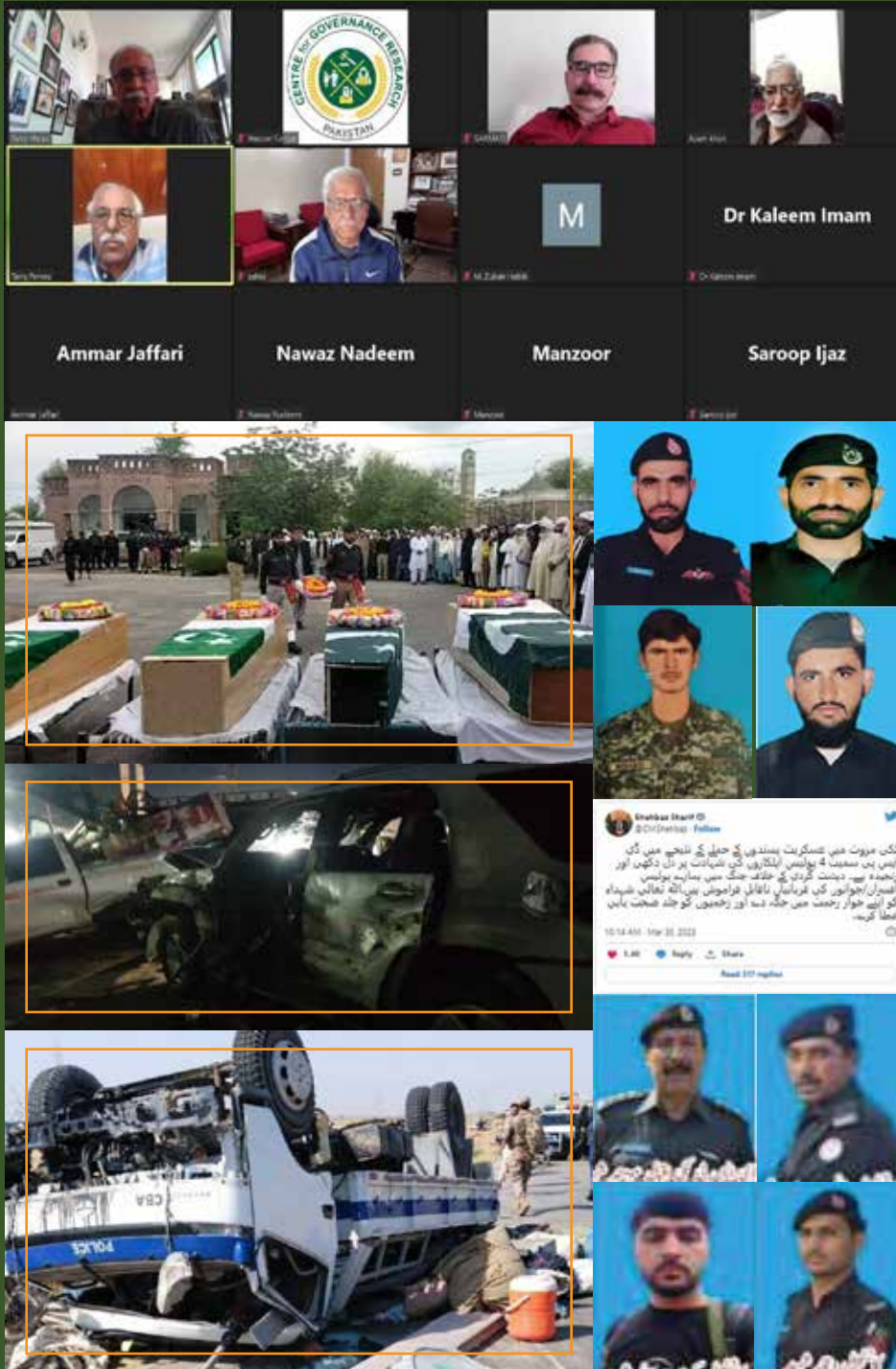
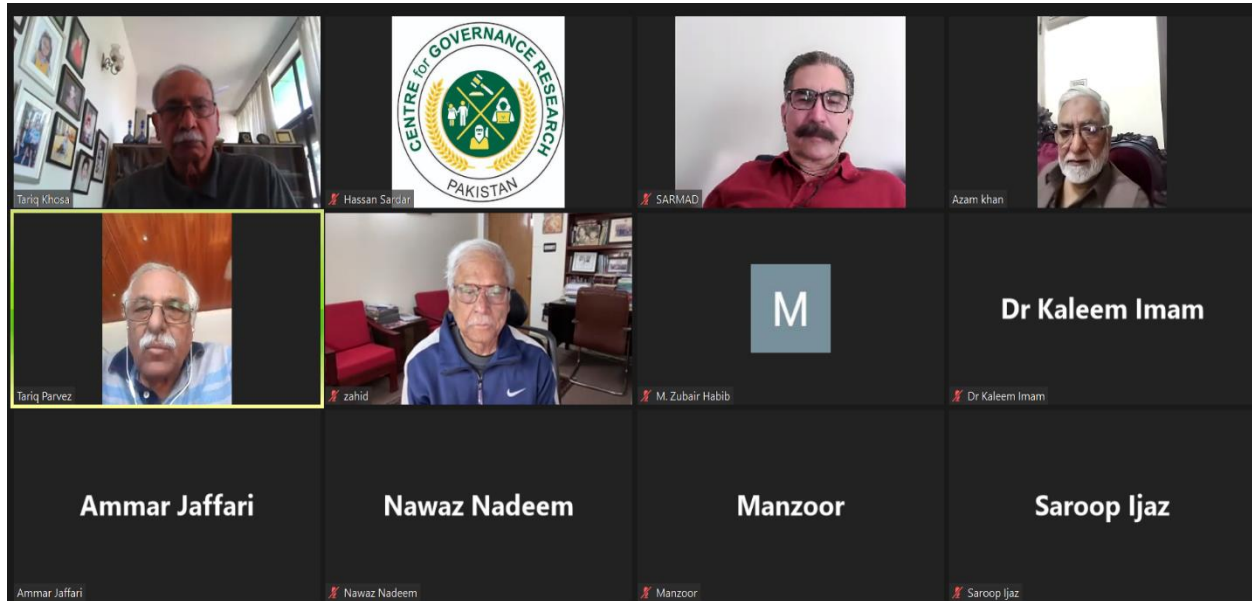


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NIOC's 41st Advisory Board Meeting



The 41st Advisory Board Meeting was held on Thursday 30 March 2023 at 12 pm. The following participated: Advisory Board: Tariq Parvez, Zahid Hussain, Manzoor Ahmed and Zubair Habib. Samina Ahmed and Jawaid Akhtar could not attend due to their other commitments. NIOC Directorate was represented by the following: Tariq Khosa, Sarmad Saeed, Kaleem Imam, Saroop Ijaz, Ammar Jaffri, Azam Khan, Nawaz Nadeem and Hassan Sardar.

The following matters came under discussion:

- 1) CGR-NIOC released the UNTOC Review Process implementation report for 2022 on behalf of the Civil Society Alliance on 14 March 2023. It was disseminated to the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GITOC) in Vienna, UNODC Civil Society Unit and UNTOC Secretariat in Vienna, Alliance of NGOs on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, Vienna.
- 2) The report containing the civil society perspective was appreciated by UNODC, GITOC and Alliance. It is being reflected as international best practice by UNODC-CSU.
- 3) As the UNTOC Review Process continues in 2023, CGR-NIOC has constituted three Working Groups on UNTOC Legal Aspects (Convener Barrister Umar Mahmood of Center for Human Rights); Human rights and Victims' Perspective (Co-conveners: Saroop Ijaz of Human Rights Watch and Fatima Haider of The Grief Directory); and Transnational Organized Crime (Convenor: Tariq Parvez of NIOC).

- 4) All three WGs will hold Focus Group Discussions and come up with Position Papers on behalf of the civil society.
- 5) UNTOC and Protocols will be discussed in the Constructive Dialogues in Vienna in May 2023 as well as during the CCPCJ the same month in Vienna. CGR-NIOOC will represent Pakistan's civil society perspective.
- 6) On a suggestion by the UNODC-CSU, CGR-NIOOC will plan a 2-day international conference in Islamabad in mid-November 2023 to focus on TOC and UNTOC Pilot Initiative follow-up. A proposal in this regard has been shared with UNODC-CSU and GITOC.
- 7) WG on TOC will focus on Human Trafficking and UNTOC TIP Protocol. WG on Human Rights will examine the draft Toolkit being developed by UNODC in the context of human rights and gender equality. WG of legal experts will focus on responses to the TIP Protocols articles under review in Cluster-1.
- 8) An engagement strategy for the current year with the Civil Society Alliance will be worked out by the Deputy Director NIOOC Sarmad Saeed.

'TTP wants to push govt out of KP to establish Sharia'

The outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) aimed to push the government of Pakistan out of Khyber Pakh-tunkhwa and establish Sharia by waging a terrorist campaign against the military and state, a US State Department report warned.

According to the 2021 Country Reports on Terrorism, the TTP uses the tribal belt along the Afghan-istan-Pakistan border to train and deploy its operatives.

TTP draws ideological guidance from Al Qaeda, while elements of AQ rely in part on TTP for safe haven in the Pashtun areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

“This arrangement has given TTP access to both AQ’s global terrorist network and its members’ operational expertise.”

The report also names major terrorist groups that focused on conducting attacks in Pakistan, including TTP, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and the militant Islamic State-Khorasan group (IS-K).

The report on terrorism notes that Pakistan “experienced significant terrorist activity” during the year in review, i.e. 2021.

Underlining the link between terrorism and lack of economic activities, the report points out that “the United States provides assistance to support trade and economic growth” in Pakistan.

The US assistance to Pakistan includes partnering with US businesses, civil society, and the regions bordering Afghanistan.

“This assistance is intended to improve the lives of the Pakistani people and support US objectives,” the report explains.

“The United States continues to support people-to-people exchanges to alleviate misunderstandings and complications in the bilateral relationship.”

In 2021, separatist militant groups conducted terrorist attacks against varied targets in Balochistan and Sindh provinces. Terrorists used a range of tactics

to attack varied targets, including Improvised Explosive Devices, Vehicle Borne Improvised Explosive Devices, suicide bombings, and targeted assassinations.

The report acknowledges that Pakistan took steps in 2021 to counter terror financing and to restrain some India-focused militant groups. Pakistan reviewed and revised its 2015 National Action Plan (NAP) to counter terrorism, reducing the NAP from a 20-point plan to 14 key points.

But the report complains that Pakistan made meagre progress on the most difficult aspects – specifically its pledge to dismantle all terrorist organisations without delay or discrimination.

The report identifies IS-K as another group which poses a significant threat to Pakistan and is composed primarily of former TTP members, the Afghan Taliban, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. It is estimated to have between 3,000 and 5,000 fighters and has claimed responsibility for attacks on civilians and government officials in Pakistan.

IS-K, elements of Al Qaeda, and terrorist groups targeting Pakistan, like TTP, have continued to use the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as a safe haven.

The report notes that Pakistan-focused terrorist groups continue to conduct attacks against Pak-istani military and civilian targets.

The report also mentions Pakistan's pledge to "ensure that no armed militias are allowed to function in the country," but complains that attackers continued to operate from Pakistani soil in 2021. The report identifies the Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) as the groups that carry out such attacks.

The report claims that although "Pakistan took some steps in 2021 to counter terror financing and to restrain some India-focused militant groups, authorities did not take sufficient action to dismantle them".

The report commends Pakistan's commitment to combat the trafficking of items that could contribute to the development of WMDs and their delivery systems. "Pakistan was a constructive and active participant in IAEA-hosted meetings and in the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism," it adds.

The report also highlights Washington's cooperation with Islamabad on regional security and counterterrorism, noting that the US government provides robust law enforcement, counternarcotics, and rule of law assistance for Pakistan, as well as limited defence, counterterrorism, and anti-money laundering assistance.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 1, 2023

Militant attacks surged in February, says report

Militant attacks witnessed a surge in the month of February this year, but the resultant deaths were down as compared to January.

An attack by the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on Karachi Police Headquarters was the most high-profile attack in the month of February. According to the statistics released by Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), militants carried out 58 attacks during the past month in which 62 people were killed, including 27 civilians, 18 security forces personnel and 17 militants while 134 people were injured, including 54 civilians and 80 security forces personnel. The database showed that for the first time after June 2015, the country faced 58 attacks in a single month. The upward trajectory of anti-state violence continued in February as 32 per cent more insurgents' attacks were recorded compared with January 2023. However, the number of deaths declined by 56 per cent compared with January.

In January, most deaths occurred due to the Peshawar Police Line suicide attack.

“The number of suicide attacks also increased but their impact was not as devastating as it was in January. In February 2023, three suicide attacks were reported in which nine people were killed and 37 were injured. In January, 106 people were killed and 216 injured in two suicide attacks,” the statement said on Wednesday. The month of February saw a considerable decline in militant attacks in mainland KP while attacks increased in erstwhile Fata (tribal districts of KP) and Balochistan. The number of attacks also went up in Punjab and Sindh. An attack by TTP at Karachi Police Headquarters was the most high-profile attack in the month of February.

In February, Pakistani security forces further stepped up their actions against militant groups and killed at least 55 suspected militants. At least 75 suspected militants were also arrested from across the country. The majority of the suspects were arrested in Punjab and KP.

According to statistics, the highest number of militant attacks were reported in Balochistan where PICSS recorded at least 22 attacks in which 25 people were killed and 61 injured.

Erstwhile Fata faced 16 attacks in which 16 people were killed and 39 injured. Mainland KP witnessed 13 attacks in which six people were killed and eight were injured. Punjab witnessed four militant attacks in which two people were killed and eight injured while 10 people were killed and 18 injured in three reported militant attacks in Sindh.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 2, 2023

Monsters amongst us

ANOTHER crime of bestial violence against a child has taken place, this time in Karachi. On Wednesday, a six-year-old was found brutally raped and murdered after she went missing three days ago. The child had been subjected to horrific sexual violence, possibly by more than one individual. An hours-long protest by her relatives and political workers was held on the National Highway and called off only when a senior police official assured them that all those responsible would be arrested. Two men, both neighbours of the victim, have been detained by the police for interrogation on information provided by witnesses.

There was a hue and cry after the January 2018 rape-murder of young Zainab Ansari in Kasur, a crime shocking enough to shake society out of its apathy and encourage some soul-searching. What had we become that the most vulnerable amongst us could be targeted in this manner and her life snuffed out so cruelly? There were also of course inevitable calls for hanging the perpetrator publicly, something that a civilised polity cannot possibly countenance. When the police zeroed in on the killer, DNA evidence established that he had earlier killed at least seven other children, indicating that the police did their job properly only after public pressure came to bear on them following Zainab's murder. That crime became the catalyst for the Zainab Alert, Response and Recovery Act, which enhances the punishment for offenders and aims to coordinate efforts to trace the victims. It also made it mandatory for the police to register an FIR for such a crime within two hours of it being brought to their notice. However, thus far little more than lip service has been paid to implementing the law. It is only when the police investigate each case thoroughly, when legislators ensure the law is applied, and a sex offenders' registry is set up, that we can take paedophiles off the streets and keep our children safe.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 3, 2023

Terrorist killed in North Waziristan IBO: ISPR

A terrorist was killed by security forces in an intelligence-based operation in North Waziristan district's Mir Ali general area, according to a statement from the military's media wing.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release said: "During the conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists. Resultantly, one terrorist was killed. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorist."

The ISPR added the slain militant was "actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens".

"Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the area," the press release reads.

The exchange of fire comes amid a surge in terrorist activities across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November.

On Sunday night, two soldiers embraced martyrdom in North Waziristan, officials had confirmed. According to local officials, armed militants had stormed a check post in the Noorkhel area.

On February 13, seven TTP militants were killed when cops repulsed an attack on a police van carrying three detained militants to Bannu from North Waziristan.

On Feb 3, the ISPR said two terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire between terrorists and security forces in the Esham area of North Waziristan district.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 3, 2023

9 policemen martyred, 13 wounded in bomb attack on Balochistan Constabulary van in Bolan



The photo shows the Balochistan Constabulary van that was targeted in Bolan.

At least nine personnel of the Balochistan Constabulary (BC) were martyred and 13 were wounded in a bomb attack in Bolan, police said.

Kachhi Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Mahmood Notezai confirmed the casualties to Dawn.com.

“The constabulary van was on its way back to Quetta from Sibi when an explosion occurred on the Kambri bridge in the area bordering the Sibi and Kachhi districts,” he said.

According to the official, a motorcyclist — believed to be a suicide bomber — rammed his vehicle into the police van. However, he said the exact nature of the attack will be ascertained after investigation.

SSP Notezai said the injured persons have been moved to the Sibi Civil Hospital, while bomb disposal squads and security personnel have arrived at the site.

The area has been cordoned off and a search operation is underway, he added.

A government helicopter has been sent to Bolan to move the injured persons to Quetta, a statement issued by the Balochistan Information Department said.

An emergency has also been imposed at hospitals across Quetta.

The Balochistan Constabulary (BC) is a department of the provincial police force that provides security at important events and in sensitive areas, including jails.

So far, no one has claimed responsibility for the attack.

The blast comes on the heels of attacks in KP and areas bordering Afghanistan. Since the talks with the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) broke down in November last year, the militant group has intensified its attacks while insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with it.

Condemnations

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo has condemned the attack and expressed grief at the number of casualties.

He said terrorist elements wanted to accomplish their wicked aims through cowardly actions, adding that they were conspiring to keep Balochistan under-developed by creating unrest and instability in the province.

“All such conspiracies will be made unsuccessful with the public’s support,” the chief minister vowed in a statement.

Bizenjo conveyed his sympathies to the families of the martyred, asserting that they were national heroes. “The sacrifices of the martyred will not go to waste,” he promised.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif condemned the incident as well and paid tribute to the valour of the martyred policemen, APP quoted the premier’s press release as saying.

He said terrorism in Balochistan was part of a nefarious design to create instability in the country and promised to free the country from the menace of terrorism.

SOURCE: DAWN, 6 MARCH, 2023

Trafficking scourge

MARIA TAIMUR

MODERN-DAY slavery takes different forms. In many places, it eludes attention because of the crafty methods employed to impose it. Trafficking in persons (TIP) involves the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons through the use of threat, force, deception and coercion with the purpose of exploitation. It is a crime locally and internationally, and a crime against an individual or individuals. Victims either have not given their consent, or any initial consent they gave has become meaningless because of the deception and violence used against them. Vulnerable persons usually go through many cycles of violence before traffickers exploit them.

The primary aim of such exploitation is to generate income. Trades that promote and use human trafficking include prostitution, escort work, pornography, forced labour (including farming, construction, tourism and domestic labour and organ harvesting). Trafficked persons can be used for transporting illegal items and committing crimes. It is important not only to observe the geographical and demographic patterns of TIP but also the different sections of society affected by it. Globally, it is a crime against men, women and children that is shaped by their country's circumstances. The inequalities faced in income, location, ethnicity, age and gender define the exploitation.

EVEN THOUGH MANY MEN FALL VICTIM TO TIP, GIRLS AND WOMEN ARE DISPROPORTIONATELY AFFECTED. SINCE GENDER DEFINES ACCESS TO POWER AND RESOURCES, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO APPLY A GENDER LENS WHEN DISCUSSING TIP. IT ESPECIALLY HELPS LAW ENFORCERS UNDERSTAND HOW THE EXPERIENCES OF BOTH MEN AND WOMEN ARE SHAPED BECAUSE OF THEIR GENDER. INTEGRATING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE MEANS GIVING DISTINCT ATTENTION TO GENDER IMBALANCES AND BIASES.

Gender inequalities have their roots in the social and cultural norms of a specific area. The distribution of power in social and economic contexts plays a pivotal role in defining gender roles. Gender discrimination and gender-based violence predispose girls and women to becoming victims of violence. In fact, GBV and TIP intersect at many points. The physical and emotional trauma of GBV increases a victim's vulnerability, which traffickers use to their advantage to further exploit the victim. Forced marriages, the barter of girls or women and abusive relationships make them an easy prey for organised crime. Financial inequalities and lack of access to technology, skill and opportunity renders them almost paralysed.

Most victims of trafficking are also victims of GBV. 'Intersectionality' is a term used to indicate that all oppression is linked. It is an acknowledgment that everyone has their own experience of

discrimination and that everything that can marginalise them on the basis of gender, race, class, religion, physical ability, etc, must be taken into account.

The profile of trafficked girls and women shows that they find themselves unable to break free from the cycle of exploitation. They believe violence against them is to be expected and blame themselves for their stigmatisation. They also hesitate to report it to law-enforcement officers out of fear of not being believed.

Understanding the profile of the offender also helps in finding probable victims of trafficking. According to a UNODC report on TIP, there are two broad categories of traffickers. First are those who are members of organised criminal networks, and then there are the small-time local criminals operating in isolation. The offender is usually a person the victim trusts or a relative. Both men and women work as traffickers and resort to threat, fear, deception and financial fraud to trap victims. In conservative communities, it is mostly women who are the facilitators or traffickers.

For members of the criminal justice system, it is necessary to recognise intersectionality and disregard the misperceptions related to victims. The violence experienced must not be minimised or used to suggest that the victim's own behaviour contributed to it. Dismantling gender bias must be achieved through reviewing procedures and the training of members of the criminal justice system. Inter-agency coordination in overlapping jurisdictions of the federal and provincial governments brings positive results in lessening TIP.

At the level of government, strategies against TIP can be formulated based on laws and their implementation. A country's geographical position can help evolve joint action plans with neighbouring countries. The local context of socioeconomic realities must be included in creating a national and regional interface to curb trafficking in persons. Mapping of internal trafficking and identifying patterns are also crucial steps in the prevention and detection of trafficking in persons.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 8, 2023

KP police set up unit to probe terror financing through extortion money

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police have established the Counter Terrorist Financing Unit (CTFU) to “reduce and investigate” the growing cases of extortion to finance terrorist activities.

“Extortion is taking place at a huge scale. This was a low priority area. There was confusion on who would deal with it in the first place,” KP Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayat Khan told Dawn about the initiative.

A standing order issued by the Central Police Office said the volume of terror financing, extortion and transfer of money through illegal means, inland and across the borders, was higher than the number of registered cases.

It added that the cases reported to the police were just a tip of the iceberg.

The IGP said the police had created the fiscal space to get specialised equipment and gadgets and the required personnel to prop up the unit and get it going.

“I hope to see it [CTFU] up and running by the middle of next month,” he said.

Data shared with Dawn revealed that the province recorded 155 cases of extortion payment in 2022 alone and that 60 extortion payers disclosed the amount to the police but a bigger number declined to do so.

According to it, the amount paid to extortionists was estimated at Rs41 million.

“The scale and amount of extortion is, of course, much bigger than we know,” the police chief said.

However, in a recent background briefing, a top security official put the figure at Rs1.06 billion. It is not clear how the law-enforcement agency reached that sum.

The standing order, while outlining the objectives of the CTFU was to reduce the threat of terrorist financing by ‘detecting, preventing, deterring and disrupting the flow of terrorist finance.’

“I am banking on a 30 per cent success rate,” Mr Khan said.

“Even if we are able to reduce it by 30 per cent, it would certainly dent the terrorists’ ability to finance their activities. Less money means less activity. It is better to do something than fighting it with meagre resources. At the moment, we are doing nothing.”

The standing order said the CTFC would undertake to understand terrorist finance activity by exploiting intelligence to prevent and detect illicit activity and investigate to disrupt and deter it by holding extortionists to account.

According to it, the CTFC will also review its legislative framework and propose new laws or amendments in the existing instruments with the view to enhance legal powers of law-enforcement agencies to disrupt and pursue terrorism financing in the face of more technological and complex threats that Pakistan and its interest might face.

Currently, Pakistan has several laws dealing with terrorist financing, including the NACTA Act, Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997, Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 2947, Anti-Money Laundering Act, 2010 and Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016.

As part of the effort, the police chief said he was formally setting up the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Financial Intelligence Cell that would be linked with financial units to receive suspicious transaction reports, work on them, and initiate their own suspicious activity reports.

“We are going to procure highly sophisticated technology and digital systems. We need to have a technological edge over terrorists financing their activities through extortion. If we can squeeze them, it will have an impact on the ground. Better technology and better methods will yield better results,” he said.

The IGP said increasing the police’s digital footprint was high on his agenda.

“There is technology available and we are certainly going to tap into it. With better reorganised force and specialised units with better technology, I am sure we can make a much better and much bigger impact to stem the tide,” he said.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 8, 2023

6 terrorists killed in North Waziristan IBO

Six terrorists were killed by security forces in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in North Waziristan's Datta Khel general area, according to a press release from the military's media wing.

The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) press release said: "On March 8, an IBO was conducted by security forces in general area Datta Khel, North Waziristan District. During intense exchange of fire, six terrorists were killed," adding that weapons and ammunition were recovered from them.

"The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and civilians," the press release added.

The ISPR said area locals "appreciated the security forces response and expressed their full support to eliminate menace of terrorism from the area".

The exchange of fire comes amid a surge in terrorist activities across the country, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) ended its ceasefire with the government in November.

Last week, a facilitator of suicide bombers was killed and two suspected militants were arrested during an IBO carried out by the security forces in North Waziristan Mirali tehsil.

On Feb 26, two soldiers embraced martyrdom in North Waziristan, officials had confirmed. According to local officials, armed militants had stormed a check post in the Noorkhel area.

On February 13, seven TTP militants were killed when cops repulsed an attack on a police van carrying three detained militants to Bannu from North Waziristan.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 8, 2023

Policeman martyred in attack on census team in DI Khan



A photo of Constable Gul Garaz who was martyred by armed men in DI Khan.

A cop was martyred while four others were injured in a terrorist attack targeting a census team in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Dera Ismail Khan district, according to police.

Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) Yaqoob Zulqarnain, a spokesman for DI Khan police, told Dawn.com that the terrorist attack occurred in the far-flung area of Gira Mastan within the limits of Daraban Police Station.

“The census team, accompanied by police personnel, was working in the area when unknown armed men attacked the police party,” he said. He added that the attackers fled after targeting the police mobile van.

Zulqarnain said that the five police personnel injured in the attack were moved to the District Headquarters Hospital for treatment where one of them died.

He said that police and other law enforcement agencies reached the area and initiated a search operation to hunt down the perpetrators, adding that no arrests had been made so far.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police identified the martyred officer as Constable Gul Faraz and the injured as ASI Hayatullah, Constable Aftab, Constable Mohammad Naeem and Sabir, the driver.



The banned militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack.

Surge in terrorism

Over the past few months, the law and order situation in the country has worsened, with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country.

Since the talks with the TTP broke down in November, the militant group has intensified its attacks, particularly targeting the police in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and areas bordering Afghanistan. Insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with the TTP.

According to statistics released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based think-tank, January 2023 remained one of the deadliest months since July 2018, as 134 people lost their lives – a 139 per cent spike – and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 8, 2023

Punjab CTD arrests 12 terrorists linked to Al Qaeda, TTP

The Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested 12 alleged terrorists, belonging to the banned Al-Qaeda and Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), it said in a statement.

The statement added that they were arrested during a “covert operation” from three cities of the province, including Lahore, from where three “terrorists” were arrested “nearby a sensitive area”.

The CTD spokesperson said the “terrorist network wanted to conduct subversive activities in sensitive districts”.

Explosives and material used to make suicide jackets were also recovered from the alleged terrorists, the statement added.

The CTD said they were identified during the interrogation of 61 suspects. Investigations were under way after registering a case against them, it further said.

In the current week, 797 combing operations have been conducted, during which 159 suspects have been arrested, the CTD stated.

The CTD asserted: “No stone will be left unturned in making terrorist elements reach their end.”

Heightened security concerns

Over the past few months, the law and order situation in the country – especially in KP and Balochistan has worsened – with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country.

Since the talks with the TTP broke down in November, the militant group has intensified its attacks, particularly targeting the police in KP and areas bordering Afghanistan. Insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with the outlawed TTP.

An attack by the outlawed TTP on Karachi Police Headquarters was the most high-profile attack in the month of February. A month before that, a powerful suicide blast in a mosque in Peshawar Police Lines killed 84 people and injured many others.

According to a report released recently by Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS), militant attacks witnessed a surge in the month of February this year, but the resultant deaths were down as compared to January.

The report said Punjab witnessed four militant attacks in which two people were killed and eight injured while 10 people were killed and 18 injured in three reported militant attacks in Sindh.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 10, 2023

2 police officials martyred, 5 injured in terrorist attacks on census teams in Tank, Lakki Marwat



Photos of Constables Dil Jan (L) and Khan Nawab (R) who were martyred in terrorist attacks on census teams in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Two police officials were martyred while five others received injuries in terrorist attacks on policemen deployed on census duty in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Tank and Lakki Marwat districts, police and Rescue-1122 confirmed.

Constable Khan Nawab was martyred while police constables Shah Nawaz and Aslam Khan, Levies official Bismillah, Frontier Constabulary official Abdullah and driver Eid Jan received bullet injuries in an armed attack from terrorists on a police van deployed for the security of census staff in Tank's Kot Azam area.

The injured officials retaliated and forced the attackers to retreat who later escaped from the scene. Meanwhile, a fresh contingent of police reached the spot, cordoned off the area and started a search operation.

The martyr and injured were moved to District Headquarters Hospital Tank for medical treatment where their condition was stated as being stable.

In another attack in Lakki Marwat's Parwala village near Sadar police station, two terrorists targeted Constable Dil Jan deployed on census duty and martyred him on the spot.



The terrorists managed to escape after the incident. A heavy police contingent reached the spot and surrounded the area and initiated a search operation.



Similarly last week, a cop was martyred while four others were injured in a terrorist attack targeting a census team in KP's Dera Ismail Khan district. The banned militant group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the attack.



Surge in terrorism

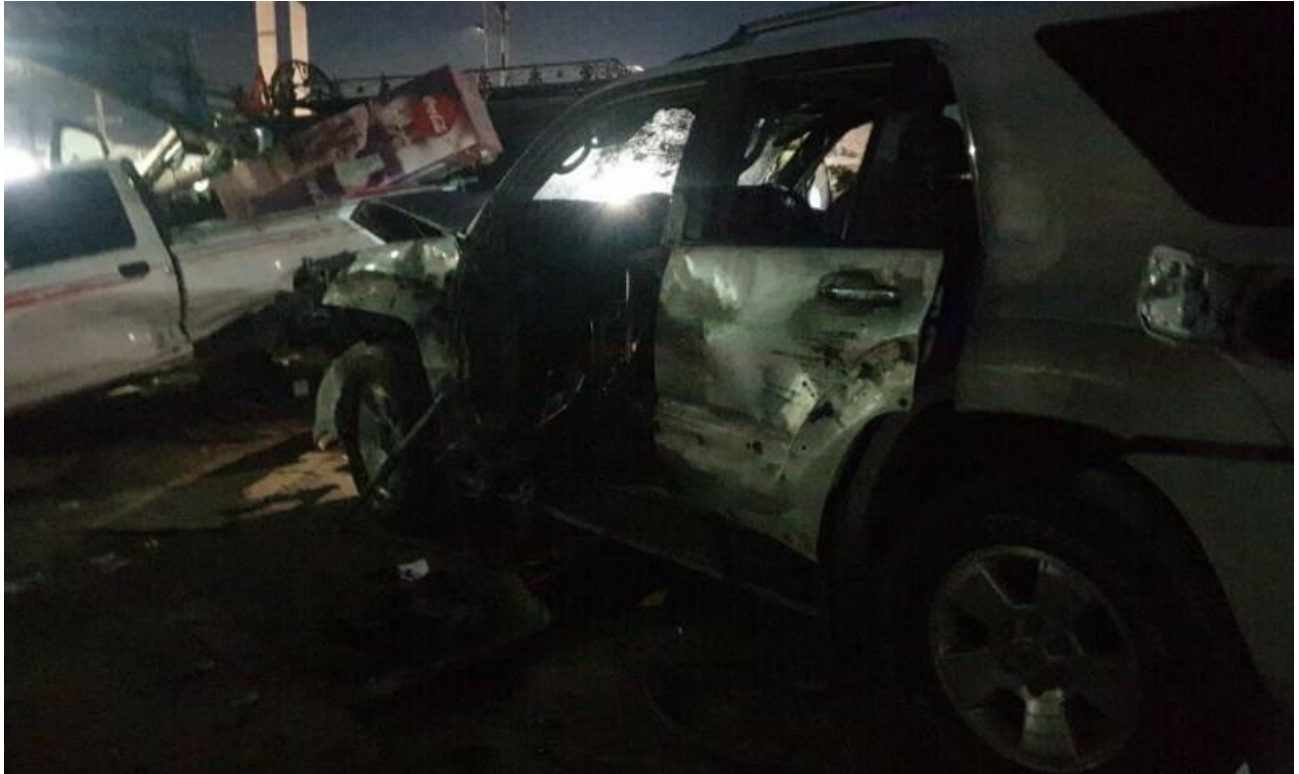
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SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 13, 2023

2 dead, 8 injured in Khuzdar blast



The site of a car bomb blast in Khuzdar.

Two people were killed while eight others were injured in a blast in Balochistan's Khuzdar district, with Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari calling it a terrorist incident.

Khuzdar Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Fahad Khosa told Dawn.com that the blast took place at Sultan Road near Do Talwar Chowk.

He said that the bomb was attached to the vehicle using magnets and then detonated through a remote device.

He said that as a result of the blast, 20-year-old Naveed Shahwani — the son of Dawn correspondent Wahid Shahwani — and a trader named Amanullah, both of whom were in the vehicle, had died while eight others were injured.

The SSP also said that initial reports suggested the perpetrators had targeted the trader.

FM Bilawal, in a statement, condemned the “terrorist attack”. He said that those targeting innocent civilians had nothing to do with the nation or religion and could not even be called humans.

He further said that the government and the nation were intent on eradicating terrorism.

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo also condemned the blast, and expressed sorrow over the deaths and offered condolences to the families.

“Terrorists are targeting innocent citizens. The plot to destabilise the province by spreading terror and chaos will be foiled,” he said in a statement, adding that terrorism should be condemned by all.

“We will have to stand united against terrorists,” he said, directing the officials concerned to make the security in Khuzdar more effective.

Last month, two police officers lost their lives and another two were critically injured when a magnetic bomb attached to their vehicle exploded in Khuzdar. Police officials said the bomb exploded when the vehicle was on patrol near Jhalawan Complex.

The driver of the vehicle lost his life on the spot while three cops were injured, one of whom later died in the hospital.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 14, 2023

Two approaches

MOHAMMAD ALI BABAKHEL

TRADITIONAL approaches to prevent and counter violent extremism have often relied on reactive and security-based responses. Such measures include identifying individuals and groups involved in VE, curbing financing that sustains their efforts, preventing their movement, and disrupting their plans and activities.

The two most popular approaches to combating VE are whole-of-government (WoG) and whole-of-society (WoS). The former aims to prevent and counter VE based on an integrated government response, the second to prevent and counter VE via a role for civil society and other non-governmental and government actors.

An effective WoG approach needs coordination among government actors, including police, the interior ministries, labour, women's development, education, youth, religious affairs and social welfare. Under a WoS approach, preventing VE requires dialogue and cooperation between government and non-governmental actors. Youth and women are the preferred targets of extremist narratives, but they can also be powerful agents of social change. Adoption of WoS creates space for a partnership between the state and its citizens.

Kinetic responses don't address socioeconomic causes, and may exacerbate radicalisation and limit rights. Preventing radicalisation requires resolving the grievances and motivation that lead people to join ext-remist groups. A security-based approach alone is insufficient to root out terrorism. Fighting extremism demands that youth, families, women, victims of terrorism, religious, cultural and educational leaders, civil society and media play their role.

A WoS approach faces multiple irritants. CSOs are often seen as suspicious, unable to address security issues, and working to get grants. Conducting research in extremism issues is considered out of bounds, and researchers often avoid showing interest in this. Partnerships are often hampered by poor awareness and skills in civil society, and CSOs may not know how to help prevent extremism. In developing societies, lack of trust between the state and CSOs creates hurdles.

Media coverage of terrorism is not a routine journalistic affair. Terrorism is not only an act of violence but also communication. In covering terrorism, the media may play a positive or negative role. The way terrorism is reported has a negative impact on public safety and LEAs' efforts. Exaggerated and biased coverage may polarise communities, fan hatred and encourage terrorist groups. Responsible reporting fulfils professional as well as social duties. A responsible media not only reports incidents of terrorism but also encourages the debate regarding the push-

and-pull factors and uses a diagnostic approach. Journalists should be familiar with national commitments to international human rights law, privacy and the presumption of innocence.

Militants prefer innovative technological options. Hence, including IT specialists in the counter-narrative is essential. A few countries have incorporated engagement with formerly violent extremists, which has enhanced understanding about the prevention of extremism.

Traditionally, women have been presented as victims, but research indicates an active role by women in supporting or being an active partner in VE, eg, gathering intelligence, recruiting and mobilising resources. Militant groups enlist female fighters to shame men. Increasing women's role in VE prevention requires them to play a larger part in decision-making in the security sector, and to include them in peace processes.

Parental influence is very important too. Where parents have little influence over their children's decisions, they are less able to guard against their radicalisation. 'Parent-son' ties can represent gaps. While fathers are away, mothers in developing societies have to shoulder the responsibilities. They are well placed to recognise the early signs of radicalisation; but unless they're empowered they can't do much. Parents should be the first ones to detect proclivities to violence. But they are not always equipped to address psychological, sociological and ideological issues. In a recent attack in Karachi, reportedly, for the last few months, the parents of one attacker were unaware of their son's whereabouts. Training parents to recognise and deconstruct VE narratives will pay dividends.

For two decades, the US and its allies waged a war against terrorism, yet, the virus of extremism infected many societies. Terrorists may be killed, but extremism won't be.

NAP I makes no reference to any policy to address VE. NAP II lists the formulation, institutionalisation and implementation of the CVE policy. Last year, Nacta drafted the national CVE policy, which awaits approval. Pakistan needs separate CT and CVE policies, plans and laws to ensure clarity.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 18, 2023

Pakistan remains 'country of concern', says US HR report

WASHINGTON: In its first assessment of the human rights situation in Pakistan under the incumbent government, the US State Department notes the human rights situation in the country remains a cause of concern.

The annual State Department report refers to several events that occurred in 2022, including former premier Imran Khan's Azadi March to protest his removal from office.

The report also refers to PTI chairman's claim that his march to Islamabad was impeded due to barriers imposed by the federal government, and that participants were subjected to tear gas and arrests. "Two participants reportedly died, and thousands were arrested by security forces."

The document, however, also points out, "There were no reports of restrictions on political parties participating in elections, except for those prohibited due to terrorist affiliations" in 2022.

The report notes that during this period, judges ordered media regulatory agencies to enforce constitutional bans on content critical of the military or judiciary, "compelling media to censor politicians' speeches and election-related coverage deemed anti-judiciary or antimilitary."

Organisations that monitored press freedom "reported direct pressure on media outlets to avoid content on possible military influence over judicial proceedings against politicians and positive reporting of opposition leaders," the report adds.

The State Department report, however, acknowledges that in the elections held in 2022, "in most areas there was no interference with the right of political parties and candidates to organize campaigns, run for election, or seek votes."

In Balochistan, however, there were reports that "security agencies and separatist groups harassed local political organisations, such as the Balochistan National Party and the Baloch Students Organisation," the report adds.

According to the State Department during 2022, its monitors received credible reports of unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government or its agents; forced disappearances by the government or its agents; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government or its agents.

Conditions remained harsh and life-threatening prisons across Pakistan where arbitrary detention of political and other prisoners also happened.

Pakistan also imposes serious restrictions on free expression and media, including violence against journalists, unjustified arrests and disappearances of journalists, censorship, and criminal defamation laws.

The report also refers to laws against blasphemy, serious restrictions on internet freedom and substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association.

The report says that Pakistan also has serious government corruption; lack of investigation of and accountability for gender-based violence; and crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of racial and ethnic minorities. Crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or intersex persons are also common, it adds.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 21, 2023

Brigadier among five security men martyred in two attacks

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN / D.I. KHAN: Five security personnel, including a senior military officer, were martyred in separate attacks in South Waziristan and Dera Ismail Khan.

According to an ISPR statement, Brig Mustafa Kamal Barki from Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), while leading the encounter from the front, embraced martyrdom and seven soldiers got injuries, two of them critical, in South Waziristan.

Police sources said Brig Barki was travelling from Angoor Ada to Wana when they came under attack in the Khamrang area, close to Afghan border. His driver also embraced martyrdom in the attack which took place around 6pm, they said.

No group claimed responsibility for the attack till late evening.

Brig Barki's family also confirmed the reports of his martyrdom.

The ISPR said Brig Barki and his team put up a valiant resistance against the terrorists during an encounter and the officer sacrificed his life for peace of the motherland. The defence forces and intelligence agencies pledge to reaffirm and demonstrate firm resolve to eliminate the menace of terrorism from every inch of the country, the statement said.

Earlier in another encounter, security officials killed three terrorists before embracing martyrdom in Dera Ismail Khan, officials said.

According to ISPR, terrorists opened fire on a police checkpoint in general area of Khutti on the night of March 20 and 21. Security forces immediately cordoned the area, blocking all possible escape routes, and intercepted fleeing terrorists in the general area of Saggu. After an intense exchange of fire, three terrorists were eliminated and weapons and ammunition were seized from their custody.

During the exchange of fire, Havaldar Mohammad Azhar Iqbal, 42, resident of Lodhran; Naik Mohammad Asad, 34, resident of Khanewal; and Sepoy Mohammad Essa, 22, resident of South Waziristan, having fought gallantly, embraced martyrdom. A police official who sustained injuries was shifted to D.I. Khan hospital.

According to the ISPR, an operation is being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area. The statement said the army was determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of brave soldiers further strengthen their resolve.

Security forces have killed at least 142 militants in last three months as operations to eliminate terrorism from the country continue. At least 1,007 militants were arrested in as many as 6,921 operations by security forces across the country during this period. In KP, a total of 1,960 operations were conducted, out of which 1,516 were area-domination operations, 301 were intelligence-based operations, and 143 were area-sanitisation operations. In the KP operations, 98 militants were killed and 540 were arrested.

While expressing his condolences, former premier and PTI chairman Imran Khan tweeted, “Saddened to learn that Brig. Mustafa Kamal Burki lost his life in a terrorist ambush. My condolences and prayers go to the family.”

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 22, 2023

DSP among four police officers martyred in Lakki Marwat blast



A deputy superintendent of police (DSP) and three constables were martyred when an improvised explosive device (IED) went off on the Pirwala Road in Lakki Marwat, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police said.

According to the police, the blast occurred as the personnel were en route to the Saddar police station, where policemen were fending off an attack under way.

“The DSP, along with a heavy contingent, left for the police station after he received information regarding a terrorist attack there.

“On the way, near the Pirwala turn, an IED blast occurred in which DSP Iqbal Momand and constables Ali Marjan, Waqar and Karamatullah were martyred,” it added.

Lakki Marwat police spokesperson Shahid Hameed told Dawn.com that terrorists opened fire at the Saddar police station in the early hours today. Resultantly, an exchange of fire took place between the police and the terrorists.



During the gunfight, six policemen were injured, he said. The wounded men, identified as Head Constable Farooq Shah and constables Amanatullah, Asghar, Sardar Ali and Arif have been moved to the Lakki City Hospital.

A police statement also revealed that the militants were equipped with advanced and heavy weaponry. "The police were on alert and the attackers had to flee when the police returned fire."

The terrorists fled while taking advantage of the darkness, it added.

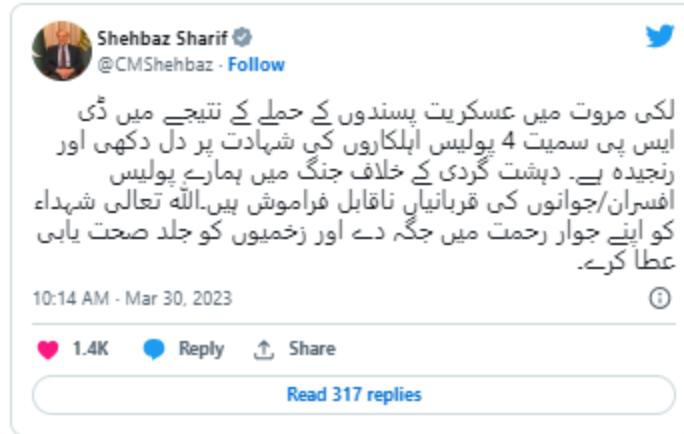
Later, funerals of the slain policemen were offered at the Police Line, which was attended by senior police officers.

The outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed the attack in a statement.

Talking to Dawn.com, former chief of the National Counter Terrorism Authority, Ihsan Ghani, said that the police are a "soft target" for armed groups.

Ghani, who has also served as chief of the KP police, said that police routinely come under attack as they are on the streets and perform duties anywhere. "We are now alone in the war on terrorism," he added.

Condemning the incident, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the sacrifices of police officers in the war against terrorism were unforgettable and prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured persons.



In a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office, PM Shehbaz paid homage to the martyred DSP and policemen in a statement issued by the prime minister's office.

"Police are performing magnificent duties against the terrorist as the first line of defence. Elimination of terrorism is a must for Pakistan's survival and development," PM Shehbaz said.

The prime minister extended condolences to the bereaved families. He also said that the police at Saddar station bravely countered the terrorist attack.

Surge in terrorism

The latest attack comes as terrorism in Pakistan has been rearing its head again. Over the past few months, the law and order situation in the country – especially in KP and Balochistan has worsened – with terrorist groups executing attacks with near impunity across the country.

Since the talks with the TTP broke down in November, the militant group has intensified its attacks, particularly targeting the police in KP and areas bordering Afghanistan. Insurgents in Balochistan have also stepped up their violent activities and formalised a nexus with the outlawed TTP.

In Jan, a powerful suicide blast in a mosque in Peshawar Police Lines killed 84 people and injured many others.

According to statistics released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, an Islamabad-based think-tank, January 2023 remained one of the deadliest months since July 2018, as 134 people lost their lives – a 139 per cent spike – and 254 received injuries in at least 44 militant attacks across the country.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 30, 2023

Appointment of imams

SAIF ALI KHAN BABAKHEL

EXTREMISM and intolerance are straining the social fabric of societies. When a state fails to regulate its religious affairs and institutions, it is likely that radical elements within some of these institutions may undermine its authority. Due to the state's loose control on religious institutions, the latter have been used as breeding grounds for extremism.

In Muslim countries, religious misconstruction serves as the foundation of extremism. Whereas in non-Muslim countries, the vacuum created by the absence of religion is filled by Islamophobia. Religious extremism continues to be the common denominator, regardless of the state religion.

Issues related to religion and religious leaders are often seen as sensitive and are swept under the rug. The criterion for the appointment of imams remains a key issue. In Pakistan, the state enjoys little control over the appointment of imams. It is typically subject to local approval. Although in prominent mosques the government appoints imams, prayer leaders of local mosques seldom go through the same vetting process. The absence of a screening process poses a serious challenge.

The menace of extremism can be curbed if mosques and religious leaders are regulated by the government. In Türkiye, the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) is tasked with the appointment and supervision of imams. Diyanet is entrusted with drafting a weekly sermon which is delivered in mosques across Türkiye. In Saudi Arabia, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance is in charge of the affairs of mosques and the appointment and supervision of imams.

In Iran, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance oversees religious affairs, including the selection of imams. The potential imams are assessed based on their religious knowledge and loyalty to the state. The Friday Prayer Council is responsible for the distribution of pamphlets to around 900 Iranian cities weekly. These pamphlets comprise guidelines according to which the imams are to address Friday prayers.

The National Action Plan was formulated to root out terrorism and extremism. NAP I highlighted the need for regulation of religious seminaries. Point 10 of NAP called for the registration and regulation of religious seminaries. The revised NAP has been divided into two domains: kinetic and non-kinetic. The regulation of madressahs falls under the non-kinetic domain. In Pakistan, as per federal law, all madressahs must be registered and licensed by the government. In the capital, however, numerous seminaries are operating illegally.

Out of a total of 562 madressahs operating in Islamabad, approximately 250 are without a license. The authorities seldom take action against such seminaries, fearing a backlash from religious

parties. In an effort to register and mainstream madressahs, the Directorate General of Religious Education was established under the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training (MFEPT) in 2019.

By May 2021, the DGRE had registered over 5,000 madressahs in collaboration with the Ittehad Tanzeematul Madaris Pakistan (ITMP). In KP, seminaries were placed under the jurisdiction of the education department. However, more than five years after the announcement, the registration of madressahs is far from complete.

The National Counter-Terrorism Authority was tasked with revising the curriculum of religious seminaries in collaboration with the HEC. Two committees were formed to overlook the revision of the religious curriculum; however, no significant progress has been observed.

Certain measures can be put into place to ensure the systematic appointment of imams. Firstly, proper education and training must be ensured. This can be achieved by collaborating with the ITMP and establishing a body that specifically oversees the training of imams. Screening and selection processes are needed to ensure that the individual is suitable for the position.

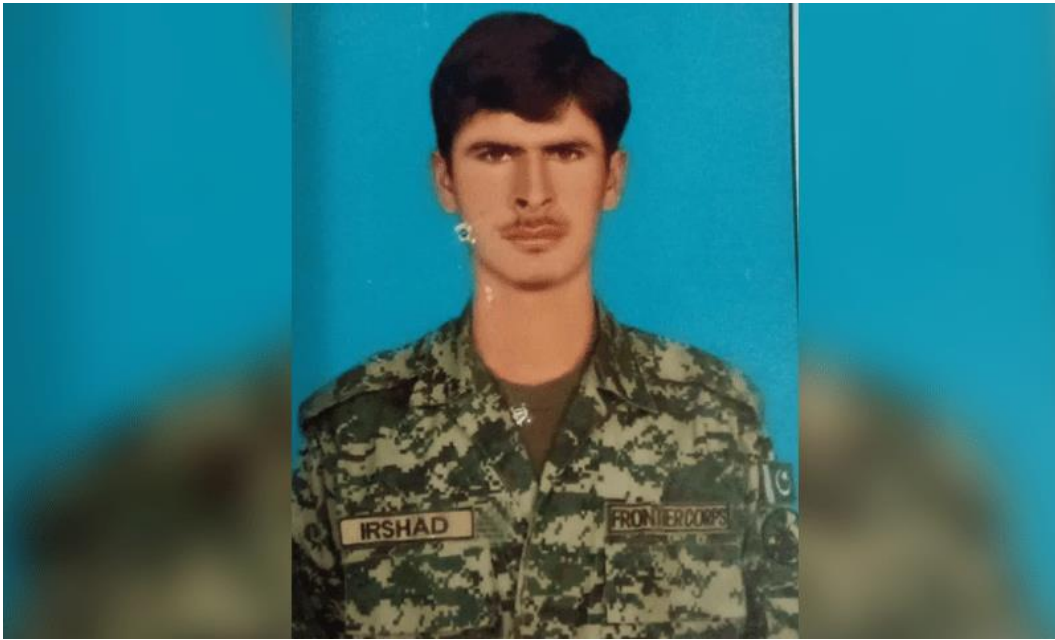
Providing the imams with a conducive environment will ensure the efficient imparting of knowledge. This can be achieved by establishing an institution under the MFEPT that assesses aspiring imams and sets a benchmark against which future aspirants can be evaluated.

There is a dire need for evaluation. Periodic evaluation will ensure that the imams are carrying out their duties effectively. Evaluation may include feedback from local mosque committees. The accountability of imams must be ensured to prevent the violation of laws.

Sermons at Friday prayers need to be regulated. An umbrella organisation can be devised, functioning under the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, which should be tasked with regulating Friday sermons. Such an endeavour can only be successful if there is cooperation between the centre and provinces.

SOURCE: DAWN, MARCH 31, 2023

Soldier martyred during exchange of fire with terrorists in North Waziristan



Martyred Sepoy Irshad Ullah

A soldier embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire with terrorists in the Mir Ali area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's North Waziristan district, the army's media wing said.

According to a press release from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), 29-year-old Sepoy Irsha Ullah was martyred during the battle. "Own troops fought bravely and effectively engaged the terrorists' location," the statement said.

The ISPR added that "sanitisation" activity was being carried out to eliminate any terrorists found in the area.

"Pakistan's security forces are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve," it said.

According to Radio Pakistan, the sepoy's funeral prayers were later offered in Karak district.

The report added that senior serving and retired officers, soldiers, relatives and a large number of people attended the funeral where the sepoy was laid to "rest with full military honour".

Militant killed in Sibi IBO

Meanwhile, a terrorist was killed during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the general area of Noshman located in Balochistan's Sibi.

"From March 30, onwards an IBO has been initiated to intercept a group of terrorists operating in general area Noshman, south of Sibi," said an ISPR press release. "The terrorists were linked with the targeting of civilians in the area besides harassment of coal mine owners."

The ISPR added that multiple ambushes had been laid along different routes in the area frequented by terrorists for the past two days based on credible information.

"Resultantly, a party of three terrorists was intercepted while moving towards their hideout. On being blocked, they opened fire on the security forces," the ISPR said. "During the ensuing heavy exchange of fire, one terrorist has been killed while two others have been injured."

The ISPR said a cache of arms and ammunition was also recovered.

"Pakistan army, in step with the nation, remains determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging peace, stability, and progress of Balochistan," the statement concluded.

SOURCE: DAWN MARCH 31, 2023