

Manchester Attack

The strategy of solidarity

PLEASURE IS ALL MINE



SHAH HUSAIN IMAM

AFTER the Manchester carnage, there should no longer be any sense of disbelief at the invidious lengths to which terrorists can go to make their presence felt. Especially when they are weak, cornered and desperate. First you have a flashback to put the latest incident in perspective; then you scrutinise if it was preventable and come up with solutions for the future.

There have been three terror attacks in Britain over the last decade. The first was the bombing in a section of underground railway on July 7, 2005. This took a toll of 52 people. Then followed a long period of calm as a mark of British counter-terrorism success up until March this year. At that point, Westminster Bridge bloodshed took place. A sense of vulnerability crept in; Britain was put on high alert. But in spite of that, last Monday night, a suicide bomber unleashed a horrendous massacre on mostly teenagers at the end of a concert at the heart of Manchester. Not since 2005 have there been such



A Jewish woman named Renee Rachel Black and a Muslim man named Sadiq Patel react next to floral tributes in Albert Square in Manchester, Britain on Wednesday.

heavy casualties—22 killed and 59 injured of whom 20 are in a critical state. Was it preventable? Well, first of all, it was the softest of targets that a

terrorist mentor or operative could pick. Secondly, according to some eyewitness accounts, security checks at the gate were lax; surely not the copy-book type they had expected. It

appears that the lessons have sunk in. The British prime minister has raised the terror threat from 'severe' to 'critical' with the military being deployed to guard all key

installations leaving the police to intense and extensive patrolling duties.

It is worth noting how promptly the British police have identified the attacker. His name is Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old British-born Muslim of Libyan origin, who had just returned from a visit to Libya. The British government is evidently acting on the plausible assumption that a wider network may have been involved and that a recurrence can't be ruled out.

In parallel runs a pragmatic view cognisant of certain limitations before adopting a fail-safe plan of action in terms of counter-terrorism. First of all, there's no way to deter a suicide bomber wired with explosives except for stopping him by timely intelligence tracking. Secondly, and importantly as it happens now, 1,000 Muslims have been put under surveillance in Britain. The list includes 400 returnees from Syria and 600 who have been stopped from travelling to Syria and Iraq.

Is it humanly possible or even mechanically feasible to keep 1,000 potential suspects under radar on a 24/7 basis? Then add to the list sleeper cells, sympathisers and lone wolves—that's a daunting task.

Thus, the conventional us-vs.-them clinical approach to tackling terrorism needs to be rethought and revised to ensure right amounts of community involvement against terrorism. To make sure that there is community-wide participation, the British government and civil society will have to discourage any unwitting profiling or persecution of Muslims.

In their weak and desperate situation, ISIS is courting persecution of the Muslims overseas to alienate them from their host countries. Governments in the West would be falling in the trap of driving a wedge in the community if they are to treat the Muslims differently.

The other robust potential for community-wide understanding lies in inter-faith dialogue and communication. President Trump's visits to Riyadh, Jerusalem and Vatican City have been regarded as symbolic gestures to bring to bear the Abrahamic religions—Islam, Christianity and Judaism—on the issue of peace and harmony. The optimism though at any rate looks misplaced because Iran and Russia have been kept out of the equation.

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Potemkin Road

The tale of the strange bonsai beautification



KAZI KHALEED ASHRAF

ALL of a sudden Dhaka's Airport Road is looking like a Potemkin Road. With an exhibition of "bonsai" trees, odd garden-like set-ups, random visual paraphernalia, arbitrary street lights, and Stalinist sculpture, Airport Road is showing all the gimmicks of those fake villages that the Russian administrator Grigory Potemkin created along the path of Empress Catherine's journey in the Crimea in 1787. Since then the term has come to mean devices city administrators prop up to dazzle a few but conceal or avoid dealing with actual conditions.

Since the 1980s the Airport Road has fallen prey to quite a few Potemkinesque projects targeted apparently for foreign visitors, but the recent grand exhibition curated by the Roads and Highways Department is full of absurdity and hilarity, both at the same time. It's absurd to beautify the Airport Road when the airport itself remains a disgrace. No one will disagree that Dhaka airport, with its shoddy spaces, facilities and services, takes the prize as the worst airport in the world.

If intending to improve a special corridor such as the Airport Road that links the city with the airport, Roads and Highways need not go far. The most beautiful airport road is not in Kuala Lumpur, landscaped with manicured attention, or Tokyo, with grand views of the countryside, but our very own Sylhet city. The 15-minute drive from the airport to the main street of the city takes place through tea gardens with their breathtaking views. We can learn a few things from this exceptional site: how to arrange airport roads, and its canopied routes, cultivated views, and picturesque landscapes.

The grand beautification of Airport Road is not merely Potemkinesque, which would make things humorous, but rather alarming. At the centre of this fraught project is the planting of those imported trees. Apparently the trees, bonsai or bonsai-like, have been imported from China at a ridiculous price of Tk 200,000 each.

Creating bonsai-like tree is a unique and laborious process that needs a lot of care; it needs equal care in its maintenance. An important aspect of such trees is the location of their placement. Typically set in formal indoors or courtyards of grand Chinese or Japanese buildings, bonsai trees are totally inappropriate on roadsides. We know of no city, west or east, where a major promenade or avenue has been lined up with bonsai trees. People who have made the decision obviously do not see the

absurdity in it. It's also absurd for other reasons. With each tree costing an obscene Tk 200,000 and special shipment cost from China, 120 trees would cost close to Tk 3 crore! On the other hand, if a more locally familiar tree variety were chosen, such as *krishnachura*, *radhachura* or *nageswar*, each tree may have cost no more than Tk 2,000. Eminent botanist Professor Dwijen Sharma thinks that we have a strong precedence and tradition of

trees, and are better equipped for their maintenance and upkeep. We have little or no expertise about the bonsai, particularly, the bonsai version of what appears to be a ficus tree in the Airport Road project. With the trees set up on footpaths, close to the edge of the highway, no one has any idea what will happen if the trees start to expand in five or ten years.

In planting trees on urban roadsides, it is important to know what type should be planted, and for

decisions are taken with the pedestrian as a priority. There is a reason why people usually walk on roads rather than footpaths. Roads are constantly widened for the benefit of cars by reducing the width of footpaths. Additionally, footpaths are constructed without any deep sense of how they work or should work, in fact, with little empathy for the pedestrian. There are no guidelines for footpath in this glorious city where 60 percent of the population

Even though there are ample spaces on both sides of the Airport Road Corridor, the footpath is a minuscule four or five feet when it could have been twenty feet wide, and there is hardly any shade-giving tree. The Airport Road project has constructed unnecessary gardens and structures for purely visual bravado.

Constructing walls is another syndrome that afflicts Dhaka. Whether a property is private or government-owned, the first task is to erect offensive walls all around. Walls can also be visually interesting; they can be porous or fence-like allowing porosity between the two sides, but most walls in Dhaka are solid putting up a blunt, unfriendly face to the public side. We have done a calculation of the boundary walls of plots in Gulshan residential area: if the walls were lined up end to end, they would reach from Dhaka to Chittagong! When the Roads project envisioned a whole corridor bounded by walls for a few kilometres, they may have thought something like this rather than the wonderful experience of seeing open spaces and greeneries along the route.

The Roads and Highways Department should just focus on roads and highways and leave "beautification" to others. In the meantime, they should work on more important and critical things, for example, discipline vehicle movements on the roads, create lines on roads for proper and safe movements, mark proper stoppages for buses, construct adequate pedestrian corridors and shelters, and arrange for safe methods for pedestrian-crossing that now verges on being life threatening (Tk 3 crore for bonsai could make for six pedestrian overbridges!). All that money spent could go a long way in making Airport Road safer, more efficient and truly beautiful.

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A row of imported bonsai trees planted along a 6 km stretch from Zia Colony to Shahjalal International Airport intersection as part of a beautification project undertaken by the Roads and Highways Department.

avenue trees. Planting of locally known variety would have been culturally and ecologically appropriate. *Krishnachura*, for example, has an elegant presence and history in Bengali imagination, and has delighted the arrangement of streets in many places in Bangladesh. We also know the behaviour of such

which purpose. More than a visual presence that may tantalise passersby, or people driving by, it is more important to go for shade-producing trees that may soothe the pedestrians as well as vehicles. Trees with wide green canopies also contribute to reducing the heat gain of the built city. Dhaka is not a walkable city – few

walk. Footpaths' widths are often so narrow that we joke a footpath literally means a foot-wide path. There are constant cuts and breaks, and ups and downs, in the pavement making walking a health challenge. Footpaths are ridiculously high from the road; they are often 20 inches high, at some points steps have to be constructed to get up on the sidewalk.

QUOTABLE Quote



CHARLOTTE BRONTE, 'JANE EYRE' English novelist and poet

I am no bird; and no net ensnares me: I am a free human being with an independent will.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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|----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ACROSS | 39 Battery end | 10 Warbled |
| 1 Reach | 41 Enormous | 16 Ready to go |
| 6 Play groups | 45 Perfect | 18 Folded food |
| 11 Coldly distant | 46 Sneezing sound | 19 School near |
| 12 Nebraska city | 47 Student housing | Windsor |
| 13 Wine grape | 48 Use the rink | 20 Arrive |
| 14 Backpack material | DOWN | 21 Team acquisition |
| 15 Midterm or final | 1 Mountain pass | 24 Fencing sword |
| 17 Pull gently | 2 Quarter-back | 25 Manual reader |
| 18 Computer geek | Manning | 26 Household critters |
| 22 Resting on | 3 Great weight | 28 Calls off |
| 23 Shredded | 4 Hors d'oeuvre stab- | 31 Carnival city |
| 27 Standup guy? | 5 Many a time | 34 Forum garments |
| 29 Slight error | 6 Restraint | 35 Hotel worker |
| 30 Like some garages | 7 Writer Tan | 36 Take apart |
| 32 Yard divisions | 8 Shaker fill | 37 Active person |
| 33 Bootee makers | 9 Quaker's pronoun | 40 Beaver creation |
| 35 Coffee, in slang | | 42 Cry of discovery |
| 38 Hen pen | | 43 Word of denial |
| | | 44 Foot part |

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

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BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

