

Attack on Sheikh Hasina is unacceptable

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton, USA

THIS is serious, folks! When the leader of the opposition and the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina, is targeted for assassination five times this year alone, it is clear that the terrorists are determined to kill her. If the government's response is simply to "condemn" those responsible and not scour every inch of Bangladesh with the army's assistance to apprehend and punish the criminals, sooner or later, Allah forbid, the terrorists will succeed. Then what? Once the former Prime Minister is assassinated, the terrorists will then target the current Prime Minister, because the terrorists would like to put an end to democracy in Bangladesh and usher in anarchy in which terrorism thrives. Mere condemnation of the attempt on Sheikh Hasina's life is not enough; it is unacceptable. It should not have happened.

Expatriate Bangladeshis are appalled at the carnage at the Awami League rally last Saturday in which the leader of the opposition and former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was almost killed, and many of her top lieutenants maimed. The scene resembled a battlefield with blood, severed limbs, and several human beings either dead or severely injured and crying for medical aid. The only difference was that the victims were not battlefield combatants but unarmed civilians attending a peaceful political rally on whom descended grenades and bullets. The terrorists are such cowards! They lobbed grenades at the unsuspecting civilians whose backs were turned, and took potshots

at them as they were fleeing the scene of mayhem. Terrorists never have the moral courage to confront their victims face to face.

Law and order is primarily the responsibility of the government. People elect governments so that they can live in peace and security as they pursue their livelihood. If the government cannot provide security, they fail

sions. Speculation is not enough; we must find out. America broke the backbone of the racist Ku Klux Klan and the Italian mafia by infiltrating these groups with government agents. Bangladesh intelligence, too, must infiltrate these fringe elements and find out who they are and what they are up to. Without inside knowledge, it will be impossible to fight and eliminate

critical of Muslims to be incensed at those non-Muslims who demolish mosques, and at the same time condone the acts of Muslims who dishonour and ravage places of worship belonging to people of other religions.

The writer was surprised, during his trip to Bangladesh, to see the government treating the Islamic terrorist, the so-called Bangla Bhai with kid gloves.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

Those of us who love Bangladesh are worried. Bangladesh is at a watershed moment. If we can curb political violence, treat our minorities with fairness and respect and restore law and order, Bangladesh is on the threshold of taking off and becoming a prosperous and one of the most important small nations in the world. If Bangladesh's culture of violence is to deteriorate one notch downward, Bangladesh will descend into utter chaos and anarchy, where democracy will perish and only terrorism will thrive. The two choices for Bangladesh are as stark as heaven and hell.

in one fundamental responsibility they are entrusted with. And the government has to crush terrorists of every stripe with equal vigor. The government cannot be partial to its own terrorists, in which case the mission is doomed. For the sake of the country and for the sake of their own political parties, it is time every political party in Bangladesh agreed to disown their own party hacks and treat them for what they are -- criminals. Pursuing of the terrorists of other parties alone will only exacerbate the political turmoil.

There are speculations in the press that Sheikh Hasina's attackers were Islamic fundamentalists, religious fanatics, or terrorists of similar persua-

sons. Speculation is not enough; we must find out.

During the writer's recent visit to Bangladesh he was dismayed at the unrelenting political and religious violence in Bangladesh. The target of political violence was mostly the opposition parties, and that of religious violence the minorities. I cannot speak for anyone else, but the Islam that I know and practice teaches that ALL houses of worship are sacred, because the worshippers in those houses of worship attempt to reach God in their own way. In Islam it is forbidden to destroy or desecrate any house of worship whether it is a mosque, a church, a synagogue, a Hindu temple, or a Buddhist temple. It will be hypo-

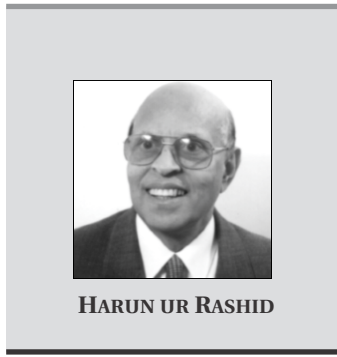
Justice is supposed to be blind and laws are supposed to apply to everyone equally. If Bangla Bhai has committed crimes or has defied the government, which he has, he should be arrested and punished for it. If the government is afraid of the likes of Bangla Bhai and fearful of arresting him, the government itself will slide down the slippery slope where its loss of credibility will be quickly followed by loss of the political power, thus betraying the people's trust.

To regain the people's trust, the government must ensure that anytime the leader of the opposition speaks at a location, the location is properly secured. If the government cannot

guarantee her security, they must not let her hold a rally there. Of course, this must not degenerate into a farce, where the leader of the opposition is continually prevented from holding public meetings because the government cannot guarantee her security. The leader of the opposition must be allowed to hold as many rallies as the Prime Minister herself, in secure locations. What really worries me is, unless these terrorist acts are taken seriously as a challenge to the authority of the nation's elected government and the terrorists apprehended and punished, the Prime Minister herself may be a target one of these days.

Those of us who love Bangladesh are worried. Bangladesh is at a watershed moment. If we can curb political violence, treat our minorities with fairness and respect and restore law and order, Bangladesh is on the threshold of taking off and becoming a prosperous and one of the most important small nations in the world. Anyone visiting Bangladesh cannot fail to feel the entrepreneurial energy average Bangladeshis are bursting with. Channelled properly, such creative energies will endow Bangladesh with limitless possibilities. On the other hand, currently as far as law and order is concerned, Bangladesh is at the lowest rung of tolerability. If Bangladesh's culture of violence is to deteriorate one notch downward, Bangladesh will descend into utter chaos and anarchy, where democracy will perish and only terrorism will thrive. The two choices for Bangladesh are as stark as heaven and hell.

Why does the price of oil go up?



DURING this year, the price of oil (Nymex light crude) has jumped from \$33 dollars to a record high of a little over \$49 dollars per barrel in New York on August 20. Even the Brent crude oil (North Sea oil) in Britain rose more than \$44 dollars. Some oil experts say that given the global political instability and demand for oil, it may jump even to \$50 dollars or more per barrel.

Iraq's post-war violence is the primary cause of the rise of the oil price. The Iraqi war has spawned so many adverse ramifications in international community that the Bush administration miscalculated the outcome of its pre-emptive attack in March 2003. Now everyone is paying the high price for this kind of adventure. The global economy could hit recession if oil hits \$50 dollars or more and continues for long time.

It may be recalled that in 1999, the price of oil was only at \$11 dollars per barrel and the year 2000 saw the price rise to \$30.00 per barrel. Since 2000, the price was rising intermittently.

Why does the price rise at present? There are both physical and psychological factors, according to oil experts. Some of them deserve mention as follows:

First, the frequent disruption of oil supply from Iraq and its political instability, Second, rise of terrorist attack in Saudi Arabia and its potential disruption of oil supply, Third, political power struggle in Venezuela (5th oil exporter), and fourth Russia's biggest oil producing company Yukos' uncertainty to supply oil in the context of its looming bankruptcy (Russia exports oil as much as Saudi Arabia per day).

Among other reasons that need mention are: (a) most oil-producing countries have not invested in new machinery in oil installations to pump more oil (Libya, Iraq and Venezuela are examples), (b) The US is buying oil for its strategic reserves for "rainy day," (c) The demand for oil has jumped in China and India to maintain their accelerated economic growth. Import of crude oil has jumped to 40 percent this year in China and the state-run Indian Oil Corporation stated that its crude oil imports rose by 11 percent during this year, and (d) environmental laws in many countries have made oil exploration difficult and limited in search of new oil reserves.

The Vienna-based OPEC is pumping at its highest level since 1979 and a report from OPEC estimates that it may raise its production to 30.5 million barrel per day. According to them, jittery market based on fear psychosis is responsible for the high price.

The US Secretary for Energy has reportedly been occupied with talks with the oil-producing countries to ensure that the price does not remain so high. Media reports indicate that, Saudi Arabia is inclined to increase oil productions to stabilise the world

BOTTOM LINE

It is now time that the industrialised countries direct their attention to search for and develop renewable energy resources, otherwise the high oil price will have adverse impacts on poor countries. The poor countries will be compelled to divert their resources away from social including poverty alleviation programmes. One must be conscious that poverty creates unemployment and desperation among youths that is likely to be exploited by extremists for their political agenda to destabilise the world.

prices in oil. Saudi Arabia's Oil Minister recently said that the steep price of oil should not threaten global economy.

Flow-on effect of price rise

The price of oil has never been a matter solely for the oil-producing countries. The rise and fall of it have profound implications for all the counties in the world. When the oil price is high, it creates inflationary pressures and potentially other economic problems.

The flow-on effect hits every country primarily because the transportation costs increase. The consumers first feel the pinch due to high price of basic essentials including rice, vegetables, fish, and meat. Kerosene oil becomes expensive for poor. Car maintenance and air travel is affected by the rise of price. No sector of economy remains untouched. In the end, consumers spend less on non-essential items and goods. As a result, national economy is badly affected.

For instance, in the US, the consumer spending constitutes two-third of its economic activities. Because of the steep price of oil, there will naturally be a slowdown of consumer spending in the US and consequently, its sluggish economy may have pernicious effect on its economy.

When the oil price rises, the oil-importing countries including Bangladesh suffer while the average income of the oil-producing countries has reportedly jumped almost to 50 percent (the political positions of Venezuela's President Chavez and Russia's President Putin have become much stronger because they can afford to spend more money on national programmes).

However, there is a downside as well for the oil-producing countries. For example, in 1997, the economic crisis hit South-East Asia and North Asia which led to a reduction of demand of oil in those countries. As a result, oil price collapsed in that year, partly because of the economic downturn in parts of Asia.

Relationship of oil production and price

The classical theory says that market mechanisms will adjust price governed by the laws of supply and demand. It has been reported that ordinarily the demand for oil worldwide increases at an average annual rate of 2 percent (at present on average demand is more than about 9 percent) At that rate of increase in demand and with matching supply, experts maintain that an equilibrium price will be at least around \$30.00 per barrel.

When the price is low, the oil-producing countries and oil companies suffer. If the oil price is as low as

\$20 dollars, investment in oil exploration and production is not cost-effective. Oil experts say that in order to reach a viable stage for oil exploration companies, the oil price must rise at least \$25 dollars.

The experts believe that the depletion of existing oil wells is about 10 percent per year and to produce an extra million barrels per day it requires investment of \$3.5 billion to \$7 billion. It is estimated that the oil companies spend \$100 billion per year to replace lost production and to meet the incremental demand.

The question is : from where does the money come from? It must come from the oil price at a rate that matches the expenses of additional oil production.

It appears that given the dynamics of need of continuing oil production and its demand, experts believe that oil price will continue to be above the \$35 dollars per barrel in the coming years. Some experts say that it may hit \$60 dollars per barrel, if the unabated demand in China continues without having any new oil reserves.

Oil prices are unlikely to fall at \$30 dollars soon. The days of cheap oil have gone and the oil-importing countries should be prepared to pay for high oil prices. The adage that, what goes up must come down, does not appear to be applicable in respect of oil price.

Conclusion

To avoid dependency on oil, environmentalists, such as Canadian David Suzuki, suggest that the need of designing a new kind of global economy which is not dependent on oil and other fossil energy. Renewable energy including solar, wind, tidal and geothermal should replace the fossil energy. The industrialised countries have not spent money on alternative clean energy resources anywhere near the funds that go into space exploration. The International Space Centre in the US alone is expected to spend about \$100 billion in near future.

It is now time that the industrialised countries direct their attention to search for and develop renewable energy resources, otherwise the high oil price will have adverse impacts on poor countries. The poor countries will be compelled to divert their resources away from social including poverty alleviation programmes. One must be conscious that poverty creates unemployment and desperation among youths that is likely to be exploited by extremists for their political agenda to destabilise the world.

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Bomb squad: A national requirement

DR M A KAMAL YURREE

BOMB explosion, as terrorist activity and bomb culture have suddenly taken a very tragic turn in Bangladesh with frequent recurrences. Of all terrorist offences, it is the most heinous against humanity. It kills simple and innocent people and inflicts injury attributing to various extents of disabilities. It is more harmful to let the terrorists activate and sustain in camouflage than the havoc of several bomb-blast incidents.

Bomb explosion is going on without any effective measure against it. Unlike Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams of a developed country, we are equipped with hardly any plan, knowledge and experience. Usually, we find some army explosive experts come after a bomb explosion and collect relevant evidence for further action or carry the UXO (Unexploded Explosive Ordnance) to demolition range. But the terrorists are not under their disposal, they are under police investigation. The detection of a bomb before or after its planting has been ineffective in our country due to fast development of Improvised Explosive Device (IED) of the attackers who are trained in their subject. And of late they attacked with ordnance grenades. For an effective tackling of such hi-tech terrorist group, bomb squad has become a national requirement today. Most of the police stations in all the states of the USA are having dedicated bomb squads. Shouldn't we have at least one for the whole nation?

Incidents in record

Incidents of explosion are recurring in Bangladesh at short intervals with variety of bomb's size, power and operational technique. On Saturday, Awami League rally at Bangabandhu Avenue came under grenade attack killing at least 19 and injuring more than 200. Earlier on August 7, an AL meeting in Sylhet came under bomb attack killing one and on August 5 two cinema halls also in Sylhet came under bomb attack also killing one. Before that new British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Choudhury (Rt leg below knee), DC Abul Hossain (both legs) and over 100 people were

injured in a powerful bomb blast at the shrine of Hazrat Shahjalal (RA) after Juma prayer on Friday, 21 May 2004.

Some more incidents are mentioned here. Bomb explosion during CPB meeting at Paltan on 20th January 1999, killed seven and injured more than 50 people. A couple of or more bombs were exploded at Ramna Batomool at Chhayanaut's traditional Bengali new year cultural function on April 14, 2001; 9 persons were killed and many others injured. Earlier on 6th March 1999, terrorists attacked a cultural programme of Udichi at Jessore Town Hall premises exploding bombs which killed 10 persons and

places of the country since March 1999, but none has been punished yet for these heinous crimes. These incidents obviously prove that huge quantities of explosives are now available in Bangladesh for making bombs and there are some well-trained people in the country who can easily make them. And now there added the availability of grenades. The intelligence agencies can hardly provide any warning about the incidents in anticipation. The follow-up actions (or inaction) after bomb incidents help the terrorists in some way or other. They manage 'safe den' and enjoy benefit of eyewitness.

Bomb explosion is killing simple and innocent people of the country very frequently. The terrorists are growing more powerful day-by-day and threatening the very efforts to punish them. It's an irony that the AL rally held to protest earlier bomb blasts was itself bombed on Saturday! We have to stop this by means of well-planned protective and preventive measures. For that, definitely Bomb Squad has become a national requirement, which can function as another independent wing of the law-enforcing agency.

injured many others.

On October 08, 1999 seven persons were killed and thirty others injured in a bomb blast at Ahmadiya Masjid in Khulna. Ten persons were killed and many others injured in a bomb attack on a church at Baniarchang in Gopalganj on June 03, 2001. Only within a fortnight on June 15, 2001, 22 persons were killed and many injured in a bomb attack on the AL office at Narayanganj. On September 23, 2001, eight persons were killed and more than one hundred injured in a bomb attack at Mollahat in Bagerhat. Bomb blasts in four cinema halls at Mymensingh town killed 21 persons and injured many others on December 06, 2002. On January 17, 2003, seven persons were killed in a bomb blast at Tangail. On January 12 and May 21 2004, bomb blasts killed eight persons and injured many others at Shahjalal shrine, Sylhet.

Similar incidents at random are horrifying us but no remedial measure has yet been taken. Not less than 150 persons have been killed and 500 others injured, many of them disabled for life, in bomb blasts at different

Nobody accepts the responsibility of any bomb explosion. The law enforcing agencies seem to be in doubt about the identity of the terrorists. Investigations are hardly revealing any fact. The government, without genuine evidence, put blame on the political opponents and vice versa, without any exception in the past or present. A propaganda offensive is usually launched immediately after each bomb blast. These greatly hinder the work of investigation agencies. The obvious attempt to fit the findings of the investigation to the political bias deviate the case from its logical course. In addition, there are serious logistic and resource constraints that are also hampering the functions of intelligence and investigating agencies.

General opinion

The general mass has been panic-stricken. They are to get rid of these terrorists. It is time to think of adequate preventive measures. Bomb explosion is killing simple and innocent people of the country very frequently. The terrorists are growing

more powerful day-by-day and threatening the very efforts to punish them. It's an irony that the AL rally held to protest earlier bomb blasts was itself bombed on Saturday! We have to stop this by means of well-planned protective and preventive measures. For that, definitely Bomb Squad has become a national requirement, which can function as another independent wing of the law-enforcing agency.

Improvised explosive device (IED)

Now, bomb can be made to look like almost anything and can be placed or delivered in multiple ways. The task of finding a bomb that looks like anything is very difficult. Different commercial or military explosive are used and most of the bombs are home-made. They are limited by the imagination of the bombers and resources available to them. The attackers appear to be equipped with the latest development of knowledge and skill through training. To deal with such technical affairs, a systematic study by collecting data of past explosions has become very important. The revealed facts may form the basis of formulating the preventive measures commensurate with Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) adopted by the bomb planters. A well-organised bomb squad can only prove effective to take adequate preventive measures with various changes in the types of bomb and its ways and means of planting for explosion.

Common use of metal detector

The commonly used detecting device for clearing explosives here is basically a metal detector. But this device is incapable to detect the non-metallic ingredients and containers of bombs. Nowadays most of the bombs are made of plastic, C4, SEMTEX etc. The IED can be squarely dealt with only by a specialised group of personnel equipped with right type of logistic support, explosive detectors/vapour detector, training and experience. Again, it reminds us about formation of a national bomb squad.

Constitution of a bomb squad

Only a national bomb squad can be tasked to deal with every case squarely and promptly. Such bomb squad should comprise the following:

- a. Handlers or bomb technicians including provision of automated robot (for special cases).
- b. Radiography unit.
- c. Post-blast research and analysis unit.

4x3

5x3

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