

Mastung bombing

INSTABILITY continues to haunt Balochistan, as Friday morning's bombing in Mastung has shown. At least nine fatalities have been confirmed – mostly children – while at the time of writing no group had claimed responsibility for this atrocity. Considering Balochistan's complex vortex of violence, both separatist militants or religiously inspired insurgents could be behind the act of terrorism, though initial impressions suggest the latter may be responsible. The bombing occurred near a hospital and a school, while a police vehicle, that was reportedly going to escort polio vaccinators, was badly damaged, with a policeman among the victims. Statements from the prime minister and the provincial chief minister suggest that children were the prime targets of the attack. Regardless of the perpetrators' ideological background, the targeting of children is the worst form of terrorism, and needs to be strongly condemned by all quarters. Sadly, Mastung is no stranger to violence. Last year, an Eid-i-Milad procession in the town was targeted, causing over 50 fatalities. Over the last 13 years, there have also been a number of high-profile sectarian attacks in Mastung. While separatist forces do operate in this area, it is believed to be a hotbed of extremist and sectarian actors. This lends credence to the impression that extremist militants may have carried out the latest attack. At one point Lashkar-i-Jhangvi was believed to have a strong presence in this part of Balochistan, and some believe these LJ cadres may have joined the self-styled Islamic State group.

If it is proved that Friday's attack was the handiwork of LJ, IS, or similarly inspired groups, the state would have a fresh security challenge to confront. While Balochistan has recently witnessed frequent separatist attacks, extremist outfits have been less 'prolific'. Countering both a separatist insurgency, and militant onslaughts inspired by groups such as the TTP and IS, is a formidable problem for the state. Despite the considerable presence of security forces in Balochistan, law and order remains poor. This must change as far too many precious lives – of both civilians and security personnel – have been lost in terrorist attacks. With regard to extremist and sectarian groups, the state had in the past 'decapitated' such outfits by neutralising their leaders. These groups cannot be allowed to reorganise and further destabilise Balochistan. Thorough intelligence and proactive action is required to check such malign actors.

Source: Dawn, November 2, 2024

Concerning measures

AN old law is being resurrected. Why? It is a question that the government must answer.

On Friday, the law minister quietly introduced a bill in the National Assembly to give military and civil armed forces the power to 'pre-emptively' detain any individual facing terrorism charges for a period of up to three months. The bill, which proposes several amendments to the Anti-Terrorism Act, was quickly referred to the relevant committee by the deputy Speaker without any discussion of its salient features. It aims to resurrect several amendments to Clause 11EEEE of the ATA which had lapsed in 2016.

Specifically, the bill seeks power for the authorities to detain any individual for up to three months if they "pose a threat to national security". The detained individual may not have actually committed a wrong: under the law, "reasonable suspicion" will be good enough for the state to deprive them of their liberty.

The rationale provided for preventive detention has long been the same: in times of insecurity, drastic measures are 'necessary' for maintaining order. Lately, there has been a sharp resurgence in terrorist activity, which has resulted in the loss of many lives, particularly among security personnel. As a result, there is growing pressure on security forces to restore peace in the affected areas and clamp down on militants and miscreants.

Unfortunately, Pakistan's legal system lacks versatility and often appears inadequately equipped to deal with the various challenges faced by security forces and the state while conducting counterterrorism operations and prosecuting dangerous terrorists. For example, it has been a long-standing complaint from security forces that they catch dangerous terrorists after much effort, only to see the courts set them free again. It is in this context that legal cover is repeatedly sought for 'emergency measures' that violate fundamental rights.

But it is hardly as simple as that. There are countless examples of preventive detention laws being used for much more than simply combating terrorism. They have proven extremely useful, for example, for punishing political opponents and dissidents. It cannot be ignored that the language of the amendments proposed by the law minister is vague enough for the law to be used against anyone whom the state wants to put behind bars for a short period. "Reasonable suspicion" can mean anything in a country where ordinary citizens are routinely charged with terrorism merely for participating in unruly protests.

Given how frequently the ATA is used when political opponents are to be taught a lesson, any measure that enhances its potential for abuse should be a cause for alarm. It is for this reason that the government must seek political input and consensus on the changes it is seeking to make and be open about its intentions.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 3, 2024

Three terrorists killed in Balochistan's Musakhel district

The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Balochistan conducted an operation in the Musakhel district in the early hours of Sunday, where three terrorists were killed and two were arrested, said a CTD spokesperson.

According to the spokesperson, the CTD and law enforcement agencies received “credible information” about terrorists belonging to the proscribed Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) active in the Rarhasham area of Musakhel.

“Forces [including] CTD, FC and police were deployed in general area and late at night one of the deployed force contingent came across a group of 10-12 terrorists, moving towards main road,” the spokesperson said in a statement.

“The terrorists were intercepted and heavy exchange of fire followed.”

During the gun battle, three terrorists were killed and two others were apprehended, according to the spokesperson. However, “five to seven of them managed to flee because of night conditions”, he said, adding that a search for them was underway.

The spokesperson added that weapons and ammunition were seized from the terrorists during the operation, while the bodies were shifted to a hospital and the arrested terrorists were being interrogated.

“[An] FIR (first information report) has been registered with CTD. Further information will be shared as it develops,” said the spokesperson.

Earlier, the Balochistan CTD registered an FIR against unidentified terrorists who carried out an improvised explosive device (IED) blast in Mastung on Friday.

Nine people, including five children, were killed and 29 were injured in the blast, drawing condemnation from Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti who lamented that terrorists had now started targeting innocent children along with poor labourers.

The country, particularly the Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, has seen a sharp uptick in terrorism-related incidents over the last few months.

Terror attacks declined by 24 per cent in September compared to August, but they witnessed surges in August and July, according to monthly security reports.

In 2023, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counter-terror operations. Overall fatalities, including those of outlaws, mark a record six-year high.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 3, 2024

4 FC men martyred in South Waziristan attack

SOUTH WAZIRISTAN/KHYBER: At least Seven people, including four Frontier Corps personnel, lost their lives in three attacks across South Waziristan Upper and Tirah in Khyber.

In South Waziristan Upper, a bomb disposal vehicle of the security forces was attacked with an improvised explosive device (IED) in the Karam area of tehsil Ladha. The IED was followed by shooting. As a result, four FC men were martyred and five others wounded, sources told Dawn.

Two of the injured personnel were in critical condition and shifted to Scouts Hospital in Wana. "Security forces cordoned off the area immediately and launched a search operation," sources said. There was no official statement by the military's media wing till this report went to press.

In a separate incident, militants targeted a vehicle in the Daza Ghundai area. As a result, a Counter-Terrorism Department official was martyred and two civilians were wounded.

In Khyber's Tirah Valley, two children were killed and five were injured when a mortar shell, fired from an unknown location, landed in the area.

Sources said that a group of students of a government primary school, Hashim Khan Kalay in the Bhutan Shareef area of Bar Qambar Khel were on their way home when a mortar fired from an undisclosed direction hit the nearby houses and a mosque.

They said that while the mortar shell caused a fire in some houses and the mosque in the Sra Cheena locality, the shrapnel hit six school children, injuring them critically while a girl was also injured in the fire.

Residents of Bhutan Shareef, near the border with Orakzai district, said that 10-year-old Abidullah and his sister Kulsoom succumbed to injuries while on their way to hospital in Peshawar. Other injured students were shifted to hospital, with most of them having injuries on their faces.

Although there was no immediate confirmation about who fired the mortar shell, there were speculations from some official quarters that two rival groups of the banned TTP were at war in the area and they had been targeting each other's positions with heavy weapons.

Local sources could not be approached to confirm the veracity of these reports.

It may be noted that a quadcopter attack on October 21 in the Peer Mela area of Tirah injured at least 15 persons, mostly children who were later shifted to Peshawar for treatment.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 7, 2024

4 soldiers martyred, 5 terrorists killed during exchange of fire in South Waziristan



Naib Subedar Taib Shah, Lance Naik Gulab Zaman, Lance Naik Muzammil Mehmood and Lance Naik Habibullah.

Security forces have killed five terrorists during an exchange of fire in the South Waziristan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, while four soldiers were martyred in the operation, the military's media wing said.

According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), "During the intense fire exchange, four brave sons of the soil, Naib Subedar Taib Shah (38), Lance Naik Gulab Zaman (30), Lance Naik Muzammil Mehmood (30) and Lance Naik Habibullah (28), having fought gallantly, embraced" martyrdom."

A sanitisation operation was being conducted to eliminate any other Khawarij found in the area, the ISPR said.

"Security forces of Pakistan are determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve" it added.

In July, the government, through an official notification, designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan.

The country has lately witnessed a sharp uptick in the number of attacks targeting security forces, other law enforcement agencies, and security checkpoints, particularly in Balochistan and KP.

Attacks escalated after the TTP broke a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government in 2022 and vowed to target security forces.

On November 2, four terrorists were killed during an intelligence-based operation in KP's South Waziristan region.

In another incident on Nov 4, security forces killed seven terrorists in separate operations on Monday, with one terrorist killed in Balochistan and the other six killed during two operations in KP.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 7, 2024

Terror in Dukki

TARIQ PARVEZ

RECENTLY, a horrific incident of terror took place in the far-off district of Dukki in Balochistan, where 21 poor miners, mostly Pakhtuns, working in the coal mines, were mercilessly slaughtered by an unknown group of armed men.

The incident created a stir at the national level, albeit for only 24 hours and then it vanished from public discourse. That is the tragedy of Balochistan. Unimaginable atrocities carried out there by the terrorists, criminals or the state agencies, don't stay in the spotlight for long, hence, do not get the attention they deserve.

According to the FIR, on the night between Oct 10 and 11, 2024, a group of 40 to 50 armed men raided the Junaid coal mines in Dukki. During their attack, they not only massacred 21 miners but also set on fire nine engines of the mines. It is disconcerting to know that during the one-hour carnage, neither the Frontier Corps Balochistan (FC) nor the police or Baloch levies, based in nearby Dukki town, turned up to challenge the raiders.

While the police suspect the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) for this attack, the banned group has denied it. After this terrible incident, instead of being deterred, on Nov 3, an armed group set on fire three trucks carrying coal in Dukki district. The rampage continues.

In recent years, Dukki district has been witnessing an increase in cases of extortion and terrorism. There were, reportedly, two armed attacks on the Dukki mines in 2022, two in 2023 and 12 so far in 2024. Also, the number of miners killed in these attacks has shot up to 26 this year as against two in 2023.

There are many reasons for the armed attacks on these mines. It is generally believed that the most common motive for these attacks is the demand of extortion or protection money by armed groups, from the mine owners. When they fail to pay it, the poor miners are abducted or killed to put pressure on the owners. The phenomenon is, however, not confined to one district alone. Similar incidents of extortion and killings have also been reported in Machh, Quetta, Bolan, Harnai and other places in Balochistan.

In fact, extortion from the mines is one of the main sources of funding of BLA and other militant groups in the province, which they are reported to claim on a fixed rate on per ton of coal extracted. As per one estimate, BLA earns up to Rs5 billion per year from the mines in the entire province. Interestingly, such is the impunity of militant organisations that at times, the mine owners are asked to deposit the extorted amount in specific bank accounts in Quetta or elsewhere, and there is no action by the law-enforcement agencies!

A reflection of mine owners' dissatisfaction with the prevailing insecurity and extortion was the huge protest in January this year, blocking the road connecting Loralai with Punjab, demanding the arrest of the extortionists as well as the killers in such cases.

As far as responsibility for security of mines in Dukki is concerned, there is a bit of duality. According to the law, the security of the mines and investigation of cases of all armed attacks on the mines is the responsibility of the police. However, according to reports, the mine owners, through a local written arrangement with the paramilitary FC, have made the security of the mines the exclusive domain of the FC.

For instance, an HRCP report on Balochistan, issued in 2022, states: “mine owners and union representatives were particularly bitter about the role of the FC, which they claim collects millions of rupees in the name of security but have failed to maintain peace in the area”.

Under these circumstances, the police role in Dukki district is confined to investigating cases of armed attacks and extortion in the mines. Interestingly, Dukki was declared a district in 2017 and the then chief minister approved a numerical strength of 425 police personnel for the district. The Balochistan finance department, however, sanctioned only four posts for the district police – one SP, two DSPs and one clerk, claiming non-availability of funds for the rest of the posts. No posts were sanctioned for manning the two police stations at all!

The IG Police was asked to manage the district by transferring police officers from other districts on a temporary basis. What is even more ridiculous is that this ‘temporary’ arrangement has been ongoing for the last seven years. The protection of lives of miners and the extortion from mine owners seems to be low on the priority list for the allocation of funds to police in Balochistan.

As the way forward, a four-dimensional approach is suggested.

One, a joint security committee should be set up at the district level to deal with such attacks, headed by the district police officer, with the deputy commissioner, the FC wing commander and representatives of mine owners and miners’ union as members.

Two, if reports of FC getting money from the Dukki mine owners for the security of their mines are true, then it must devise plans to ensure fool-proof security.

Three, the police strength of 425 personnel approved by the Balochistan chief minister in 2017 should be immediately sanctioned and recruited to enable police to fulfil their lawful duties in the district.

Four, a well-planned, concerted effort should be launched by CTD Balochistan in conjunction with FIA and Nacta, to address the issue of terrorist financing through extortion from coal mines in Dukki, and elsewhere.

The most important takeaway from the Dukki massacre is not only the need to secure the miners from armed attacks, but also to address the challenge of terrorist financing based on extortion from the coal mines. The security of mines of Balochistan should be ensured to choke the funds of terrorist organisations like the BLA in Balochistan.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 9, 2024

Wake-up call

THE United Nations Human Rights Committee has sent a clear message to the government: it must work to bring the country's laws in line with international human rights standards.

The committee's findings, released after its latest review of Pakistan's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, paint a distressing picture of the state of human rights in the country. The gravest concerns raised by the committee revolve around the use of military courts to prosecute civilians. This practice not only violates the right to a fair trial, as the committee noted, but also represents a troubling expansion of the establishment's jurisdiction into the civilian sphere. The committee rightly urged Pakistan to abrogate such jurisdiction over civilians.

The committee's other findings are equally worrying. It noted the absence of broad, transparent consultations on judicial independence reforms, especially related to the 26th Amendment. Concerns were also raised about the intimidation and harassment of judges and prosecutors, especially in sensitive cases. The authorities' ability to access and retain personal data without proper oversight was another observation. Such unchecked surveillance is a serious affront to privacy rights and must be remedied with strong privacy laws, as recommended by the rights body. Furthermore, the committee noted the continued use of enforced disappearances, as well as threats and attacks against journalists and human rights defenders. It has demanded immediate action against such violations.

Another critical area discussed in the review is the death penalty. The committee stressed that although some limitations have been introduced, Pakistan's continued use of capital punishment, even for non-violent offences requires reconsideration. Its call for a moratorium on executions is especially relevant given concerns about age determination and juvenile justice. The committee also highlighted severe detention conditions and the prevalence of torture, urging Pakistan to take stronger measures to prevent abuse in custody. The rights of children were stressed, with recommendations to end forced conversions and marriages of minority girls.

While the committee acknowledged some positive legislative developments, such as laws addressing gender-based violence and protecting transgender persons, it is clear that much more needs to be done. This cannot be a cosmetic exercise. True reform requires meaningful, transparent consultations with all stakeholders – judges, prosecutors, lawyers, civil society – to ensure the independence and integrity of key institutions.

Pakistan must heed this wake-up call and embark on a concerted effort to bring its laws and practices in line with its international human rights obligations. Failure to do so will not only undermine Pakistan's global standing, but more importantly, will deprive its citizens of the rights and freedoms they are entitled to under the ICCPR and the country's own Constitution.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 9, 2024

16 killed, 30 injured in blast at Quetta Railway Station



This photo shows the aftermath of a blast at Quetta Railway Station on November 9.

At least sixteen people were killed and 30 injured on Saturday in a blast at Quetta Railway Station, a police officer said.

Sixteen people were dead and more than 30 were injured, Quetta Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations Mohammad Baloch told reporters.

He further said that the incident “seems to be a suicide blast” but it would be too early to say for sure, adding that an investigation was underway to ascertain the nature of the blast.

Speaking to reporters, SSP Baloch further said that “around 100 people” were present at the site, according to footage seen by him.

Earlier, Edhi Rescue Service head Zeeshan said that the blast “occurred at a platform inside the railway station”.

Balochistan government spokesperson Shahid Rind, in a statement, said police and security forces had reached the site of the incident.

Rind said the nature of the blast was being investigated as the Bomb Disposal Squad was collecting evidence from the site and a report had been sought on the incident.

An ‘emergency’ has been imposed in hospitals there, the government official stated, adding that the “injured were being provided with medical aid”.

Footage run by Dawn News of the incident site showed rubble at the railway station's platform. At the time of the explosion, a train was ready to depart from the platform for Peshawar, Dawn News reported.

'Continuation of targeting innocent people'

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti condemned the incident, saying it was a "continuation of targeting innocent people".

In a statement, CM Bugti said, "The terrorists' target now are innocent people, labourers, children and women. Those targeting innocent people do not deserve mercy."

According to the statement, the chief minister has ordered an investigation into the blast and contacted top officials in Balochistan.

CM Bugti further said: "Terrorists are not eligible to be called humans. They have fallen from humanity; they are worse than animals."

Stating that "elements involved in various terrorist incidents" in the past have been traced, he vowed that the perpetrators behind the railway blast would be caught as well.

CM Bugti reiterated the government's resolve to continue operations against terrorists and pursue them. "We will root out terrorism from Balochistan," he asserted.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 9, 2024

Infiltration attempt foiled, six 'militants' killed in North Waziristan

NORTH WAZIRISTAN / SOUTH WAZIRISTAN: Six suspected militants were killed and three others injured during a clash with security forces in the Spinwam area of North Waziristan, near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

According to sources, around 25 militants attempted to infiltrate through the Spinwam area of tehsil Mir Ali on Friday night. An intense exchange of fire ensued after security forces spotted their movement. Six militants were killed, three injured and the remaining militants retreated back into Afghanistan.

The sources said the security forces also used a quadcopter during the operation. No official statement was issued by the ISPR, the military's media wing, till late Saturday night.

However, on Nov 4, the Inter-Services Public Relations had released a statement saying security forces had detected some terrorists trying to infiltrate through the Khamrang area on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in South Waziristan on the night between Nov 3 and 4. It said the security forces effectively engaged the terrorists, thwarting their infiltration attempt and killing five of them during an exchange of fire.

"Pakistan has consistently been asking interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border," the statement said, adding that the interim Afghan government was expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by terrorists for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan.

Meanwhile, the district administration of South Waziristan Upper on Saturday held successful negotiations with the family members of two children, Sahib and Alim Khan, who died after a mortar shell allegedly landed in the Sharkai area of tehsil Shaktoi on Friday morning. Another child, Tahir, was injured in the incident.

Following the incident, the family members and local Mehsud tribesmen held a sit-in protest, prompting Deputy Commissioner of South Waziristan Saleem Jan to meet the protesters for negotiations. The protesters called off the sit-in after the meeting.

Asif Khan Mehsud, a member of the provincial assembly, condemned the incident and alleged that security forces had opened fire on the local population.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 10, 2024

'BLA ringleader' among 16 killed in operations across KP, Balochistan

PESHAWAR / QUETTA: An important 'commander' of a banned organisation was among 16 terrorists killed and six others injured in gun battles, retaliatory attacks and operations carried out in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was officially announced.

Security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation (IBO) on the reported presence of khwarij (the military's terminology for the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan) in the Miramshah area of North Waziristan district between Nov 12 and 13, said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The security forces effectively engaged the terrorist locations during the operation. Eight terrorists were killed and six others injured during the exchange of fire.

In the Kech area of Balochistan, four terrorists, including an important 'commander', were killed in a gun battle during an operation, the ISPR said.

In a statement, the military's media wing said that on the night between Nov 12 and 13, security forces conducted IBOs in the general area Balgatar of Kech district on the reported presence of terrorists.

After an intense exchange of fire between the troops and the terrorists, a high-value target, terrorists' ringleader Sana alias Baru was killed along with three other terrorists.

The ISPR said that Sana was the focal recruitment agent, especially for suicide bombers, for the so-called Majeed Brigade wing of the banned Balochistan Liberation Army in Kech district and was highly wanted by the law enforcement agencies.

Weapons and ammunition were recovered from the killed terrorists.

Sanitisation operations were being conducted in Miramshah and Kech to eliminate any other terrorists found in the areas, the ISPR said, adding that security forces were determined to wipe out the menace of terrorism from the country and thwart attempts to sabotage peace, stability and progress of Balochistan.

Earlier in the day, four terrorists were killed in two encounters conducted by the Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) personnel in Malakand, officials said.

Arms and ammunitions were seized after the gun battles, they added.

In the first encounter, three terrorists were killed when the CTD personnel retaliated against attackers in the Sher Khana Palai area. The dead militants were identified as Rizwan alias Bodagay, Salman, and Abdur Rehman alias Shadmani.

Rizwan was wanted by the police and security forces for his involvement in various terrorism-related cases, and was also involved in the firing incident at the historic Churchill Packet, they said.

Deputy Inspector General CTD Hassan Raza told a press conference in Batkhela that his department had received information on Oct 23 that some terrorists had sneaked into the country from Afghanistan and they were planning to carry out subversive activities in different districts of Malakand Division, including Bajaur, Malakand and Swat.

He said that terrorists attacked a CTD team, which had placed barricades on a road at the Sher Khana Palai area to check their movement. In a retaliatory action, the CTD personnel killed three terrorists.

The CTD personnel recovered three Kalashnikovs, hand grenades, pistols and live rounds from the dead militants.

During the other encounter, security forces killed a terrorist, identified as Abdullah.

DIG Raza, flanked by SP Malakand Amjad Ali Khan, stated that the killed terrorists, who belonged to the Sher Khana Palai area, were wanted by the police and security forces for their involvement in several terrorism-related cases. He said a search operation continued in the area.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

China security ties

AFTER a slightly turbulent patch, during which officials publicly used uncharacteristically direct language, Pakistan-China ties appear to have returned to cordiality.

While speaking to the media on Monday, the Chinese foreign ministry's spokesperson reiterated Beijing's desire to strengthen bilateral ties with Pakistan. He said China would help Pakistan in its fight against terrorism, while resolving to "foil any attempt" to destabilise ties. The relationship has mainly been tested by the targeting of Chinese personnel in Pakistan by terrorists. Two major deadly attacks have occurred this year – last month in Karachi and in March in KP.

While reacting to unguarded comments by the foreign minister at an Islamabad seminar in October, the Chinese ambassador reiterated the need for Pakistan to take steps to safeguard the lives of his compatriots working in this country. Matters were further complicated after the Foreign Office termed the ambassador's remarks "perplexing". However, the latest comments from Beijing indicate that this incident may be behind us.

Yet the fact remains that Beijing remains concerned about the security of its nationals in Pakistan, and if this matter is not addressed satisfactorily, it may affect bilateral ties. Some media reports have stated that China wants a joint security mechanism with Pakistan. These reports say the Chinese proposal involves the deployment of their own security personnel in this country. Pakistani officials are reportedly not comfortable with this suggestion, and no one in Islamabad or Rawalpindi has publicly commented on these plans.

While training of local forces and intelligence-sharing can be considered, putting Chinese boots on the ground in Pakistan is not a good idea. In fact, having any foreign armed force present in the country should be discouraged. Security should solely be the prerogative of Pakistan's military and civil armed forces. The Chinese concerns cannot be dismissed, as the relationship with Beijing, particularly in view of CPEC, is a key pillar of our foreign and economic policy. It is also a fact that lapses on Pakistan's part have allowed terrorists to target Chinese nationals. Yet instead of allowing foreign forces to operate on Pakistani soil to protect their nationals, closer CT cooperation with Beijing should be pursued. A dedicated division to protect CPEC schemes – manned by thousands of personnel – already exists. Capacity-building of this division, such as the provision of modern equipment and improvement in intelligence-gathering capabilities, should be the state's priority to ensure the security of Chinese nationals and projects.

If Pakistan is serious about attracting foreign investment, the state must improve the security situation so that investors feel safe in bringing their citizens here. Moreover, foreign projects should prioritise the hiring and training of locals in their areas of operation to bring jobs and prosperity to underdeveloped and economically deprived regions.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

2 soldiers martyred, 3 terrorists killed in Balochistan operation



The martyred soldiers, Major Muhammad Haseeb and Havildar Noor Ahmed.

Two soldiers were martyred, while three terrorists were killed during an operation in Balochistan’s Harnai district, the military’s media wing said.

According to a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), “On 14 Nov 2024, on [the] reported presence of terrorists planning to target innocent civilians in Harnai District, security forces under Major Muhammad Haseeb were immediately mobilised to sanitise the area.”

It added: “Own troops effectively engaged the terrorists’ location and resultantly three terrorists were sent to hell.

“However, during the operation, an improvised explosive device exploded on the leading vehicle of security forces, resultantly, Major Muhammad Haseeb (28), a brave officer, who was leading his troops from the front, along with Havildar Noor Ahmed (38), having fought gallantly, made the ultimate sacrifice and embraced shahadat.”

The security forces of Pakistan, in step with the nation, remain determined to thwart attempts at sabotaging the peace, stability and progress of Balochistan, and such sacrifices of our brave soldiers further strengthen our resolve, the statement concluded, the statement added.

The country has lately witnessed a sharp uptick in the number of attacks targeting security forces, other law enforcement agencies, and security checkpoints, particularly in Balochistan and KP.

A day prior, security forces killed four terrorists, including a “high-value target”, during an exchange of fire in Balochistan’s Kech district.

In another operation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Miranshah district on the same day, the security forces killed eight terrorists.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 14, 2024

Nearly 40% Pakistanis want to leave country



A file photo of Islamabad International Airport.

KARACHI: Pakistan climbed to the fifth place in an infamous list of countries, which accounted for the most illegal immigrants in Europe, according to a report released by the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR).

The reports pointed to some chilling data, saying that nearly 40% of Pakistanis wanted to leave the country mainly because of economic difficulties, political uncertainty, lack of educational opportunities lack of employment, inflation, and terrorism.

The report, authored by Zunaira Inam, had been prepared by the Foreign Affairs Ministry of Denmark and the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The report was launched at a ceremony in Karachi.

The report said that a spike was witnessed in the illegal emigration in the last two years. The trend, it added, continued despite the perilous journey. "Illegal migration is increasing in spite of serious difficulties and danger to life on the illegal routes," NCHR Chairperson Rabiya Javeri Agha said.

Speaking at the introduction ceremony, Agha said that there had been an improvement in the situation after the strong legislation and other measures introduced to curb this trend, following a deadly boat accident off the Greek coast that killed over 300 Pakistanis.

Speaking on the occasion, Senator Qaratul Ain Marri of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said that this report was a "call for action", as it identified the socio-economic and political factors that contributed to the emigration from the country.

"These reports points out our internal problems and challenges that require a coordinated and effective strategy to solve them," she said, adding that the Senate Human Rights Committee "will play an active role" in resolving these problems.

The report said that in 2022, Pakistan was not among the top-10 countries for illegal migration to Europe but by mid-2023, the country became the fifth largest nation and by December 2023, 8,778 people had crossed into Europe illegally.

According to the report, the Pakistani emigrants mostly used the route to Europe via Dubai, Egypt and Libya. It said that some 13,000 Pakistanis reached Europe in the first half of 2023 through this route and 10,000 of them did not return.

The trend of illegal emigration from urban areas was higher than the rural areas. According to the NCHR report, 40% residents in the urban areas and 36% population in the rural areas of Pakistan were willing to leave the country.

The desire for leaving the country was the strongest in Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) with 42%; Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa followed with 38%, Sindh 37.6% and Islamabad 36.5%.

According to the data, the number of Pakistanis traveling illegally to Europe increased by 280% in the first 10 months of 2022. In the same period, there was also a spike of 208% in illegal immigration from Turkey; 179% from Egypt; 165% from Afghanistan; 122% from Syria, and 92% from Bangladesh.

Among the nationalities of the illegal immigrants to Europe, Syria takes the first place with 42.7%. Afghanistan accounts for 16.4%, Tunisia 12.1%, Egypt 9.6%, Bangladesh 8%, Turkey 5.7% and Pakistanis 5.5%. Gujarat, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin and Sialkot districts stand out in terms of large numbers.

The data shows that in 2022, more than 46,000 Pakistanis, who went to Europe illegally, were deported by air and another 5,676 land, while 19,055 people were offloaded. In the first eight months of 2023, more than 25,000 people were deported by air and 3,150 by land, while 10,366 were offloaded.

After the death of hundreds of Pakistani illegal immigrants near a Greek coast in June 2023, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and other law-enforcement authorities intensified a crackdown on the human smugglers, the report said. In 2023, 189 cases were registered and 854 people were arrested.

Recommendations

The report recommended to the authorities concerned to curb illegal migration, by spreading awareness in areas where the trend was high. It suggested that intelligence units should be formed at the district level to prevent human trafficking and legal channels should be created.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 15, 2024

Army brig takes the helm to purge Punjab of drug abuse



The opening ceremony of 7th International Pakistan Army Team Spirit (PATS) Exercise-2024.

LAHORE: The Punjab government has fully activated the Narcotics Control Department (NCD) with a serving army brigadier taking charge of the post of its director general, in order to purge the province's educational institutions of drugs abuse.

Brig Zaheer was nominated by the GHQ as the new DG NCD. After his assuming the office, the provincial government has started releasing funds after the approval from Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. More than 600 retired military personnel would be hired on contract basis in the department.

According to sources, services of more than 480 personnel would be acquired on deputation from excise, customs and police departments. The government planned to increase their perks by amending the rules.

The department was created as the 'narcotics control wing' in the Excise and Taxation Department in 2017 with a view to stopping the drug peddling in the educational institutions. However, the wing remained ineffective for the past seven years.

The main reason behind this inactivity was the reservations shown by the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF), the sources said.

However, recently, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed for making this wing functional in real sense to keep the young generation away from the poison of drugs.

According to the sources, 1,180 personnel had been sanctioned for the field work of the department, including 600 will be retired army personnel. Funds were also being released for the purchase of weapons, communication systems new vehicles were being released, they added.

SOURCE: THE EXPRESS TRIBUNE, NOVEMBER 15, 2024

12 security men martyred, 6 terrorists killed following attack on Bannu check post



Names and pictures of soldiers martyred following an attack on a checkpost in KP's Bannu district.

Twelve personnel were martyred while six terrorists were killed after a checkpost was targeted in the Mali Khel area of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu, the military's media affairs wing said.

The incident comes amid a sharp uptick in the number of attacks targeting security forces, other law enforcement agencies, and security checkpoints, particularly in Balochistan and KP.

The restive Bannu district has seen heightened militant violence of late, including the abduction of cops, an attack on a girls' school and a shootout that martyred three security men.

In a press release, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that on November 19 (Tuesday), "khwarij attempted to attack a Joint Check Post in general area MaliKhel in Bannu District".

The attack was effectively thwarted, the ISPR said, but a suicide blast led to the collapse of the checkpost's perimeter wall and adjoining infrastructure, resulting in the martyrdom of 10 soldiers and two Frontier Constabulary personnel.

“In ensuing fire exchange, six khwarij were sent to hell,” the ISPR said.

In July, the government designated the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as Fitna al Khawarij, while mandating all institutions to use the term khariji (outcast) when referring to the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Pakistan.

The ISPR statement noted: “The attempt to enter the post was effectively thwarted by own troops, which forced the khwarij to ram an explosive-laden vehicle into the perimeter wall of the post.”

It added that the “suicide blast led to collapse of portion of perimeter wall and damaged the adjoining infrastructure, resulting in shahadat of twelve brave sons of soil that include 10 soldiers of the security forces and two soldiers of Frontier Constabulary.”

According to the ISPR, a sanitisation operation was underway. “The perpetrators of this heinous act will be brought to justice,” the military vowed.

“Security forces and law enforcement agencies of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism and such sacrifices of our brave men further strengthen our resolve,” it reaffirmed.

Condemnations

President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed grief over the martyrdom of the 12 personnel, Associated Press of Pakistan reported.

In their separate statements, both leaders paid tribute to the armed forces personnel for sacrificing their lives and killing six terrorists while safeguarding the country.

“The whole nation salutes the soldiers for sacrificing their lives for the security of their motherland,” President Zardari was quoted as saying. He reiterated the nation’s resolve to wipe out terrorism from the country.

Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz asserted: “The sacrifices of the nation’s soldiers will never be squandered. The Fitna Al Khawarij posing threats to the lives and properties of the people will have to pay a heavy price for it.”



Collage of posts on X by PTV News.

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi also condemned the terrorist attack.

Calling the soldiers “heroes of our nation”, Naqvi noted: “The brave sons of our homeland sacrificed their lives to thwart the nefarious designs of terrorists.”

Vowing to always support the martyrs’ families, the interior minister highlighted: “The nation remains indebted to their ultimate devotion to peace.”

Asserting these sacrifices have no parallel globally, Naqvi observed that the attack has once again underscored the ongoing threats posed by extremist elements in the region.

The Iranian embassy in Islamabad also condemned the attack in a statement posted on X which said, “The Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Islamabad strongly condemns the terrorist attack in Bannu’s Mali Khel in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa leading to the martyrdom of twelve security personnel.”

It further said, “It extends sincere condolences and sympathy to the Government, Army and People of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. It also extends condolences to the families who lost loved ones.”

US ‘engaging with Pakistan’ in building capacity to prevent terrorist threats

Separately, the United States has reaffirmed its commitment to engaging with Pakistan to build capacity in detecting, preventing and responding to terrorist threats, according to State Department spokesperson Mathew Miller.

During a weekly press briefing on Tuesday, Miller said: “We remain committed to engaging with government leaders and civilian institutions to identify opportunities to build capacity in detecting, preventing, and responding to threats posed by militant terrorist groups.”

His remarks came in response to a question about how the US could “help Pakistan” in wiping out terrorism from the region.

Referring to the question, Miller said he was aware of the abduction of seven policemen in Bannu, who were later recovered, as well as of “reports that a military convoy was ambushed near the border with Afghanistan”.

“We condemn these and all terrorist attacks,” the State Department official said, acknowledging that Pakistani people have “suffered greatly at the hands of terrorists and violent extremists”.

He expressed his condolences to the loved ones of those killed or impacted by recent attacks, mentioning the deadly Quetta train station bombing,

Asked about US action to target terrorist groups “based in Afghanistan” – a concern that Pakistan has conveyed to Kabul repeatedly – Miller stated the US continued to have an “important bilateral counterterrorism partnership” with the Pakistani government.

He highlighted that the partnership included “regular high-level dialogues and working level consultations dedicated to enhancing both civilian and military capabilities to detect and counter these type of threats”.

Rise in terrorism

Terrorist attacks have escalated after the TTP broke a fragile ceasefire agreement with the government in 2022 and vowed to target security forces.

In 2023, Pakistan witnessed 1,524 violence-related fatalities and 1,463 injuries from 789 terror attacks and counterterrorism operations. Overall fatalities, including those of outlaws, marked a record six-year high.

A day ago, four people, including a tribal chief and a woman, were killed and as many were injured when unknown armed men opened fire on a double-cabin vehicle in Bannu.

On Monday, over half a dozen policemen were abducted from a check post on the border with North Waziristan. They were recovered safely by police, with the help of tribal elders, yesterday.

Over the weekend, at least eight security personnel were martyred and three injured in fierce gun battles with militants in the KP's Tirah valley.

In Balochistan's Kalat, seven security men were martyred and 18 others were wounded on Saturday in a pre-dawn terrorist attack on a check post. Security forces also killed six terrorists and injured four others in the incident, the ISPR had said.

Earlier this month, at least 26 people, including 16 security personnel, lost their lives and 61 others were injured in a suicide bombing at the Quetta railway station.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 20, 2024

39 killed in Kurram convoy bloodbath



Photos posted by a local journalist show the personal belongings of passengers, and one of the vans targeted in the attack on a large convoy, which was travelling from Parachinar to Peshawar.

- **At least 28 others hurt as convoy en route from Parachinar to Peshawar ambushed**
- **Conflicting reports over motive behind attack, as the area has a history of sectarian tensions**
- **Officials see 'land dispute' behind incident; PM Shehbaz, CM Gandapur slam bloodshed**
- **MWM criticises KP CM, interior minister, security institutions**
- **Fazl says despite operations, terrorism spiralling out of control**

KURRAM / PESHAWAR: At least 39 people, including seven women and a nine-year-old girl, were killed and 28 others injured when a convoy of passenger vehicles was ambushed in Lower Kurram, officials confirmed, fearing that the death toll may rise further.

The attack occurred in the Mandori Charkhel area, a region with a history of sectarian tensions and land disputes.

Deputy Commissioner Javedullah Mehsood said the convoy, consisting of some 200 vehicles, was on its way from Parachinar to Peshawar when it came under heavy gunfire. Twelve injured passengers, including two women, were shifted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Tall, while 16 others were transported to Tehsil Hospital Alizai.

Sources said the attack, which occurred around 1:20pm, appeared to be retaliation for an Oct 12 assault that claimed 15 lives, including those of two women and a child. Local officials

expressed concerns that the situation might escalate further, with tensions running high in the tribal district.

Mr Mehsood told the AFP news agency that two separate convoys of Shia passengers were targeted in two attacks. "Approximately 10 attackers were involved in both incidents, firing indiscriminately from both sides of the road," he said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the incident.

'Five minutes of shooting'

Ajmeer Hussain was among those attacked and taken to a local hospital for treatment.

"Gunfire suddenly erupted, and I started reciting my prayers, thinking these were my final moments," Mr Hussain, a 28-year-old victim being treated at a local hospital, told AFP.

"I laid down at the feet of the two passengers sitting next to me. Both of them were struck by multiple bullets and died instantly," he added. "The shooting lasted for about five minutes."

Kurram district, which borders Afghanistan, has long experienced sectarian violence, often fuelled by disputes over land ownership between communities.

The government had earlier appointed a land commission to resolve the matter. While the commission has reportedly submitted its findings, the government has yet to make the report public, citing sectarian sensitivities.

Speculation also surrounds the involvement of the banned terrorist group Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has recently been active in Lower Kurram, prompting fears among the residents. But government officials attributed the incident to the ongoing land dispute, ruling out sectarian motives.

A tribal elder of Tori Bangash tribes, Jalal Bangash, urged authorities to immediately evacuate stranded passengers and take steps to ensure the safety of the injured.

Mr Bangash and Alla--ma Tajammal Hussain condemned the attack, stressing the failure of state institutions to secure transportation routes despite previous peace efforts, including a mass march by locals from Parachinar to Islamabad.

PM, CM condemn incident

Prime Minister Sheh-baz Sharif condemned the attack, saying in a statement that "the enemies of peace in the country have attacked a convoy of innocent citizens, an act that amounts to sheer brutality".

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi and Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur also condemned the attack.

Mr Gandapur ordered the reactivation of a jirga to de-escalate the conflict and ordered the formation of a provincial highway police force to secure transportation routes, according to a statement from the Chief Minister's Secretariat.

The chief minister also directed provincial ministers, lawmakers and senior officials to visit the area and submit a detailed report.

He pledged that those responsible for the attack would be brought to justice and directed all relevant institutions to work towards restoring peace in the region.

‘Criminal silence’

The attack drew strong condemnation from political and religious leaders. Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) announced nationwide protests and a mourning period against the attack on unarmed civilians.



Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan ✓
@mwmpakofficial

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مجلس وحدت مسلمین کا پارا چنار دہشتگردی کیخلاف بروز جمعہ پاکستان سمیت دنیا بھر میں احتجاج کا اعلان

[Translate post](#)

5:50 PM · Nov 21, 2024 · 34.2K Views

Addressing a press conference at the National Press Club in Islamabad, MWM General Secretary Syed Nasir Abbas Shirazi and other party leaders criticised the provincial and federal governments for failing to protect civilians. He particularly criticised CM Gandapur, federal Minister of Interior Mohsin Naqvi and the inefficiency of security institutions.

“More than 50 people have been martyred. We condemn the criminal silence of the interior minister,” he added. “The rulers want to run this country at the cost of our blood.”

“This is not a Shia-Sunni problem. The responsibility for the blood of these innocent passengers lies with law enforcement agencies,” he said.



Senator Allama Raja Nasir ✓
@AllamaRajaNasir

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سانحہ پاراچنار، وفاقی و صوبائی حکومتوں اور سیکورٹی اداروں کی مجرمانہ غفلت، کوتاہی اور بے حسی کا نتیجہ ہے، یہی لوگ ہمارے شہداء کے مجرم ہیں جو امن و امان کے قیام اور دہشتگردوں کا قلع قمع کرنے میں ناکام ہوچکے ہیں۔ کل 22 نومبر بروز جمعہ پاکستان کے تمام اضلاع میں احتجاج کیا جائے گا، اوورسز پاکستانیوں سے بھی احتجاج کی درخواست کرتا ہوں جبکہ سانحہ پاراچنار پر تین روزہ سوگ کا اعلان کرتا ہوں۔ میری گزارش ہے کہ مجلس وحدت مسلمین کے تمام رفقاء، وابستگان اور کارکنان بالخصوص اور عوام پاکستان ان مظلوموں کے ساتھ مکمل اظہار یکجہتی کریں اور احتجاجی مظاہروں میں شریک ہوں۔ شہید ہونے والے مظلومین کے لواحقین کے ساتھ تعزیت کرتا ہوں، خدائے متعال شہداء کے درجات بلند فرمائے اور پسماندگان کو صبر جمیل عطا فرمائے۔

Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maula--na Fazlur Rehman also expressed sorrow over the killings. In a statement, he called the incident a failure of federal and provincial governments, institutions and law enforcement agencies, lamenting their inability to maintain law and order.

“Decisions to launch operations are made every day, but terrorism is not under control now,” he said.



Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam Pakistan ✓
@juipakofficial

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جے یو آئی سربراہ مولانا فضل الرحمان کا ضلع کرم میں درجنوں افراد کے قتل پر اظہار
افسوس

ضلع کرم دہشت گردی کی بھینٹ چڑھنے والے قیمتی انسانی جانوں کا ضیاع افسوس
ناک ہے۔ مولانا فضل الرحمان

واقعہ حکومت، اداروں اور قانون نافذ کرنے والے اداروں کی ناکامی ہے۔ مولانا فضل
الرحمان

صوبائی اور وفاقی حکومت عوام کے جان و مال کے تحفظ کی اہلیت ہی نہیں رکھتیں۔
مولانا فضل الرحمان

آئے روز آپریشن کے فیصلے ہوتے ہیں لیکن دہشت گردی کسی کے قابو میں نہیں۔ مولانا
فضل الرحمان

مقتولین کے اہل خانہ سے اظہار تعزیت کرتا ہوں۔ مولانا فضل الرحمان

میڈیا سیل جے یو آئی پاکستان

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 22, 2024

Three terrorists killed trying to cross into North Waziristan

PESHAWAR: Three terrorists were killed when security forces foiled their attempt to infiltrate from Afghanistan in the Hassan Khel area of North Waziristan district, the military said.

According to an ISPR statement, security forces detected the movement of armed gunmen attempting to infiltrate through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the Hassan Khel area on the night between Nov 25 and 26. The forces engaged the attackers and killed three of them.

“Pakistan has consistently been asking interim Afghan government to ensure effective border management on their side of the border. Interim Afghan government is expected to fulfil its obligations and deny the use of Afghan soil by Khwarij for perpetuating acts of terrorism against Pakistan,” the ISPR said.

It added that that security forces remain determined and committed to securing the borders and eliminating terrorism in the country.

Meanwhile, security forces and police successfully repelled attacks on a police station and a check post in tehsil Birmal of Lower South Waziristan district on Monday night.

According to police officials, the assailants first attacked the Raghzai police station in Birmal, leading to an hour-long exchange of gunfire with security forces. Officials said this was the sixth attack on the Raghzai police station in the current month.

In a separate incident, terrorists targeted a security checkpoint in the Ghorlama area of Birmal with a rocket. However, prompt action by security forces repelled the attack and forced the militants to flee.

Bomb blast

A member of a local peace committee narrowly escaped injury when a remote-controlled bomb exploded near his vehicle on the Wana-Kari Kot Road in Lower South Waziristan on Tuesday.

The bomb targeted the vehicle of Saifur Rehman Wazir. A colleague traveling with him sustained minor injuries in the blast.

Sources said the bomb was planted on a dirt road near the Baghicha post in Wana. Saifur Rehman and his colleague Ajaz were traveling from the Talabani area of tehsil Wana to Rustam Bazar Wana when the bomb exploded near their vehicle.

After the explosion, police arrived at the scene and collected evidence.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 27, 2024

4 terrorists killed in Khyber

KHYBER/QUETTA: Four terrorists, including a 'commander', were killed during an operation in the Khyber district, the military's media wing said.

A statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) said security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in the Bagh area, on the reported presence of terrorists.

Forces engaged the terrorists at their hideout and managed to gun down four of them, it said. Their ringleader, identified as Batoor, was killed while three others were injured.

A sanitisation operation was being conducted to eliminate any other terrorists in the area, it said.

Turbat explosion

Separately, a security man was martyred and two others were injured in an explosion in the Absar area of Turbat, according to officials.

An improvised explosive device went off when the bomb disposal squad team was sweeping the area to clear landmines.

The powerful explosion was followed by firing by unidentified attackers.

The martyred officer and injured were moved to the Turbat district hospital. The deceased was identified as Shahid Ramzan, while the injured included Shams and Amanullah.

In a separate attack, armed men opened fire at a barber shop in Door Ghati area of Gwadar.

The bullets shattered shops' window panes, but the owner and other people sitting in the shop remained unhurt.

SOURCE: DAWN, NOVEMBER 29, 2024