

Quad's Working Group on Counter-Terrorism

Formed in 2007, the quad has been in the lime-light for various reasons, but the primary focus of this tie-up between the U.S., Japan, Australia, and India has been to checkmate China. The aggressive Chinese policy of inch-by-inch progress has been a matter of grave concern for its neighbouring countries; in fact, China is in dispute with 13 countries at this juncture. Some countries, like Tibet, had been overrun by China in the past, and the latest on the list is Taiwan. The Indo-Pacific region will be the future flash point, as the focus is on its peace, stability, and growing prosperity. India has been bearing the brunt of terrorism for almost four decades, and until 9/11, terrorism for the rest of the world was just a dictionary word and nothing else. With one attack on the USA, the dynamics of terrorism changed forever. Pakistan has been supporting terrorism and using this as a state policy. Despite the UN Security Council's 1267 sanctions committee declaring numerous terrorists and various organisations as designated, Pakistan has been supporting them with impunity, and China is an active accomplice of Pakistan, bailing out sanctions against it by using veto power, raising stumbling blocks against nominated terrorists, and providing financial and military support to Pakistan to keep its breeding factory of terrorism intact. China has been consistently playing dirty politics with India. While India's border with China in official documents is 3,488 km, China shows only 2,000 km as it considers Askai Chin and many other places as its territory. Except for the middle sector border of Himachal and Uttarakhand with China, the western sector and eastern sector have many disputes. The western sector is from Ladakh to Tibet via the Kunlun mountain range to Karakoram Pass. The authentic 1842 Treaty signed by Maharaja Gulab Singh, Lama Gurusahib of Lhasa, and representative of the Chinese Emperor, further modified in 1897 as the Johnson-Ardagh line, is the basis of India's claim on Aksai Chin as the successor of British India and China in its official documents accepted even after independence. The rest is history: Pakistan and China collusively developed the Karakoram Highway, now the CPEC Corridor, with numerous new settlements. The latest unprovoked clashes at Galwan, Doklam, and many other places are a matter of serious security concern for India. Similar aggression policies are being adopted by China in the East and South China Seas-unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo or increase tensions. The world is concerned about the pervasive and labyrinthine tactics of China, and it cannot be just a mute spectator. The Quad Platform is proactively ensuring member countries take on this threat head-on.

The world has accepted the Indian version of terrorism, and the setting up of the Working Group on Counter-Terrorism is a great diplomatic victory. It is indeed a matter with grave repercussions, as terrorists' have adapted emerging and evolving technologies such as unmanned aerial systems and the internet. No place is safe, and the whole security establishment of the world is under undue stress to safeguard their countries against such threats. India has been raising the issue of collective responsibility to name, shame, and isolate countries that support terrorism. No money for terrorism has been the battle cry of India in its war against terrorism, and the whole world is now realising the importance of this. India has been at the centre of backdoor diplomacy on every vital issue concerning world peace and is playing its role perfectly. The nuclear neighbour Pakistan is heading to be a failed state and China is under the world scanner. The G-20 presidency has raised the stature of India, and the world has recognised the emerging and surging Indian influence on the world forum. This is India of the 21st century, striving to be Vishwa Guru by its deeds, not by aggression.

Unutilized Yatrika Niwas

Tourism is the world's largest industry, with exponential growth, and it is critical to city economies. The LG Administration of Jammu and Kashmir is also trying to increase tourist footfall and develop alternative tourist places. Gol has been formulating various schemes to provide financial aid for viable DPRs to develop new tourist places, and while the Kashmir Tourism Directorate has been successful in utilising the opportunity, the Jammu Tourism Department has been missing the bus too often. Despite the best of intentions, being unable to tap the potential is the sad story of the day. Jammu's Tourism Department has failed to utilise the PRASHAD scheme to develop a pilgrimage circuit covering Uttarbehni, Purmandal, and Sukrala Mata. Leave alone the future development, the Directorate has even failed to utilise the already-built Yatrika Niwas at Sukrala, built for Rs 3.5 crores, even after ten years since its completion. Despite a sanctioned amount of Rs 5 crores to develop buildings, parks, and parking, only buildings were developed for reasons best known to the Tourism Department. It is a tragedy that during peak days there are chaotic road jams due to parking issues and there is no proper arrangement for pilgrims yet the department is not able to open this Yatri Complex to the public. Another Yatri Niwas, built by R&B with a budget of Rs 1.25 crores, is also unutilised. These are serious lapses and have to be investigated properly. Not only this infrastructure, but the Bani Tourist Complex is also a white elephant, built at a cost of crores but remaining unutilized. Much-hyped outsourcing policy without application of proper scrutiny resulted in zero results on the ground. Seven times a tender for Sukrala Complex with no bidder and miserably failed outsourcing at Bani are serious matters to fix the accountability. While neighbouring Punjab and Himachal are always blooming with tourists, our truly scenic destinations like Bani, Sarthal, and Sukrala are nowhere on the tourism circuit. Something is seriously wrong somewhere, and it must be worked out.

Women achievers of Jammu and Kashmir

Col B S Nagial (Retd)

Women in Jammu and Kashmir are affected by numerous factors, such as religion, culture, social norms, and politics. Like many other parts of India, women in Jammu and Kashmir customarily ought to fulfil gender-specific roles such as taking care of the household and raising children. But, with the spread of education and awareness, women are breaking down these hurdles and playing an active role in different fields.

Recently, there have been attempts to improve the status of women in Jammu and Kashmir. The UT government has implemented numerous policies and programs to support women's education, health, and economic empowerment. These ingenuities have facilitated an increase in the enrollment of girls in schools, provided healthcare facilities to women, and encouraged entrepreneurship among them.

However, the region has also seen increased terror and violence against women, mainly due to on-going cross-border terrorism. Women have been subjected to human rights violations, including sexual violence, by these terrorist organisations allegedly supported by our adversary. This reign of terror and violence has significantly affected women's lives in J&K and their capability to access education, health, and economic opportunities.

While visible progress has been made towards empowering women in Jammu and Kashmir, much work still needs to be done to address the hurdles and promote gender equality. It requires a concerted effort from the Government and civil society to create a safe and enabling environment for women to thrive.

On 18 Feb 2023, Lt Governor Manoj Sinha, in this month's 'Awaam ki Awaaz', mentioned the efficacious conduct of the third Khelo India National Winter Games.

"Sport can bring about optimistic change, and recently conducted Khelo India National Winter Games at Gulmarg have demonstrated that 25 states were playing as one team, and they push forward the growth of winter sports in the country," said the Lt Governor. He added that society must celebrate women's achievements, recognise challenges, ensure women's rights in every sphere and salute the spirit of Nari Shakti.

He praised the grit and resolve of Kritika Khanna of Jammu, India's first female para rower. She is a true champ, overwhelming as an athlete and inspiring others. At the same time, Soni-

ka Sharma from Kathua made herself a distinctive display of efficacious women entrepreneurs. Her successful dairy business is inspirational for budding female entrepreneurs across the UT. Masrat Jan's career is full of prospects, challenges and success. Her determination to set up a diagnostic lab while struggling through odds reflects her strong belief in Nari Shakti, the Lt Governor said. The Lt Governor also lauded Superintendent of Police, Reasi, Sargun Shukla IPS, Rupali Singh, Chasfeeda Shah, Editor-in-Chief, Kashmir Scan magazine, Dr. Surbhi Kuyar, Breast Onco Surgeon, Dr Twinkle Suri, Head of Department, Department of English, Cluster University, Humaira Mushtaq, First Formula Car Racer from Jammu and Kashmir, Harman Anand Posthumously, Social Worker, and Seema, First e-Auto Driver in Jammu and Kashmir.

The women's issues in J&K have now moved to centre stage both in thinking as well as in planning. Women's participation is now inevitable. The mindsets of the people toward women have to change. Women's employment and education are critical variables for their change. Women form a potent power source of the elegant source and society. Women are the backbone of the family as well as of society

Zamrooda Ali's efforts to revive the hand-down craft. Zamrooda Ali has arisen as a successful entrepreneur and works as a dominant artisan. She has established a crewel embroidery training centre at her home in Badamwari, Srinagar.

The hard work and will power of Parveen Sangral from Samba for committing her life to charity and humanitarian work can't be ignored. Parveen, through her NGO, Muskaan Foundation, is serving people from all walks of life and transforming the lives of those in need.

FICCI Flo JKL organised an event on 05 Mar 2023 at Jammu to recognise the outstanding achievements of women from various fields under the banner of TRAILBLAZERS. This was the second edition celebrating the 'Women Achievers' event. The list of winners is Mandep Kaur, Commissioner Secretary, Department of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj, Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Anuradha Gupta JKAS, Deputy Commissioner, Samba, Seema Khajuria Shekhar, Senior Advocate, Jammu and Kashmir High Court, Rashmi Wazir, Senior

The Indian Army has been involved in several initiatives from the early days of terrorism to help women in Jammu and Kashmir. Here are some of how the Indian Army has been supporting women in the region:

Providing education: The Indian Army has been actively educating girls in the remote and underprivileged areas of Jammu and Kashmir. The Indian Army runs several schools and colleges in the region, providing education to girls who would otherwise not have access to it.

Creating employment opportunities: The Indian Army has been creating employment opportunities for women in the region by recruiting them as soldiers, doctors, nurses, and other support staff. This has not only provided women with a source of income but has also helped in empowering them.

Ensuring women's safety: The Indian Army has been working towards ensuring women's safety in Jammu and Kashmir. They have set up several helplines and emergency response teams to address cases of violence against women.

Providing medical assistance: The Indian Army has provided medical assistance to women in the region by setting up medical camps and hospitals in remote areas. They have also conducted health awareness camps to educate women about health issues.

Promoting sports and cultural activities: The Indian Army has been promoting sports and cultural activities for women in Jammu and Kashmir. They have set up sports facilities and organised tournaments to encourage women to participate in sports.

Overall, the Indian Army has been making significant efforts to empower and support women in Jammu and Kashmir.

Empowerment of women is a multidimensional process which encourages women to realise their goals in life. In general, Indian society is the male dominant, and J&K is no exception. Women were not considered at par with men. But things are changing now, and these changes are happening at the grassroots level. The Government has taken numerous measures like Saath, Umeed, Mumkin, Hausla, and Tejaswani to make women in J&K socially and economically independent. In addition to these initiatives, JKRLM programmes are changing the lives of many rural women in J&K. About four lakh women in 48000 self-help groups (SHGs) are revolutionising the concept of entrepreneurship in UT.

Thus Government has adopted a holistic approach toward developing a women's entrepreneur ecosystem to connect, collaborate, and invent to make a strong women's workforce. Women in J&K are transforming society in many ways by ensuring economic security and prosperity for themselves and others.

The women's issues in J&K have now moved to centre stage both in thinking as well as in planning. Women's participation is now inevitable. The mindsets of the people toward women have to change. Women's employment and education are critical variables for their change. Women form a potent power source of the elegant source and society. Women are the backbone of the family as well as of society. The health of a nation can be gauged from the status of women in society-the fruits of labour, whether at the home or national level, must be shared equally. Therefore, investing in women's capabilities and empowering them to exercise their choice is valuable and the surest way to contribute to economic growth and development.

Targeting Kashmiri terrorists in Pakistan

Harsha Kakar

Pakistan news agencies confirmed the death of Syed Khalid Raza, former commander of the Pakistan-based terrorist outfit Al Badr outside his residence in Karachi recently. He was killed by a single bullet to the head, implying a planned assassination. The Sindhi nationalist group, Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army (SRA) has been reported to claim credit for his death, though not confirmed. The SRA, seeking independence of Sindh from Pakistan, is an ally of the Baloch militant alliance.

Pak media described Raza as a 'renowned educationalist', as also vice chairman of the federation of private schools in Karachi. Raza had headed Al Badr, which was formed in 1998 by the ISI to participate in Jihad in Kashmir. It targeted security agencies and civilians, including women, claiming they did not follow the Islamic way of life.

In the third week of February, Bashir Ahmad Peer alias Intiaz Alam of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) was shot dead by unidentified gunmen close to his residence in Rawalpindi, which is also the location of the Pak army HQ. He was the third in hierarchy of the outfit and responsible for despatching fresh recruits into Kashmir, identifying infiltration routes mainly in the Kupwara region, coordinating between terrorist groups as also providing logistics to terrorists. He was nicknamed the 'launching chief.'

A government of India notification described him as being involved for 'a number of online propaganda groups to unite ex-militants and oth-

er cadres for the furtherance of activities of the HM, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and others.' Syed Salahuddin, HM's leader attended Peer's funeral at the Pakistani Army's burial ground and as expected spoke against India. Peer had shifted from Kupwara to Pakistan in the early 1990's. Pak media reported that Peer was killed by rival gang members over issues including funding.

The third terrorist assassinated in recent times is Ejaz Ahmad Ahanger, a Kashmir-born insurgent. Ahanger was notified as a terrorist by the Indian government in Jan this year. He was eliminated in Southern Afghanistan by the Taliban. A resident of Srinagar, Ejaz was the mastermind of the suicide attack on Kabul's Gurdwara Kart-e-Parwan in March 2020, which claimed 25 lives. A member of the Islamic State, Ejaz was arrested and jailed in Kabul for the suicide attack but escaped once the city fell to the Taliban.

In Jun 2021 there was a blast outside the residence of Hafiz Muhammad Saeed, the founder of LeT. Saeed was reportedly in prison during that time. A number of nearby buildings were damaged. As per police reports three people were killed and fifteen injured in the attack. Pakistan intelligence claim that a police picket near Saeed's residence was the target. Five individuals were arrested for the incident. In Dec 2022, a year and a half later, Pakistan blamed India for the attack in a dossier, an accusation which had no takers.

Targeting of known Kashmiri terrorists on Pak soil is a new phenomenon. Pakistan has always projected that it protects its terrorist assets thereby building a pro-Pakistan Kashmir lobby involv-

ing anti-India Kashmiris. The elimination of designated terrorists on their soil impacts the reputation of the ISI unless the greenlight for the killing was given by them. To add to insult, Peer was eliminated in the vicinity of army HQs in Rawalpindi.

Pakistan attempted to suppress the incidents as also protect the identity of slain terrorists, not that inputs were not available with Indian agencies, who announced their elimination soon after occurrence. The easiest way out for the ISI was to blame Indian RAW claiming it to be a covert operation. It could do so in the case of the Lahore blast as the target, Hafiz Saeed, was a known global terrorist. However, in other cases, accusing India would imply admitting it was harbouring known terrorists on its soil, hence its attempts at cover up.

There are other causes also, which Pak is loath to admit. Firstly, is the infighting between cadres, especially because funds and power are involved. Removing competition enables garnering a larger share of funds and greater control over operations. This was possibly the case with the elimination of Peer, who had assumed responsibility for training, launching and coordinating activities between terrorist groups, overriding many other members of the group. If Peer's case is linked to fight for power within the LeT, there are bound to be other incidents in the future, which would benefit India.

The second reason for their killing is that once their utility ends, keeping them alive and protected is wasting scarce funds. Syed Raza, the leader of Al Badr, was of no utility to the ISI, which had

nurtured and funded him, when he operated in Kashmir. Raza was no longer running Al Badr. The claim by the SRA is possibly a cover-up for an ISI ordered assassination. Raza's manner of killing, a single shot to the head, from close range, implied execution, the ISI way. There was no official follow-up in investigation and an FIR was registered after days.

The elimination of Ejaz Ahmad Ahanger in Afghanistan is possibly the Taliban sending a message to India that it will target anti-India terrorists on its soil. Ahanger, being responsible for the suicide attack on the Gurdwara, was on the radar of Indian intelligence agencies. It is possibly also because Afghanistan hopes India will invest in projects in the country. The Indian budget for the current financial year has earmarked Rs 200 crore for Afghanistan. There are reports that both the LeT and HM have camps in Afghanistan. How will the Taliban act against these camps is to be seen.

Finally, if it was a covert operation conducted by Indian intelligence agencies then it goes to their credit. The killings would anyway have raised shackles in Pakistan's security circles, forcing them to expend additional resources to ensure protection of their remaining assets, who are equally vulnerable. It would also signify that India has taken the battle beyond its shores deep into Pakistan, a fact Pakistan would be hesitant to admit. Whatever the reason behind their killing, all other designated terrorists would maintain a low profile, fearing UN designation or elimination. This is what India desires.

The author is Major General (Retd)

Noise Pollution Control

Prof R D Gupta

More than 100 years ago, the leading German Bacteriologist Dr. Robert Koch (Nobel Laureate) once issued a circular with regard to the menace of noise. He said "The day will come, when man will have to fight noise as incurably as cholera and the plague." Today his prediction has become true particularly in metropolitan cities.

"Any sound reaching the ears that serves no useful or good purpose is called noise." Robert Alex Buron (1964) showed that noise which becomes an inseparable part of everyday life for many people, had damaging physiological, psychological & personallogical effects.

Today, noise as pollutant has become a great nuisance. It is now omnipresent and is a real danger especially in the crowded cities of the country where there is still no staunch legal or moral curb on noise automobile engines and use of blaring horns and high pitched conversion. "Noise Pollution" infact, has now become a health hazard and therefore, it is a burning problem of the day.

Measurement of Noise.

The intensity of noise can be measured in "bels" - a unit named after Gram Bell. It is usually measured in decibel which is one tenth of a bell. Although the threshold of hearing is zero decibel (dB) but it is only a theoretical phenomenon accompanied in experimental conditions. In general terms "silence" is normally around 25 dBs. Our hearing would be o-kay if we are not exposed to noise intensity over 50 or 55dBs. Higher the dB, higher we stand for risk of hearing.

Impact of high intensity sounds & their source.

High intensity sound affects the ear, which can adjust its parts, to reduce the chances of impairing auditory system. A sound of 90dBs for more than 10 seconds contracts the tympanic membranes through aural reflex. British scientific team has proved that noises of jet engines contribute to the break down in mental health of people living near

jet airports. It is because noise of jet planes proceeds a sound of 150dBs. The British team surveyed two groups of people one living within the maximum noise area surrounding at land air and in other in an adjacent quieter zone. It was found that admission to mental hospital was 20 percent higher from the noisier zone than that of quieter zone.

According to recent survey, the noise pollution is damaging minds and bodies, heart troubles, blood pressure and nervous disorders. Even unborn babies are believed to react to it. Investigations in the USA, Britain & Russia, have evinced that noise means danger to the overall health. It disturbs nervous system, brings tension and fatigue, interferes with metabolism. It has also been found that noise induces deafness which is preventable but is not wholly curable. Indeed, noise poses a twin challenge to industry. It influences the health of the workers and lowers productivity. Some experts have found that losses caused by hearing impairment among workers are than those caused by another occupational illness. The overall damage has to be assessed not only in terms of the impairment caused but also the cost of compensation claims, decline in output and increase in number of accidents. This is the reason that scientists believe noise to be one of the worst invisible enemies of a long and healthy life.

In India deafness is looming due to noise pollution. Three to four out of five have Indians have already lost some power of hearing. Ear experts claim that these days, it is a noisy world, getting noisier and somehow we get to learn to control it. Indian health specialists feel and believe that noise has an adverse impact on health which is even dangerous than air and water pollution. Noise pollution can change a man's physiological state by speeding up the pulse and respiratory rates. Continued exposure to loud noise could cause ulcers or hypertension. Noise has other physical effects also. According to Medical research, it has been found and proved conclusively that it may

cause sudden blindness, stammering and even fits of epilepsy particularly in children. It has also been concluded that some people who were subjected to noise, while sleeping woke up extremely fatigued.

The sound level inside a running underground train reaches about 75 dBs which is considered very high. As a result, it is impossible to converse with a fellow traveller in train. Then there are the shops playing the audio cassettes. The noise produced by so called music can only be compared to the blaring loud speakers during social and religious festivals.

Truly speaking the use of loud speakers have become virtually traditional so much so that no social function whether marriage or religious ceremony is considered complete without cacophony. Added to this, is noise created by the stereos which are played with impurity in metadors and buses without any consideration for commuters. Then there are ear splitting crackers that are fired with hardly any thought for the old and sick. The most horrible is cracker bomb the noise from which is simply deafening.

It is unfortunate that noise has virtually gone unattended. In Jammu city particularly in the congested areas that noise menace is at peak at most of the places due to traffic increase. In commercial areas the noise level has crossed the maximum prescribed limit of 65dBs. The increase of dBs has also been witnessed in the places like Parade Ground, Satwari Chowk, Vikram Chowk, Shalamar etc. Even at Shalamar opposite to SMG Hospital, the noise level has increased alarmingly to 80 to 85dBs. Medical College Bakshi Nagar, the noise level is 70 to 75 dBs. Medical professionals especially ENT specialists of SMG Hospital have already expressed great concern about the significant rise in the level of noise pollution. According to them noise above 90dBs for continuous period of 8 hours a day causes temporary hearing loss, a single exposure of 150dBs produce permanent injury to the ears internal

mechanism.

Checking of noise pollution

* Excessive noise can be checked by controlling noise source such as radio television, vehicles etc. Noise intrusion into a building can be best combated by sealing all outlets to the outside. Gaskets around doors can also reduce noise pollution from one place to another.

* Inside a building carpets, drapery and acoustical files provide some reduction of noise levels although such internal provision donot affect the noise intrusion from the outside.

* Planting of strips of 3m width on both sides of the roads is the simplest method to, control noise pollution created by the vehicles. While planting the trees, growing of local species having broad leaves must be preferred. Rows of tall trees with ample foliage on both sides of the high ways and busy roads have proved more beneficial for this purpose. It is because they serve as good noise absorbers by way of functioning as noise filters.

* The trees which can easily be planted with in the cities include Azadirachta Indica, Ficus religiosa, Ficus bengalensis, Saraca indica, Bauhinia variegata, Cassia fistula etc. these trees have great noise absorbing power.

* As noise is directly proportional to congestion of buildings and population so urban planning should stress on the dispersal of settlements.

* Above all public awareness about noise pollution & its hazards /impacts through media can also go a long way to control noise pollution

Suggestions.

* It is suggested that noise pollution has to be tackled mostly from administrative angle. This would imply to form regulatory policies for plying vehicles & running industries with strict observance of rules.

* The problem of noise pollution should be explained by way of radio, television & other media.

(The author is ex-Associate Dean cum Chief Scientist KVK SKUAUST-J)

(The views expressed by the authors are their personal)

feedbackexcelsior@gmail.com