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A new headache along with Brexit

Manchester attack: Britain has never seen anything like this

The response to such attacks always follows a script: Blanket coverage in the news media, brave words by leaders, forests of flowers at the scenes of attack, forensic reconstruction by the police, and a return to normalcy – until the next attack. It was only two months ago that the script was played out when Khalid Masood mowed down pedestrians on the Westminster Bridge in London in a speeding car.

But the Manchester attack is different in that it appears to be the first incident of suicide bombing in Britain, a country that has long witnessed political violence in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. London was also the target in July 2005, when serial blasts across its transport network killed over 50 people. No killing can be viewed as normal, but the Manchester attack is clearly a step-up in the kind of terrorism Britain has faced so far. It not only indicates the existence in the country of individuals prepared to undertake the task – for whatever reason – but also a network, without which such acts are not possible. It was hitherto a feature of conflict in West Asia or Pakistan, not in Britain or Europe. Since August 2014, the official threat level from international terrorism has been set to 'severe' in Britain, which means an attack is 'highly likely'. It was put in place when Theresa May was the home secretary. The Manchester attack has happened on her watch as the prime minister, opening a new front at a time when she was hoping to sort out the Brexit-related politics through an election on June 8. The cut-and-thrust of electoral politics is a sign of normalcy in a democracy, but Manchester posed such a stepped-up threat that all campaigning has been suspended until further notice.

It was poignant that the Manchester blast happened few hours after the Indian high commission had observed the annual 'Anti-Terrorism Day'. It needs no repeating that terrorism knows no borders and that the globalisation of terror is a reality, but all global powers – current, past or waning ones such as Britain – must reflect on the fact that actions and causes in one part of the world may trigger reaction in another.

For India, the AfDB meet is purely strategic

New Delhi must expand its footprint in Africa to counter Beijing's reach

India's strategic safari took a step further this week with the African Development Bank (AfDB) holding its annual meeting for the first time in this country. The meeting puts some important financial and policy flesh to the new relationship developing between India and the continent, which was politically signalled by the largest-ever India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015. New Delhi had become a vigorous provider of lines of credit as part of its aid programme. These provided a useful bridge for Indian firms to find local business partners and establish a commercial presence in Africa. An additional stamp of legitimacy has now been provided to this programme by the AfDB, acting as an intermediary for such concessional finance. In addition, the summit will see India and Japan work out the modalities of an economic and transport corridor, probably through eastern and southern Africa, which will be a path breaker in terms of India partnering with another country to carry out an aid project in another set of countries.

India's relationship with Africa is entering a new phase. Indian trade with the continent is doubling every five years and is now a larger trading partner for Africa than Japan or the US. Over 15% of India's overseas investment now goes to Africa.

There is today a much more of a strategic play in what India does with Africa. This is partly because of New Delhi's concerns about non-State threats from the continent. It also reflects Indian concerns that it has done little to cement political and military ties in its own maritime backyard at a time when US influence is waning and the Chinese presence is rising. Beijing's Belt Road initiative underline why New Delhi needs to become a much larger player in Africa. Among the areas outside of Asia, eastern and southern Africa will emerge as the most important geographical areas of interest to India in the new century.

democracywall

HARSH MANDER



Create jobs, the rest will fall in place

Of the million people added to India's workforce every month, only 0.01% actually find work

For millions of young voters Prime Minister Modi's most alluring election promise in 2014 was that his government would create ten million jobs, reversing the dismal UPA record of almost jobless growth. 65% Indians are younger than 35 years, and legitimately dream of a better life built on well-paid and secure employment; therefore many among them chose to trust their futures with his leadership.

But three years into his tenure, job-creation has not proved to be all it was cut out to be. As pointed out in the India Exclusion Report 2016 of the Centre for Equity Studies, there are almost no jobs available in India's high-growth economy. Job creation has plummeted to levels even below those of preceding UPA governments. The government is reluctant to publish official data about employment, because it does not tell a pretty story. But data compiled from the Quarterly Report on Changes in Employment in Selected Sectors by the Labour and Employment Bureau of the government of India reveals that employment creation even in the most labour-intensive sectors of the economy in 2015 plummeted to a low of 135,000 jobs. One million new people join the workforce every month. This means that just

0.01% of new workers added to the work force actually found work. The picture of jobless growth is further complicated because jobs are being extinguished even as others are being created, and the net figures don't reflect this. Employment in the formal sector has fallen since 1997. More and more people are being pushed into either lowest-end self-employment, or the most unprotected wage employment. The countryside is of course the most stricken.

The 12 million people joining the labour force includes those who seek work in the cities because of the near-death of the rural economy. The worst-hit are rural workers and distress migrants. The socio-economic and caste census revealed that 56% rural households own no land, and depend primarily on manual labour to survive. Economist Prabhat Patnaik observed that our share of cultivators has actually fallen since 1951. People who might have been independent peasants have been pushed into agricultural labour. They have no rights, no income security, are subject to abject drudgery, and cannot be organised.

Since the stagnant rural economy offers meagre opportunities for employment, a large segment of these households are circular distress migrants, evocatively described



• The worst-hit by the job crisis are rural workers and distress migrants HT FILE

by labour anthropologist Jan Breman as 'hunters and gatherers of work'. In order to stay alive, they will go to any corner of the country, to do any work, on any terms. An estimated 12.24 million people seek work for 2-6 months annually. Of these, 77% are resident in rural areas and more than two-thirds migrate in desperate search of work to urban areas. Estimates show that about 35-40 million labourers could be seasonal migrants.

These are the migrant workers toiling in the prosperous farms of Punjab, Haryana, Western UP and Maharashtra, construction workers building high-rise structures in cit-

ies, semi-bonded workers in brick kilns, workers building roads in conflict-endemic frontier states, and so on. As social policy commentator Colin Todhunter observes in a biting indictment, 'much mainstream thinking implies that shifting people from agriculture to what are a number of already overburdened, filthy, polluted mega-cities to work in factories, clean the floors of a shopping mall or work as a security guard improves the human condition'. Often boys barely in their teens set out to distant lands to earn some money to keep their families alive. But now increasingly families migrate along with men, interrupting children's schooling, forcing women to bear and raise children on dusty city streets and shanties, and leaving behind old people in the village to starve, beg or die.

The highest promise of reforms was that it would unleash millions of jobs. However, the reality of what was accomplished in the high noon of economic growth under the UPA governments was jobless growth. Modi had promised to reverse this, but the government has no diagnosis of why past policies failed. Without reversing the agrarian crisis, mending the broken education system, installing greater labour protections and promoting labour-intensive small manufacturing, the promise of millions of jobs will remain a mirage.

Harsh Mander's is the author of *Fatal Accidents of Birth: Stories of Suffering, Oppression and Resistance*. The views expressed are personal.

FIREWALL



• Physical access to machines is a prerequisite to tampering with them, since they don't have any wireless device or Internet connection built in. MINT FILE

Why EVMs cannot fall into the wrong hands

Elaborate checks and balances ensure that the electronic voting machines cannot be tampered with



AMIT KATARIA

Many parties have blamed their election losses on tampering with electronic voting machines (EVMs). However, just proving that a machine can be tampered with doesn't prove that the elections were rigged. This would require that an entire set of processes has been compromised.

The EVMs are stored in a strong room, normally at the district collectorate, with round-the-clock security, and are accessible only to officials authorised by the district magistrate (DM). By default, the DM is also the district election officer (DEO). Each EVM's record is tracked with its unique security number. The machines are manufactured at public sector undertakings ECIL or BEL. As soon as new machines arrive, the DEO takes charge. The transportation is done under the eagle eye of an executive magistrate.

Physical access to machines is a prerequisite to tampering with them, since they don't have any wireless device or internet connection built in. Chances of EVMs getting into the hands of unscrupulous persons are next to impossible. Such security failures cannot happen owing to checks and balances.

When the election process begins, each

EVM machine is checked by engineers of the ECIL or BEL in the presence of returning officers, election observers and representatives of parties. After that, the randomisation is done, so that no one knows which EVM will go to which constituency or polling booth in the district. Therefore, unless all EVMs are tampered with, the tampered machines, if any, can land anywhere in the district.

The most crucial component of preparation is a mock poll where every EVM is tested by entering dummy votes, and the results tallied. During the test, 10% of EVMs, which the candidates can choose, are polled more than 1,000 votes. Any machine that gives wrong results or is tampered with will be detected. Next, the EVMs are sealed with unique paper seals. It is impossible for a tampered machine to go undetected beyond this stage.

At the polling station, the presiding officer again conducts a mock poll before polling begins. Once the election is complete, the EVM's control unit is sealed, after which there is no way to change the data. The EVMs are then brought back to the strong room and sealed in front of political party representatives. The strong room is opened only on counting day and counting done in the presence of candidates. All these processes are transparent with no scope for foul play.

If processes are followed diligently, there is no way that a "hacked EVM" can enter the system and derail fair elections.

Amit Kataria is collector and district magistrate, Bastar, Chhattisgarh. The views expressed are personal.

The Army has hurt itself and its own image

By commending Major Gogoi, the armed forces have lost more than just 'the human shield's' heart and mind



HARINDER BAWEJA

On a recent visit to the Valley, I learnt – through confidential conversations with various state actors – that Major NL Gogoi, the army officer who infamously tied Farooq Ahmed Dar, a Kashmiri shawl weaver, to a jeep, had been called by his bosses and asked to explain the circumstances that led him to use a civilian as a human shield. The conversations revealed another important fact: Gogoi had not reported his 'innovative' prowess to his immediate superior for three days.

The fact that Gogoi had stripped a civilian of his right to life and liberty came unmasked only after a video showing the shawl weaver strapped to a jeep bonnet was made public on social media. Was Gogoi aware – within himself – that he had perhaps crossed the line? Was that the reason he had not revealed his actions to his superiors?

The same action – justified as one taken under grave circumstances, so lives could be saved – has now won Gogoi a commendation from the Chief of Army Staff, Gen Bipin Rawat. The chief, and everyone down the hierarchical chain in the army, has endorsed the view that Gogoi deserves to be honoured, but in the tenuous relationship between the common Kashmiri and the men in olive fatigues, what message have the army and the government (to whom the army reports in India, unlike in Pakistan) sent to an entire population that is already alienated because they feel a deep denial of justice?

"Was I an animal?" the 'human shield' asked my colleague, soon after he learnt of the honour bestowed on Gogoi, wondering which provision of the law permitted him being driven across villages for over 20 minutes.

WHERE IS THE GUARANTEE THAT COPYCAT HUMAN SHIELD ACTIONS WILL NOT BE REPEATED? THE HONOUR, AFTER ALL, HAS BEEN BESTOWED BY NONE OTHER THAN GENERAL RAWAT HIMSELF.

The law is an ass but its practitioners will tell you that it will be judged as an illegal act and is of course, a harsh and inhuman step no army can – or should – be proud of.

General Rawat has commended the Major for counter-insurgency operations but the army is fooling nobody for Gogoi is a household name for the human shield operation and there is no other action against his name that stands out for 'commendation.'

Dar has been condemned as a 'stone pelted', though there is no evidence to support that. What we do know, for a fact, is that Dar was one of the few who came out to vote on April 9 for the polls being held for the Srinagar parliamentary constituency. The election was violent: eight civilians were killed and only 7.4% turned out to risk getting the ink mark on their finger. The commendation for Gogoi adds another layer to the already complex reality of Kashmir: Dar now stands identified as one of the minuscule few who risked their life by walking to a polling booth. Given the current mood in the Valley, where even mainstream political parties are getting marginalised, the shawl weaver suffers social humiliation for favouring democracy and is of course, a victim of army excesses because human shields are a complete no-no, as per the Geneva convention, even in a non-combative situation.

Attention is being focused on Gogoi's actions – and less on Dar, who has already been painted as a 'stone pelted' who, according to the growing breed of 'nationalists', deserves what he got.

Given the culture of commendations within the army – particularly in a conflict zone like Kashmir – where battalions are honoured for the number of militants arrested and killed – where is the guarantee that copycat human shield actions will not be repeated? The honour, after all, has been bestowed by none other than Gen Rawat himself. Which young captain or major, would not want to catch the eye of the chief? Remember the 'ketchup colonel' who faked 'slain militants' by smearing them with tomato sauce – all for gallantry medals.

In the end, the army has only harmed itself and its own image. In the intricate security apparatus comprising local police and paramilitary forces, the army stood out for its WHAM approach: 'win hearts and minds'.

By honouring Gogoi, it has lost more than just Dar's heart and mind.

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FOCUS YOUR ENERGY ON GETTING WHAT YOU DESIRE THE MOST, AND ACHIEVE IT

Nipun Sarin

For the last three or four years, I've developed an interest in analysing what brings success in life. Is it luck? Or the result of other factors?

I've come to the conclusion that what matters most is passion! With passion, you undoubtedly find your way even in the midst of darkness.

Joseph Campbell said, "Passion will move men beyond themselves, beyond their shortcomings, beyond their failures."

The best part is that none of us is lacking in passion. The goal may be positive or negative. A student, who is more interested in sleeping than in studying, will make all types of excuses to go back to asleep.

He will end up getting what he desired the most – sleep, but he will not be able to cover his course.

We focus all our energy with all its positivity towards attaining the thing we desire the most and achieve it. To receive one thing, we sometimes have to forego another. In the above example, it was

impossible that the student keeps sleeping and his course also gets covered. The choice was absolutely his.

The concept applies to all time frames – five minutes, one day, one month, one year or one life.

However, it is restricted to our desire placed at serial number one in all time frames.

Innervoice comprises contributions from our readers. The views expressed are personal. innervoice@hindustantimes.com