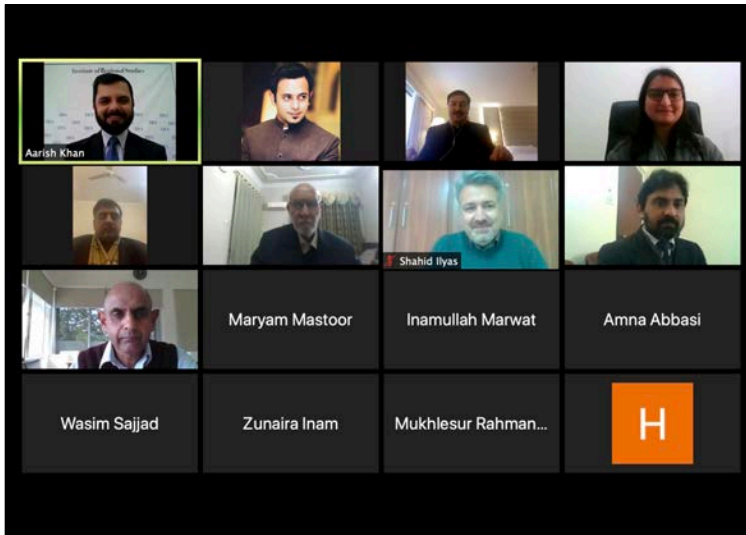




Institute of Regional Studies

Pakistan much safer since APS attacks



ISLAMABAD December 16, 2020: Participants of a roundtable unanimously agreed that Pakistan was a much safer place since the terrorist attack on Army Public School (APS) in Peshawar six years ago. The views were expressed in a webinar hosted by the Institute of Regional Studies titled “Terrorism vs State: Remembering the Tragedy of APS.”

Senior journalist Rahimullah Yusufzai maintained that while there had been security lapses on the day of the terrorist attack on APS, Pakistan

had come a long way since then in terms of improving its internal security as well as addressing some key underlying institutional weaknesses. Elaborating further, Mr Yusufzai shared that while the law enforcement agencies had given numerous sacrifices in Operation Zarb-e-Azb to make Pakistan a safer place, the Government of Pakistan had also taken several initiatives to improve the institutional capacity of the state and to promote national cohesion.

Citing examples of the government’s efforts towards overcoming institutional hurdles to countering terrorism, Mr Yusufzai mentioned the fencing of the border with Afghanistan despite reservations of the Afghan government. Besides referring to the National Action Plan (NAP) soon after the attack, Mr Yusufzai also referred to the 25th constitutional amendment, which he considered a major step towards improving law enforcement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He regretted, however, that the amendment was pushed through the parliament in haste by the previous government creating several administrative problems for the government that came afterwards. Mr Yusufzai mentioned the Paigham-e-Pakistan declaration signed by all the leading religious scholars of the country as a success of the government. Mr Yusufzai further added that the mastermind of the attack Khalifa Akhtar Mansoor as well as the leader of TTP Mullah Fazlullah were killed in drone attacks in Afghanistan owing to Pakistan’s intelligence coordination with the US as well as its diplomatic efforts.

The Alpha Bravo Charlie-fame Lt Col (Retd) Qasim Shah, who was an eye-witness to the incident, urged all citizens of the country to acknowledge the bravery and sacrifice of the heroes of December 16 and added that the Indian intelligence agency RAW had chosen the date to hit Pakistan through its sponsored terrorists very carefully to inflict as much psychological pain on Pakistanis as possible. He was of the view that the society could play a key role in alleviating the plight of the parents who had lost their children in the attack. Ms Shumaila Zahoor, Lecturer at the National Defence University, also narrated the human stories of bravery and sacrifice from the teachers and students of APS on the day of the attack as well as the positive role played by the media in the aftermath of the attack.

Security Management Professional Maj (Retd) Yasir Janjua called for commemorating not only the days on which such tragedies struck but also the days on which they were averted owing to the quick response of the security forces or citizens like Aitzaz Shah, the young schoolchild who had saved dozens of lives in his school by sacrificing his own.

President IRS Amb Nadeem Riyaz thanked all the participants for their candid remarks and insights.