

South Asia Conflict Monitor

monthly newsletter on terrorism, violence and armed conflict...



NEPAL: Assessing the Threat of Religious Conversion and Radicalisation

Nihar R Nayak & Animesh Roul

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Amidst the ongoing India-Nepal diplomatic tensions over border disputes, Nepal's Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli extended support for Indian proposal at the UN for a common definition for terrorism -- Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) -- during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on September 25, 2020. In the speech, PM Oli "condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, or other activities inflicting pain and suffering on innocent people." He added, "We [Nepal and its citizens] call for an early conclusion of a comprehensive convention against terrorism".[1]

Haven for Extremists

In the post-Maoist insurgency period, Nepal did not witness any active violent conflict by any global terrorist outfit. Even its home-grown radical left extremist group -- the CPN (Chand faction) -- has been branded as a criminal outfit, not as a terrorist organisation. The government has clarified to the media as well as to India that Nepali territory is not being misused by terrorist groups. Nonetheless, several terrorists arrested in the past have disclosed during interrogations that they used Nepal as a shelter zone, transit route to India and as an indoctrination centre.

Some examples are the hijacking of Air India flight from Kathmandu in 1999, the arrest of Indian Mujahedeen terrorists such as Yashin Bhatkal and Ariz Khan from the Terai region and LeT terrorist Mohammed Umer Madani.[2]

This indicates that absence of active violence does not mean that there is no presence of terrorist groups/rebel groups in the country. It is often seen that the domestic rebel groups and transnational terrorist outfits do not carry out any subversive activities in a particular territory, region or county that is used as a shelter zone. In the case of Nepal, the radical Islamist terrorist outfits use Nepal as a haven due to the following reasons. First, it is easy to escape and move between India and Nepal due to the open border system. Even the functioning of the SSB personnel gets restricted due to the open border. Second, the strong presence of Muslim clusters in the border regions of both the countries and proliferation of mosques and madrasas in the Nepali side of the bordering areas. Third, the anti-India elements take advantage of the existence of strong anti-India feeling amongst the Kathmandu based ruling elites. For example, in 1999, the ISI-backed terrorist groups took advantage of the then misunderstanding between

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Kathmandu and New Delhi over the presence of Nepali Maoist leaders in India and New Delhi's non-compliance to security cooperation between the two countries. A senior police official of Nepal's Bhairawa district, in an interview to an Indian media, had then refuted allegations on Nepal saying, "India suspects us of protecting the ISI. We, on the other hand, suspect India of encouraging Maoist guerrillas here [Nepal]."[3] Fourth, Nepal has visa on arrival facility for nationals of other countries to promote tourism. The radical Islamist terrorist groups and anti-India elements misuse this arrangement. Fifth, Nepal has not been successful in setting up a robust monitoring mechanism to prevent misuse of its territory by transnational terrorist groups due to frequent political instability and its impact on governance. Sixth, the terrorist groups are aware that both India and Nepal are in favour of giving continuation to the historical open border arrangement. Since India has fenced its western and eastern borders, Nepal-India border would offer as an alternative easy entry point to India as long as the open border arrangement continues.

Most importantly, India and also the US State Department have repeatedly highlighted Nepal becoming a hub to carry out terrorist activities against India since 2015. A 2018-19 report categorically observed that the Indian Mujahideen maintains ties with other terrorist entities, including Pakistan-based Lashkar e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), and Harakat ul-Jihad Islami (HuJI), to operate from Nepal against India. These groups' stated goal is to carry out terrorist actions against India.[4] It is often found that the members of these outfits mostly take shelter in the Muslim dominated clusters of southern districts of Nepal like Mahottari, Rautahat, Parsa, Kapilavastu, Sunsari, Banke and Bara that shares border with India. Despite hard evidences, some political parties of Nepal ignore this fact for vote bank politics. Since Muslims constitute 5-6 per cent of the total Nepalese population and are mostly found in the Terai region, prominent Muslim leaders and organisations have been associated with the former CPN-UML due to ideological factor. For example, Salim Miya Ansari was an active member of the CPN-UML and served as a minister twice. His son, Yunus Ansari, the kingpin of FICN (Fake Indian Currency Notes) network, was arrested in 2014 for having linkages with D-group and the ISI. Yunus Ansari was released but again arrested in May 2019 by Nepal Police in the same charges along with three Pakistani nationals.[5]

In January 2019, the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) government appointed Samim Miya Ansari as the chairperson of the Muslim Commission. Ansari allegedly played a crucial role in facilitating Rohingya refugees' taking shelter in Nepal. A Ministry of Home Affairs, Nepal, task force formed in 2008 under

Krishna Bahadur Katuwal, the then Assistant Chief District Officer of Kathmandu, found that Rohingyas could be a long-term threat to Nepal".[6]

From the former CPN-UML's perspective, supporting the Muslim community was an opportunity to make its presence felt in the Terai region where, traditionally, it had a weak base. As a result, the UML leaders often gave freehand to Muslim organisations and ignored their dubious activities. Similarly, in the post-2008 period, Upendra Yadav's party wanted to consolidate in the Terai region by seeking the support of the Muslims. Yadav's party has been a mute spectator to illegal activities too. At the same time, province No 2 Chief Minister Lal Babu Raut brought about a new policy to allow direct external funding to the Muslim organisations of Nepal in 2018.

Therefore, it is worth understanding what prompted the current Oli government to speak against terrorism and money laundering?

Threat of Grassroot Islamism

Of late, Nepal government is worried about rapid demographic changes due to religious conversion despite having an anti-conversion law under the new Constitution. Other than Christianity, there are reports about conversions of Hindus into Islam. There is a growing influence of Wahabism as a direct fallout of the mushrooming of Wahhabi madrasas and mosques, especially in the districts along Nepal's border with India. The process of conversion continues both at domestic level [7] and abroad. At the domestic level, the Islami Sangh Nepal (ISN), mosques and madrasas play an important role. These institutions and organisations get regular direct funds from Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. On September 4, 2017, the iqna.ir (International Quran News Agency), quoting a Turkey-based newspaper, reported that the number of Muslims had increased rapidly in Nepal in the past few years. Citing Maulana Khurshid Alam Islahi, the head of the ISN, the report said some 100,000 Nepalese embraced Islam over the past 15 years and the same is expected to rise even further in the coming years.[8] It is to be noted that Turkey is one of the major donors to promote Islam in Nepal, mostly through aids (e.g. food distribution) and scholarships to promote religious education through its religious charity Turkey Diyanet Foundation (TDF). The TDF was once accused of distributing meat and other succour among Nepalese Muslims in 2019's Eid al Adha festivities.[9]

Moreover, there have been reports of Nepalese migrant labourers converting into Islam. In due course, more poor Hindu Nepalese population could embrace Islam while working as migrant labourers in

Muslim countries. In 2009, the Asian News reported that the then foreign minister of Nepal, Upendra Yadav, had instructed Nepali diplomatic missions to probe the cases and stop such conversions if they come through pressure or by force. He ordered after receiving complaints from the Nepalese workers' union, immigrants and their relatives about embracing Islam by Hindu Nepalese immigrants in 55 countries, especially in Qatar, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the Arab Emirates and Malaysia.[10]

Media reports have indicated in the past that a large number of mosques and guesthouses have been constructed adjacent to India-Nepal border. For example, a two-storey guesthouse is constructed in Nepalgunj, where the "guests" of Dawat-e-Islami (DeI), a transnational Islamic missionary group with origins in Pakistan, will be accommodated during their congregations. DeI branches of Pakistan reportedly bear the cost of all such constructions.[11] Though the DeI claims to be an apolitical body, it promotes Islamism to its fundamental level; and despises other religious practices such as Hinduism. It openly criticises Polytheism or Idolatry (as shrik) which is not permissible under Islamic Sharia law.[12]

Besides the DeI, the Muslim pockets of the Terai region have seen increasing Tablighi Jamaat (TJ) activities, another orthodox Islamic missionary organisation with origins in India. The mid-February 2020 International TJ Conclave (Alami Tablighi Ijtima) in Bodebarsain, Saptari (province No-2) witnessed massive footfalls from the Indian subcontinent (Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) and beyond (Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Kuwait, Qatar). [13] Despite its intention to ban these large annual gatherings, the government failed to stall the three-day event. [14] Similar to TJ, there are over 15 Islamic missionary organisations in Nepal. These include the Jamaat-e-Millat-e-Islamia; the Nepal Islamic Yuba Sangh; the Nepal Muslim League; the Nepal Muslim Ekta Sangh; and the Democratic Muslim Welfare Association.[15] Like the DeI and TJ, these groups are reportedly getting regular funds from many Muslim countries and individual sympathizers.

Challenges Ahead

Rampant conversion drives by Islamic religious groups remain a major problem in Nepal despite anti-conversion provisions. Due to poor implementation of money laundering and anti-terrorism finance laws, religious groups like DeI and TJ hold frequent congregations and indoctrination programmes with the support of foreign funding. Other than foreign aid, these groups receive backing from influential local, state and central leaders and constitutional position holders to promote suspicious activities in the guise of apolitical religious gatherings.

Within three days of PM Oli's remarks against terrorism at the UNGA, media reports indicated that the Social Welfare Council (SWC), Government of Nepal, has undertaken the process to bring out a new act to address the risk of money laundering and terrorist financing in Nepal.[16] This is the first-ever effort made by Nepal to check money laundering and terrorist financing after delisting itself from the FATF grey list in 2014.

The new policy would ensure that those organisations operating in the garb of NGOs, INGOs, welfare or rights groups maintain transparency about the sources of their investments, funding and other financial transactions. This will also bring organisational activities under the scanner. The new policy will also enable the government to monitor and curb the economic lifeline of terrorism-related activities (recruitment and indoctrination) as well as illegal religious conversions backed by so-called socio and religious organisations.

Nihar R Nayak, Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi.

Animesh Roul, Editor, South Asia Conflict Monitor, Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict, New Delhi.

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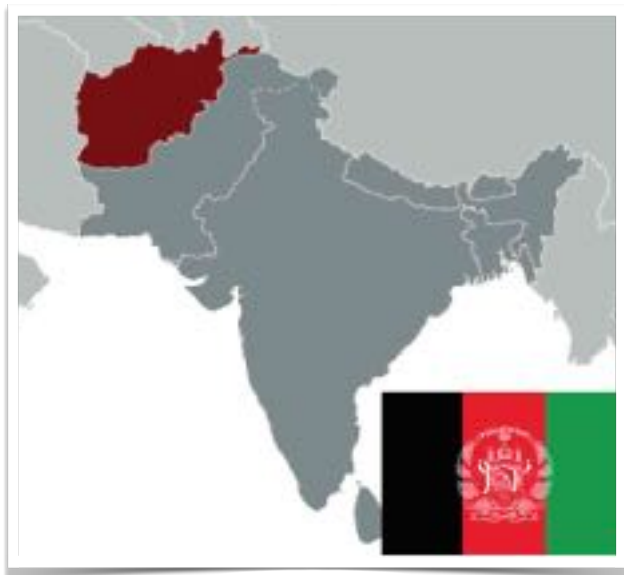
COUNTRY BRIEFS AND NEWS ROUNDUP: SEPTEMBER 2020



AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan witnessed regular violent incidents despite several progress towards normalisation: 1) a standing peace agreement between the US and Taliban (signed on February 29 2020), 2) substantial progress in releasing of the Taliban prisoners by the Afghanistan government, and 3) the first round of intra-Afghanistan dialogue in Doha on September 12, 2020. The Taliban militants continued to target both the Afghanistan security forces, their rivals and the civilians. In retaliation, Afghanistan security forces too targeted the Taliban, IS-KP and other groups.

The first round of intra-Afghanistan dialogue ended on September 30, but without any results. The dialogue was inconclusive because both the sides disagreed on the procedural rules. The Taliban’s spokesman



Mohammad Naeem, during an interview in Qatar, said that the group would not agree to a ceasefire unless the government peace negotiators discussed the main cause of the war in the country. Naeem claimed that the Taliban reduced the level of violence with the start of the preliminary round of the talks even though the government has continued offensive operations.

Earlier, the Loya Jirga (tribal assembly), which was held in August, had approved the release of 400 prisoners. Both the Afghanistan government and the Taliban reiterated their commitment to the peace process. The Taliban especially declared that it would end the conflict once those 400 Taliban prisoners were released.

Afghanistan conflict is induced more externally than internally. Pakistan has remained the key factor behind the lingering strife there. Pakistan does not want a stable and peaceful Afghanistan, which would strategically

undermine Pakistan's relevance to the global community. Unless the international community strongly warns Pakistan, Afghanistan will continue to face more bloodsheds in the near future.

MAJOR EVENTS:

September 03: The spokesman for the National Security Council (NSC), Javid Faisal, confirmed the completion of the Taliban prisoner release except for the prisoners about which international partners have reservations. The Taliban confirmed the release of 5,000 prisoners except seven that the foreign countries urged the Afghan government not to release directly. ([Tolo News](#))

September 05: The Afghan National Army reported that the Afghan forces killed 46 Taliban terrorists and injured 37 others during an operation in the Qaisar district of the Faryab province. ([The Times of India](#))

September 09: At least 10 people died in a roadside bomb attack in the Afghan capital Kabul targeted at the First Vice-President Amrullah Saleh. Saleh, a former head of the Afghan intelligence services, escaped the attack. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied about his group's involvement in the targeted attack. ([BBC](#))

September 10: Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS) have arrested Obaidullah (also, Ikrima Madani), the mastermind of bomb blasts in two mosques in Kabul city, which lead to the killing several people in June 2020. The blasts had killed Ayaz Niazi and Abdul Aziz Mofleh, two renowned clerics. Islamic State group had claimed responsibilities of these killings. ([Pasbanan](#))

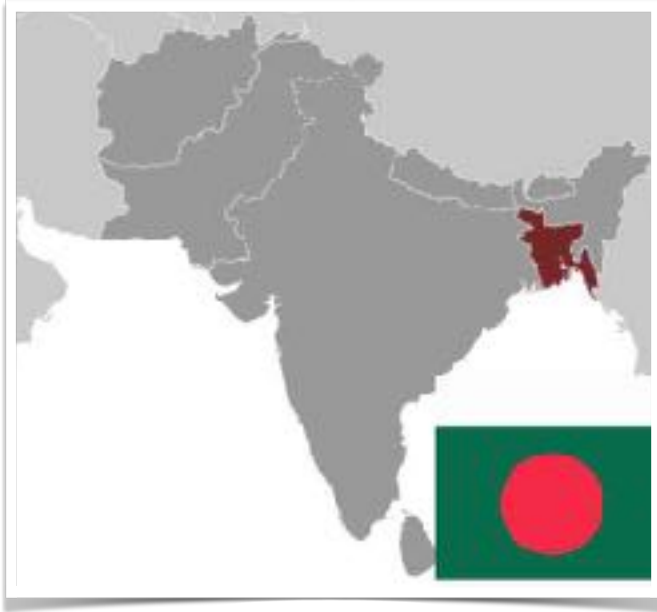
September 12: The Taliban and the Afghan government began peace talks in Doha, Qatar, aimed at shaping a power-sharing government that would end decades of war that have consumed Afghanistan and left millions dead and displaced. ([The New York Times](#))

September 17: Speaking to Ariana News, Attaullah Khogyani, a spokesman for the provincial governor said at least 20 Afghan forces were killed and 30 others wounded in the clash between the Afghan forces and the Taliban in Sherzad, Khogyani, and Hisarak districts of the province. ([Ariana News](#))

September 21: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani at an event on the International Day of Peace said peace is possible only through a political settlement, insisting that the government is making efforts to end the forty years of war in the country. "We should absorb at least 60,000 to 120,000 Taliban fighters. We have a plan for it. We are ready for it. We should also embrace four to six million refugees," he further added. ([Tolo News](#))

September 29: Three Afghan policemen, including Kohistan district's police chief Abdul Zahir were killed and three others were injured in Taliban attacks in the northern Badakhshan province. At least four Taliban members were killed in the event. ([Tolo News](#))

BANGLADESH



Bangladesh experienced a relatively calm September month bereft of any violent conflict or unrest. Like the previous month, counter-terrorism agencies of Bangladesh continued to take action against the radical Islamist groups that had attempted to revive their activities in different parts of the country. The agencies arrested a large number of cadres from Ansar-al-Islam, the Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB), and the Allah'r Dal. The arrested cadres were attempting to revive their operations in the name of fundraising and holding meetings both in urban and rural areas.

The review period, however, witnessed an increase of attacks on religious minorities such as Hindus and Buddhists. Media reports indicated about rapes, molestations, murders and physical attacks, looting of properties, closer of holy places, forced conversions and occupation of lands.

Given the commitment of the CTTC and decisive policy of the Awami League government, Bangladesh may not witness any major violent conflict emanating from radical groups in recent times.

MAJOR EVENTS:

September 09: The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) of Dhaka police have arrested four militants of Al Qaeda linked Ansar al-Islam near Hotel Royal in Mirpur area of Dhaka city. They were identified as Amit Hossain, Al Amin, Shihab Uddin and Manikuzzaman. Police recovered extremist literature, among other things from them. ([Independent](#))

September 10: Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Counter-Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit (CTTC) arrested four members Neo-Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen (Neo-JMB) from Uttara area of Dhaka city. They were identified as Mamun Al Mujahid, Al Amin alias Abu Jihad, Mujahidul Islam and Sarowar Hossain Rahat. These Neo-JMB militants were involved in the July 24 Paltan bomb blast. ([Daily Stars](#))



September 13: After over a month-long investigation, Dhaka Metropolitan Police's CTTC unit concluded that the Sohel Rana of the village Shilashi in Gafargaon, Mymensingh, was killed by members of Neo-JMB. The investigations have confirmed that four members of the IS-inspired group have confessed to their crime. These four Neo-JMB operatives were arrested in early August from the locality. Earlier the Islamic State group has claimed the murder in Sawt-al Hind magazine, No 7 and its social media outlets. He was killed for practising witchcraft. ([Prothom Alo](#))

September 18: Bangladesh police arrested one Ansarullah Bangla Team (ABT) operative Mohamad Sarowar Hossain Sohag from Bhola City (Barisal Division), with extremist literature. Sarowar, was planning to create unrest in Bangladesh with his associates and make religious provocations through Facebook, WhatsApp and

IMO. A few days earlier, on September 16, the Anti-Terrorism Unit and RAB of Bangladesh police arrested two militants of Ansar al-Islam group, identified as Mohamad Kiron Hossain and Abu Sayem from Dhaka city. Both ABT and AaI are linked with Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent. ([Dhaka Tribune/ Dhaka Tribune](#))

September 18: Security forces stepped up surveillance around the Kashimpur Central Jail and several other prisons following a threat issued for jailbreaking to free militant prisoners. Since September 15, all prisons across the country were put on high alert. ([Dhaka Tribune](#)).

September 22: The Rapid Action Battalion of Bangladesh police arrested one Allah'r Dal (AD) militant, Shimul Hossain from Sarmongla Eco-park area of Rajshahi District. Police recovered four mobile phones, leaflets and various organisational documents from Hossain. Previously, on September 17, RAB had arrested two AD militants identified as Mohamad Chan Mian and Mohamad Saiduzzaman Nayan from Puraton Bazar area in Gaibandha District. ([Dhaka Tribune/ Dhaka Tribune](#))

September 29: Media sources informed about Neo-Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB's) leadership changes. Though IS media did not officially declare these organisational changes, and media sources picked up the information from local social media chatters. The organisational name of the new 'chief' is Abul (Abu?) Abbas Al-Bangali Hafizullah, who is of Bangladeshi origin and now staying abroad. According to sources, the new Majlis-e-Sura (core council of members/decision-making body) members are Abu Amer Al Bangali, Abu Ruham Al Bengali, Abu Adnan Al Bangali, Abu Dujana Al Bangali and Abu Ahsan Al Bangali. Most of these members are perhaps operating from abroad. ([Daily Star](#)).

September 29: The Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) of Bangladesh police arrested Mohamad Mahbubur Rahman of Ansar Al Islam terror group from Ashulia, Narayanganj District. Police recovered extremist books and leaflets from him. Mahbubur confessed to promoting extremist propaganda through different social media platforms, such as Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp and recruiting young people by meeting them in person. ([Dhaka Tribune](#))

September 30: Bangladesh police apprehended three Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants from Belpukur area in Rajshahi District. They were identified as Abdul Hannan, Shahidul Islam and Ziaur Rahman. ([Daily Bangladesh](#))

INDIA



The post-withdrawal period of about 10,000 paramilitary personnel from the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) witnessed an increase in terrorist attacks. According to the government sources, a total of 45 civilians and 49 Security Force (SF) personnel were killed in militancy-related incidents from August 5, 2019, to September 10, 2020. It would be pertinent to mention that the government withdrew security forces since the region witnessed less number of violent incidents in July and August. The spike in the violent incidents in the review period could be due to the following reasons: 1) Failure of state forces to maintain area domination in the absence of paramilitary forces; 2) Last round of attacks from the terrorist groups before the onset of winter and, 3) Pakistan wanted to increase the number of incidents in Jammu and Kashmir to blame India at the UN Security Council.

Interestingly, there has been a correlation between the Cease Fire Agreement (CFA) violation along the Line of Control (LoC) by Pakistan and several terrorism-related violence in Kashmir. The review period witnessed an increase in CFA violation by Pakistan. That indicates that Pakistan attempted to infiltrate more militants into India side by violating CFA repeatedly in this month.

In the case of north-eastern (NE) region of India, a large number of cadres of the different militant groups were arrested in the review period. The number of cases went up since the NE based insurgent groups attempted to revive their movements in the post-COVID lockdown period. The peace process dialogue between NSCN-IM and the central government continued in the review month. A series of informal meetings were held between the central government and the NSCN-IM in New Delhi, but without any significant progress. The NSCN-IM stuck to its demand for a separate Naga flag and Constitution. A final peace agreement was supposed to be signed in September. Perhaps, the government has to fix another deadline since no progress was seen by the end of September.

As Jammu and Kashmir, there was a spike in the number of casualties, arrests and surrenders of Maoist cadres in the Maoist affected states. As the monsoon season withdrew from India, both the affected states and the Maoists are getting ready for active operations in the deep forests. In that case, there are possibilities of more casualties in the coming months.

MAJOR EVENTS:

September 04: Five militants of Islamic State-Jammu and Kashmir (IS-JK) were arrested from Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir. They were involved in a May 20 attack at Pandach on the outskirts of Srinagar city that killed two Border Security Force (BSF) soldiers. They were identified as Aijaz Ahmad Rah, Shahi Rasool Shalhaf, Bilal Ahmad Ganie, Mujeeb Shafi Ganie and Jibran Riyaz ([Journey Line](#))

September 08: A Special National Investigation Agency (NIA) Court in Kolkata (West Bengal), convicted and sentenced four members of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) to imprisonment for seven years in Burdwan Blast case of October 2, 2014. Four accused are Ziaul Hoque, Motiur Rahaman, Mohammad Yusuf, Jahirul Sheikh. The investigation by NIA revealed a conspiracy by JMB to radicalise, recruit and provide training in arms and explosives to its members in India as well as to commit terrorist acts and wage war against the democratically established Governments of India and Bangladesh. A large number of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), explosives, hand grenades, training videos were recovered during the investigation of the case. ([Daily Star](#))

September 10: The Seventeenth meeting of the U.S.-India Counter-Terrorism Joint Working Group and the third session of the U.S.-India Designations Dialogue was held virtually on September 9-10, 2020. Both countries have resolved to take concerted action against pan-Islamist terror groups Al Qaeda and Islamic State (IS) and also the Kashmir-centric Pakistan-sponsored outfits, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and Hizb-ul Mujahideen (HuM). ([US State Department](#))

September 10: The NIA filed a charge sheet in LeT online recruitment module case against accused Tania Parvin (Isra Noor) under UAPA in a special court in Kolkata, West Bengal. She was earlier arrested on March 18, 2020. Investigation revealed that the accused was a college student and had got radicalised in the cyberspace by Pakistan based cadres of LeT. ([India Today](#))

September 10: The Islamic State's weekly newsletters, al-Naba (No. 251) carried a tribute to three IS-Kashmir members on its 'Story of a Martyr' series. These three dead members have died in clashes with Indian forces on June

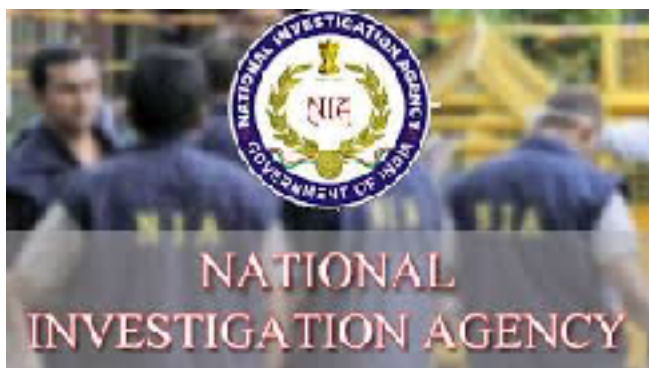
21. The eulogy was dedicated for Abu Yahya al-Kashmiri, Hussein Sani and Abu al-Darda. The article also featured three photos purporting to show the slain militants. (Al Naba, 251).

September 11: Special NIA court in Delhi held nine more people guilty and convicted them in the Islamic State (IS) Conspiracy Delhi Case. Earlier on August 6, 2020, six accused persons were held guilty and



convicted in this case. This case was dealing with larger criminal conspiracy hatched by the IS to establish its base in India by recruiting Muslim youth for IS, through different social media platforms. This case was first of its kind in which these IS terrorist had conspired to carry out terrorist acts in various parts of the country as is evident from the evidence on record concerning their conspiracy meetings in Hyderabad (Telangana), Bangalore (Karnataka), Pune (Maharashtra) and Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh). ([India Blooms](#))

September 14: The Kashmir-Pakistan based Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) reportedly threatened to target mainstream politicians of the Jammu region, if they did not relinquish politics. The two-page threat letter, written in Urdu on the militant group's letter pad, was delivered by post to a Congress Party leader Raman Bhalla at his headquarters on September 11. The letter, signed by a self-styled divisional commander of HM, named 17 senior politicians of various national and regional parties, including Union Minister Jitendra Singh, Bhalla, BJP president (Jammu and Kashmir) Ravinder Raina, former deputy chief minister Nirmal Singh among others. ([NDTV/ News live](#))



September 19-21: India's NIA has arrested nine Al-Qaeda linked suspects in multiple raids in Murshidabad District of West Bengal and Ernakulam District in Kerala. A large number of incriminating materials including digital devices, documents, jihadi literature, sharp weapons, country-made firearms, a locally fabricated body armour, articles and literature used for making home-made explosive devices have been seized from the possession of the arrested terrorists. They were identified as Murshid Hasan, Iyakub

Biswas, Mosaraf Hossein (all residents of Ernakulam, Kerala) and Najmus Sakib, Abu Sufiyan, Mainul Mondal, Leu Yean Ahmed, Al Mamun Kamal, Atitur Rehman (all residents of Murshidabad, West Bengal). Days later, the NIA has found more people in West Bengal involved in Al Qaeda linked activities. Two more persons from Malda District working in tandem with the earlier arrested individuals. ([Hindu/ Deccan Chronicle](#))

September 20: India's Home Affairs Minister, G. Kishan Reddy informed the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Indian Parliament) that the NIA registered around 34 Islamic State-related cases and 20 cases related to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) across the country. NIA arrested about 240 people in connection with these cases. The IS group has an active presence in States like Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Rajasthan, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. ([India Today/ Times of India/ Deccan Chronicle](#))

September 20: The latest edition of pro-Islamic State group (IS) magazine Voice of Hind (No.8) focused on the Indian subcontinent has justified the unintended killing of women, children and the elderly in jihadist attacks. The magazine has been published by Ansarul Khilafah in Hind, a pro-IS Kashmir group. The Magazine is produced by al-Qitaal Media Centre, one of three official outlets for Jundul Khilafah. (Voice of Hind/Telegram)

September 21: The NIA detained two terror suspects Gul Nawaz and Shuhaib from the Thiruvananthapuram international airport in Kerala. They arrived at the airport from Saudi Arabia. One of these two men is associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba, and the other belongs to Indian Mujahideen (IM). Gul Nawaz is from Uttar Pradesh, and the other Shuhaib belongs to Kannur District in Kerala. These men have been detained in connection with the serial blasts in Bengaluru in 2008. ([Matrubhumi](#))

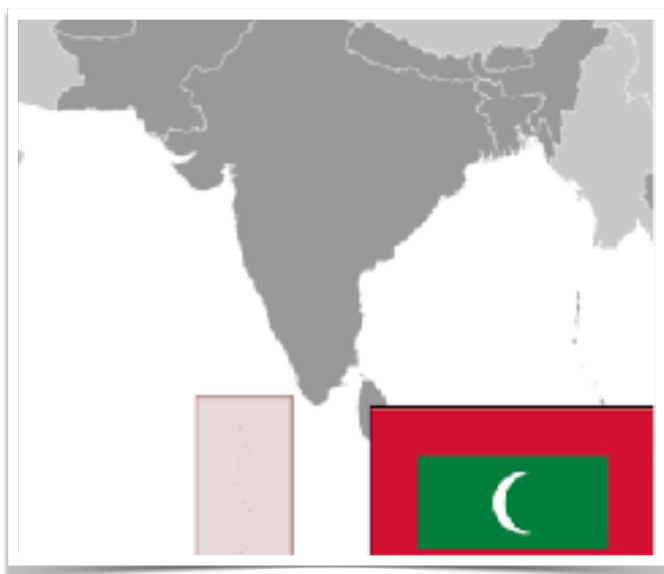
September 25: The Bengal-Kerala based Al-Qaeda module had opened a *madrassa* (Islamic Seminary) in Murshidabad District of West Bengal, which was used to radicalise the Muslim youth. Al Mamun Kamal, one of the accused in the case told investigators that a madrassa had been opened up and he had also raised funds

for this purpose. The NIA has also learnt that the arrested people in this case, kept in touch through a chat group called the Ghazwa-e-Hind with at least 22 members. ([One India](#))

September 28: The NIA Special Court at Ernakulam (Kerala) sentenced Islamic State-linked militant Subahani Haja Mohideen. The investigation also revealed that Moideen had exited India from Chennai and reached Turkey on April 8, 2015. He had then illegally crossed over to Iraq through the land border and joined the Islamic State using kunya name Abu Jasmine Al-Hindi. After undergoing religious and arms training with IS in Iraq, he was deployed with IS' military formation Umar Ibnu Khatab Khatiba, headed by the French national Abu Suleiman Al-Francisi, who was later killed. ([NewsMinute](#)).

September 29: A Special NIA Court in Kolkata (West Bengal) convicted two Bangladeshi citizens Sahadat Hussain and Umar Farooque under various sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) and the Foreigners Act. They were sentenced to seven years of "rigorous imprisonment, and the court also imposed a fine. NIA Investigation by NIA revealed that Bangladeshi members of ABT entered India in 2016 in pursuance of the conspiracy to commit terrorist acts in India. The accused persons travelled and stayed at Hyderabad, Pune and Mumbai in the guise of labourers. ([Outlook India](#))

MALDIVES



September 15: The court hearings of the Yameen Rasheed murder trial was extended for another week. Before starting the hearing, Judge Adam Mohamed questioned the defendants whether they objected to the remote hearing. The lawyers for the three other defendants voiced objection, citing that they had not been able to meet their clients in days. *Al Qaeda* affiliates allegedly stabbed Yameen Rasheed to death in the stairwell of his residence on April 23, 2017. Six men are on trial for his murder; Ismail Haisham Rasheed, Hussain Ziyad, Ahmed Zihan Ismail, Mohamed Dhifran, Hassan Shifaz, and Ismail Rasheed. ([Sun](#))

September 20: India-South Asia focused pro-Islamic State group (IS) magazine Sawt-al Hind (Voice of Hind, Number 8) has urged IS followers in the Maldives to strengthen their connection to the group and also said that the IS followers in that country are not keeping up with the latest news, instructions or media released by IS. It said that "This unfamiliarity is undoubtedly disappointing." The article also stressed the importance of reinforcing "social relationships" among IS followers in the country. The magazine also called on IS followers to implement the group's interpretation of Sharia law in the Maldives "publicly and privately", including in their own households, claiming that this led to excellence in the "battlefields". (Voice of Hind/ Telegram)

September 23: Maldivian criminal court has released a sixth suspect Hassan Raze, charged with supporting terrorist organisations. Hassan Raze along with five others were arrested in a special operation conducted by Maldives Police Service in Raa Atoll's Maduvvari during Late December 2019/early 2020. The six individuals were charged with supporting terrorist organisation. Five suspects were freed by the court earlier on the ground that they had been remanded for an excessively long period of time. [[Edition](#)/ [Sun](#)]

NEPAL



In the case of internal security, Nepal did not witness any major political violence in the review period. The security forces were busy taking actions against the renegade Maoist faction, the CPN-Maoist-Chand, cadres in different parts of the country. The security forces managed to arrest some cadres of the Chand faction in the review period.

Although the anti-government street protests, like the 'Enough is Enough' movement, were suppressed by the state and a peaceful hunger strike by Dr KC was managed through negotiations, Nepal may witness more such anti-government protests and strikes in the coming months. The CPN-Maoist-Chand group could take advantage of public anger against the Oli government due to the collapse of the public health system.

MAJOR EVENTS:

September 12: The Standing Committee of the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) passed the agenda prepared jointly by the two co-chairpersons of the party — KP Sharma Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal — and decided to give Dahal executive powers to run the party. ([The Himalayan Times](#))

September 13: The Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons urged the Government to provide relief for the victim's family. In its written request to the Ministry of Law and Justice, the Commission said immediate relief was necessary for the families of the victims of forced disappearance to save them from hunger. The Commission says that most of the victims of enforced disappearance are economically weak and have lost their jobs due to the lockdown triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic. ([The Kathmandu Post](#))

PAKISTAN



The review period witnessed an increase in violence and killings in Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Karachi. The Liberation Front (BLF) militants attacked the security forces on multiple occasions to take revenge of SF action against Baloch youths in the province. The Pakistan Army retaliated strongly against the BLF militants and some innocent civilian. Many youths have been reported missing in the province. Similarly, there was a spike in violent incidents in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) in the review period due to an increase in sectarian violence and cross border firings with Afghanistan. Perhaps, in response to that, Pakistan Government proscribed a group identified as Khatam-ul-Ambia for being an offshoot of a banned organisation Ansar-ul-Hussain involved in terrorism under the Anti-Terrorism Act, 1997. The National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) added Khatam-ul-Ambia's name to its list of

proscribed organisations after the Federal Ministry of Interior issued the notification. There were also reports about attacks on Sikh minorities in the province.

Besides, Karachi witness spike in sectarian violence by some unidentified groups. The groups targeted both police and civilians. In response to that, a large number of anti-Shia protesters, including demonstrators linked to 'Sunni extremists,' undertook a series of street rallies in Karachi. The protestors waved pro-Sunni flags and chanted Sunni-power slogans.

There was a spike in attacks on religious minorities, sectarian violence and attack on civil society activities in Pakistan. It appears that Imran Khan Government is encouraging this to divert public attention from its failure on governance issues, neutralise the Army in the internal matters and anti-Imran Khan rallies by the 11 opposition political parties, which formed Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM). In this regard, the government might take further action against some opposition leaders to quell the movement and use extremist groups to divert public attention.

MAJOR EVENTS

September 08: Islamic State-Pakistan (IS-PP) province has claimed killing a member of the intelligence services in north-western Pakistan's Bajaur area. IS has claimed similar attacks in Pakistan in recent months. In August 2020, the group said it killed two intelligence agents using machine guns in Bajaur, near the Peshawar city of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Also, in July 2020 another member of the intelligence services was also allegedly killed by the group in the same area. (RocketChat)

September 12-13: The Islamic State (IS-PP) has claimed an attack on Pakistani army headquarters in Wur Mamund, located in northwest Pakistan. IS statement said that its militants attacked army headquarters in "Wur Mamund (referring to Mamund in Bajaur) killing or wounding several soldiers. Previously, IS issued a statement saying it killed a Shia Muslim man on September 11, in Faqirabad neighbourhood in Peshawar. IS activity in Pakistan has been negligible since its self-proclaimed 'Pakistan Province' branch announced in May 2019.

September 13: Pakistan army has killed four terrorists, including terrorist commander Ihsan Ullah alias Ihsan Sanray near the Inter-district boundary of North and South Waziristan. According to Inter-Services Public Relations, the terrorists were killed in Ghariom, Shaktu. The ISPR also said Sanray had masterminded numerous terrorist activities including ambush attacks in Shaktu area that had led to death of several soldiers and officers recently including, Lt Nasir and Capt Sabih. (Geo News)

September 17: Pakistan has frozen 964 properties of proscribed terror groups/charity Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). The upper house of parliament was informed that 907 of the frozen properties belonged to JuD and 57 to JeM. The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan elaborated that the provincial home departments had frozen the properties of proscribed organisations under the United Nations Security Council (Freezing and Seizure) Order, 2019 issued by the foreign affairs ministry. (The Express Tribune)

September 30: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Sindh killed one Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) operative in a pre-dawn shootout in Karachi. The CTD team raided a place in Musharraf Colony on Hawkesbay Road and killed Saeed Haji after a brief encounter. The slain terrorist was said to have joined the AQIS in 2014 and was trained in Afghanistan. Later, he along with his associates Syed Mujtaba and Abdul Saboor formed a group in 2016 (The News)

SRI LANKA



The newly elected government in Sri Lanka was engulfed passing the 20th Amendment to the Constitution, which gave more excellent immunity to the Executive President. Earlier, the 19th Amendment was passed in 2015 to restrict presidential powers and strengthening the parliament. The new legislation has reduced the office of the Prime Minister to a ceremonial one. Some opposition leaders and civil society groups have appealed against the Amendment before the Supreme Court.

Tamil minorities in the North staged a hartal (general shutdown) in protest against the ban issued by the Northern Provincial courts banning the commemoration of a former Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) cadre Thileepan. Several political parties and civil society organisations in the North, including Tamil National Alliance (TNA), requested closer of government offices, schools and the private sector institutions in the northern region. Other than Tamils, the Muslims are also feeling insecure due to the government's decision to impose a ban on cattle

slaughter.

The Rajapaksa brothers used Sinhala nationalism against minorities during the elections. The leaders used the same electoral tactics to win Presidential elections last year. Since both the leaders are known for their anti-minority views and now enjoy unrestricted power with the Presidency, they might take more such actions against the minorities --Tamils, Muslims and Christians who fear losing their basic rights.

MAJOR EVENTS

September 12: Former Senior Deputy Inspector General of Police (SDIG) Eastern Province Edison Gunathilaka informed the Presidential Commission of Inquiry (PCoI) probing Easter Sunday attacks that Muslim extremists' groups in Sri Lanka were propagating armed extremism since 2008-09. Gunathilaka said that former Minister Rishad Bathiudeen, former Eastern Province Governor M. Hizbullah and politician A. L. M. Athaullah had provided security for these extremist groups that emerged in the Eastern Province. Gunathilaka said that year 2008 marked the beginning of the first extremist groups. It starts with the name "Islamic Centre". These people created various issues in the Eastern Province. They killed people and punished whoever they want. ([Daily Mirror](#))



September 18: Former Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando informed PCoI, investigating the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks that former President Maithripala Sirisena has not allowed immediate action against the Sri Lankans who had returned after fighting for the Islamic State (IS) and extremist foreign preachers because he feared upsetting Muslim politicians. ([The Island](#))

September 20: Former Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena denied allegations made against him by Fernando at the PCoI into the

Easter Sunday attacks. He said Fernando's testimony about him before the Commission was totally untrue and malicious. ([Cylon Today](#))

September 22: The PCoI summoned former President Maithripala Sirisena and former Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe before the Commission. Sirisena is scheduled to appear before the Commission on October 5, and Wickremesinghe is scheduled to testify on October 06. ([Colombo Page](#))

September 24: Former IGP Pujith Jayasundara informed the PCoI that former President Maithripala Sirisena should take the sole responsibility of the coordinated terror attacks. He added that the attacks took place due to a breakdown in long-term political plans. ([Daily News](#))



The South Asia Conflict Monitor (SACM) aims to provide in-depth analyses, country briefs, summary sketches of important players and a timeline of major events on issues relating to armed conflicts, insurgencies and terrorism. It also aims to cover the government's strategies on conflict resolution and related policies to tackle these risks and crises.

The South Asia Conflict Monitor is a monthly bulletin designed to provide quality information and actionable intelligence for the policy and research communities, the media, business houses, law enforcement agencies and the general reader by filtering relevant open source information and intelligence gathered from the ground contacts and sources.

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Editor: Animesh Roul (Executive Director, Society for the Study of Peace and Conflict, New Delhi) EMAIL: ANIMESHROUL [at] SSPCONLINE [dot] ORG

Editorial Advisor: Nihar R. Nayak (Research Fellow, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), New Delhi)

Consulting Editor: Akanshya Shah

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