

Mayhem in Paris

High time to unite against terrorism

WE are shocked and appalled by the synchronised terrorist attacks in multiple locations in Paris on Friday that have left at least 128 people dead (till going to press) and countless more injured. Gunmen, reportedly, burst into the Bataclan concert hall and opened fire on the audience, while gunshots and explosions took place at five other sites across the city, including a stadium where France and Germany were playing a friendly football match. Only a day earlier, two suicide bombers killed at least 43 people and wounded more than 200 others in what was the deadliest bombing in Beirut since the civil war ended 25 years ago. We condemn these attacks on civilians in the name of religion, and express our condolences for the grieving families and the people of France and Lebanon.

These attacks highlight, once again, that terrorism is a global phenomenon necessitating a global, coordinated response to eradicate extremisms of all forms brewing in different parts of the world. An attack on Paris is, indeed, an attack on our ideals of liberty, democracy and tolerance, and the international community must act with urgency.

Bangladesh has consistently taken a zero tolerance stance on terrorism, with the Prime Minister reiterating the importance of global unity to combat the barbarous forces in all their manifestations that are committed to wanton violence. We are confident that Bangladesh will continue to play an effective role in fighting the global menace in all its manifestations, both within and outside of its borders.

Nur Hossain in jail

Does he not have a tale to tell?

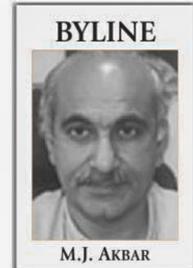
WE are relieved that at last Nur Hossain has been brought back from India. The very manner in which he fled the country had raised many questions. Now we are perplexed as to why the prime accused in the most gruesome murder in recent times is not being quizzed. And in asking why Nur Hossain has not been taken on remand so far, we are only echoing public sentiments.

Are we to assume that in a murder case that involves an agency of the state, the police have nothing further to find out from the prime accused? On the contrary, we feel, there are many unanswered questions.

Was Nur acting alone, or in collusion with others? How is it that a unit of Rab got involved in the matter without the higher authority getting a wind of it? And how did he manage to escape the dragnet that was supposed to be in place when the murders were discovered? These are mysteries that can only be demystified if Nur Hossain is taken on remand. We wonder how can the case be proceeded with on the basis of the current charge sheets when the main character in the case has not been questioned even once; how can the investigation be deemed complete?

We feel there is a need for further probe because, according to common perception, there is more than just the involvement of Nur Hussain. And there is the name of a state agency which needs to be cleared by determining that indeed those who participated in the killings were acting on their own.

The deadly game of alibis



BYLINE

M.J. AKBAR

THE terrorist assault on cities began in Mumbai: not Mumbai 2008, but Mumbai 1993. A series of coordinated bomb blasts in February 1993 had an impact far greater than the destruction of half a dozen buildings. The thesis that a humungous metropolis constitutes a soft spot has been proved often since 1993 across the world. It is porous, and therefore particularly vulnerable to those whose only objective is terror, best achieved by the killing of innocents wherever they can be found. Nothing is sacrosanct: school, hospital, railway station, stadium, music arena. Terrorists are mass murderers; mass urbanisation offers them a hunting ground. It once required armies to raze a city. Technology has changed the equation between offence and defence. A few can inflict the dread that once needed a host of uniforms.

The assault on New York, more familiar as 9/11, was perhaps the most dramatic, not least because of unbelievable visuals that still live on airwaves. But New York was not alone. Equally famous Western cities were hit and hurt, leaving each one in uproar, rage, horror, pain - and, in all cases till date, still groping for a comprehensive answer to a vicious problem. Nations have improved their

tactical capacity to defend their cities, but have been singularly unable to agree upon the counteroffensive needed to bring terrorist masterminds to justice.

This deadlock is a recipe for ruin. Terrorists have expanded their reach, improved their weapons and increased their recruits. We can no longer dismiss the possibility that nuclear contamination might be within their reach. If we are hapless in a confrontation with conventional weapons, what will we do when they use unconventional ones? Those on a suicide mission do not care how they die. What they care about is how many they will take with them.

Responsible governments now know that you cannot wreck a country in search of elusive militias. Iraq was an expensive folly. Responsible leaders recognise that you cannot blame a whole religion, Islam, for the sins of a few Muslims. It was a coincidence, but just hours before the anguish of Paris hit our consciousness, Prime Minister Narendra Modi noted that the spirit of Islamic Sufism has been and remains the antidote to guns and terrorism. This is the kind of understanding that requires reinforcement.

In practical terms, however, what next? We cannot deny a simple fact. Nations who have been worst hit by terrorism remain ambivalent about the hunt for masterminds, pursuing a quarry only when it suits them rather than as a principle. We hear the same clichés on the day of a tragedy. Once memory cools, politics and clever advocacy of geostrategic options prevail. The killers

in Paris were puppets. The puppeteer is sitting in some sanctuary somewhere else. As long as he can survive with impunity, protected by vested interests that could include local governments, this malevolence will not ebb.

Initial reports say that ISIS was behind the havoc in Paris. On paper this simplifies the search; in real life this extends the problem. ISIS has, uniquely, been attracting volunteers from western

Nations who have been worst hit by terrorism remain ambivalent about the hunt for masterminds, pursuing a quarry only when it suits them rather than as a principle.

Europe, particularly England and France. The Trojan horse does not have to be dragged through city gates by stealth. The horse is living quietly within its target city, if not with a regular job then at least with social security. This will have consequences in the whole of Europe, most emphatically in the next round of elections, further reducing liberal space.

The present governments have only themselves to blame. There cannot be much hope if they are still unable to agree upon a definition for terrorist that can be accepted by the United Nations. Language is not the problem. Too many protégés of big powers are still selling that poison weed labelled 'Your gunman is a terrorist, my gunman is a freedom-fighter', and their mentors are buying into this fallacy.

There has to be a beginning to the way forward. Perhaps we can return, logically, to where it all began, Mumbai. For decades we have identified who organised Mumbai 1993, Dawood Ibrahim. Over the last few years, America has directly helped in the arduous collection of evidence against Hafez Sayeed, head of the Lashkar-e-Taiba and architect of Mumbai 2008. America has acknowledged as much in joint statements with India. Why cannot Dawood Ibrahim, who does not bother to refute allegations that he heads a Mafia operation, be picked up from his sanctuary in Karachi and brought to trial? Why should Sayeed continue to taunt India and the West from his safe haven in Lahore, and surely plan for a second Mumbai-style attack? Instead of bringing both to justice, Dawood and Sayeed have mentors in Islamabad who have upgraded their security.

When will this game of alibis get over? If it continues, Paris will continue.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, *India on Sunday*, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

This was a strike against the very soul of France

But does La Republique have any real answers?

HARRY DE QUETTEVILLE

IT is hard to overstate the significance of the attacks on Paris. First, just take a look at where they were carried out: on Rue de Charonne near Bastille, nightlife heart of the city, where bars and restaurants would have been packed out on a Friday night.

In a pizzeria and a restaurant near Place de la Republique, a symbolic rallying point, again in the city centre, and host to countless demonstrations and protests down the years, including the mass gatherings after the Charlie Hebdo attacks.

Bastille. Place de la Republique. These targets have not been chosen by accident. They represent the soul of the French nation. Symbolic hardly does them justice. And terrifyingly, it must be likely that the perpetrators were themselves French.

Of course, they may have been foreign assailants, flown in to carry this out. But the suspicion must be otherwise. The suspicion must be that the perpetrators' names will be added to those of Yassine Salhi, Chérif and Saïd Kouachi, Mohammed Merah - French citizens who have turned on France.

What could better exemplify that than a strike at the Stade de France - where the national football team was playing Germany.

When I was a correspondent in Paris almost 20 years ago, the national football team was a symbol of unity - "black, white, Arab together" the hopeful chant used to run. That spirit reached its zenith when the multicultural team won the World Cup in 1998. How fast it soured.

By the time I had left Paris, five years later, the suburbs - les banlieues - home to large north African and sub-saharan communities, were simmering. The jobs the residents had come to fill had gone. Education achievement was poor. Prospects in these ghettos were grim. Few were surprised when these same suburbs erupted into violence in 2005. That was exactly 10 years ago, with young men openly taking on riot police.

But even then, for most Parisians, there was a sense of "them and us". The carnage going on in the banlieues of Clichy-sous-Bois seemed a world away from the glittering boulevards in central Paris.

It was as if the ring road around Paris - the Boulevard Périphérique - was not a road at all, but a moat keeping the besieging

barbarians from the gate.

The 20 arrondissements cosily contained inside the Periph were another world. Not any more. As these attacks show, the violence has come crashing through the gates.

As my colleague Hugh Schofield has pointed out, many billions have been pumped into les banlieues to regenerate them. To little avail. The ghettos remain. What has changed is that for a few, a radical few, the trend is not towards integration, but

security and intelligence failings? Will France have to give up some of its cherished liberal ideals to counter the terrorists? Is it even over?

But perhaps the most troubling of all is: Who was responsible? Because if it turns out that the killers have come from within, that they are young men with no prospects who have rejected their French nationality, that they are from deprived areas or depressed banlieues, then there is a terrible problem.



People are evacuated following an attack at the Bataclan concert venue.

PHOTO: AFP/GETTY IMAGES

dis-integration - a positive rejection of that 1998 spirit of unity.

For these few, the trend has been distinctly worrying. Schofield quotes Malek Boutih, a Socialist deputy from a southern Paris banlieue: "We have been on a downward slide which has led to the point where our neighbourhoods produce terrorists. Ten years ago it was rioters, now it is terrorists."

There are a host of troubling questions that emerge from this attack: Were there

And that is this: since 2005 the French government has spent significant time and money trying to reverse the violent sense of grievance felt by some immigrant communities, the sense of grievance that a decade ago saw so many cars set ablaze, so many petrol bombs thrown at police. Has any progress been made? None.

So what answers does France have now?

The writer is Comment Editor, *The Telegraph*, UK. © *The Telegraph*.

COMMENTS

"Consider gravity of crimes before granting bail"

(November 12, 2015)



Ochena Lena

Why and how did the Gaibandha-1 MP get bail?

"US updates travel alerts"

(November 12, 2015)



Anwar Hossain Bablu

How does the US know that there is a possibility of further attacks? They should share this information with our government.

"A father's eyes"

(November 11, 2015)



Hasan Shaheen

This is an example of how to lead an honest life despite limitations.



Farhana Ali

This goes on to show how resilient the people of this country are. Much respect!

"Already more than 2000 arrested"

(November 11, 2015)



Anwar Akhtar

It's just an eyewash. They are using the state machinery to neutralise the opposition with the goal of securing a "win" in the upcoming local elections.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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"Biharis show India's way"

This refers to the above mentioned article published in TDS on November 10. Yes, India's democracy has shined again through the fair and peaceful election in Bihar in which voters rejected the communal forces.

Bihar is a backward state. Its fragile agro-based economy, caste-ridden social structure, absence of any big industry and over-population needs special attention. The state virtually has been ruined

by the misrule of Lalu Prasad. The mafia dons Shabuddin, Sadhu Yadav and other henchmen of Lalu always ran the show in the politics of Bihar. This time Lalu and Nitish came together because they felt that unless they joined hands, chances of their being defeated were pretty high. It is an alliance of convenience. Nonetheless, we welcome the defeat of the BJP, a communal force, in Bihar.

MKB
On e-mail

Clean up the footpaths in front of DMCH

The footpaths in front of the emergency gate of Dhaka Medical College Hospital are frequently occupied by illegal shop owners. As a result, patients along with their relatives face severe difficulties in entering the hospital. We request the authority to look into the problem.

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PHOTO: PALASH KHAN