university level in Balochistan and later she was employed as a government school teacher in Turbat.

Khattab said the outlawed BLA had claimed responsibility for the attack and shared details about the attacker on their social media platforms.

Meanwhile, a paternal uncle of Shari, Ghani Parvaaz, while talking to Dawn.com, had said that she belonged to a highly educated and financially prosperous family in Kech.

He had said that many members of their family had held high government positions with her father, Mohammad Hayat, having retired as a registrar in Turbat University while Parvaaz himself was a retired professor and writer.

About her educational and professional record, her uncle said she had completed a Bachelor of Education degree in 2014, a Master of Education degree in 2018 and subsequently a Masters in Zoology from Balochistan University and an MPhil degree from Allama Iqbal Open University's Turbat campus. She was working as a science teacher in a government school in Turbat, Parvaaz added.

SOURCE: DAWN, APRIL 28, 2022

Terrorism financing in Pakistan

BY DR MAQSOOD AHMED

Terrorism is a contested term -- difficult to define, and a cause of contention in academics and policymaking for years. There is no universal definition of terrorism. According to the UNHCR, terrorism is commonly understood as acts of violence that target civilians to pursue political or ideological aims. In legal terms, although the international community has yet to adopt a comprehensive definition of terrorism, existing declarations, resolutions, and universal 'sectoral' treaties relating to specific aspects of it define certain acts and core elements.

In 1994, the General Assembly's Declaration on Measures to Eliminate International Terrorism, set out in its resolution 49/60, stated that terrorism includes "criminal acts intended or calculated to provoke a state of terror in the general public, a group of persons or particular persons for political purposes" and that such acts "are in any circumstances unjustifiable, whatever the considerations of a political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or other nature that may be invoked to justify them." Article 2 of 'International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism' defined financing of terrorism as: "An act of providing a person funds by any means (directly or indirectly), deliberately and knowingly so that the funds will be used in full or part to carry out a terrorist act by a terrorist or a terrorist organization."

Funds are essential to execute a terrorist activity. Terrorists acquire funds by different means and place them in different ways and procedures. One of the most vibrant ways of utilizing money in the business of terrorism is money laundering. -- a process of hiding illegitimate origins of money by transforming them into other currency or assets, which can then be legitimately utilized, essentially conversion of dirty money into clean money.

According to Dr Nicholas Ryder, money laundering is claimed to be one of the largest global industries, and it is impossible to measure the actual scope of money laundering. Money laundering poses an international global threat undermining the financial system's integrity. The object of laundering money is to get the economic benefit from criminality without being caught. The terrorist or criminal will always seek to avoid leaving a trail that can lead back to the original crime (predicate offense). The terrorist will also seek to conceal the origins of the money, allowing it to be used to further terrorist activity or be re-invested to increase their funds. Traditionally there is a three-step phase to money laundering -- placement, layering, and integration.

Terrorism in the world at large, and Pakistan in particular, depends on many sources and channels of funding. Funding sources used by terrorists may involve funds raised from legitimate sources, such as personal donations and profits from businesses and charitable organizations. A

percentage of the amount collected as donations and charity by organizations is used for the purchase of weapons, equipment, and to give training. So, terrorism is morphed into a proper structure -- they are into business, including drugs that are not prepared here but mostly from Afghanistan.

The charities and donations made by the developed countries to entities, either religious or social, in developing countries have the lion's share in financing extremist diaspora and, in turn, terrorism. People who are more inclined towards religion give their own money as charity and donations. They also collect money from other people for such purposes. Some individuals, due to their ideological convictions, donate personal assets also.

Owing to the religious concepts of the people of this country, people are very prone to giving charity because it is our sacred obligation to give zakat and sadaqah. At the same time, terrorist organizations collect funds on the pretext of religious charities. They collect zakat, sadqa, fitra, and hides of sacrificial animals in the name of religion and helping the poor and needy. Charitable organizations collect funds during religious congregations like after Jumma prayer every Friday or during spiritual prayers like Eid. During the holy month of Ramazan, they keep donation boxes or collect money in the name of zakat and sadaqah.

People generally don't ask what is being done with the money they give in the form of charity. Such cash is misused for terrorist activities. This element of the socio-religious aspects of our nation is being exploited by the perpetrators of money-laundering and terror financing -- and charities and NPOs, especially those are running on donations, have a high-risk of terrorist financing and money laundering.

Religious conservatism, the mushroom growth of madrassahs, and the evolution of different sectarian groups were not kept in check over the past 33 years. Some madrassahs do serve as conduits for funding terrorism. There is no data available regarding sources of funding for these madrassahs, whether foreign or domestic. It is a high-risk area, and it is challenging to opine about the madrassahs, which are unregulated because there is no database or whereabouts of the background of children studying there, what kind of curriculum is being taught to them, whether any military training is being given to them or not. Various funding groups like madrassahs, student organizations, religious parties, NGOs, NPOs, and others go unaccountable due to the cash economy and make us vulnerable to terrorism financing.

The Hundi/Hawala system has been established for many decades in Pakistan, India, and the Middle East. And it has for such a very long time been so successful in laundering all sorts of black money, including terrorism financing. Terror groups have taken advantage of this because it remains successful in many legitimate businesses, and it has been misused by our bankers, traders, and local businessmen. Most of the proceeds of crime are based on illegal means -- corruption, weapons and drug trafficking (mainly from its Afghan border), smuggling, illegal gambling, and other criminal activities.

There is a consensus that Pakistan has many policies on every imaginable subject. The dilemma, however, is that there is a lack of implementation -- and thus the core objectives of the policies are not being met. This issue becomes more complex in the presence of the enormous civil, military, law enforcement, and other forms of bureaucracy that are trained and experienced in implementing the policy. There is an absolute disconnect between policy formulation and its implementation.

SOURCE: THE NEWS, APRIL 30, 2022