

# People's Participation in Keeping India Internally Safe

*Internal security holds a pivotal place in the overall national security of any country and it concerns everybody. It impacts day to day life and hence it becomes a joint responsibility of both the state and citizens.*

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The security scenario in South Asia continues to be extremely critical and India is the prime target of many terror groups including Indian Mujahedeens. On the whole, these threats hamper prosperity of the people and progress of our country. Therefore, we have to overhaul our internal security architecture in the most effective manner.

Latest data from National Bomb Data Centre (NBDC) shows that India suffered 212 bomb blasts in 2013. This resulted in 130 deaths and 466 injuries. Strange as it may sound, government data show that India is among the most dangerous places in the world as far as bomb blasts per year are concerned - next only to Iraq and Pakistan. However, India has done slightly better than the rest of the world in terms of the share of attacks targeted at common public. While in the rest of the world, 69% of attacks are directed towards public, India registered 58% in this category with the rest being targeted at the security forces and government property. Security forces managed to decrease attacks on them by almost 40% last year as compared to 2012, due to improved drills and alertness. However, attacks on public remained almost the same, as there is no similar alertness and training with the people.

I often wonder if such dastardly acts could have been avoided if only the people in the targeted area had bothered

to notice some uncanny device, a bag or a person planting the bomb in an innocuous place, surely catching someone's eye.

The internal security concerns everybody. Similarly people's perception about it matters and impacts day to day life and hence it becomes a joint responsibility of both the state and citizens. While the government keeps its machinery well oiled with periodic reviews and upgrades, the capacity building of the common man remains a matter of neglect. It is only once the protectors of the people sensitize the public to combat a perceived or real threat that the security blanket will give the required insulation from violence.

The government requires a variety of resources for maintenance of internal security, including people who are the heart of any security system. However, people are to my mind the weakest link in the security chain. An important resource but least talked about. More attention needs to be given to improve the human elements/resource for achieving higher security standards.

## PEOPLE'S ROLE

This brings me to an important expectation of people who want internally safe India. To make India internally safe, we need to get information on the possible targets and those responsible and tasked to carry out such acts. Can any government alone deliver on this? The answer is no. Any government, no matter how efficient, honest or well-intentioned has its limitations in terms of what it can do for society at large. We need one more variable. We need a society where people are alert and are security conscious.

**Know Anti-social Elements:** People make mistakes by ignorance and fall into adverse situations. Therefore, the first thing is that we must know the people who have evil designs, leanings and deceive gullible persons.

**Business of Prevention:** The people have no authority like Police but it should be a resource for stopping crime before it happens. Thus people have to be in the preventive business. It should be our job to act as deterrent to crime. For example citizens of Israel are so well 'trained' that an unattended bag or package would be reported in seconds by citizen(s) who know how to publicly shout, 'Unattended Bag!'. The area would be quickly and calmly cleared by the citizens themselves.

**Security Consciousness & Alertness:** While the government efforts are critical for effective security, caution at individual, family and community level is equally important. Awareness of the risks and available safeguards reduce panic. It encompasses not only individual preparedness but also mutual aid and collective deliberations posed by disasters. Some people do not do what they are supposed to, and thus create vulnerability in our security framework.

**Intelligence Building (Roving Eye):** The Police cannot watch every public place. Manpower constraints make it impossible. Embracing technology will create deterrence and post incident analysis. However, this requires huge investments. The technology cannot read minds of culprits as human eyes and ears. Therefore, country needs peoples' help in being the eyes and ears of India. People therefore, have to be encouraged to be vigilant in observing conduct that creates risk like; suspicious movement/ unusual behavior of people/ identified suspicious objects(unattended bags etc)/ unusual sound and then to report what they see to the concerned, so that appropriate action may be taken. KUTCH DHIKHTA HAIN TO BOLO (If You See Something, Say Something). It is important that the criminals/terrorists realize that they are being watched. Government on its part should offer incentives to people who report any such incident.

Remember, people don't have to

charge in during or after an incident/offence. Instead remain calm, observe, remember events and report to the Police.

**Watch Indoctrination:** The incident of four youth of a community in Thane/Kalyan suspected to have joined terror outfits in Iraq (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) is an example of indoctrination. The family and people around did not read their actions. Luring sympathizers and recruits by seasoned extremists is known methodology. Thus there is need for keeping track on missing youth in particular. Similarly there is need to institute debriefing process for those returning from sensitive places.

**Watch Social Networking Sites:** It is important for keeping watch on social networking sites and messenger services as often the initial contact is made with people (mostly youth) having leanings towards terrorists' ideology.

**Team Player:** Do not try to manage the situation alone. If circumstances of incident warrant immediate help, seek from people around. Call police once you are in a safe area, but only if police, has not arrived.

Be a team player at the disaster site, once the law enforcement agencies arrive. Help others who are hurt or need assistance to leave the area if you are able. If you see someone who is seriously injured, seek help.

**Other Responsibilities:** We the people need to:-

1. Accept restrictions on personal freedom/liberties.
2. Tolerate stringent laws politely.
3. Accept video surveillance at larger places.
4. Do not bring races/religion into security matters. Respect diversity.
5. Accept monitoring of telephone and internet communications.
6. Cooperate in frisking.
7. Accept tighter security at public places, train/metro/mono rail and bus stations.
8. Do not crowd at the incident site as it hampers rescue and investigations. Also crowds of people may be targeted for a second attack.
  - Avoid unattended cars and trucks in the incident area as these may contain explosives.



- Follow directions from people in authority/volunteers if you are at an incident site. Move at least 200 meters away from incident site. It will also protect you against falling glass and bricks from damaged buildings/structures.

### CHALLENGES BEFORE PEOPLE

There are many knowledgeable people as far as security related people's role is concerned. However, there are few challenges, like:-

- Even if people are willing to play a role in aiding the nation's physical security efforts, they may find it too confusing to do so.
- Busy people will not be able to pay much attention to the requests made of them.
- Fear of unintentional negative consequences of sharing intelligence.
- Crowded environment, where identifying miscreants many times becomes difficult.
- Lack of expertise among common people in identifying suspicious persons and objects.

### ENHANCING PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

Build Security Climate & Culture: Security climate is the shared perception of the people in terms of security systems, processes, procedures, routines and rewards. Security culture could be defined as the manifestation which reflects the importance that an organization/nation places on securing its physical, electronic and information assets. When combined, both these two concepts work together to elicit appropriate security behaviors

from the public. All the security policies are useless, unless people perceive these as appropriate and valuable. If they don't, security policies and procedures will likely be ignored or circumvented. As such shared public perceptions that support security are also important.

There is a lot to be done in this. This needs to be systematically addressed by the government so that people's participation in internal security becomes voluntary.

**Security Education:** The change must begin at homes and schools. The mission to inculcate security must begin at a very early stage by instilling this culture among school children. Security education should to be made a part of the curriculum – like there are special subjects – SUPW/PT etc. Government and Corporate must incorporate security training courses as in house training.

I am convinced that a proactive approach to educate the masses, especially those who are in frequent contacts like car attendants, coolies, rickshaw pullers/drivers, vegetable and fruit vendors, shoeshine boys and so on are potential information warriors.

To achieve this we have to educate the people from different walks of life and empower the poor on the streets by giving them simple incentives and motivating them to become facilitators and providers. The NGOs should work towards this regard and educate those people who do not get formal education.



Along with such a measure, there is a need to introduce formal education in this area in schools and colleges. There is the requirement of a structured approach in tackling this menace and relevant guidelines need to be issued to all stakeholders who have an important hand in spreading the message and in impacting the minds of the people. It is time for our citizens to wake up and realize the gravity of the problem of not contributing towards identifying an impending disaster and not doing one's duty of becoming a part of the country's security apparatus.

The government should leverage the power of communication media to create awareness like "ABKIBAR BOMB NAHI." These campaigns should be sustained and use all available means to reach out people both in urban and rural areas.

**Skill Development:** Technology is a valuable asset in an overall security management strategy. No matter how advanced the technology is, it will ultimately be deployed in an environment where humans exist. The skill development of security technicians needs to be incorporated in the ITIs.

**Media:** Why do we only reflect on the past and then try and assess what went wrong? Why can we not become more proactive? Why do our newsmakers not facilitate creating more awareness amongst the people on the essentials

of citizenship? It is with the support of the citizens of the country that we can expect the security situation to improve. For it is only in awareness that we can feel more secure.

It is only mass support that is going to count in the war against terrorism. People have to be sensitized to the problem and checks and balances have to be suggested and placed for greater security. The people need to be informed of their responsibilities towards society.

**Ease of Communication with Police:** We need to make it easy for common man to communicate with the Police in confidence. The informer's identity needs to be simultaneously protected. One suggestion is create an App where information can reach the respective authorities with a click of a button. Also eventually make this app compulsorily built in every phone in India.

**Disgruntled Elements:** It is commonly held belief that the insider threat is major, if not the major concern when concerning physical security. These must be identified early and not allowed to grow into a larger problem. Fight against terrorism must begin with our children so that their indoctrination as they grow becomes difficult.

**VIP Culture:** One of subject that is a constant source of anger is the special treatment that our so-called VIPs receive in the country for undergoing security

check. In order to make security checks effective, exceptions should be very rare. That can only happen when officials and VIPs change attitude without any blinkers.

**Mobile Technology:** Mobile technology, which has become rather gainful for economic transactions, has to be energized for usage as early warning systems, and people have to be encouraged and educated in the multiple usage of the facility.

**Protection of Foreigners:** It should be the responsibility of every Indian to protect and guide foreign nationals, e.g., tourists, delegates etc from potential risks arising out of security issues. However, as a nation we need to create a conducive environment so that foreign governments do not issue security advisories.

## SUMMATION

Citizenship has to be regarded as the strength of our nation. It is therefore, relevant to suggest that there is a need for detailed and deliberate coordination of all these activities and there is a need to educate the environment through professional intervention, while also through the mass media. There is the requirement of creating a structure for spreading the message to the people and making them aware that they are a part of the advance warning system. The role of NGOs will become more pronounced as they have to share the burden of educating the people on the intricacies of modern terrorism.

All the resources for managing internal security are interwoven and it is extremely difficult to differentiate and to identify when a particular resource's role is more predominant. The government requires enthusing and winning over the people with initiatives, which will make a difference to the citizens and hence a citizen-oriented plan has to be worked out to bring about a change in society. Society should become the focus of all future security endeavors.

Lastly, the 'Human Permanent Eye' at public places involves 'Zero' cost. So our internal security has to be in the hands of 3Ps; People, Private Security and Police in that order.