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Army Trains 30 Kashmiri Youths to Give Healing Touch

By Sudhi Ranjan Sen

Yasir Hameed has a shy, disarming demeanor with a quiet smile. “I like it here,” says the 17-year-old, who is part of a group of 30 boys who left home to prepare for the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) to study medicine at the Army’s secret facility near Srinagar. The super-30 programme is run by the Army, NGO National Integrity and Education Development Organization (NIEDO) and funds provided by corporate like HCL as part of their corporate social responsibility.

Yasir, who belongs to the restive Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir — from where rifleman Aurangzeb, who was on deputation with the 44 Rashtriya Rifles, was abducted, tortured and shot dead— would spend the next one year with the other 29 youth at the facility and only keep in touch with his family through phone. Yasir’s father is a security guard and makes a meagre living. “I was surprised when Yasir’s mother approached me,” says Dr Srivastava, a managing trustee of NIEDO. For their neighbors, these 30 youth are staying with their relatives in other villages. Openly associating with projects that have government or Army backing is fraught with danger. Therefore, they would not return home till they take the exam. “There is a lot of distraction back home,” one of the students said indicating the turmoil in his village. “Here it is better. One can concentrate,” he added. These 30 youth are a stark contrast to the bleeding image of Kashmir riven by terrorism, counterinsurgency operations and stone pelting. They are taught by experts from various fields of medicine and by KU professors. The group almost follows an Army routine.

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— DR SRIVASTAVA, NIEDO

THE HINDU

China offers to boost ties between India and Pakistan

Foreign Ministry spokesperson hints at trilateral meeting

By Atul Aneja



Without explicitly proposing a trilateral dialogue among India, Pakistan and China, Beijing on Wednesday offered to “strengthen” its cooperation with New Delhi and Islamabad to bolster “stability” in the region. “Both India and Pakistan are China’s neighbours and friends. We are willing to conduct relations with all our neighbours, including Pakistan and India, to strengthen our cooperation for better development and stability in the region,” Foreign Ministry’s spokesperson Geng Shuang said. Without abandoning the prospects of a trilateral meeting altogether, the Chinese Foreign Ministry seemed to step back from explicit offer of a meeting among China, India and Pakistan, made by its Ambassador in New Delhi, Luo Zhaohui. Official sources told The Hindu that India was exploring the possibility of connectivity to Central Asia through the Pakistan-Afghan corridor, under the SCO framework. “The SCO has been working on connectivity among its member countries. Now that India and Pakistan are both members, it provides New Delhi with a fresh opportunity to reach out to Central Asia across the Pakistani corridor,” the source said. However, another official said that New Delhi had not been considering the SCO as a forum where bilateral differences between India and Pakistan were to be addressed.

Personal opinion

In response to Mr. Zhaohui's proposal, the External Affairs Ministry had earlier said: "We have seen reports on comments made by the Chinese Ambassador in this matter. We have not received any such suggestion from the Chinese government. We consider the statement as the personal opinion of the Ambassador. Matters related to India-Pakistan relations are purely bilateral in nature and have no scope for involvement of any third party." Mr. Shuang said he hoped that "India and Pakistan can strengthen their dialogue to improve their mutual trust." Asked whether Mr. Zhaohui's remarks in Delhi were China's official position, Mr. Shuang said: "What I have just said is China's official position." Analysts say that it is become apparent that China is imparting greater urgency for the resolution of India-Pakistan differences under the SCO framework. During the Qingdao summit, Chinese Foreign Minister and State councillor Wang Yi told state broadcaster CGTN, "I think after their joining the SCO, maybe we can provide a better platform and opportunities for the building of relations between them."