

LONDON CARNAGE AND TERRORISM

Underlying causes must be pulled up by their roots



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

THE world has rightly condemned the ghastly bomb attack on the London sub-way and a double decker bus on July 7 that killed over 50 people and injured several hundred. It is this city of London that brought in about two million people who raised their voice against Bush-Blair invasion of Iraq. It is this city that witnessed an octogenarian who walked through the icy street of London in a sub-zero temperature with a candle in hand muttering -- no war, no war. Regardless of what its leaders did, the city that holds souls of such great understanding should not have been subjected to such appalling bomb attacks. This certainly deserves strongest condemnation from peace loving people around the world.

It is also praiseworthy that the leaders of the people of faith -- Christians, Muslims and Jews -- immediately came out and made joint statements condemning this heinous attack and agreed to work together to stop further attacks. Al-Qaida connected organisations reportedly claimed responsibility for the attacks and that put the UK Muslim community under immediate suspicion. Such reactions were undoubtedly unwarranted as the mindless work of some disgruntled individuals cannot be the reason for putting the blame on the entire community. Though certain areas witnessed some sporadic disturbances including vandalising of mosques, as was also seen in New Zealand, immediate actions by the law enforcing agencies brought situations under control. Later Prime Minister Blair spoke in the House of Commons and emphasised on the need for maintaining harmonious community relationship. One can hope that good sense would prevail and the situation would remain calm.

However, such an attack in the heart of London brought into light the real truth -- the truth that no amount of security measures can stop such attacks from the determined but mindless people, however condemnable these acts are. Therefore, the solution lies in finding the real roots of discontent that lead to such terrible attacks against innocent people who have nothing to do with events unfolding elsewhere. Indeed, immediate actions must be taken to redress them effectively. Prime Minister Tony Blair was absolutely right when he said that the 'underlying causes of terrorism' must be 'pulled up by its roots....' Probably with this type of terrorism the solution cannot be the security measures. I have never doubted this myself... the underlying issues have to be dealt with too, in terms of trying to get rid of this dreadful perversion of the true faith of Islam."

This time Tony Blair's stand on

terrorism which is certainly the right one, turns out to be at odds with that of his great friend Bush who said -- we must take the fight to the enemy till they are defeated. President Bush is, as usual, ill advised. The people responsible for such attacks cannot be defeated; they only multiply and spread like fire. This is why it is no use pursuing bin Laden or Al-Zarqawi to their dark caves. If they are caught and killed, more and indeed bigger bin Ladens and Zarqavis will rise up and make the life of world community a hell. Whatever President Bush might call them -- insurgents or terrorists --

should Saddam alone be tried in the Hague court?

It's not that only Iraqis are being killed; the American men and women are also being sacrificed in Iraq for spreading Bush's freedom and democracy there. Who asked him to do this? Iraq has been the most developed among the Arab countries. Before UN sanctions, Iraqis had enough in all respects food, water, electricity, medicine etc. Women had the full liberty to go round and work without any discrimination; 12 years of UN sanction made them impoverished, half a million kids lost their lives

lately no doubt that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and their root causes must be "pulled up by their roots" as put by Prime Minister Tony Blair. Indeed, the answer lies in what Spain -- a member of EU did and showed by solid proof that the "terrorists" can be won.

Even half a century old religious conflict in Northern Ireland resulting in terrible violence and terrorism came to a reasonable situation because of the negotiations that brought these two religious communities to the talking level. Interesting enough is the latest peace between deadly rivals in Sudan John Garang has been brought into the political system as he joined the government as the Vice President. So there is no doubt that negotiations are the best means to bring the rebels into the peace fold provided genuine desire is there for peace among all parties involved in the conflicts.

The present world is no longer a place where war can solve problems. President Bush's vow that the war (if he meant military intervention only) on terror must continue is too dangerous in a nuclear world. President Bush is too back-dated or trying to practice neo-colonialism through unilateral military means -- by defying the UN. He must read history and see what has happened to Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire and similar other powers. America must abandon its Jewish idea that talking to the rebels giving in to terrorism. No, that's not true. The good examples have been mentioned above. The world must talk the rebels into what is good for them and for the world. Negotiation is the only means to solve problems. If giving autonomy is the answer, give it as long as it is agreed to be practiced within the limits of a country's sovereignty. It is quite in line with the extended meaning of democratic principles. Democracy is not a solid hard nut. It should be flexible enough to accommodate variables that exist in societies and this is how democracy should work and be meaningful for the people.

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All said and done, there is abso-

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

There is absolutely no doubt that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and their root causes must be "pulled up by their roots" as put by Prime Minister Tony Blair. Indeed, the answer lies in what Spain -- a member of EU did and showed by solid proof that the "terrorists" can be won.

the US Administration created them in Afghanistan and Iraq and those insurgents are indeed taking the fight to their "enemies" and striking at ease at targets of their choice -- Twin Towers, Madrid, Bali and now London. Unfortunately, they are killing the innocent people.

For the real answer, one does not have to travel very far -- as far as Srebrenica where the UN and the world community failed to save 8000 Muslim men and boys from the genocide committed by the Bosnian forces. Just see what has been happening in Iraq. In the name of flushing out insurgents, the innocent Iraqis are being killed by the American army and there British involvement made the innocent lives of Britons so insecure -- many Londoners had to pay the price. Though nothing can justify London carnage, the truth of the matter, however, is that insurgents' actions also cannot justify America's army actions against the innocent Iraqis. At the dead of night American army kick open Iraqi family homes and look for insurgents among traumatised and trembling Iraqi women in night-gowns and children in shorts. Is it the way to spread Bush's liberty and democracy among Iraqis? Saddam killed or gassed 5000 Kurds as they were seen by Saddam as insurgents. For Bush, many Iraqis are insurgents and his army is killing them. The number is at least 25 times higher than what Saddam killed. So for the civilized world, what is the difference when it comes to killing insurgents? Then why

because of malnutrition. But Saddam made his fortunes all right. He had his palaces which are presently being conveniently used by the Americans while Saddam is in jail. So what was the purpose? Saddam was not punished; Iraqis were punished by the UN -- a body of civilized nations.

When justice does not exist in the Security Council of the world body, how can we expect just behaviour from those who have been suffering for years under the UN sanction? The situation came to a head with Bush's unilateral attack on Iraq which even the UN could not stop. Then the question arises as to why the world should have the UN at all, let alone it be expanded, when one country can completely defy the UN and dismember a sovereign country. Now the world is facing the attacks against innocent civilians and more attacks including dirty bomb or biological attacks are being talked about and indeed cannot be ruled out. Who are responsible for all these disasters? These words may sound very rough and tough and indeed annoying, but the time has come to raise these questions openly as the ordinary citizens of the world -- the innocent people are becoming the targets. May be London bomb victims are some who joined the crowd of some two million that protested Iraq war. Why should they be among the casualties? It's no use blaming only the insurgents; those created them are really to blame.



State's ferocious reach now aimed at women: Time to resist

MALEKA BEGUM

THE public -- men and women -- continue to be subject to state violence. Class, education, environment, security, law, profession, work, medical treatment, residence, budget -- everywhere the state's long reach continues to break rules and policy. All this in order to protect the interests of members of the ruling party and other parties associated with them.

Just as the party in power benefits from proximity to state resources, MPs from the main opposition parties, including independent candidates, also benefit from closeness and access to state resources. Therefore, whether or not they boycott parliament, they are in some measure equally responsible for laws passed and policies implemented in parliamentary committees and in parliament.

All members of the Jatiya Sangsad accept their salaries and other benefits associated with their position. Those in the Opposition will say that they have been elected, so this is their due. On this point, we citizens (men and women) who are voters would like to say that to protest against and oppose the passage of laws that undermine our interests, is the reason we have voted you into power. You take from the state the various financial benefits admissible to your position but deprive voters-citizens of their rights -- through a futile policy of boycotting the government and remaining 'neutral'.

Currently, the government has turned its oppressive policy on the hard-earned rights of the women's movement. If Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and the BNP still recall (and consider it important) that by signing the document of out come from the Fourth World Women's Conference at Beijing in 1995, she not only earned the praise of women in Bangladesh, but also of women everywhere, as well as of the UN. Under the PM's direction, and on the basis of this document, the formulation and implementation process of the National Policy for the Advancement of Women (NPAW) was initiated in MOWCA. Under the leadership of Dr. Najma Choudhury, it was initiated in women's groups and the NGO Forum, through the Women's Directorate.

I don't know how far members of the opposition would have proceeded on this count had they remained in Parliament and in Parliamentary Committees, but if they still recall (and consider it important), it was in 1997, under Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina that the NPAW was approved by Parliament, without any modifications to the original text.

It has come to light recently that in 2004 with the initiative of the ministry of women and children affairs, the Parliamentary Standing Committee meeting made changes to the basic ideals of equality -- among other things -- to the NPAW. (Detailed information is available at the Secretariat for the United Movement's Human Rights Platform for Resisting Changes to Bangladesh's NPAW, Shukrabad,

Dhaka Phone: 8116376, 8120791).

The process of drawing up the accepted NPAW in 1997 took place under the leadership of the then caretaker government's Advisor for Women and Children Affairs Dr. Najma Choudhury, who assembled numerous experts on the subject. I was part of the team and was filled with pride at being involved in the formulation and implementation of such a significant process. How many days, nights and hours, without remuneration, through purely voluntary labour were we happily engrossed in the task of drawing up the policy, of gleaming

about changes introduced in 2004? Why was it that the discussion did not involve us all? In the same way that ballot boxes are stolen deep in the night, the ballot box of women's rights has been hijacked. Opposition parties are so involved in their desire to grasp political power that they do not consider it necessary to pay attention to the progressive plundering of the human rights of citizens, workers' rights and women's equal rights -- all earned through the sacrifices made in the liberation war. Yet at the end of every month, they pocket their entire salaries and keep their

The equal rights of women, of almost 50 percent of the population, are being literally inked out and prohibited through state dictates. United women's human rights platform, a coalition that is representative of Bangladesh's women's movements, and which includes over 600 leading women's rights, human rights organisations and NGOs, calls on all individuals and organisations, to take a united stand against changes to the 1997 NPAW.



advice from over a hundred women leaders and putting their experience into practice! Can we abandon all this? Never!

In the process of drawing up the NPAW, we absorbed the writings of that trail blazer of women's awakening, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, on Islam and women's rights; we accepted all the positive aspects of the Sharia; the secularism of constitution; gender equality; the equal rights of all communities and human rights, we took these as our basic principles. All laws in Bangladesh, the CEDAW Convention, the CRC, UDHR, ILO laws, we accepted them all. Most important, in order to address the obstacles to implementing women's equality at the grassroots level (gender inequality and patriarchal structures) in which both men and women are implicated, we evaluated gender equality policies with great seriousness.

Why was it that those of us who composed the NPAW, drawing on our own experiences and that of a hundred years of the women's movement, were not informed

positions as MPs intact.

I will take up the issue directly: The 1997 NPAW was accepted by a consensus in the Cabinet. The changes introduced in 1994, to Articles 7, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, Section 8, Section 9 and Section 12, all strike at the very heart of gender equality. This is illustrated below: Notable changes and modifications to the NPAW are shown in detail.

Sections: 7. The active and equal participation of women in all national economic activities must be ensured; 7.2 Women's economic empowerment; 7.3 Women's employment; 7.4 Childcare/daycare services; 8. Women's political empowerment.

In the section on the formulation and implementation of economic policy (trade, currency, taxation etc.), ensuring women's equal rights has been replaced by ensuring women's rights as guaranteed by the Constitution.

In the section on ensuring equal access and partnership/share to property, employment, markets,

business, and ownership, the word property has been deleted.

With reference to workplaces that predominantly employ women, ensuring provision of transport, housing facilities, separate toilets and childcare services, etc. -- housing has been deleted.

In the section on women's full and equal opportunity to and control over factors that are critical to women's economic empowerment such as health, education, training, lifelong learning, vocational training, information, income earning opportunities, inheritance, property, credit, technology, and earned property as well as rights over land, etc., (and if necessary the introduction of new policies) -- inheritance, property and right to land have been deleted.

With reference to taking all out initiatives to ensure the employment of the female labour force, educated and illiterate, the 2004 law states that steps will be taken for 'appropriate' employment.

The introduction, expansion and development of support services for elderly, helpless and disabled women, in order to ensure their participation in economic activities and the development process, no longer includes the elderly.

The section on motivating NGOs, including women's organisations, to carry out campaign programmes that would inspire women's active participation in politics has been deleted.

After the expiry in 2001 of the provision for reserved seats for women in parliament, taking initiatives to institute direct elections for women has been dropped, replaced by a call to ensure reserved seats.

In matters of ensuring women's participation in decision-making at the highest levels, including the Cabinet, and if necessary with reference to relevant sections of the Constitution, highest levels has been replaced with 'at all levels'.

In Article 8, the policy on direct entry to the highest levels of the administration has been changed to entry alongside.

In other Articles, the full and equal participation of women as a policy has been deleted.

Notice how the equal rights of women, of almost 50 percent of the population, are being literally inked out and prohibited through state dictates.

Under the auspices of Beijing + 10, united women's human rights platform, a coalition that is representative of Bangladesh's women's movements, and which includes over 600 leading women's rights, human rights organisations and NGOs, calls on all individuals and organisations, to take a united stand against changes to the 1997 NPAW. All across the country, on our own initiative, in our own organisations, commemorate July 14 was observed as a day of protest. The time to be passive is over, it is urgent that we resist changes to the NPAW.

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Many faces of foreign investment

MUSTAFAZUR RAHMAN

THERE is very often heard loud and euphoric voices from some sections of government officials, politicians and business people in favour of inward foreign investments irrespective of their nature and purpose. People are usually given to understand that inward foreign investment or Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) will provide more employment, increase inflow of foreign exchange, and finally improve national economy. The government hesitates to say that local, selective and prioritised investment can do it better. The adverse effects of bad foreign investment are usually known to the people through media only when they reach an alarming stage. Contrary to reality, some people or even some academicians tend to believe that Japan and South Korea owe their industrial and economic development to foreign aid and foreign investment after World War II. The reality is that they developed on plan-rational, self-reliant and technology-based, nationalistic approach, resisting undesirable and untimely foreign investment.

Foreign investment in Japan and South East Asia
Japan imported technology, know-how and expertise after her pre-Meiji forced ending of 215-year isolation in 1854. She introduced from abroad one each of all kinds of highest standard industries and sold them to private entrepreneurs at low cost in 1880s. Government measures and manoeuvres, fiscal and monetary policies and motivation helped her rapidly industrialise, though she had to sign an imposed, unequal trade treaty with the West in 1858, which deprived her of the right to protect her nascent industries by tariff adjustment up to 1911. She took a small loan to introduce railway in 1870-2 from Britain and a loan of US\$40.2 million in 1949 from the then newly formed World Bank for power plant and later for steel plants, which was bitterly criticised in the

Japanese parliament. Though Japan got some US aid during the period of occupation by SCAP, she lost all freedom to use her own foreign exchange earnings. Anyway Japan adopted the path of self-reliant industrial, social and economic development very hard way and rationally.

The postwar Japanese companies had owned-capital ratio of 16-20%, which was unthinkable in the west. This was definitely an opportunity for the West to invest in Japan which was under SCAP occupation till 1951, but Japan successfully resisted undesirable foreign investment. This mechanism was rightly put by Chalmers Johnson in his words: "Before the capital liberalization of the late 1960's and 1970's no technology entered the country without MITI's Ministry of International Trade & Industry) approval, no joint venture was ever agreed to without MITI's scrutiny and frequent alteration of the terms, no patent rights were ever bought without MITI's pressuring the seller to lower the royalties or to make other changes advantageous to Japanese industry as a whole; and no programme for the importation of foreign technology was ever approved until MITI and its various advisory committees had agreed that the time was right and that the industry involved was scheduled for 'nurturing'."

The cumulative inward foreign investment in Japan as of 1980 was a meagre US\$2,979 million, a figure about one-fourth of what Japan was investing in a single year. Similarly South Korea wisely resisted undesirable foreign investment. Malaysia did allow foreign investment mainly in manufacturing for export. They prepared their ground for absorbing technology. India resisted any foreign investment till recently when they earned some industrial, technological and engineering capability. S. Korea, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia were much behind us before liberation. We trained many of their manpower. The

leadership of these countries realised the importance of technology-based industrialisation just in 1960's and 1970's. Today they are enviable achievers.

Our investment priority
After liberation, we have perhaps managed to ill-manage our pre-independence investment, infrastructures, industrial base, institutions, financial systems, banking system, administrative systems, educational systems, judicial system and what not? Our currency is devalued from Taka 7.3 to

reserved for domestic investment. We also did the same, but before strengthening them to withstand external competition, we are compromising or selling out our national interest for petty personal interest or under intimidation. We fail to understand that we are sabotaging national interest at policy level by closing our industries under some pretexts or other. We sign international treaties or agreements without weighing their merits. As our industrial base is not strong and competitive enough, we should have invested heavily in existing industries

We must have courage to bring about educated, drastic reform and restructuring with bold initiative. The leadership may immediately streamline all development policy instruments and put them to implementation with courageous dedication. Policies must be development- and welfare-oriented, not loan-dictated. We must realise that it is a national insult to ask for foreign loan for appointing foreign consultants to advise our ACC, to prepare our voter list, to prepare our identification cards, to plan our city, to privatise our public entities, to modernise our judiciary and the like.

a dollar in 1971-72 to about Tk.64 to a Dollar in July, 2005. Politicians blame administrative machinery, the administration blames the politicians and even the businessmen, but no one takes the responsibility of getting into the causes and the methods of solving all the solvable problems by revamping the dysfunctional systems and institutions systematically. We have not yet identified what we want as a nation. We have not yet realised or do not have the courage to accept that the 'system' we followed failed for last 34 years and kept us backward by about 40 to 50 years with respect to progress in the contemporary world.

We always tend to put the cart before the horse. We are trying to open up service sector before the secondary and primary industrial sectors are made capable of supporting it. The developed countries which want to pre-empt our right measures had traditionally kept their utility sector, energy sector, financial sector, important industrial sector protected, nationalised or

and in service sectors like shipping, civil aviation, international banking, education, engineering, and also in civil construction locally and worldwide wherever scope exists. India has now conditionally allowed foreign investment in construction industries, which we may explore.

The small value addition of about 25 percent or so in garment industries, small export of shrimps, leather and tea is a peanut for a country of about 140 million. Our wise leadership and policy makers are now advocating such projects as overhead expressway in Dhaka and Dhaka-Chittagang span on Build-Operate-and-Transfer (BOT) system on 25 to 30 year toll collection term and a tunnel to reduce traffic congestion in front of Prime Minister's office with foreign loan. Their logic is that BOT system does not involve any local finance and that the finance ministry does not allocate fund for real development capacity building. Our economy is already bleeding just at the pressure of repatriation of about \$1.0 to 1.5 billion

ture fields. Our civil engineers and architects may look back to the example created by their old colleague in American skyscraper history. South Korea earned about US\$ 9.0 billion a year in Middle East construction job when their industries were just picking up. We had better opportunities.

Service sectors like mobile phone and telecommunication, road transport, railway, banking system, and energy sector, infrastructures and other low-tech fields are the areas where our own people can be economically engaged for years to improve our own standard of living.

We may allow or even invite foreign investment in the field of electronics, mobile phone manufacturing, automobile, automobile engine, automobile components, railway components, shipbuilding, joint research and many other manufacturing industries that will supplement, not compete with, our national investment and industries. As we don't have any substantial mineral resources, except

complementarities, not rivalry. The rule of the game has to be sound and self-correcting. We must learn and practice how to trust our own people. We must prepare an atmosphere and ground for local investment. Foreign investment shall compete to come under our terms and in joint venture, and we can be selective.

Confusion and over-enthusiasm about foreign investment
It seems some people are getting mad about TATA investment, at the very figure of some \$ 2.5 billion. TATA is mainly a steel producer. They have improved and modernised their technology recently. Steel is a basic low value-added industry. There is also a worldwide shortage of quality steel supply. We don't have iron ore. We can supply only the energy part at the best. We cannot probably get the job of the plant construction. It is basically a high-pollution industry. There is a necessity of maintaining

pollution control at ISO level. There remains a question of guaranteeing the technology level, R & D facilities, quality of products, pricing of iron ore and other raw materials and finished products, besides the pricing of energy and rent for leasing of the land. How the procurement of plant machinery shall be done, how the finance shall be arranged, whether plant machinery shall be mortgaged for finance and whether there will be involvement of international or multinational financial institutions, etc., must be ascertained and agreed upon. Whether TATA can invest the amount straight by remitting the whole amount to Bangladesh to open letter of credit for import on competitive basis need be clarified.

Bangladesh is a land-starved country with highest population density in the world. The intrinsic value of our land is many times that of India. We cannot sell land at any price. If all other questions are resolved we may at best lease only required size of land for 10-15 years with advanced rental payment which we may put up as our equity share. We must evaluate as to whether we end up with getting less than the value of gas supply only at the end of the day. We must do our home work properly and prepare our application form seeking all information necessary for evaluation of the project. As India is our valuable neighbour we cannot make any commitment that might prove unacceptable to the general people of both the countries at some later stage and embitter the mutual relation, which might be too costly.

If this project finally proves workable, we may propose to invest in a similar project in India near the source of raw materials or other convenient location. We may supply energy and India shall supply raw materials on mutually acceptable formula. The management procedures may be worked out in details.

The proposed investment in power and fertilizer plants is altogether a different investment. There is no

connection with steel plant. We must go by our open procedures, taking into consideration all our experience and international situation.

Coal mining is not an urgent matter to be decided hurriedly. If the Bangladesh royalty is just 6 percent, a question remains whether turning the vast area into an undesirable lake, and probable loss of life chronically associated with coal mine all over the world will be justified. We must evaluate all technical, ecological, and economic aspects for national interest. We must make it clear that no emotion or immediate personal interest may influence decisions against long term national interest or neighbourly relation. There should not be any place for superficiality in our own decision making.

Nonproductive foreign loan and our own responsibility
We must have courage to bring about educated, drastic reform and restructuring with bold initiative. The leadership may immediately streamline all development policy instruments and put them to implementation with courageous dedication. Policies must be development- and welfare-oriented, not loan-dictated. We must realise that it is a national insult to ask for foreign loan for appointing foreign consultants to advise our ACC, to prepare our voter list, to prepare our identification cards, to plan our city, to privatise our public entities, to modernise our judiciary and the like. We cannot say whether this is a real need or a mechanism for kickback or bribing in foreign exchange. Let us believe that our leadership shall not act against the interest of the people and the state knowingly.

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