



IMRAN KHAN ARRESTED, PROTESTS ERUPT IN PAK.

Former Prime Minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan was arrested on Tuesday from the Islamabad High Court where he appeared seeking bail in multiple corruption cases, triggering demonstrations across the country that saw his supporters vandalising buildings.

The Rangers personnel were acting on arrest warrants issued by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case.

PTI leaders condemned the arrest and asked party workers and supporters to step out and "protest peacefully". Mr. Khan's lawyer Ali Gohar alleged that the Rangers "tortured" the former Prime Minister during the arrest.

"Imran Khan was hit on the head and his injured leg," he said.

However, the government denied all such allegations.

"Imran Khan has been arrested by the NAB, which is an independent body. The arrest is not on government orders. Imran Khan always professed that those accused of corruption charges must clear them in courts. Al-Qadir case is a serious corruption case in which Imran Khan allowed £190 million recovery of the state to be siphoned to a real estate tycoon in return for personal material favours," Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, told The Hindu.

Dated May 1 and signed by NAB chairman Lt. Gen. Nazir Ahmed, Mr. Khan's arrest warrants said he was accused of corruption and corrupt practices under Section 9(a) of the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999.

The High Court, late in the evening, declared Mr. Khan's arrest "legal". Earlier, it had reserved its verdict on the legality issue.

Mr. Khan, his wife, Bushra Bibi, and other PTI leaders are facing an NAB inquiry.

The case is that of an alleged settlement between the PTI government, which was ousted from power in April last year through a no-confidence vote, and property tycoon Malik Riaz, causing a loss of £190 million to the national exchequer.

In a press conference on Tuesday, Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said a laundered amount of £190 million that belonged to a "property tycoon" [Malik Riaz] was caught in the U.K. by Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) and sent to the government. According to the law, "this amount rightfully belonged to the people of Pakistan", said Mr. Sanaullah. Mr. Khan and others are accused of getting a property registered in the trust's name as a quid-pro-quo by Mr. Riaz's real estate company Bahria Town. Mr. Sanaullah alleged that the Al-Qadir Trust was established to hide 'bribery'.

Mr. Khan was taken to Rawalpindi for questioning at the offices of the National Accountability Bureau, according to police and government officials. Visuals from several cities in Pakistan on social media showed PTI protesters coming out in support of Mr. Khan. Some visuals showed PTI supporters inside



Private security personnel with bulletproof shields escort Imran Khan as he arrives to appear in a court in Islamabad. AP

The former Prime Minister was arrested when he appeared in court to seek bail in multiple corruption cases and taken to Rawalpindi; his wife and other PTI leaders are facing inquiry too

the Corps Commander House in Lahore, vandalising the premises. PTI leader Asad Umar said on ARY News that violence is not part of Mr. Khan's politics. "The most popular leader of the largest political party has been illegally arrested. Protest is our democratic right but Khan has never supported violence."

Senior journalist and anchorperson Mohammad Malick said things can never return to business-as-usual between the Army and Mr. Khan, regardless of who commands the GHQ. Mr. Malick added that with the Supreme Court also soon getting a rather 'unfriendly' chief justice, "things may be far tougher than many imagine them to be".

Senior journalist Saleem Safi said that initially, there was confusion on both sides whether Mr. Khan and the military establishment would have a face-off. "Now, it is a real test for both sides after what happened on Tuesday. The biggest challenge for Khan is that he is popular in public, but his party's second-tier leadership is mostly pro-establishment and a lot of them are not ready for a confrontation with the establishment," he said.

GREEN CROSSHAIRS

A multi-pronged counter is warranted to tackle the EU's carbon tax plans

Starting this October, the European Union (EU) proposes to introduce a framework for levying a carbon tax on imports of products that rely on non-green or sub-optimally sustainable processes and where carbon emissions are deemed to have not been adequately priced. This Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) will begin with an import monitoring mechanism and culminate in the levy of duties as determined from January 2026. The EU argues that the CBAM will ensure its climate objectives are not undermined by carbon-intensive imports and spur cleaner production in the rest of the world. This poses a significant threat to some of India's biggest exports to the trading bloc, including iron ore and steel, with carbon levies estimated to range from 19.8% to 52.7%. During a visit to France in early April, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said it was too early to gauge the tax's impact on Indian exports, as operational clarity was yet to emerge. By last Thursday, top trade officials were more assertive and termed tackling this risk as one of the top items on the government's agenda, with several options being explored.

It is critical that the Centre reacts with greater alacrity to what may be considered

by some as a sophisticated trade barrier doused in 'greenwashing' optics, proposed by the EU. Last year, about a third of India's iron, steel and aluminium exports, for instance, were shipped to EU members. Engineering products, the largest export growth driver in recent years, would be impacted too. Larger players across sectors are gradually turning to greener technologies, but the transition needs time — even more so for smaller businesses — to move away from legacy carbon-heavy technologies (such as blast furnaces for steel making). The EU believes the carbon tax is compatible with World Trade Organization norms, but India is looking to challenge that. It may also flag the incompatibility with the UN's climate change framework which moots common but differentiated responsibilities for developed and developing nations. But even if these arguments are upheld, these two avenues lack enforcement options. So, a threat of retaliatory tariffs on EU imports is also being weighed even as plans are afoot to quantify the various carbon taxes levied in India. Having positioned itself as the voice of the global South, India must play that part to the hilt while at the helm of the G-20 this year and galvanise other nations to take on the EU's

carbon tax framework. This championing need not revolve around its own concerns, but the far worse implications the CBAM entails for poorer countries, many of whom rely more heavily on mineral resources than India does.

SYRIA'S HOMECOMING

Arab world must help rebuild Syria, while keeping up pressure on Assad

The Arab League's decision to readmit Syria, after over a decade of isolation, signals a growing desire of regional powers to set aside intra-Arab rivalries and work towards establishing a more predictable, stable relationship with one another. Ironically, it is Saudi Arabia, which had rallied the Arab countries to expel Syria in 2011 amid the regime's crackdown on protests that pushed for Syria's readmission. The move is also recognition that Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has practically won the civil war and signals the weakening influence of the U.S., which still imposes heavy sanctions on the regime and is upset with the League's decision. When protests broke out in Syria in 2011, inspired by similar protests elsewhere in the Arab Street, the regime's response was one of violent repression. But when the protesters took up arms and got support from Mr. Assad's regional rivals such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey, the crisis turned into civil war. Over the years, the Assad regime, backed by Russia, Iran and the Hezbollah, managed to stabilise and push back the rebels and jihadists. Today, Mr. Assad controls most of the country, except Idlib in the northwest, which is run by a former al-Qaeda unit, and the northeastern parts ruled by the Kurds, where the U.S. has a military presence.

Though late, the Arab countries realised that their policy of regime

change and isolation of Syria had only boomeranged on them. As Syria was expelled from the Arab League and Arab countries backed anti-regime forces in the civil war, Damascus moved closer to Iran. Today, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan and others want to reestablish the lost balance in their ties with Syria. The Arab countries and Turkey, which host millions of Syrian refugees, want to send them back. For that, they need to cooperate with and help sanctions-hit Syria, which was battered by a devastating earthquake in February, sustain itself economically. The changing geopolitical environment in West Asia in which rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran are warming up to each other has also helped the Arab rapprochement with Syria. As a token gesture, Syria has agreed to take back 1,000 refugees from Jordan and cooperate with neighbours to crack down on drug smuggling. But this is only the beginning. Mr. Assad might have won the civil war, but the wounds of the war, in which his regime used brutal methods to crush the opposition, are still festering. The country's infrastructure needs massive investments, the economy needs a reboot and the millions of stranded Syrians have to be allowed to return. The Arab countries could help Syria rebuild itself, while also pushing Mr. Assad to reach out to the opposition to find a permanent solution to the country's religious and political cleavages.

SALVAGING THE IDEA AND REALITY OF MANIPUR

The communal riots which erupted in Manipur since the evening of May 3, between the Meiteis and Kuki-Hmar-Zomi communities, have unleashed unprecedented human displacement, a tragic loss of lives and destruction of property, and show no signs of closure. As the nature and character of the riots transform from one of ethnic cleansing to genocidal attacks across the divide, the precarity of law and order remains as ragtag mobs with the support of armed groups from either side continue to expand the theatre of these riots to the peripheral areas, with more virulence. The large-scale deployment of paramilitary forces, predominantly in urban areas, is clearly not sufficient to maintain 'law and order' in the State's peripheries. Even as large parts of State have turned into a Hobbesian world, where the dictum 'might is right' determines whether lives remain brutish, nasty, and short, the trails of destruction have already bruised the ideational and geopolitical foundations of Manipur beyond any immediate repair.

The delay in imposing the shoot-at-sight order for a night-and-a-day in Imphal and valley areas now appears as deliberate state complicity to allow ragtag mobs to do the job of a comprehensive targeting and erasure of lives, properties and land records (pattas) with precision. When this order came on the latter part of May 4, the project of ethnic cleansing of the tribals (Kuki-Zomi-Hmar) and a de facto erasure of their land titles that the tribals held for centuries in the valley was already accomplished. The thousands of tribals and Meiteis who are being evacuated to safety from Imphal and Lamka (and other towns) to towns inside Manipur and various Indian metros are likely to be displaced as 'refugees' for a long time. Sadly, 'encroachers', 'eviction' and 'refugees' are labels that will now no longer remain the exclusive preserve of any particular community.

The swift imposition of a shoot-at-sight order in Churachandpur district on the evening of May 3 is in stark contrast to the night-and-a-day delay in the valley areas. Yet, this has not succeeded in forestalling the sanitisation of disparate Meitei settlements across Churachandpur district and other peripheral areas across the State. Either way, extensive ethnic cleansing suggests that the geopolitical body of Manipur has been badly bruised and radically transformed beyond recognition.

For one thing, the rag-tag mobs, as marionettes of the integrationist project of the State and Meiteis, have succeeded partially in their attempt to dissolve tribal land rights in the valley areas, a major grouse the Meiteis have against the tribals in hill areas. In fact, this grouse was a major reason which set the stage for these conflagrations. Similar extensive counter ethnic-cleansing drives in various parts of the hills imply that considerable Meitei settlements are likely to be erased forever. The existence of multiple tribal localities in Imphal and its valley environs inhabited by the Nagas implies that the State's aggressive integrationist and majoritarian project has to contend with this asymmetrical regime on land rights where tribals, unlike the Meiteis, can own land both in the hills and the valley.

The extensive bruises to and radical transformations of the geopolitical body of Manipur caused by these riots are likely to make the task of post-conflict state building and transformation of state-society relations extremely difficult, if not impossible. Some possible and tentative blueprints are in order.

Any attempt to secure future stability and peace in ways that will help in the stable management of post-conflict situations must begin with the audacity to confess and confront the truth about the very nature of these riots and their principal cause. The State under the N. Biren Singh-led Bharatiya Janata Party government must take primary responsibility for preparing, activating and sustaining what Paul Brass, an expert on Indian politics, calls, the 'institutionalised riots system' as a first step. Given that these riots built up and happened under his watch, Mr. Biren Singh must resign so that accountability is fixed and trust in the political system restored. A judicial commission under the Supreme Court of India supervision must be set up to fix accountability immediately so that the institutionalised ecosystem of riots does not replicate in the future.

Need for recognition and accommodation

The BJP-government and Meiteis must realise that the stability and territorial integrity of a pillarised society such as Manipur is secured not by an aggressive integrationist project and non-functional sub-State asymmetrical institutions, but by genuine recognition and substantive accommodation of territorial rights and identities, and by making these institutions work. The disintegration of the East European states in the 1990s should be a good reminder of why it is not federalism per se but the lack of democracy and the rickety functioning of federal institutions which predate disorder and state collapse. Manipur should learn from this and from the ability of deeply-divided societies such as Belgium, Canada and Switzerland to 'hold together' which is facilitated by their enduring commitment to accommodate and institutionalise differences as a valuable good.

In the post-conflict scenario, salvaging the idea and geopolitical reality of Manipur may impel a radical shifting of constitutional gear. This is imperative if the hills and valley communities are to live together under one political roof. Minimally, this may impel a more genuine accommodation of tribal rights and identities under the Sixth Schedule and a more robust Article 371C where 'scheduled matters' on the hill areas are made inviolable by brute legislative majority. However, given the hardened positions adopted by both sides, this may be easier said than done.

As a goodwill gesture, the State must withdraw all its notifications on reserved forests, protected forests and wildlife sanctuaries. It must also stop the blanket targeting of communities as 'foreigners', 'encroachers' and 'illegal immigrants'. Future policy-decisions of the State must consistently follow the established procedure of laws.

State-building ahead

The weak state-society model that obtains in the State suggests that an

'ethnic security dilemma' — in Barry Posen's sense — will persist in the absence of the capacity of the State to guarantee overarching security. Institutional trust and legitimacy will be critical in holding together deeply divided societies such as Manipur as a result. The state must adopt even-handedness in its dealing with diverse communities and must not cave into the pressure of the majority in the future.

Such an accommodationist framework, if it were to work and obtain trust and legitimacy from the governed, must be alive to the distinctive and historical pedigree of extant sub-State constitutional asymmetry and increasing sense of insecurity of the Meiteis under the weight of demographic pressure. The project of reviving and sustaining the idea and the geopolitical body of Manipur can be realistic only when 'dissensual communities' engage in reasoned dialogue and

THE 'RIGHT TO HEALTH' GOAL AND A ROLE FOR TAIWAN

As the world enters the fourth year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the situation is gradually improving. Most border restrictions have been lifted and global health governance is now focused on a post-pandemic recovery. Countries have stepped up efforts to achieve health and well-being for all and further the realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose progress was impacted by the pandemic.

Taiwan fully supports health-related SDGs and the World Health Organization's 'Triple Billion targets'. Taiwan is committed to building a more resilient and equitable health service supply chain, maintaining an inclusive and equitable universal health coverage system, and providing disease prevention and management through a robust primary health-care system. It is willing and able to share its experience in creating a cross-sectoral, innovative, and people-centered health approach to help the international community work toward the realisation of health-related SDGs.

Taiwan's pandemic response

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan effectively mitigated the spread of the disease by leveraging its comprehensive public health-care system, well-trained personnel, and epidemiological surveillance, investigation, and analysis systems.

The Taiwanese people played a pivotal role too by following appropriate social behaviour, following quarantine regulations and getting vaccinated. When compared with the 38 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development member states and Singapore, Taiwan ranks sixth-lowest in COVID-19 mortality and case-fatality rates. Taiwan also ranks fourth-highest for coverage rates of at least one COVID-19 vaccine dose and third-highest in terms of vaccine boosters administered.

Last year, the World Health Organization's Director-General outlined five priorities for the subsequent five years: promoting health, providing health services, protecting health, powering progress, and performing. Moreover, WHO's 'Achieving well-being', a draft global framework for integrating well-being into public health that utilised a health promotion approach, further demonstrates its commitment to health for all.

A focus on disease prevention

Taiwan established a universal health-care insurance system in 1995, which provides disease prevention and health-care services for all. These include prenatal checkups, gestational diabetes screening, anemia testing, and three ultrasound examinations to reduce pregnancy risks and promote maternal and infant health. To assist infertile couples and reduce the financial burdens of in-vitro fertilization, the government has continued to expand subsidised infertility

conversation by mutually respecting each other as equals, in a spirit of give and take. The landlocked nature of the State and the fact that it had an admixture of populations across the State — drawn from populations within and across various States — implies that any prolonged conflagrations will be mutually destructive and self-defeating.

Future state-building and accommodation of distinctive rights and identities are indeed challenging given that the sense of hate and mutual distrust has run deep across communities. Leaders of communities, the State and all-important stakeholders must confront the truth about the mutually self-destructive nature of violence. Serious and concerted inter-community reconciliation efforts must be initiated immediately if Manipur as an inclusive idea and a geopolitical space of accommodation were to be revived.

treatment programmes. Taiwan also aims to create a breastfeeding-friendly environment and provide preventive paediatric health care and health education. Taiwan has a number of prevention and management programmes for non-communicable diseases which include targeting chronic metabolic diseases help assist at-risk groups, diet and exercise guidance as well as smoking and betel nut cessation information to empower people. Taiwan also supports the global fight against cancer and WHO's goal of reducing cancer mortality by 25% by 2025. In line with WHO's Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative, Taiwan subsidises cervical screenings and human papillomavirus vaccinations. HPV vaccines have been administered to female students (12 to 15 years) since 2018, with a coverage rate of 92.1% by December 2022.

Taiwan's National Health Insurance (NHI) offers financial protection and access to a range of essential services. The COVID-19 pandemic helped the international community recognise the importance of regional cooperation and digitisation in health care. Taiwan is committed to promoting digital health and innovation to enhance the accessibility and quality of health-care services, including plans for a next-generation NHI programme. Innovative services, utilising real-time tele-health consultations for remote areas and outlying islands, and is exploring applications for artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies. During the pandemic, Taiwan issued 13 export licences for its herbal formula NRICM101 (Taiwan Chingguan Yihau) to help countries in the region combat the pandemic. Taiwan is currently implementing preventive measures such as strengthening the domestic production of critical drugs and active pharmaceutical ingredients to avert future drug shortages. Taiwan will further share innovative technologies and best practices with partners around the world.

A place for Taiwan

Taiwan has not been invited to the World Health Assembly since 2017. Now that the COVID-19 pandemic is abating and dialogue on strengthening health systems worldwide is accelerating, Taiwan should not be left out. Taiwan's inclusion would make the world healthier, more sustainable, and more equitable.

Taiwan urges WHO and all relevant stakeholders to support Taiwan's inclusion in the World Health Assembly as an observer, as well as its full participation in WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities. Taiwan will continue to work with the world to help ensure the fundamental right to health enshrined in the WHO Constitution. In the spirit of the SDGs, no country should be left behind — especially not Taiwan, which has made significant contributions to global public health.

ARAB TRAINS TO CARRY INDIAN GOODS TO ISRAELI PORT: COHEN

Arab train networks in future would be carrying Indian goods to the Israeli port of Haifa, said Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Addressing the India-Israel Business Forum organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Mr. Cohen announced support for increasing the number of Indian employees in Israel and urged for an early conclusion of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.

"Our vision is that Israel, the Gulf Arab countries and India is the gate from the east to the west. The trade that will come from India will go to some Arab port and

from there by train till Haifa port in Israel and from there to the markets in Europe," said Mr. Cohen laying out the outline of a new regional connectivity and trade in the West Asian region.

The visiting Minister's comment on railway transport is an early sign of the shape of the connectivity projects that are emerging in India's backyard in the West Asian region.

Mr. Cohen's visit to Delhi and Mumbai comes against the backdrop of growing interactions between India and Israel as the two sides are preparing for a possible visit from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to India.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

COMMON UNIFORM IN ARMY FOR OFFICERS FROM THE RANK OF BRIGADIER FROM AUGUST 1



Reflecting ethos: A standard uniform will ensure a common identity for all senior-rank officers, says a source. File Photo

In a significant move, the Army has decided to go for a common uniform for officers of the rank of Brigadier and above from August 1 irrespective of their parent cadre or regiment, military sources said on Tuesday.

The decision was taken after detailed deliberations during last month's Army Commanders' Conference and extensive consultations with all stakeholders, they said.

"In order to promote and strengthen common identity and approach in service matters amongst senior leadership, beyond the boundaries of regimentation, the Indian Army has decided to adopt a common uniform for Brigadier and above rank officers," said a source.

"This will also reinforce the Indian Army's character to be a fair and equitable organisation," the source added.

The changes will come into effect from August 1.

Common identity

The headgear, shoulder rank badges, gorget patches, belt and shoes of flag rank — Brigadier and above — will now be standardised in view of the decision, the sources said.

The flag-rank officers will now not wear any lanyards.

There will be no change to the uniform worn by Colonels and below-rank officers.

In the Army, officers of the rank of Brigadier and above are mostly posted at headquarters or establishments where those from all arms and services work and function together.

According to sources, a standard uniform will ensure a common identity for all senior-rank officers, while reflecting the true ethos of the Indian Army.

FITCH CUTS INDIA GDP GROWTH FORECAST FOR THIS FISCAL TO 6%

Rating firm trims outlook from 6.2% projected earlier citing headwinds from elevated inflation, interest rates and subdued global demand; sees India as one of the fastest-growing sovereigns

Fitch Ratings has lowered its 2023-24 GDP growth forecast for India to 6%, from 6.2%, citing headwinds from elevated inflation and interest rates along with subdued global demand, with the expansion seen quickening to 6.7% in 2024-25, as against the 6.9% projected earlier.

The rating firm also reaffirmed India's long-term foreign-currency issuer default rating at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. A 'BBB-' issuer default rating indicates that expectations of default risk are currently low and payment capacity to meet financial commitments is considered adequate, but adverse business or economic conditions are more likely to impair this capacity.

While India will be one of the fastest-growing rated sovereigns, bolstered by "resilient investment prospects", Fitch said this year's growth will ease from the 7% expected for FY23, as pent-up domestic demand fades along with faltering global demand.

"We forecast headline inflation to decline, but remain near the upper end of the Reserve Bank of India's 2%-6% target band, averaging 5.8% in FY24 from 6.7% last year. Core inflation pressure appears to be abating, falling to 5.7% in March," it noted.

Headwinds ahead

Credit rating company expects a confluence of headwinds including elevated inflation and interest rates to crimp demand



- Growth to ease from 7% seen for FY23, as pent-up domestic demand fades and global demand falters

- Firm reaffirms India's long-term foreign currency issuer default rating at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook

- Headline inflation seen averaging 5.8% in FY24, slowing from 6.7% last fiscal

MINIMISING THE THREAT FROM IEDs



Ambush attack: Onlookers stand at the site of the attack in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh on April 27. AFP

Why are improvised explosive devices potent tools in the hands of militants? What can be done beyond standard operating procedures to take on terrorists in Kashmir or Maoists in central India?

EXPLAINER

The story so far:

On May 5, five soldiers were killed and another was injured in a gunfight with militants in the Rajouri-Poonch sector of Jammu division. According to the Army, the gunfight broke out after an explosive device was triggered when a search team established contact with a group of terrorists hiding in a cave in the Kandi forests, killing two soldiers. On April 26, an IED (improvised explosive device) killed 10 security personnel of the District Reserve Guard in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada area. The jawans were out on an anti-Maoist mission when they were ambushed.

Were any tactical mistakes made?

The quintessential dilemma for security forces is that they are dealing with an enemy who is faceless, unidentifiable and hidden among the people. Wedded to upholding the law of the land and protecting its people, security personnel can open fire only in self-defence, not on apprehension. Militants,

whether they are the Lashkar-e-Taiba in Kashmir or the Maoists in central India, have the 'first mover advantage', on triggering a landmine or an IED on a mobile Army vehicle or opening burst fire with an AK-47 on a static CRPF sentry post. In all such scenarios, particularly in landmine/IED ambushes, the reaction or the response time available for what is called "Immediate Action (IA) or Counter Ambush drill" is a few seconds, and that too, if a few of the security personnel are lucky enough to survive the initial IED ambush. Hence, all standard operating systems and procedures, technological measures etc. are directed towards identification and detection of IEDs/landmines and to avoid being caught in them.

How can errors be minimised?

The first thing that must be kept in mind is to avoid travel by vehicle. The safest mode of travel is on foot in a region where left-wing extremism is active. Studies show that over 60% of casualties/fatalities in Maoist territories are because of vehicles ambushed in landmines/IEDs, as also seen in the recent Chhattisgarh incident. Routine operations like area domination, cordon-and-search, long range patrolling, ambush-cum-patrolling and so forth should only be undertaken on foot. Vehicle travel should be undertaken rarely and that too, only for urgent operational reasons, after exercising due diligence. If vehicle travel is absolutely essential, the onward and return journeys should never be by the same route, nor undertaken during the day time. A little-known fact is that Maoists, to avoid the risk of civilian casualties, neither trigger IEDs during night time, nor use anti-personnel/pressure induced mines. The exact timing of triggering IEDs is also an issue during night time. Hence, night travel by vehicles is relatively safe for security forces. Unfortunately, in most instances, the security forces travelled during daytime and that too by the same route, resulting in fatalities.

Will moving around in camouflage help?

Stealth, camouflage and concealment are integral to anti-terrorist operations. Olive green vehicles of the Army and light green vehicles of the CRPF are easily identified from a distance, giving adequate time and opportunity to terrorists to organise an IED ambush. If vehicle travel is absolutely essential, security forces are expected to take civilian or State Road Transport Corporation buses. To avoid easy identification, they must travel with civilians in mufti with weapons carefully concealed.

What about armoured vehicles and other protective gear?

In certain war zones, vehicular deployment is inevitable. Security forces working in such areas should be equipped with appropriate protective gear, such as blast-resistant clothing, helmets, and eye protection. Their vehicles should also be equipped with V-shaped and armour-plated hull, blast-resistant technology and proper sandbagging to minimise damage in the event of an explosion. Machine guns and other weapons should be mounted on top of the vehicles with outward facing rotatory seats, from where the men can have a 360-degree observation outside.

Also, security forces should always travel in a convoy of minimum two to three vehicles, maintaining a distance of at least 40 to 50 metres between them, so that even if one vehicle is caught in a landmine, the personnel in other vehicles are able to take positions and neutralise the threat.

How can a region be made safe for travel?

Rigorous and regular implementation of various detection methods, such as metal detectors, ground-penetrating radar, and trained sniffer dogs, to locate and clear landmines and IEDs, is essential. Road opening parties play an important role in detection of ambushes. Aerial surveillance carried out through

drones and road opening parties equipped with UGVs (Unmanned Ground Vehicles), can not only detect the presence of terrorists to carry out operations but also pick tell-tale signs of a likely ambush like piles of rock and mud bags, dugout portions on the sides of the roads, and absence of people or movement of other vehicles.

Based on the above inputs, areas known or suspected to contain landmines or IEDs can be mapped and contingency plans prepared for them. This includes establishing safe routes, setting up checkpoints, and creating evacuation plans as part of both preventive and mitigation measures.

What about Intelligence inputs?

While it is important to gather actionable intelligence, due to enormous risks of reprisals by terrorists, locals usually do not divulge information for money alone. Winning of hearts and minds is neither easy nor quick. Relationships have to be cultivated and goodwill generated among the local population on a long-term basis beyond and above transactional levels. This requires patience, commitment, empathy and integrity on the part of security forces, which is sometimes lacking.

What can be learnt from an explosion?

There is simply no substitute for good, old routine investigation of crimes, including that of IED ambushes. An IED ambush is not an insular, standalone event. There is a whole ecosystem behind it, comprising of financiers, suppliers, transporters, builders and triggermen. It is pertinent to mention here that in just one year alone (2008-9) in Afghanistan, the U.S. forensic investigation teams picked up a mindboggling 5,000 finger prints from the remnants of IEDs and explosives, recovered from the scenes of bomb blasts. This enabled identification and detection of hundreds of suspects and accomplices involved in IED ambushes. Diligent and scientific investigation, establishment of linkages through meticulous collection and marshalling of evidence, framing of chargesheets, followed by speedy trials and conviction, serve as a strong deterrent to terrorism.

What are some of the other measures that need to be undertaken?

Several measures need to be undertaken at the government level, both at the Centre and States. These include collaboration with international organisations, NGOs, and other countries to share information, resources, and best practices for landmine and IED prevention, detection, and clearance; implementation and enforcement of national and international laws, policies, and regulations aimed at preventing the use, production, and trade of landmines and IEDs.

Legislative measures are required for mandatory addition of odoriferous chemicals and/or biosensors to explosives used in industry and mining etc. for their easy detection during transport. Likewise, legislative measures are required for stricter controls on manufacture, supply and sale of explosives and detonators. Other countries have taken several counter-IED measures spending billions. The U.S., for example, set up the Joint Improvised-Threat Defeat Organization to "prevent, identify and defeat IEDs" and has spent about \$20 billion on counter IED measures since 2005. NATO's Counter-IED Centre of Excellence is based in Madrid; a small unit exists in India under the National Security Guard. But given that IEDs have been causing major setbacks to fighting militants in India, it is high time that an overarching agency is created under the Ministry of Home Affairs to coordinate the efforts of both the Government of India and the State governments, and to provide legislative, technological and procedural support to law enforcement agencies.



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