

Istanbul blasts

The root causes behind terrorism must be eliminated

THE city of Istanbul has witnessed, for the second time in a week, what may be termed unprecedented acts of barbarism. The attacks on the British Consulate and the HSBC bank have proved, beyond any iota of doubt, that the spectre of terrorism is ever lengthening on the world at large. It's not known who will be its next target.

The killing of Roger Short, the British Consul General, is another reminder of the mindless nature of terrorism. Words are not enough to describe the enormity of the crime.

US President Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair have reacted to the attacks much the same way they always did in the past while commenting on such incidents. They have also tried to justify all that the Anglo-American military alliance has done in recent times to obliterate the threat of terrorism. But terrorist attacks continue as does the rhetoric aimed at it. The upshot of it all is that innocent people continue to lose their lives.

George Bush and Tony Blair have hinted at the war on terrorism being carried to its logical conclusion. But we believe any attempt to solve the problem militarily will fail to obtain its objective. Rather, the need is to get at the root of the problem. Poverty and an unjust global order can and do feed the monster of terrorism more than anything else. Regrettably, there has been no real initiative on the part of the West to eliminate these discrepancies which account for a huge chunk of the world population living under sub-human conditions. The poor countries are the ideal breeding grounds of every kind of terrorism.

The immediate concern, however, is the Middle East, where Israel has been given a freehand to implement its highly jingoistic agenda. Again, the West has failed miserably to deal even-handedly with the parties concerned.

So the ultimate answer to terrorism lies in defusing tension and removing the root causes like poverty and social discrimination, not in demonstration or application of military might.

Five slaughtered in Pabna

Government must make police reform top priority

THIS has been a bad week for law and order. The latest incident to hit the headlines is the slaughter of five fishermen in Pabna early Thursday morning and it seems that not a day goes by without news of a new outrage perpetrated by criminal gangs.

The motive behind the killing of the fishermen in Pabna remains shrouded in doubt and no one has yet been arrested in connection with the gruesome incident. Locals believe that the killings are connected to the payment of toll that gangsters had demanded from the fishermen, and the local police are pursuing leads that the killings may be the result of an internal conflict among the gangsters, and that the five killed were themselves outlaws.

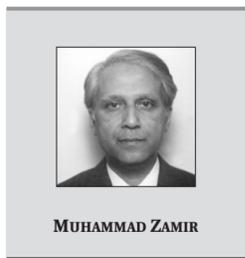
One thing which is clear is that crime in the country is out of control and the police seem utterly incapable of adequately handling the situation. Day before yesterday we reported on the murder of eleven members of one family by dacoits in Banshkhal and it seems as though criminal gangs can terrorise the population at large with impunity.

An anti-crime drive is currently active in the south-west of the country but we have undertaken such crackdowns in the past with no noticeable long-term benefit. What is now necessary is wide-spread and systematic police reform so that we have the resources and the will to tackle the criminality that runs rampant.

All over the country people live in fear of extortionists and gangsters, with the police seemingly unable or unwilling to be able to provide the public with the security it deserves. It is becoming increasingly apparent that whatever current measures are in place to check crime are insufficient, and that top-to-bottom long-term police reform is needed so that the law and order situation can be brought under control.

The government which campaigned on bringing back law and order to the country must make it a top priority and deliver on its pledge.

Fighting the tentacles of terrorism



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

FORTUNATELY for Bangladesh, terrorist attacks on the scale of 9/11 have not taken place on its soil. We have however suffered from the more widespread phenomenon of domestic terrorism. There have been several unfortunate cases of bombing which have led to deaths of innocent civilians, enjoying a cultural function or a movie on different parts of the country. In this regard one is reminded of the terrible incident in the cinema hall in Mymensingh on 7 December, 2002 which killed 15 persons.

Despite steady denial about the presence of terrorists linked with fundamentalist bodies, recent developments are unearthing all sorts of worms. In addition to the United States Department of State identifying 'Harkat ul-Jihad-i-Islami/Bangladesh's as a terrorist organization in their 'Patterns of Global Terrorism 2002 Report', the law and order forces in Bangladesh are also beginning to identify and locate extremist groups bent on creating chaos and confusion within the country. Arms and explosives are being discovered in large quantities. Members of various organizations and fringe groups are coming under careful scrutiny and several militants from the 'Jama'at ul-Mujahidin' have already been arrested. The malaise has finally been recognised, and that hopefully, will help to restore some degree of normalcy in the western parts of Bangladesh.

Terrorism is something that none of us can condone. It affects national potential and retards growth. Taking innocent lives, through the use of illegal arms is against the principles of justice and all norms of civilised conduct. No religion sanctions such

drastic steps. Unfortunately, as yet, no one definition of terrorism has gained universal acceptance. Nevertheless, there is broad consensus about what construes as terrorism particularly in the international context. I will try to describe for the readership today the various steps being taken world-wide to contain this menace and what we may also do in this regard within our own country.

The United States, the principal

designated under EO 13224 have risen to 250, and the total designated under the FTO to 36. The US administration has also designated some states as state sponsors of terrorism. This controversial list includes Cuba, Iran, Libya, North Korea, Sudan and Syria. Iraq was also included till recently. For obvious reasons, it does not include Israel, although it continues to flout international law, Security Council resolutions and carries out targeted assassinations.

strengthening policing capability and tactical training programmes in counter-terrorism. Recent fatal events in Iraq have however demonstrated that unless there is clear coordination and precise assigning of responsibilities, gaps will be created and that will be exploited by terrorists.

Despite differences over Iraq, European nations have continued to work in close partnership with the US in the global counter-terrorism campaign. They are sharing

This has been done apparently to deny oxygen to the fire that keeps such groups alive. However, it has not been a plain sailing. Syria, while cooperating 'with the US government in investigating al-Qaida and some other organisations' has continued to support some of the organisations that are on the US terror list- Hizbollah, Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad. The Syrians continue to assert that the activities of these groups constitute legitimate resistance. The Gulf

Africa), this campaign continues to suffer within South Asia because of the differing interpretations of political will. Bilaterally, there is, to a degree, inter-active cooperation between South Asian countries and the USA. However, regional cooperation and sharing of intelligence as is being done elsewhere is more or less absent. This is not helping matters and not permitting law enforcement agencies to achieve objectives. One must not forget here that this region today is the home to several soft insurgencies -- the Tamil Elam movement in Sri Lanka, the Maoist terrorist attacks in Nepal, the continuous border skirmishes in Kashmir and rebel and other attacks in the North Eastern part of India. Bangladesh also has its problem with scattered bombs aimed at civilian targets. There exists in principle a SAARC agreement to combat terrorism, but this seems to have been relegated to the background.

Poor countries like Bangladesh cannot afford the luxury of taking a passive approach with regard to terrorism abroad and within its borders. If we do so, it will have a direct impact on our economic and social development. All our political parties must understand that terrorism has nothing to do with politics and religion. Supporting extreme groups of any kind through so called charity needs to end. Ours is a rural society where village elders and the Imams and priests in places of worship play a significant role. It is incumbent on the political parties to encourage them to speak out about respect for human rights and also against coercion and any form of extreme behaviour.

In addition, in the true spirit of South Asian cooperation, countries in this region should come together and fight the war against poverty instead of tacitly encouraging covert operations. With rule of law and sustained stability, we can generate confidence and credibility and subsequently expect greater infusion of foreign direct investment in this region. This will have its own beneficial multiplier effect.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

POST BREAKFAST

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agent in the world's fight against terror has chosen its definition as contained in Title 22 of the United States Code, Section 2656f (d). That statute contains the following definitions: "the term 'terrorism' means premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience." Similarly, 'international terrorism' has been defined to mean "terrorism involving citizens or the territory of more than one country." The US Departments of Justice and the State Department have also come to an agreed formulation with regard to the term 'terrorist group'. Groups are classified as such, if that group or any of its sub-groups practices international terrorism.

Apparently, the US government has been employing this definition of terrorism for statistical and analytical purposes since 1983. It is also within the scope of this Act that the US government has started designating groups as foreign terrorist organisations (FTOs) and the President has also signed executive order (EO) 13224, aiming to disrupt the financial support network for terrorists and terrorist organisations. Some of the groups have been included in both categories. Till to-date, the total number of groups

I will now turn to some of the efforts that are underway throughout the world to counter terrorism. Even the United States understands and acknowledges that the war against terrorism has not come to an end with the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Ba'athist regime in Iraq. It is with this end in view that they are attempting to sustain and enhance the political will of states to fight terrorism. This they are doing with the hope that others will also understand that continued efforts are in their long-term interests. The United States is also trying to bolster the capacity of all states to fight terrorism. This they are doing because they understand that the United States cannot investigate every lead, arrest every suspect, gather and analyse all the intelligence and effectively sanction every sponsor of terrorism. In short, they are trying to create a global system to fight the problem globally.

In this context, having spearheaded the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1373, the United States is also attempting to assist countries in meeting their obligations under this resolution.

It is also trying to strengthen the UN's counter-terrorism capabilities. This includes training on enforcing anti-money laundering laws,

intelligence information and working with the US on investigations of terrorist groups. They are also forging closer cooperative links with their neighbours. It is believed that this has disrupted planning for terrorist attacks, and led to the interception of funds destined for terrorist organisations. The European Union has also become deeply involved with both Russia and the OSCE in an effort to enhance counter-terrorism cooperation throughout the region. Russia, for understandable reasons have supported the steps for cooperation strongly. It has helped them to gain a measure of flexibility in dealing with the festering problem of Chechnya. In the name of shared values, various movements are being dealt with severely. Unfortunately, what is sometimes being forgotten is that effective counter-terrorism is impossible without respect for human rights. It is also sometimes being overlooked that the rule of law is a formidable and essential weapon in the fight against international terrorist organisations.

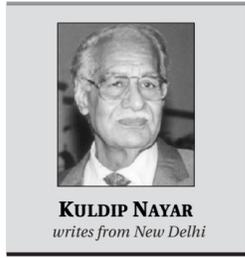
In the Middle East, at the urging of the USA and the EU, several Middle East governments have frozen alleged financial assets of terrorist groups, consistent with UN Security Council Resolutions 1267, 1373, 1390 and 1455.

countries including Saudi Arabia appear to be assisting in the war against terrorism. However, as has been seen recently, despite their 'positive steps,' disquiet about full support continues to exist in the minds of the US administration.

In East Asia, Philippines and Indonesia have been taking active steps and extending strong support and cooperation with other regional nations on counter-terrorism issues. They are also trying to bring perpetrators of bombings to justice. This has been partially possible because of foreign assistance towards improvement of counter-terrorism capabilities through training and assistance programmes and strengthening of existing legal and regulatory regimes. Malaysia has approved the concept of a regional counter-terrorism centre and has been supported in this regard by Thailand and Cambodia. Law enforcement centres and intelligence agencies in Singapore are openly cooperating with all the other countries within ASEAN. This, in turn, is generating confidence within this region.

While such intense diplomatic engagement to fight terrorism is taking place all over the world on a regional basis (including Latin America and

Crime sans punishment



KULDEEP NAYYAR
writes from New Delhi

FOR all its brazen sleaze, India is a fair working model of democracy. The underworld, foreign agencies, corrupt bureaucrats and dishonest politicians have lessened the sheen and support that the system should have had normally. Still it gives a growth of six to seven per cent per year, although very little reaches the lower half.

The general feeling is that even the poor would have got a better deal if the different scams and scandals under the successive governments had not siphoned off public money which ran into thousands of crores of rupees. Yesterday, it was the Congress in the dock. Today, it is the BJP but with no shame.

People have become so cynical of the system that they take the rulers' complicity for granted. They are painfully aware of India's top position among the countries known for corruption. For them, most political parties are the same.

What people have not been able to overcome is the horror over "a nexus between high-placed politicians, high-ranking bureaucrats and criminal elements" that a report in 1993 revealed. The report prepared by former home and defence secretary N

N Vohra delineated before them the frightening picture of corruption in high places. His information was based on the data which the Intelligence Bureau and the Central Bureau of Investigation had collected over the years.

The full report was never published. The portion made public was damaging enough. The entire apparatus of misgovernance by different political parties had been laid bare. No name was given out --

the other day that six of his ministers had put pressure on the public sector undertakings under their charge to give them money. The Sunday Express carried a few days ago pictures of a videotape showing Environment and Forests Minister Dilip Singh Judeo taking a bribe, reminding the nation of the Tehelka disclosures a couple of years ago.

From Mumbai -- India's economic capital -- has come the news of a scam of fake stamp papers worth more than

defended the minister and did not ask him to quit as it had done in the case of Bangaru Laxman, then the party chief, after he was shown accepting money on the Tehelka videotapes.

The fake stamp paper scam is the only case where some action has been taken, probably because no Union minister or central official is involved.

Nothing has been told officially yet. But Maharashtra police chief RS Sharma has gone on 15 days' leave before his retirement. The name of

December 1997. The bench comprising Chief Justice Verma and Justices Bharucha and SC Sen threw out what was called the "single directive," which required prior sanction. It enunciated the principle, "Be you ever so high, the law is above you." The cancellation of the order shook bureaucrats so much that it forced the government to issue an ordinance to restore the rule of prior permission. The Supreme

Court had then seen through the

prior permission. A senior advocate Anil Dewan, appointed as the *amicus curiae* of the court in this very matter, has made a written submission to it to strike down the relative provision "so that the rule of law is vigorously enforced."

The deletion of prior permission provision may discourage senior civil servants from joining hands with politicians for manipulating the system. But what happens to the politicians? They are a lynchpin. The select committee, which restored the rule of prior permission, was that of parliamentarians. None opposed the provision. I was the only dissenter. It is apparent that no code of ethics can stop politicians if they are bent on making money or doing something, which is in their personal interest or that of the party. This is clear from the nonchalant manner in which Vajpayee reacted to the CVC's complaint. In fact, the chief of one public sector undertaking, the National Textiles Corporation, has been relieved of his charges. He is reportedly one of the officials who had complained to the CVC.

All this reminds me of the Jain *hawala* case. The transaction came to light when one person was arrested at New Delhi for sending money to terrorists in Kashmir. During the raids at the Jain farmhouse, the police stumbled upon a diary that carried the names of top politicians and bureaucrats and the amount of money they received. After some time the matter was dropped.

There is no reason to believe that things will be different this time.

Kuldeep Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

BETWEEN THE LINES

The reason why the criminal-politician-bureaucrat nexus gets away with all the sleaze is the obnoxious rule that no inquiry or action can be initiated against senior civil servants in the government and public sector undertakings without prior permission of the ministry concerned. Over the period, ministers and bureaucrats have come to be the two sides of the same coin. That is the reason why no charge, not even a prima facie case takes off the ground.

neither of politicians nor of bureaucrats. But it was a common knowledge that some top ministers, including one or two former prime ministers and secretary-rank officials were involved in various rackets.

New Delhi did very little to pursue the information because the investigation would have compromised the position of the highest, both in politics and civil service. One thing that became clear was that there was a parallel government running at the behest of criminals, tainted officials and politicians lacking integrity.

The misdeeds of the nexus have not stopped in any way. Their fallout is visible off and on, in one form or another. The Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC) complained to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee

Rs 35,000 crore. They were issued under India's seal and printed at the Nashik Security Press under the central government's control.

Denials were on expected lines. The prime minister said that the CVC had met him but had not said anything about ministers or money. Earlier, the cabinet secretariat issued a statement to say the same thing. The videotaped minister first dismissed the matter as part of "his fight against international forces." Subsequently, he sent in his resignation to the prime minister and quit as if he was "morally obliged" to do so.

Vajpayee has made him a hero and the deputy prime minister's emphasis is on who gave the tape to *The Indian Express*, not the bribe. The BJP

former chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh of the Congress has also surfaced. The BJP has gone to town on that.

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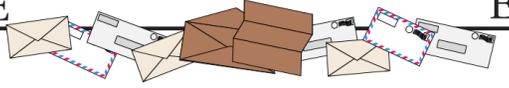
The Supreme Court came to know about the rule of prior permission while hearing the Jain *hawala* case in

game and summoned the Attorney General of India to have the ordinance amended.

This was not to the liking of the political bosses who depended on senior officials to do the dirty job. Different parties came together and decided to give a legal shape to the rule of prior permission. Little did they care that the law might be thrown out because the Supreme Court had already gone over the exercise. The law was enacted early this year while giving a statutory status to the CVC. A provision in the act legalised the rule of prior permission. Thus, the criminal-politician-bureaucrat nexus was restored as before.

But the matter may not rest here. The Supreme Court has already before it a petition challenging the rule of

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Story of a gas meter reader

The story of the meter reader in the news captioned "Gas meter reader splashes out Tk. 1 Cr. in charity" published in The Daily Star on November 16 was both amazing and surprising to the utmost. It is surprising in the sense that no action has been taken against the said meter reader although every body in the power and energy sector knows about him and his deeds.

It was really amazing to learn that even a state minister once had to offer him bribe. This uncovers the uncouth corruption and unforgivable weakness of administration. It seems that administration is knowingly allowing this to continue. How long would we

have to bear something which would lead the nation to a dismal future?

This type of corruption is not only putting the nation to a shameful position but is also causing national financial loss. It is clear that inefficient and weak administration has allowed this Frankenstein to grow. If administration and even political leaders feel helpless, where the common people would go? It is high time that top authority should take proper action to curb such corruption.

Fakhrul Alam
Siddheswari, Dhaka

On "Dear Bangladesh"

I have read the excellent article by Dr. Richard Benkin titled 'Dear Bangladesh' (November 16). I fully

agree with Dr. Benkin that in most cases, unfortunately, Bangladesh has a very negative image in the western world as the country of flood, disaster, famine etc. I think for such a bad impression, not only the western or motivated media, but some of the leaders and statesmen of the country are equally liable. I think Bangladesh is a country of infinite possibilities. For past several decades it held the culture of being extremely sincere to its friends and even tolerant to its foes. People are democratic, open minded and broad in thoughts.

Being a Jew, I would like to appeal to the Jewish entrepreneurs in the world to come forward in having wider and extended economic relations with Bangladesh. Invest in Bangladesh.

Increase the trade links. It will give excellent opportunity to the people of Bangladesh to know their Jewish counterparts even from a closer distance. Moreover, the government of Israel also needs to come forward in having better understanding with the Muslim world. They must initiate to clear the hatreds and misunderstandings.

Roxane Rosemarie
Yale University, USA

Lathi-Bansi Samity (Stick-Whistle Association) in Natore

I was disappointed to read the news that all activities of the Lathi-Bansi Samity have been banned for a month. The samity, an organisation of Natore

businessmen to fight terrorism, was established a few years back when terrorism was on the rise, and came to the limelight due to its courageous initiatives. Many people, irrespective of political affiliation, have extended their support to the samity. Even the BBC has covered the activities of the samity.

In some parts of the country, this model to fight terrorism, kidnapping and other crimes has been applied. The samity was floated due to the failure of the authorities to contain crimes and all sorts of evil activities in society, and all the people of Natore have benefited as a result. They can go about their business freely and women can travel without fear. With the banning of the samity for a

month, the aspirations of people have been dashed. What factors triggered the ban are not really clear to me. Allowing the samity to carry on with its activities is no way contrary to the Constitution. Rather it would help the people to contain evil activities in society in a more efficient and effective way.

Mallik Akram Hossain
Hong Kong

Princess Di!

This refers to Mostafa Omar Ali's letter dated 19/11/2003, which he wrote in response to my letter dated 10/11/2003, titled "A Princess Betrayed by her butler".

Well, whatever Mr Omar Ali has said about late Princess Diana is known to

all, but when a person dies, people normally ignore the weaker aspects of his/her character. Rather his/her good qualities are being remembered usually.

In fact, I put the statement under reference of national and international newspapers to ease the mental stress and pain of the two young children of late Princess Diana and Prince Charles that they have to bear due to the dishonest and mischievous act of their beloved mother's butler, Mr Burrell.

M Zahidul Haque
Dept. of Agria, Extension
Sher-E-Bangla Agricultural University,
Dhaka

The student bazaar

I live in Mohammadpur, which has

the highest density of educational institutions (per square mile). And this fact becomes clear by judging the huge traffic jams created every working day by hundreds of cars and other vehicles on Asad Avenue and the surrounding areas. Private universities and IT institutes are also increasing regularly in the area. This hi-tech learning centres are very popular these days. The computer education has become a necessity as computer skills create better options.

Hundreds of coaching centres have also sprung up all around the city, keeping the students and the cash registers busy all the time. We need educational and political dredging.

Alif Zabr
Dhaka