

We condemn the mayhem in Kolkata

Terrorism next door should heighten our security concerns

WE are profoundly shocked and outraged at the perpetration of terrorism by some motor-bike riding gunmen in front of the US Information Centre in Kolkata at the dawn of Tuesday last.

We express our heart-felt condolences to the government and people of India, and those of West Bengal and the families left bereaved by the victims of the terrible tragedy.

Just when India and Pakistan looked like veering away from their eye-ball to eye-ball posturing along their international border and the LOC in Kashmir, the emerging process of their disengagement has received a severe jolt.

As a friend to both India and Pakistan, Bangladesh urges them to get over this temporary setback and forge right ahead from the forward foothold they had reached earlier on to come to terms with each other.

With terrorism coming so close to Bangladesh and being targeted to an American installation, there is a great need felt here to upgrade our security arrangements into a fool-proof state.

Violence renewed at the DU campus

Real casualty is education

IN another disheartening incident at the Dhaka University, one group of students attacked another to disrupt a rally and injure the opponents.

Awami League's student wing Chhatra League was holding the rally to protest the proposed changes to be brought in the textbooks.

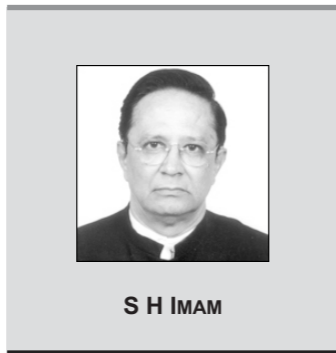
As for the opposition activists, some of them were snatched away from the police and bashed up. Media report that as many as 40 students may have been injured in the attacks.

With every change in the government, certain things tend to happen. Textbooks are changed to suit party history, universities have to be cleared of opposition activists and the police have to play the role of a by-stander.

During the AL regime, their student wing had totally taken over the campus and the BNP students had to go into hiding or inaction.

We condemn violence on the campus in the hope that the authorities will recognize that the real casualty in this situation will be education.

Terror nearer home



S H IMAM

AFTER New Delhi, our next-door neighbouring city Kolkata has been struck by terror within less than six weeks of each other.

Does it put us on the risk-list? The answer is both 'yes' and 'no'. For, although the perspectives are different between India and Bangladesh, yet after what has happened in Kolkata, we do need to beef up security, both in its internal and external dimensions.

An act of terrorism, especially of the international variety, is far too self-proclaiming to be mystified with any recital of how many unanswered questions there are to it.

clearly drawing on a background, it is manifestly retaliatory or vengeful and definitely targeted. It hits out at

the time and place of its mastermind's choice with a dare-devilry that makes state power look helpless in terms of preventing it happening.

West Bengal has had the distinction of being avowedly secular. For practical purposes as well, it has been a consistent stickler for communal harmony between Hindus and Muslims.

acting on its own. This is based on the argument that only Indians have been killed and that no US citizen lost life. But it was symbolically targeted at the American centre in the very least, which is what bodes ill in a wider sense.

tapering off since mid-January up until last week. Let them not relapse back into the late December mould when they were provoking each other with a domino effect into taking increasingly headline positions.

By association of thought, a keen observer of US-India-Pakistan tripartite relationship cannot overlook a certain shift of emphasis in their traditional equations.

the LOC in Kashmir in addition to erecting electronic fences along that border. After all this is put in place, the LOC could be impervious to terrorist penetrations.

One can read two implications into the significant development underlined above: first, the US will have a fairly wide role to play in Kashmir. Even though it will be confined to a specific parameter this signals a shift in the Indian traditional approach to Kashmir being a purely bilateral concern between India and Pakistan.

Who knows whether that prospect is making certain elements privately edgy to try and keep the Kashmir issue hot? But we look up to the leadership in India and Pakistan hoping that they would start a dialogue immediately and come grips with the Kashmir and other contentious issues before long.

SH Imam is Associate Editor of The Daily Star.

JUST ANOTHER VIEW

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Not only has terrorism penetrated deeper into India's interior, somewhat in contrast to what she has been complaining of as 'cross-border terrorism' on its peripheries in Kashmir, it is for the first time also that an US installation has been targeted in India.

In a sense, the capital city West Bengal could be regarded as the unlikely target for a terrorist attack. The left front government in

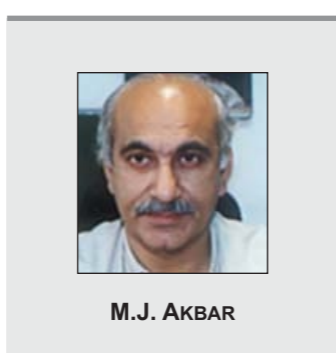
hand in Tuesday's massacre at the Chowringhee Square. Anyway, the opposition Trinamul Congress is making the most of it. They have termed it as the Left Front government's abysmal failure to take adequate precautions against the attack when Buddha dev Bhattacharya, in their words, had never tired of expressing the apprehension that the ISI were actively helping out Islamic militants in the state.

There has been a surmise that it might have been the work of some free-wheeling small terrorist group

extremist group with links to ISI in Pakistan. Some informed circles in Islamabad referring to a missile attack on a US centre in Islamabad and occasional assaults on outfits supportive of US views in the past believed it could have happened in Pakistan as well. India's castigation of Pakistan and the latter's criticism of Indian 'hawks' who have allegedly shown a 'knee-jerk reaction' without having 'arrested' anyone for the terrorist act as yet are ratcheting up tensions between the two neighbours, which otherwise were

meetings they reportedly held between the two intelligence agencies recently in New Delhi have decided to work together, as heard over BBC world service. Towards beefing up border security and surveillance along the LOC in Kashmir, the US and India will exchange intelligence data. Moreover, India will make use of US intelligence experience, her investigative skilled and expertise in forensic science. Indians will receive training at the US institutions. More significantly, the US is likely to put powerful sensors along

A moral of the story



M.J. AKBAR

I may have mentioned this story before, in which case I apologise. Not for repeating myself, for where would journalism be without the occasional dose of repetition, but for optimism. The timing of the story was not right, if it has been used before. The moment to tell that story is now.

The most famous, and the most romantic, of the Crusades was the five-year duel between the Islamic coalition of Saladin (it was a coalition: some of Saladin's troops came from as far away as India) and the Christian alliance under Richard II of England (England; Britain did not exist in the 11th century). Some of the romance about that contest is true.

While the government of Bangladesh, which is allowing Biman to carry on with their old vehicles banded public transports older than twenty years though they are certified to ply on the roads. It is done to bring Indian motor vehicles that has hardly ten per cent life in comparison with Japanese or US or EU vehicles?

silks but because the two never met formally. Richard always wanted talks with Saladin, and even insisted on them. But Saladin assigned all negotiations with the Christian king to his brother Malek. His reason was splendid: after kings meet, he said, they should never again have a reason for war.

Moral of the story? No matter what US President George W. Bush, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, US secretary of state Colin Powell, defence secretary Donald

privileged to lead. Ever since Pakistan was born it has been searching for a destiny through the muddled confusion of some criminally exploitative leaders, with the uncertain help of an ideology that eluded concrete definition. Jinnah was so specific that he stunned some of those who sat there listening to him. If Pakistan's leaders worked for the masses instead of themselves, he said, and if they treated all citizens, whether Hindus or Muslims, as equals, then,

exile in London in the first half of the 1930s, he too discovered Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, through a biography titled Grey Wolf: An Intimate Study of a Dictator by H.C. Armstrong. According to Stanley Wolpert's biography of the founder of Pakistan, Jinnah told his sister Fatima that if he ever got as much power as Ataturk he would westernise Indian Muslims. Westernise is not an accurate description of what Jinnah was talking about; he meant "modernise." The two do

Partition it very kindly remembered to send Pakistan's due share of condoms left over from the Early Treatment Centers in Burma, the last war fought by the British Indian Army. (The BIA was some 2.5 million strong at the height of the Second World War, and 400,000 after demobilisation. Pakistan got 140,000 troops; India the rest.) The security of Pakistan has been its elemental, and justified rationale. But it also, from the very beginning, confused that legiti-

the roles of head of government and de facto (not de jure) Chief of the Army. The differing lines of policy between the government and the armed forces on a matter as sensitive as Kashmir can be merged into one as long as the current dispensation lasts. But is this dispensation now going to be permanent feature of Pakistan's polity? How does this square with the need for democracy, which every leader of a coup pays lip service to? Or is the Ataturk model going to be followed rigidly, where modernisation will be controlled and implemented by military officers who are beyond the reach of public opinion? Popularity is a fragile fact, and therefore accountability is critical to long-term stability. If President Musharraf is true to his dream for his country, then he must also appreciate that this dream can be best protected by the goodwill of the people, and such goodwill can only be sustained through the democratic process. Pakistan cannot become a model, modern Muslim country without democracy, can it? This means that either President Musharraf will have to participate in that process to get the sanction of the people or cede power. The difficulties of both options do not need reiteration.

Incidentally, I have built a new storey on my single-floor house and applied for a new meter for that floor. After the usual hassles and payment of government dues and Bakshish etc. they installed a new meter and also changed my old meter with a new electronic meter. Since I was making my own bills I wanted to learn how the meter reading was done and this created confusion. The persons who installed the meters didn't know how to read them. Another person came from the office and after some time he confessed that he was not sure as to which one among the numerous figures was actually my reading. A third man appeared and told me not to bother about any other figures except the one he has shown. That was in August 2001. When my tenant occupied the first floor in December I requested the local office to connect my first floor with the new meter so that I can arrange to pay the bill promptly. This time the meter reader showed me two figures and told me to add them to find out the month's consumption. On my showing some doubt about the calculation he hesitantly told me that he would go back to office and find out if he was doing in the right way. The matter has not been resolved till date.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

BYLINE

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Rumsfeld and about three thousand other dignitaries who have visited India and Pakistan ever since the two threatened to blow each other up say, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and President Pervez Musharraf should not meet until they have decided that they will not attempt war under their watch. We cannot expect more. We should not expect less.

President Musharraf has created the conditions for another dialogue with a remarkable speech that will enter the history books of Pakistan. And remain there, at least until some successor tries to erase it, just as General-President Zia-ul-Haq tried to erase Muhammad Ali Jinnah's speech at the opening session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan. The pairing is not accidental. The two speeches, both made without a text, both offered from the heart and mind, sought to set a course for their country that was sane, that was rational, that was modern and that could have prevented so much of the tragedy that has overtaken a country that the two men were

said Jinnah, there would come a day when Muslims would cease to be Muslims and Hindus cease to be Hindus in the political sense, and Pakistan would have unity as well as prosperity. Jinnah's vision died with his death. General Zia's censors sent out word to newspapers not to mention this speech in any of the traditional articles that would be written on Jinnah's birthday. Their idea of Pakistan was darker; they wanted an exclusive zone that would become a haven for various kinds of Jihad. The Kalashnikov was the sword of their permanent war; and there was no space for the pen, except as a regressive weapon for fundamentalist indoctrination.

In his first remarks after becoming Chief Executive of his country, literally out of the blue, President Musharraf made it a point to mention the Turkish patriot who had saved his nation from dismemberment by the victors of the First World War, and then dragged it (sometimes with excessive force) into a modern political culture. When Jinnah was in self-imposed

not have to be synonymous, and so much confusion arises because they are misinterpreted to mean the same thing. As President Musharraf hinted without expanding the Islamic world was not westernised when for 600 years it transferred technology to Europe. His next sentence was sardonic and went something like, "Abhi jo haal hai, aap jaante hain."

The speech was important not as course correction for relations between India and Pakistan, but as course correction for the President's own country. The first can follow from the second. But in both its dimensions, it was a speech that perhaps could only have been made by a man secure not only in his convictions but also in his authority. In other words, in the context of Pakistan, a leader of the armed forces. The Pakistan Army, like any other institution, lives partly on self-comforting history. Its formative memory of India is denial. The mess might still occasionally reverberate with the story of how when India was meant to send her portion of ordnance after

mate with a touch of illegitimate bravado that confused defence with offense, and justified protection to cross-border manoeuvres, whether in 1947, 1965 or through the 1990s. There was an implicit signal in President (or should we call him General here?) Musharraf's speech that that phase was also over. The Pakistan armed forces would defend their borders to the last inch, as they are oath-bound to do, and no more. The rest, including the dispute over Kashmir, will be left to governments, rather than the armed forces. This again is a significant difference and will be a hinge factor in Indo-Pak relations once India is convinced of its bona fides. Evidence will come with time. Not too much time, but not too little either. The positioning and repositioning on critical issues is not over yet. The India-Pakistan equation is both too murky and too emotional to be washed clean by one speech, however sincere it might be.

There is also a paradox that needs to be flagged. President Musharraf combines in his person

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

Students without textbooks

Year after year, we see the same headlines, NCTB



No books..

robs students of their books, Beximo gets rigged contract. Yet, nothing is done. If, just for a change, this government removes the NCTB and floats an international tender for the next academic year then we would know they mean business.

Share Market not sharing The Beximo Fisheries declared cash dividend of 5

per cent in the annual general meeting held on 20th June 2001. While collecting the dividend at Dhaka, to my utter surprise I found that the Beximo Fisheries declared a similar dividend in 2000, but they did not bother to dispatch the dividend warrants.

Manoia declared cash dividend on 21st December 2000, but I received the dividend warrant in November 2001.

Onion inflation declared cash dividend in their annual general meeting held on February 1997, but no dividend warrants are paid till date because of fund crisis.

In January 1991 Magura paper mill, a joint venture with China, raised share capital through selling shares and debentures, but till date no interest on the debentures has been paid.

Unnecessary sufferings to the electricity consumers Consumers under the Electric office of Lalaimata, Dhaka have been going through unnecessary sufferings since the electric bills are being generated in the Computer Bureau of Gulshan.

It is really lying that the consumers get arrears

even after getting it corrected again and again. It appears that it is of no concern to the sub-divisional engineers or even to the executives. Are they not being paid by the consumers' exchequer? Will the authorities concerned take necessary steps to mitigate the sufferings of the consumers?

Rislan Dhaka Probable remedy for transport problem Biman Bangladesh Airlines has vehicles still in service that are flying for 25 years (DC 10-30, F-28) and the same goes with the European Airlines.

While the government of Bangladesh, which is allowing Biman to carry on with their old vehicles banded public transports older than twenty years though they are certified to ply on the roads. It is done to bring Indian motor vehicles that has hardly ten per cent life in comparison with Japanese or US or EU vehicles?

AKM Khairul Anam Dhaka

save us from sound pollution I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Ministry of Environment for taking the sensible action of banning polybags in Dhaka City. Along with polybags there is another threat to environment, which is the ever-increasing noise pollution.

Disorder in DU What is wrong the Dhaka University administration? Or is there any administration at all? The BNP led students' wing-Bangladesh Jatiotabadi Chhatra Dal just returned in the name of invading halls of DU.

League has also forgotten the fact that it was them who proposed that Shahabuddin Ahmed become the head of state in 1996.

Mujibul Haque Dhaka

Has they forgotten the fact? When the former President Chief Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed had first taken his oath and became the head of state the Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina and her party were all in praise about his honesty, integrity and patriotic zeal. However, right after becoming the President, Shahabuddin Ahmed went to the grave of Shaheed Zaur Rahman and placed wreath and prayed for the martyred ex-President. This was done in good faith, no doubt, and to prove his honesty, integrity and patriotism.

AKM Khairul Anam Dhaka

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On January 6, general students were assaulted because of the clash among the rival groups in Zia and Zahurul Huq Hall. The main entrance of Zahurul Huq hall was closed at that time and the general students had to suffer as usual. They could not enter the hall without the permission of the cadres. The people were just standing beside them like mere puppets. The hall administration is totally under control of BNP cadres.

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