

W.A. 117

Blasts rip through Britain's key oil depot

12/12

By Rashmee Roshan Lall/TNN

London: A jittery Britain was jolted awake early on Sunday morning by a series of large explosions at one of Britain's key oil depots, which created a towering inferno north of London, hurled multiple balls of fire into the sky and produced a wide delta of thick black smoke in an expanding disaster zone expected to stretch across huge swathes of the south-east of the country.

The explosions at the depot in Hemel Hempstead, a key supplier of aviation fuel to Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted and Luton airports, just after 6 am GMT, were heard as far away as in the Netherlands and Belgium. Nearby buildings caved in, cars on the road and trees in the vicinity were burnt to a cinder and the force of the blasts was felt some 200 km away from the scene. Some 400 firefighters continued to battle the shooting flames at the time of going to press.

The cause of the blasts is yet to be established. Police insisted, to a country jittery over terrorist attacks and with



Flames erupt from buildings behind the burning Buncefield oil terminal in Hemel Hempstead in Britain on Sunday

anguished memories of the 7/7 multiple Tube explosions, that they were treating the catastrophe as "an accident".

But, in a significant development, police admitted security would be up-scaled to the very highest levels at fuel storage depots and oil terminals across the country, even as security experts recalled that Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups had previously threatened to tar-

get fuel depots.

In the first high-ranking government response to the incident, Britain's defence secretary John Reid assured that the country's "armed forces, as ever, are on stand-by. This is a big one but we have received no request for (army) help so far". The disaster is thought to be the biggest of its kind in Europe, with a potential environmental blowback that could last months.

At a hurried news conference, Frank Whiteley, police chief in Hertfordshire, the south-eastern England county where the depot is located, admitted police did not have any answers to questions about what triggered the explosions which local residents described as "sounding like a 2000-lb bomb". Whiteley said "We are treating this major incident as an accident. However, clearly we will keep an open mind, as with all investigations, until we can confirm that for certain."

The powerful blasts, at Britain's hub depot, its fifth largest oil terminal, which stores 60 million gallons of fuel, caused at least 39 casualties, two of them serious.

12 DEC 2005

BLAST | At least 20 tanks with almost 15 million litres of fuel capacity involved

Oil depot blasts shocks Britain

VIJAY RANA

LONDON, DECEMBER 11

ON A Sunday morning, people in Britain awoke to the horror and shock of July 7 terror attack. A series of explosions in Buncefield fuel depot at the Hemel Hempstead Industrial Estate, 25 miles north of London lit by up the sky to 300 feet and the smoke could be seen miles away.

Being a Sunday, the factories were closed and the casualty figure was limited to 36, four of them being seriously injured. Most of them were discharged after initial treatment.

Before the emergency services could arrive at the scene, a number of eyewitnesses made a claim of an aircraft seen in the area minutes before the explosions. As the TV channels began to explore the possibility of another 9/11-type attack, a Hertfordshire police spokesman said that Buncefield tragedy was just 'an accident' and there was no aeroplane in the area.

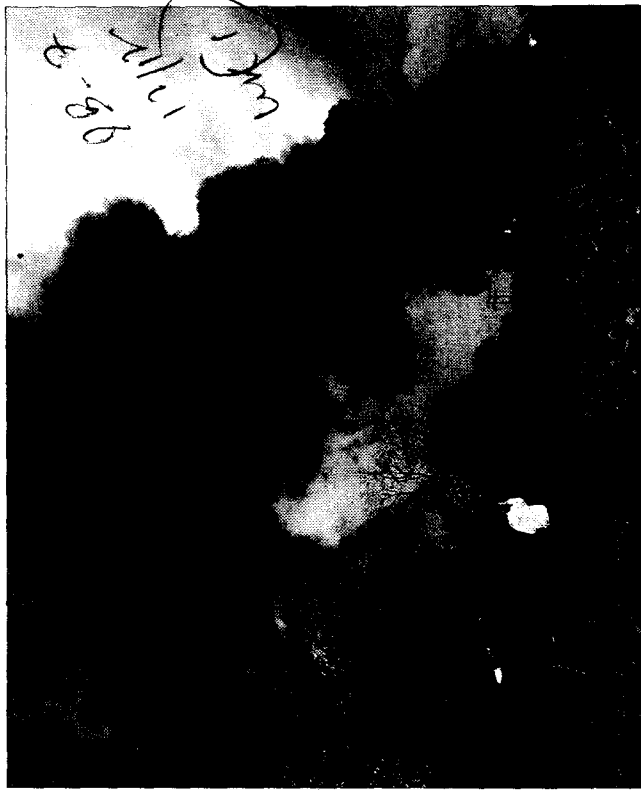
Spread in 122 acres, the fuel depot is jointly owned by Total UK and Texaco. It serves three cross-country pipelines and supplies fuel to Britain's two biggest airports, Heathrow and Luton.

Experts believe that it will not be possible to put out such a huge fire in the next few days. At the moment no one can reach near it because of its intensity and scale. Attempts are being made to acquire fire-extinguishing foam from nearby fire authorities and the industry. A mile long exclusion zone has been established.

Almost three hours after the explosions Hertfordshire police chief constable Frank Whiteley said, "All indications at this stage are that this was an accident. However, clearly we will keep an open mind until we can confirm for certain."

Whiteley said more than 100 police officers are at the scene alongside more than 100 firefighters to control the fire. He advised people to stay indoors because there might be more explosions.

Environmental costs are yet to be counted. Luckily, there was no wind on the Sunday morning and the plume rose straight into sky. Later in the day it headed leisurely towards south and west casting a huge shadow over areas of north London, Middlesex and even Reading. A sunny day further dispelled the fear of black rain that could have brought the toxic fumes back to earth; bringing more gloom to many emotionally shattered lives.



Young boys take pictures of smoke billowing after an explosion next to a fuel depot in Hemel Hempstead in central England. Reuters

According to the police at least 20 petrol tanks were involved in the fire and each of them having approximately 15 million litres of fuel capacity.

Total UK spokesman Ian Hutchinson said at the time of explosions there were 10 employees on the site and "all of them have been accounted for". One of those nearest to the scene was a tanker driver Paul Turner, who was thrown off his feet. He said, "I just saw this great ball of fire coming up from behind the wall. It was about fifty metres wide."

INDIAN EXPRESS

MI6 accused of torturing terror suspects

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: British intelligence services have been accused of being involved in the alleged torture of a group of suspects of Pakistani origin detained in Greece in the wake of the July 7 London bombings.

A senior British diplomat is reported to have been recalled home after a Greek newspaper disclosed his identity along with the names of several Greek intelligence men alleged to have been involved in the kidnapping and torture of 28 Pakistan-born immigrants.

The newspaper *Proto Thema*

named the diplomat as an MI6 officer and head of its station in Athens.

But the British Government has banned the domestic media from disclosing his identity on grounds that it could endanger his safety.

According to British media reports two of his other colleagues have also been recalled.

"There is growing concern in Whitehall that more British agents will be named as the controversy deepens in Greece over why MI6 officers were allegedly abducting and abusing suspects," *The Times* said.

The alleged suspects have

The allegations have embarrassed the British Government which has consistently denied that its officers have ever been involved in abusing detenus

claimed that they were "hooded", beaten up and threatened with reprisals against their families in Pakistan if they did not cooperate. They have also told

Greek authorities that those involved in questioning and abusing them were British.

The allegations have embarrassed the British Government which has consistently denied that its officers have ever been involved in abuse of terror suspects either at home or in counter-terror operations abroad. Recently, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw dismissed such reports as "complete nonsense".

The Foreign Office has declined to comment on the case saying it does not discuss intelligence matters but human rights groups called for an investigation into the allegations.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

Blair visits troops in Iraq

HTC and Agencies

London/Basra, December 22

IN A surprise dash to Iraq, possibly aimed at improving his dwindling popularity ratings at home, British Prime Minister Tony Blair flew into Basra for a Christmas visit to British troops there.

In the visit, kept under wraps in advance because of security considerations, the Prime Minister conceded there were 'controversies ... about the politics of the situation' and repeated Britain's intention to "draw down" troops as the Iraqi police and military forces were brought up to strength.

It was Blair's fourth visit to Iraq since the military invasion of March 2003. He flew in from Kuwait, but did not leave the UK-controlled southern Iraq.

Blair, in shirtsleeves, addressed a base housing around 4,000 troops — nearly half the total of 8,500 UK service personnel serving in Iraq. Ninety-

eight UK soldiers have been killed since the invasion.

Standing on a low-loader truck, Blair said: "I know it's very difficult from time to time, but you really ought to know whatever controversies there are about the politics of this situation, people back home have enormous pride in our armed forces.

"I know it's particularly tough being away from your families at Christmas and New Year. I just want you to know how grateful we are for the work you are doing here. However tough it is, I hope you have some sense of how important it is."

Pointing to the 10 million Iraqis who voted in recent elections, he added: "The important thing is to try and help this country become the democracy its people want it to be."

That, he said, would be done by providing the security that allows the Iraqi forces to build up their own strength, "and then of course we can eventually draw down our own capa-

bility".

"The importance of this is probably greater today than it has ever been," said Blair.

"Because, if Iraq does stabilise and become a democracy, then the region is more safe, our own country is more safe, because international terrorism will have been dealt a huge blow.

"If we manage to defeat the terrorism here, we will have dealt it a blow worldwide.

"I know how dangerous it is sometimes, because we've lost good colleagues here — and it's tough, I know, sometimes."

But whatever the dangers "you can look back at this time and you can be very, very proud of what you have done", the Prime Minister told the troops.

He also met local Iraqi workers who help staff the motor workshop, including the foreman, who gave his name as Lapta. Blair told him: "Thanks for all the work you are do-

ing here." Lapta said after meeting the Prime Minister: "He's a very good man, an honest man."

Blair was due to have meetings with the UK's deputy ambassador to Iraq, Tim Torlot, US officials and the British military commander Lt-Gen. Nick Houghton.

Blair was also meeting overall US commander, Gen. George Casey. His spokesman said the Prime Minister wanted to "talk through the way forward" with diplomats and military commanders in the wake of last week's Iraqi elections.

The Prime Minister will also discuss how the process of "Iraqi-isation" of local military and security forces is progressing in the UK's main sector of operations with Gen. John Cooper, who commands the south-east region based around Basra.

British commanders have expressed concern in the past that local security forces have been infiltrated by insurgents.

Britain's nuclear dilemma

The British Defence Secretary John Reid's recent assertion before the House of Commons Select Committee on Defence that his country will retain the nuclear deterrent as long as there was the threat of a potential enemy possessing such weapons reinforces the inherent arbitrariness in the global nuclear bargain, a recipe for the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). His remarks appear against the backdrop of the sharply polarised debate over the replacement of the Trident D5 submarine-launched ballistic missiles due by 2020. The Ministry of Defence has rejected requests for details of the proposal under the right to information law on grounds of national security and public interest. The Trident is said to possess 300 times firepower than the atomic bomb dropped by the United States on Hiroshima that instantly killed thousands and inflicted radiation-related disease and suffering on subsequent generations. The current debate should be viewed in the context of the renewal last year of Britain's 1958 nuclear agreement for mutual defence with the U.S. — widely seen as a framework for clandestine trade in WMDs. It is no surprise therefore that the proposal for the induction of the new generation of weapons should have been called into question in terms of Britain's disarmament obligations under the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty to reduce its arsenals.

Members of Parliament in the ruling Labour Party led by Paul Flynn have demanded that a final decision on updating the missile system, expected before the 2010 general elections, be made on the basis of a vote in the House of Commons. The move away from Labour's call — despite the cold-war — for unilateral disarmament in the 1983 manifesto to the commitment to an independent nuclear deterrent in Tony Blair's 2005 manifesto is indeed striking and anti-nuclear campaigners have questioned the rationale behind the investment of billions of dollars at the expense of more pressing social commitments. Nuclear deterrence — the doctrine that purportedly deters aggression from the enemy in view of the capacity to inflict total and irreversible destruction in retaliation — advocated by the nuclear weapons states has in fact been the root cause of what is known as vertical and horizontal proliferation. Not only are today's increased stockpiles of weapons and delivery systems technologically more sophisticated; but there are more countries that either have the bomb or nurture nuclear ambitions. The failure of deterrence is also tellingly revealed by the development of the so-called usable nukes by the U.S. and its withdrawal, along with Britain, of the guarantee not to use WMDs against non-nuclear weapons states. The justification for Trident's replacement in terms of national security has merely underscored this hypocrisy once again.

15 NOV 2005

Blair faces quit call after bill defeat

Defeat presages further revolts, says ex-Minister Clare Short

Patrick Wintour **ND-18**
LONDON: British Premier Tony Blair was facing backbench calls to stand aside after nearly 63 Labour MPs inflicted a first, and overwhelming, House of Commons defeat on his eight-year-old Government, spurning his personal plea to respect the police by giving them powers to detain terrorist suspects for up to 90 days.

In the biggest reverse for a British government on a whipped vote since James Callaghan's administration in the late 1970s, Mr. Blair was defeated comprehensively by 322 to 291, with 49 Labour backbenchers, including 11 former Minis-

ter, Clare Short, said the defeat presaged further revolts. "It would be good for him, and certainly the Labour administration, if he moved on quickly," she said. Another former Minister, Frank Dobson, predicted bigger revolts on Mr. Blair's plans for schools.

A personal gamble

Cabinet Ministers insisted they would not water down their reform programme, but they will have to redouble their efforts to explain their plans on education, incapacity benefit and health reform.

Mr. Blair, who personally decided to gamble by putting the 90-day detention to the vote, sounded an uncomprehending note afterwards. "The country will think Parliament will have behaved in a deeply irresponsible way, I have no doubt about

that at all," he said. "Sometimes it is better to do the right thing and lose, than to win doing the wrong thing. I have no doubt what the right thing was to do in this instance, to support the police."

"When the police say they are fighting mass-casualty terrorism and they provide examples of why they need the powers, I think you need powerful reasons to turn round and say no to them." He added: "There was every possible safeguard, with the police having come back to a high court judge to make its case every seven days."

Michael Howard, Conservative leader, said: "Mr. Blair has been engaged in the most appalling distortion of the arguments."

Mr. Blair's authority has been diminished almost to vanishing point. This vote shows he

is no longer able to carry his own party with him. He must now consider his position."

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy said the Prime Minister had to learn he needed to build consensus.

"Need for consensus"

At an electric Prime Minister's questions in the House of Commons, an angry Mr. Blair tried to discomfort the Tories. "When those charged with protecting our country provide, as they have, a compelling case for action, I know what my duty is. My duty is to support them, and so is the duty, in my view, of every member of this house."

At one point, Mr. Blair looked about to lose his temper when one Tory shouted that he was trying to set up a police state.

— ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

The Indian EXPRESS

Thursday, November 10, 2005

 PRINT THIS STORY

Close this window

International

Stinging defeat for Blair

Anti-Terror Laws Proposed legislation outvoted 322 to 291

Mike Peacock

LONDON, November 9 Britain's Tony Blair suffered his first major parliamentary defeat as prime minister on Wednesday, over plans to let police hold terrorist suspects for up to 90 days without charge.

The House of Commons voted by 322 to 291 against the proposal as about 40 members of Blair's Labour party refused to support him, raising new questions about his authority.

Blair had dramatically recalled his two top ministers—finance minister Gordon Brown and Foreign Secretary Jack Straw—from abroad in a bid to avoid defeat, but to no avail. He had earlier put his personal authority on the line, telling parliamentarians it was their "duty" to support the measure.

An election in May slashed Blair's parliamentary majority to 66, about 100 less than he has been used to, meaning fewer than 40 Labour members can defeat him by voting with an opposition combine.

Many also say Blair's decision not to fight another election has weakened his authority. The decision to recall Brown will reinforce the view that he is increasingly reliant on his likely successor to get things done.

Police called for the new powers—increasing the detention limit from the present 14 days—after the July 7 London attacks. Critics say the new powers would be a huge infringement of civil liberties and would alienate Britain's Muslim community.

Opposition Conservative leader Michael Howard told parliament the measures risked acting as a recruitment sergeant for militants.

"We all want to fight terrorism effectively but you don't have to look very far beyond our shores to see what happens if you alienate minority communities," he said, referring to the nearly two weeks of rioting in France. —Reuters

New Australia anti terror laws questioned after arrests

CANBERRA: Australia was to push ahead with tough new anti-terrorism laws on Wednesday despite Muslim and civil liberties leaders questioning their necessity. Opponents of the new legislation say that Tuesday's arrests of 17 men in the country's largest-ever counter-terrorism swoop proved its existing laws were sufficient to handle possible militant threats. Prime Minister John Howard's fight to strengthen anti-terrorism laws has mirrored that of British Prime Minister Tony Blair. The new measures, proposed after the London bombings, allow police to detain suspects for seven days without charge and

use electronic devices to track them. The laws would also make support for insurgents in countries such as Iraq an offence punishable by a seven-year jail sentence. *REUTERS*

URL: http://www.indianexpress.com/full_story.php?content_id=81689

Ads By Google

Quality Control PDFs

Make sure PDFs coming in are problem free. Unlimited clients
devzerog.com/printsure

Convert PDF to/From Doc

Convert PDF Files to MS Word files. Do batches, command line able.
www.verypdf.com

[Expressindia](#) | [The Indian Express](#) | [The Financial Express](#) | [Screen](#)
[Kashmir Live](#) | [Loksatta](#) | [Lokprabha](#)

[About Us](#) | [Advertise With Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [Labelled with ICRA](#)
© 2005: Indian Express Newspapers (Bombay) Ltd. All rights reserved throughout the world.

Blair admits times are tough

WAV
S.A
2111
London, Nov. 3 (Reuters): Tony Blair admitted today he was going through a tough period as his supporters urged him to re-assert his control of government.

Blair suffered the resignation of close government ally David Blunkett yesterday and was then forced to shelve counter-terrorism plans to avoid losing his first major vote in parliament.

The Prime Minister told a cabinet meeting today that "times are tough, but they are tough because we are trying to do tough things", his spokesman said.

Blunkett's resignation from government, for the second time in the space of just 10 months, captured all the headlines.

But more worrying for

Blair was the way rebels in his Labour party cut his parliamentary majority to just one — its lowest ever — over counter-terrorism measures, forcing his ministers to shelve major parts of the legislation.

Blair had personally insisted yesterday that police needed powers to hold terrorism suspects for up to 90 days.

Now the government will consult again in search of consensus. "He needs to get back on the front foot and fast," said one Labour parliamentarian loyal to Blair.

Blair has declared he will not fight another election but insists he will serve a full third term in power and force through radical reforms.

Many of those — overhauling schools and hospitals, the terrorism law and plans to get

people off welfare and back into work — are unpopular with a number of Labour MPs who have developed a taste for rebellion.

"What we saw yesterday was the authority of the Prime Minister diminishing to vanishing point," Conservative leader Michael Howard said.

An election in May cut Blair's parliamentary majority to 66, about 100 less than before, meaning a rump of disaffected Labour members can cause havoc by voting with Opposition parties.

Blair faces a critical few months, at home and abroad, running up to local government elections next May.

He might not be seeking re-election but most of his followers are. A meltdown at local

level would focus minds. "I am looking to next May as a crunch point," said John Cur-tice, politics professor at Strathclyde University.

On the foreign front, things look equally difficult.

The success or failure of Iraqi elections at the year-end will go a long way to define Blair's remaining time in power.

He must also try to reach agreement on the EU's budget after talks acrimoniously fell apart in June.

Diplomats say if he fails, his EU presidency will be considered a failure.

And if world trade talks in December falter, experts say Blair's key plan for 2005 — to secure global deals to lift Africa out of poverty — will fall short.



Tony Blair at 10, Downing Street. (Reuters)

Blunkett quits Cabinet

Charge of breaking the code of conduct

Hasan Suroor

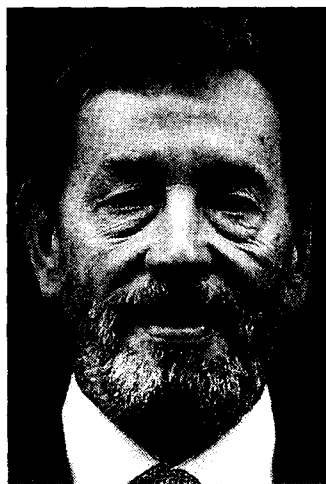
LONDON: British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Wednesday lost one of his most loyal Cabinet Ministers when David Blunkett, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, was forced to resign over allegations of breaking the ministerial code of conduct.

This is the second time that Mr. Blunkett has had to leave the Cabinet because of controversies relating to his private life. He was forced to quit as Home Secretary last December following accusations that he helped fast-track the visa application of his former mistress Kimberly Quinn's nanny.

Pension reforms

Mr. Blair brought him back to the Cabinet in the summer to push through controversial pension reforms despite reservations among party MPs and Cabinet colleagues.

The roots of Mr. Blunkett's current difficulties lie in the period when he was out of office



OUT AGAIN: U.K. Minister for Work and Pensions David Blunkett in London on Wednesday. — PHOTO: AP

and took a string of private assignments without informing the independent watchdog on ministerial conduct.

Even former ministers are expected to take its advice while taking up work in the private

sector, especially if it might be perceived as a conflict of interest. The most damaging allegation was that Mr. Blunkett bought shares in a bio-technology firm which he joined as a director after leaving the Cabinet, and which lobbies for Government work.

Company stake sold

The firm is run by a controversial Asian businessman who introduced him to a woman with a view to bringing them together when Mr. Blunkett was said to be "lonely" and "depressed" after breaking off with Ms. Quinn.

After the row broke, Mr. Blunkett admitted that it was a "mistake" not to have taken the advice of the committee which oversees ministerial conduct. He also announced that he was selling his shares in the company but as pressure continued, he decided to resign on Wednesday.

Mr. Blair "reluctantly" accepted Mr. Blunkett's resignation but insisted that he had done nothing wrong.

HD-152
WKO
3/11

Britain claims proof against Iran

Documents recently found point to Teheran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, says U.K. envoy

Ian Traynor

LONDON: The U.K. claimed for the first time on Thursday that documents recently found in Iran could only be used for nuclear weapons, and warned of "indications of weaponisation" in Teheran's nuclear programme.

At a meeting of the Interna-

tional Atomic Energy Agency devoted to the confrontation between Iran and the west over Teheran's nuclear ambitions, the British Ambassador to the IAEA, Peter Jenkins, was the first western official to state bluntly that a document recently obtained by U.N. inspectors in Iran related solely to nuclear

weapon plans. The ambassador was joined by German officials who assailed Iran on the issue and added that Teheran had denied the existence of such documents for more than two years.

The IAEA chief, Mohamed El Baradei, revealed in a report to diplomats last week that his inspectors had been given a cache

of documents in Iran, including one supplied by the international nuclear smuggling racket headed by the Pakistani Abdul Qadeer Khan, showing how to "cast and machine enriched natural and depleted uranium into hemispherical forms".

Since the disclosure experts and diplomats have been divided

over the purposes of such information. Mr. Jenkins, speaking on behalf of the E.U., left no room for ambiguity. "Iran has admitted to having a document ... which describes a process that has no application other than the production of nuclear weapons," he said. — ©Guardian

Newspapers Limited 2005

America backs plan to avert Iran vote

New York, Nov. 20: President George W. Bush has backed a plan to allow Iran to enrich uranium in Russia, a change in tactics that could avert a showdown in Vienna.

Bush's shift, which has angered hawks in Washington, holds implications for the Indian government, too, as a compromise in Vienna would help Prime Minister Manmohan Singh defuse a standoff with his Left allies.

Bush, who met President Vladimir Putin at a Pacific Rim summit on Friday, told him he would support Moscow's plan to offer Iran the chance to conduct nuclear enrichment at facilities in Rus-

sia. The US was previously against any deal that would allow Iran to enrich its own uranium.

The latest proposal would allow Teheran to convert uranium if subsequent enrichment, which could have weapons applications, took place only overseas, under Russian control.

It is the first compromise offer in which America has shown any interest and is designed to develop a joint front with Russia, a long-term ally of Iran.

Washington previously adhered to a strict "hands-off" approach to any negotiations with the Islamic regime, in-

cluding the offer that Teheran rejected earlier this year from the so-called EU3 of Britain, France and Germany.

The tactic was seen as a key part of the American "bad cop" diplomatic stance, compared with the more conciliatory "good cop" European approach.

The strategy will alarm administration hardliners — most notably Vice-President Dick Cheney and John Bolton, a former number three at the state department and now ambassador to the UN — who wielded the upper hand on foreign policy during Bush's first term.

They maintain that any

op clandestine weapons.

The significant switch in America's position comes even though Iran, which western intelligence is convinced is secretly seeking to develop nuclear arms, admitted last week that it had resumed conversion of uranium, the stage before enrichment, in defiance of an international ban.

The regime also admitted to the International Atomic Energy Agency that it had possessed a document containing partial instructions on making a nuclear bomb, believed to have been obtained through the black market weapons network of Pakistani atomic sci-

entist A.Q. Khan.

The fresh diplomatic manoeuvring seems certain to mean that America and EU3 will not try to have Iran referred to the UN Security Council over its forbidden nuclear activities at Thursday's meeting in Vienna of the IAEA. Until the middle of last week, America intended to push for referral.

European officials, who back the Russian initiative, have been surprised by how openly America has entered the process.

The shift in outlook is believed to be largely down to the secretary of state, Condoleezza Rice, who is one of Bush's

closest confidantes. She has promoted a less confrontational foreign policy since taking up her position in January.

Tehran salvo

In public, Tehran kept up the tempo. Iranian lawmakers voted today to oblige their government to stop allowing snap UN checks of its atomic sites and to resume uranium enrichment if Tehran is referred to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

In the vote, broadcast live on state radio, 183 out of 197 lawmakers present voted for the bill.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
AND AGENCIES



Rice: Peace push?

offer to Teheran is a sign of weakness, effectively rewarding long-standing Iranian deception over its nuclear programme and buying the clerical regime more time to devel-

RAFAH ■ In a first, crossing in Palestinian control

Rice brokers deal on Gaza border

9B-9
1674

SUE PLEMING

JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 15

US SECRETARY of State Condoleezza Rice brokered a deal on Gaza border crossings in marathon talks with Israel and the Palestinians on Tuesday, scoring a rare breakthrough in Middle East diplomacy.

Rice, who put her own reputation at stake by investing so personally in the negotiations, had postponed her departure to Asia for an APEC meeting, staying in Jerusalem an extra day until she secured an agreement on opening the Gaza-Egypt border.

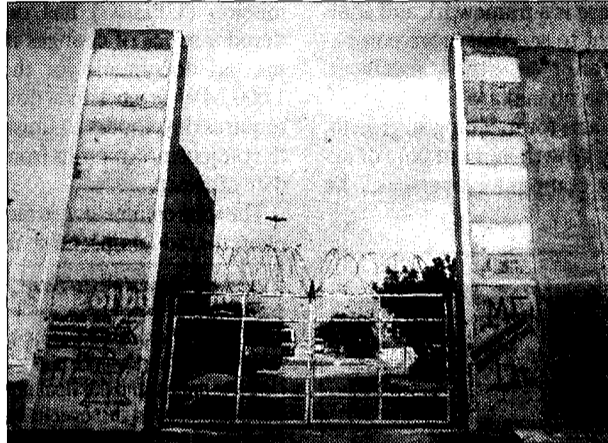
Access to Gaza is key to strengthening the impoverished strip's economy and giving a boost to chances for peacemaking.

Bleary-eyed after an almost sleepless night of hard-nosed bargaining, Rice—on her fourth visit to the region this year—praised the deal as a “good step forward”. It hands the Palestinians control of a border for the first time.

“This agreement is intended to give the Palestinian people the freedom to move, to trade, to live ordinary lives,” she told a news conference in Jerusalem before flying out.

Rice said the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, the strip's gateway to the outside world, should open on November 25 with the presence of European Union security monitors.

Palestinians would also be able to start travelling in bus and truck convoys between



An Israeli border police officer stands guard at a controversial Israeli barrier that was used to access the former checkpoint in the West Bank city of Bethlehem. On Tuesday, Israeli authorities on Tuesday closed the former Bethlehem checkpoint and opened a new civilian crossing nearby.

Gaza and the occupied West Bank within months, and construction of a Gaza seaport would begin.

Israel had conditioned the opening of Rafah on its ability to monitor goods and people passing through, saying it feared arms smuggling across the border to Palestinian militants. Palestinians had insisted that Israelis not be at Rafah.

An Israeli Defence Ministry source said a compromise was reached whereby Israeli and Palestinian security officers will man a control room a few kilometres from Rafah monitoring remote-control cameras at the border crossing.

In a sign of tensions, Presi-

dent Mahmoud Abbas, in a speech after the Gaza deal was unveiled, accused Israel of trying to avoid peace talks and incite Palestinian civil war by insisting that militants be disarmed before any negotiations on statehood.

During her visit, Rice renewed US pressure on Abbas to act against armed groups. She also pressed Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who has vowed that Israel will keep large West Bank settlement blocs forever, to freeze settlement expansion.

Both sides had previously agreed to EU observers at Rafah, and differences centred on Israeli monitoring of the crossing. —Reuters

UN dithering on Volcker: US

PHILIP SHERWELL

New York, Nov. 6: Senior UN officials are ignoring the scathing reports into their handling of the corruption-ridden Iraqi oil-for-food programme, according to John Bolton, the outspoken US ambassador to the UN.

He accused them of living in a "bubble" as they disregard the damning findings of the Volcker commission established by Kofi Annan, the secretary-general. The inquiry criticised the UN and Annan for their failings in running a scheme from which Saddam Hussein skimmed off an estimated \$2 billion.

At a private dinner in New York last week, Bolton gave

guests a hard-hitting critique of life at the UN. "In the bubble on First Avenue, Volcker is just ignored. I talk about it, but it's a solitary conversation. Nobody else will be fired unless people are indicted by outside authorities."

"Corruption didn't arise out of thin air, it arose out of the culture of the place. Bribes, mismanagement etc — it would be unacceptable for executives in any normal organisation." He said UN staff could accept gifts worth up to \$10,000 in a year without any requirement to disclose them.

In a breakthrough for US pressure for reform, the UN announced last week that it planned to reduce the \$10,000 figure to \$250 under rule chan-



Bolton: Stink in air

ges proposed by new under-secretary for management, Christopher Burnham, a former Bush administration official.

Bolton, a prominent critic of the UN, was appointed in August by George W Bush, who used special powers to

overrule Democrats and a rogue Republican who had blocked his Senate confirmation.

They criticised him as a Right-wing ideologue opposed to any American co-operation with the UN and also highlighted his role in pushing the war against Iraq on the basis of disputed intelligence on its weapons programmes.

He once quipped: "If (the UN secretariat building) lost 10 storeys, it wouldn't make a bit of difference."

At a frank discussion, Bolton said of his three months in the job: "Have I enjoyed it? It's exactly what I expected." Asked what he enjoyed most at the UN, he said: "It's a target-rich environment."

He said the prevailing anti-

US sentiment among many delegates helped to explain why the UN failed to seize the opportunities offered by the end of the Cold War.

"Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the UN has become the focus for a lot of people who have an agenda against the United States. We are having the same debates we thought we were having 20 years ago. The UN is seen by many as a chance to counter-balance us."

He cited the Kyoto treaty, setting up of an International Criminal Court and targets for overseas aid as "efforts by many countries to get us to agree to things that we'd never support" through the tactic of "collective embarrassment".

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

Riot bares UK race underbelly

London, Oct. 24 (Reuters): A man stabbed to death during weekend rioting in Britain's second city, Birmingham, had been set upon by up to 11 men, police said today.

Isiah Young-Sam, 23, was attacked in the Lozells area of the city on Saturday as he walked home with his younger brother Zephaniah and two friends from an afternoon at the cinema.

Detective superintendent Dave Mirfield of West Midlands police said Isiah was brutally assaulted. "The group was approached by three cars," Mirfield told a news conference. "Those cars contained, we believe, between 10 and 11 men.

"These men got out of the cars, armed with knives, and attacked Isiah and his friends."

The murder victim, who worked for Birmingham City Council, died from a single stab wound to the chest and his friend was stabbed in the back during the attack.

Isiah, a trainee analyst described by his mother as well-mannered and old-fashioned, was pronounced dead after being taken to hospital.

Early today, a teenager was



A burnt-out car in the Perry Barr area of Birmingham. (AFP)

shot dead in Birmingham close to the scene of weekend rioting, but police said it was unclear whether the killing was related to the disturbances. The 18-year old youth suffered fatal gunshot wounds shortly after midnight in the Newtown area, about a mile from where the worst of the weekend violence had occurred.

Police said there had been "sporadic incidents of disorder" overnight, but they had been on a much smaller scale than on Saturday night when up to 50 youths rampaged through the area and several men were stabbed, including Young-Sam.

The Saturday night violence broke out after a public meeting to address community concerns over an alleged sex attack on a teenage girl. Police said they were aware of rape allegations, but that no victim had come forward, making any investigation difficult.

Glyn Evans, director of infotech at the city council, led tributes to Isiah. "This is very sad news indeed for everyone who worked with Isiah. He was a very pleasant and hard-working young man," he said.

"He was very popular with his colleagues and had a bright future in front of him. He will be greatly missed."

Rioting erupts in UK city

Rape Of Black Girl By Asian Youths Leads To Violence, One Dead

By Rashmee Roshan Lall/TNN
London: Brown-on-black race rioting has flared in Asian-dominated Birmingham, Britain's second city and the supposed showpiece of 21st-century European multi-cultural harmony.

Saturday's rioting, which left one black man dead, and at least 20 others, including a police officer injured, erupted after the Jamaican community in ethnically diverse Birmingham accused Asian youths thought to be of Pakistani origin of raping a 14-year-old black girl.

The violence, which is thought to have involved rival gangs of hundreds of Asian and Black youths, left several, mainly Pakistani-run kebab shops, newsagents and grocers vandalised.

Eyewitnesses said dozens of

and Blacks, mainly of Jamaican descent, live cheek by jowl. Lozells, a poor area, has gone down in history as the home of the bloody Handsworth riots of September 1985, which saw two days of violent unrest following the arrest of a Black man by police. Birmingham, which won the prestigious European City of the Future award just a fortnight ago in a nod to its unique and vibrant multi-cultural mix, counts nearly 30 per cent of its population as non-white, of which 20 per cent is Asian. Blacks account for just six per cent of the population.

According to the last census in 2001, nearly 56,000 Indians live in Birmingham, while Pakistanis are twice the number and the city has nearly 21,000 Bangladeshis. The commenta-

tors said the violence appeared to sound the alert on Birmingham's proud propaganda of itself as an oasis of multi-cultural calm and harmony.

Locals said the violence, which resulted in a police helicopter ominously hovering above the area with its searchlight trained on the troubled area, erupted after a week of rising tension between Blacks and Asians.

The tensions, previously known to exist between Black and Asian gangs over drugs and gun crime, centred this time on the alleged assault on the Jamaican teenager Birmingham's black community is understood to be deeply hostile to what some describe as "swaggering Paks". The girl, who has gone underground, is thought to be an illegal immigrant.



A car set ablaze by rioters in Lozells district of Birmingham

youths smashed property and attacked police. Bricks and bottles were thrown, and, the viciousness was such that even an ambulance was attacked by a gang wielding sticks.

The rioting occurred in Birmingham's Lozells area, a multi-cultural part of the city where substantial numbers of Asians

IRA gives up weapons 27/9

Hasan Suroor 10-19

LONDON: The 30-year-long armed struggle in Northern Ireland was formally declared over on Monday when the Irish Republican Army (IRA) announced that it had destroyed all its weapons and would, henceforth, pursue solely political means to achieve its aim of a united Ireland.

The claim was confirmed by General John de Chastelain, head of the independent international body which supervised the decommissioning, and by two priests who witnessed the historic act.

A report, confirming the decommissioning, was sent to the British and Irish governments on Monday morning.

Later, at a press conference, Gen de Chastelain said his commission had "observed" and "verified" a series of acts of decommissioning and was "satisfied" that all of IRA's arms had been put beyond use. They represented the "totality" of IRA's arsenal, he said.

"The arms decommissioning is consistent with the estimates [of IRA's arsenal]," he said but declined to give details.

Gen de Chastelain called it a "milestone" and said he hoped that other paramilitary groups in the province would follow suit.

The move came two months after the IRA's historic statement promising to put its arms "beyond use" in a "verifiable" way, and declaring that its volunteers had been ordered to pursue "exclusively peaceful means" to achieve their goal.

Gerry Adams, president of IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, said the development would "dramatically change" the political landscape of Northern Ireland.

Scepticism

There had been scepticism whether the IRA would actually follow its promise through but the speed with which it moved to implement it took its critics by surprise though hardline Unionists insisted that they had expected the process of decommissioning to be more transparent.

The moderate Ulster Unionist Party leader Reg Empey extended a cautious welcome saying there had been many false dawns and only time would tell if IRA was sincere in implementing its promise. Peter Hain, secretary of state for Northern Ireland, hoped the decommissioning would lead to a complete cessation of all "paramilitary activity and violence".

UK study finds presence of radicals in universities

VIJAY Dutt
London, September 16

A STUDY by two professors of Brunie University has named 24 universities in the UK "where extremist and/or terror groups have been detected". These include Oxford, Cambridge, the London School of Economics, Birmingham, Brunie, Durham, Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, Nottingham and Luton universities.

The report said that a thread linking many British terrorists "about whom we know something" was that they had spent time at one of these universities. "This is a serious threat. We have discovered a number of universities where subversive activities are taking place, often without the knowledge of the university authorities.

The report says Islamist groups Hizb ut-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun (which was thought to have disbanded) were active in several universities despite being subject to a "no-platform policy" by the National Union of Students. The BNP was found to be active at Cambridge University, animal rights extremists at Oxford, and Islamic extremist groups at the LSE and Manchester University.

Britain was "under attack" but universities had failed to prevent infiltration by terror suspects, warned the authors of the report. They also warned that some universities "may have become, or may still be, safe havens for terrorist ideas and recruits."

This report has caused great alarm but the reality is that even in the mid-90s, groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir were active on campuses. Speeches and pamphlets attacking the degenerate western society and asking students to adopt the Islamic way of life were often and open. In one speech, the orator called for "pimps and drug-dealers (whites) should be thrown into the Black Sea." Most universities banned these groups from their campuses soon after that.

The latest report has prompted UK education secretary Ruth Kelly to ask universities to clamp down on student extremists. She said it was the duty of vice-chancellors to inform the police when they suspect students or staff of engaging in "unacceptable behaviour".

Kelly told the annual conference of Universities UK: "Following the London bomb attacks in July, we are having to re-examine certain policies. One

FOLLOW UP 7/7 London attack



BLAIR DEFENDS CRACKDOWN

British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Friday justified the crackdown on terror suspects in the UK, arguing that most nations in Europe has made tougher anti-terror legislation since-militancy hit the continent. He denied that the stringent new laws would in anyway destroy traditional British civil liberties. The proposed laws will give the police the power to detain people without charging them for upto three months, up from two weeks.

is how to respond to those using the freedoms of our society to promote terrorism and violence." The conference was held at the UUK's headquarters in Tavistock Square where 18 people were killed when a bomb exploded on bus number 30 on July 7.

But university authorities expressed concern over being asked to "police" their students although they accepted that the terrorist threat could not be ignored. A few months ago it was reported (in *HT*) that MI5 and MI6 had confidentially asked universities to monitor unusual behaviour and activities of foreign students and inform them.

A dossier prepared by Whitehall officials warned Tony Blair about a network of "extremist recruits" circulating on campuses whose aim was recruit students and people with technical and professional qualifications. The warning has been confirmed by various instances. Omar Sheikh who was behind the attack on Indian Parliament and is presently under detention in Pakistan for involvement in the murder of American journalist Daniel Pearl was for some time a student at the LSE.

Terrorism can't be justified: Blair

VIR Sanghvi
New Delhi, September 7

UNLIKE MANY world leaders who let the stress show on their faces, British Prime Minister Tony Blair seemed bright and cheery on Wednesday at the start of his trip to India. Blair had flown in from China the night before but insisted that "I have no problems with jet lag." A vacation in Barbados had left him tanned and energetic.

This interview was conducted at the British High Commission in Delhi. The Prime Minister had not set an agenda or asked for questions in advance and said he was willing to talk about anything his interviewer chose.

Inevitably though, after the first few token questions about Europe and his visit to India, he ended up spending most of his time talking about terrorism, Iraq, the perception of Britain among Muslims and how best to fight fundamentalism.

And yes, he repeated his usual response to the usual rumours about him stepping down midway through his current term to make room for Gordon Brown: "You are elected for a term and you serve it."

How do you view the India-EU relationship?

We've got to take the relationship with India and the European Union to a new stage and that's the purpose of this Joint Action Plan today. That's only a start but it signifies a complete change of gear for India and the EU. The trade between India and Europe is enormous. And as the Indian economy grows, there are going to be more and more opportunities for business. For some time, people haven't taken this relationship very seriously. But actually, it really matters. It's very important for Europe and India.

Are you pessimistic about Europe after the failure to ratify the Constitution?

No. Whatever happens to our Constitution, Europe remains the largest commercial market in the world. It is 25 different countries co-operating together. And increasingly, it is developing its own defence and foreign policy. Whatever happens during the next 12 months — and I think it is possible for Europe to regain momentum again — Europe is here to stay.

And for India, which people are now coming to terms with as a major power, it is important to have a good relationship with Europe and vice-versa.

Relations between India and the UK have improved in recent years. Was this something you set out to do?

Yes. On my very first visit to India, I was struck by the fact that there was a lot of the past in our relationship — for perfectly understandable reasons.

Britain today is a modern country. It is dynamic. It's open. It's got a very huge mix of races, religions and it is a country wanting to be taken on its merits. Whatever history we have together, the 21st Century relationship between India and Britain is a partnership of equals.

India is, frankly, going to be one of the major powers of the world in the years to come and it is important for us to have a modern, sensible relationship.

There is a tremendous affection for India in Britain. Obviously, we've got a big Indian population in the UK which is hugely respected and contributes an enormous amount to our country. I set out very clearly to have a modern relationship with India. And that's what we've got today.

Are you concerned about the effect of the London bombings on community relations in the UK?

You've got to be concerned because of the potential impact within the Muslim community. If people start saying that these measures are directed not against terrorists, but against Muslims...

But I think people realise that these measures are necessary to defeat terrorism and that the way to keep our multi-racial, multi-cultural society together is by coming together — whatever your race or colour — to stamp out extremism or fanaticism.

It is possible to get a somewhat exaggerated picture of this. There will be people who will



Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and his British counterpart Tony Blair during a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday.

S.N. SINHA/HT

make inflammatory comments but those who shout the loudest don't necessarily represent the mood. And the response of the Muslim community in the UK has been — overwhelmingly — to condemn terrorism.

I don't think they see the measures we are proposing as a big threat. They understand it's necessary, for example, to deport people who are inciting others to create terrorism in the UK.

In retrospect, do you think that in an effort to promote multi-culturalism, you were too soft on extreme elements within the UK?

I was trying to introduce tough measures but until the terrorist acts occurred, people were questioning whether the government was scare-mongering or using the threat of terrorism to introduce unnecessary legislation. I think people now understand that the threat is real.

We are an open and dynamic country. We welcome people who come to our country to make a contribution to it. The Britain of 2005 is a very different country from 20 or 30 years ago. On the other hand, when we are generous and tolerant towards people who are coming in, that shouldn't be abused. If people are coming in to foment hatred and incite terrorism, then, frankly, they've got to go back out again.

Do you think that some of these people should have been deported earlier?

We, of course, have been trying to deport them but there have been problems to do with human rights issues. I hope now that we are able to get a grip on this.

Inevitably, this takes us to Iraq. Regardless of whether the original reasons for the invasion

were valid or not, did you realise that the Muslim world would react with such hostility toward the West as a whole?

I'm very clear about this. There's a danger when people say, about those committing these acts of terrorism, that they abhor their methods but understand their sense of grievance.

But if you look at what's happening in Iraq or Afghanistan today, it is the ordinary people — who are Muslims — who are trying to get their democracy. And these terrorists — Al Qaeda and others — are trying to stop them. It is not merely that their methods are wrong. They have no grievance. They are actually visiting a grievance on people who want democracy.

You can agree or disagree with the original decision to get rid of Saddam but, what is clear is that, for the past two years, there has been a UN-led process for the country to become a democracy and the only obstacle in its way is terrorism of the same ideology as in London, in Egypt, in Indonesia and as you've seen in India — in Kashmir.

My view on this is very clear. Terrorists will use the issue of Iraq, of Palestine, of Afghanistan, of Kashmir — they will use any issue to justify what they do. But actually, the fundamental point about their ideology is a hatred for anyone different from them.

You don't dispute, surely, that anti-West feeling is at an all-time high in the Muslim world after the Iraq invasion?

In politics, you've got to challenge an idea rather than simply accept it. And I challenge the idea that when in Afghanistan, instead of the Taliban, you have a democratically-elected Pres-

ident; in Iraq, instead of Saddam, you have a democratically-elected government; that somehow this is a suppression of innocent people.

Yes, but given that there is an upsurge in anti-West feeling, do you think that perhaps the West did not do enough to address Muslim sentiment?

It's partly to do with the fact that there has been a huge inflammation of this whole idea that somehow the action that we've taken is motivated by spite against Muslim nations or Muslim people.

If you look at what happened, this began with 9/11 in America though actually this has been going on in its other parts of the world long before that. You, in India, have got a very clear experience of this.

When people are engaged in this type of terrorism, driven by this extremist ideology, they always find a reason for it. And that reason gets a certain purchase on people's minds and you find it just being said as a matter of course: "Well, look at the terrible things that have been done to people here and there..."

But when you analyse the situation, even in respect of the Palestinian issue — where I do entirely understand the strong feelings — you have got a democratically-elected President of the Palestinian Authority and he's the person who represents the Palestinians. You have got to be very careful of ending up in a situation where the legitimate voice of people in a country is not the voice of those who have been elected by the people but the voice of those who shout the loudest and use the most strident rhetoric.

Does it worry you that so many of those involved

in the London bombings have been to Pakistan, or are of Pakistani origin or have been trained in Pakistani madrasas? And have you spoken to General Musharraf about it?

Yes, of course. It's important to support Pakistan in trying to root out this extremism.

When people say to me it's all down to foreign policy, I point out that the roots of this go very, very deep. And the roots are found in the teaching of hatred at a very, very early age.

It is not something that suddenly happened on September 11 in New York or even before that. It is something that's grown over a significant period of time. And you can only handle it by tackling the culture and ideology of extremism that breeds it.

And that's why it is important to work with Pakistan on this. And I welcome the measures that President Musharraf has taken. It is important that these measures are taken. We recognise that whatever disputes and differences there are, they are not going to be resolved by terrorism. In fact, every single dispute I can think of in the world is made worse by terrorism, whether it's Chechnya, Palestine, Afghanistan or Kashmir. The only way we'll get a resolution of any dispute is by people sitting down together and talking, not through random violence that slaughters totally innocent people.

Has the London experience made you more sympathetic to what India has gone through? It started long before 9/11 for us.

It is important that people realise that in any dispute, whatever the rights and wrongs on both sides, things become worse because of terrorism. What terrorism does is to make people hate each other so much that they can't talk through their differences.

In Iraq, for instance, the purpose of the terrorism is to make Shias and Sunnis hate each other and make it impossible for the country to come together on the basis of a national identity. In my view, there's far too much opinion all around the world that — I'm going to have to choose my words carefully — yields too much to the language of the extremists; gives too much to the argument that there is, somehow, a justifiable grievance, albeit pursued in an unjustifiable way. There isn't a justifiable grievance that can, in any shape or form, permit the killing of innocent women and children in this way.

Prime Minister, you come across as very passionate on this subject. But you also come across as somebody who is increasingly annoyed by people who say things like: "Well, you invaded Iraq, what did you expect?"

If we are going to defeat this, we are not going to defeat it by compromising with it. We are only going to defeat it by taking it head-on. It's not just the actions of these people. It is their whole ideology of fanaticism.

Do you reject entirely the suggestion that Iraq made it easier for terrorists to find new recruits?

No, no. People keep claiming that I've said that "Iraq has nothing to do with it". What I've always said is "they will use Iraq to recruit people and so on". And before that, they used Afghanistan or Palestine or Kashmir or Bosnia. There will always be something that is given as the reason for doing it. But I think that the roots go far, far deeper than that.

So it does annoy you when people blame the London bombings on the action you took in Iraq?

(Laughs) It's not my job description to get annoyed.

Well, in that case, I'll ask you the final question. Are you going to serve out your full term?

(Laughs) I refer the honourable member to all the answers I've given on this subject many times before. My view is: "You are elected for a term — you serve it". So there it is.

I'll take that a 'yes', then.

Yes. I've answered this question a thousand times. But I'm not suggesting that I may get annoyed by the repetition of this question yet again. (Smiles)

Well, you can't. That's not part of your job description

Exactly. And it is your job description asking that question. (Laughs)

Blair isolated over Iraq

Hasan Suroor

HO-14
11/9

LONDON: British Prime Minister Tony Blair's isolation over Iraq has deepened as the broad political consensus in Westminster on the issue appears to be breaking down with the Tories who had strongly backed him until now signalling their disillusionment.

Kenneth Clarke, the former Tory Chancellor, launched his party leadership campaign this week with a withering attack on Mr. Blair's support for the U.S.-led invasion and said there was "huge disquiet" in Tory ranks over the course of events in Iraq.

This is the first time a senior Tory figure has publicly acknowledged that the party's official support for the invasion was being questioned as Iraq seemed to be descending deeper into chaos. Mr. Clarke accused Mr. Blair of making a "catastrophic error" in joining the invasion and giving "bogus" reasons to justify it. He said the threat to Britain from terrorism had increased because of the war, and if Mr. Blair still thought that there was no link between British intervention in Iraq and the July 7 terror attacks in

London, he "must be the only person left who thinks that".

Mr. Clarke, who was always against the war, said his views reflected the new anti-war mood among the Tories.

Major party issue

"I accept that a majority of my colleagues differed from me at the time, but I know that a huge disquiet now exists in the Conservative ranks about the course events are taking and the failures of American policy once the statues of Saddam had been toppled," Mr. Clarke wrote in *The Daily Telegraph* following it up with a scathing anti-war speech to announce his decision to contest the Tory leadership election.

Iraq looked like becoming a major issue in the Tory leadership election as Malcolm Rifkind, a former Tory Foreign Secretary and a contender to replace the outgoing leader Michael Howard, also attacked the decision to go to war. With the Liberal Democrats already opposed to the war and the Labour Party itself deeply divided, Mr. Blair's isolation seemed complete.

04 SEP 2003

PRESIDENT SLASHED DISASTER BUDGET TO FUND WARS

Bush to blame for hurricane horror

WKO
Geoffrey Lean

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3. — Vital measures to protect New Orleans from “catastrophic” hurricane damage were scrapped by the Bush administration to pay for its wars on terror and in Iraq, despite official warnings of impending disaster.

Funding for flood prevention was slashed by 80 per cent, work on strengthening levees to protect the city was stopped for the first time in 37 years, and planning for housing stranded citizens and evacuating refugees from the Superdome were crippled. Yet the administration had been warned repeatedly of the dangers by its own officials.

In early 2001, at the start of Mr Bush’s presidency, his government’s Federal Emergency Management Agency (Fema) warned that a hurricane hitting New Orleans would be the deadliest of the three most likely catastrophes facing America; the others were a massive San Francisco earthquake and, prophetically, a terrorist attack on New York.

Fema’s then director, Mr Joe Allbaugh, said the warning caused him “great concern”. But the President emasculated the agency, subsuming it into the Department of Homeland Security set up after the 9/11 attacks, which concentrated on the terrorist threat.

This was only one of a series of warnings that predicted what happened last week, including the storm surges brought by the hurricane, the breaching of the levees, the floods covering the city, and the

“toxic gumbo” of sewage, oil and chemicals.

Last year an emergency exercise run by the federal, Louisiana and New Orleans governments, featuring a fictional Hurricane Pam, almost exactly foretold the disaster now unfolding. But officials said plans to prepare for an actual catastrophe were abandoned because of cuts. Three years ago, another study concluded that a hurricane less intense than the one that has now hit New Orleans would flood most of the city; in 1998 a less severe one still, Georges, produced a 17ft wall of water.

“No one can say they did not see it coming,” reported the *The Times-Picayune* from New Orleans this week. The newspaper published a five-part series predicting the disaster five years ago. Officials and

experts last week wearily recalled their attempts to make the government take action. “It’s frustrating to have planned, begged and pleaded that this could happen,” said Mr Walter Maestri, emergency management director of the now submerged Jefferson Parish. “They would say, ‘Yeah, yeah, yeah.’ Well it’s here now.”

Troops to the rescue

Mr Bush today assured that he was ordering additional active duty forces to the hurricane-battered Gulf Coast region, adds AP. “The enormity of the task requires more resources,” Mr George W Bush said. He added that 4,000 active duty troops were already in the area and 7,000 more would arrive in the next 72 hours.

The Independent



A Katrina victim sleeps beside her child inside the Astrodome in Houston, Texas, on Saturday. AFP

THE STATESMAN

7/7 bomber speaks from the grave

AMIT ROY

London, Sept. 2: There has been nothing like this before — a message from beyond the grave from a British suicide bomber to the British people blaming Tony Blair's war on Iraq for the London bombings of July 7.

And all this delivered in a distinctive Yorkshire accent from a Leeds-born lad who was considered a model member of society at the school where Mohammad Sadique Khan had so patiently helped children with learning disabilities. The British people will now agonise over what caused one of their own home-grown boys to journey to the dark side.

Last night, nearly two months after the attacks on London's transport system, in which 52 people were killed and 700 wounded, some very seriously, Khan was seen justifying the slaughter in a video shown on the Arabic TV channel, al Jazeera.

The 30-year-old school assistant, who blew himself up at Edgware Road Station, killing six people and injuring 120, addressed the British people: "We are at war and I am a soldier. Now you too will taste



Mohammad Sadique Khan
in the al Jazeera
video. (Reuters)

the reality of this situation."

Accompanying the video was a commentary by Ayman al-Zawahiri, Osama bin Laden's right-hand man, who rubbed chilli into a gaping British wound by lauding "martyr" Khan as "one of the knights of the blessed raids on London".

This will be taken as confirmation that the London bombings were an al Qaida operation rather than a home-grown affair. It is not known where the video was shot or indeed why it has taken so long for it to be aired. Khan wore an anorak (a heavy jacket) and an Arab headscarf.

The text of Khan's message will now be scrutinised

by experts for clues.

Some of the reaction to the video, from politicians especially, was predictable. Foreign secretary Jack Straw declared: "We are waiting for a police assessment of the video, which of course I have seen, but I also say this: there is no excuse, no justification for terrorism of any kind."

Most heartfelt were the comments from those who lost loved ones. The battle could yet become Muslim versus Muslim. Gous Ali's Indian girlfriend, Neetu Jain, 37, was killed in the explosion on the No 30 bus in Tavistock Square. She was born in Delhi, had grown up in Britain and was a computer analyst.

Ali, 33, said: "Muslims around the world will be distancing themselves from anything these fundamentalists have to say; they do not represent Islam. I was born and brought up here and I would never in a million years align myself to these views."

The video does raise uncomfortable questions for Tony Blair, who is due in Delhi shortly for talks on India's relationship with the European community. So far, he has not commented on last night's video.

'PRE-OCCUPIED WITH RIGHTS OF TERRORISTS' UK chides UN over terrorists' rights

Press Trust of India

LONDON, Aug. 25. — Accusing the UN of being too pre-occupied with the rights of terrorists, Britain has said the world body should be more concerned about victims of terrorism rather than the people who commit such acts.

Dismissing criticism by UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Manfred Nowak, of new powers which will make it easier to get rid of undesirables from Britain, Home Secretary Mr Charles Clarke said: "The human rights of those people who were blown up on the Tube in London on July 7, are, to be quite frank, more important than the human rights of the people who committed those acts." Fifty-six people, including four suicide bombers, were killed and over 700 injured in the serial bombings in London on 7 July.

Mr Clarke charged the world body with being too pre-occupied with the rights of terrorists and said it should be more concerned about the victims of the menace.

Meanwhile, officials in the Home Office are studying a number of names,

including of foreign *imams* whom they hope to expel on the ground that these men first entered Britain on false identity documents.

Even if Mr Clarke orders the deportation of an individual, the person has a right to appeal which is likely to result in the removal being delayed by up to two years. At least one of these clerics is understood to have come from Pakistan and British diplomats have been in contact with officials in Islamabad over the expected expulsions.

Mr Clarke said yesterday that the list of "undesirables" included high-profile Islamic militants. "We have got the names that are widely in the public domain at the moment."

The names are believed to include Muhammad al-Massari, the Saudi-born dissident whose London-based radio station backs suicide attacks on British soldiers in Iraq, and Dr al-Massari, who has lived in Britain since 1994 and shows footage on his website of a suicide bombing of a checkpoint in which three Black Watch soldiers were killed.

THE STATESMAN

Britain drawing up undesirables list

AMIT ROY

London, Aug. 24: The British High Commission in Delhi is being asked to draw up a list of undesirables who should not be admitted into the UK under new rules to combat terrorism or extremism.

The name of Narendra Modi is likely to figure on this list, though it may prove problematic keeping out the Gujarat chief minister should he make it a point of honour to come.

Modi can boast of a dedicated following among the 300,000-strong Gujarati popu-

lation in Britain, but equally there will be a human rights lobby arguing that the man who allegedly did nothing to stop the massacre of Muslims in Gujarat should be on the banned list. Earlier this year, America denied a visa to Modi, who subsequently cancelled a trip to Britain.

The measures announced today by British home secretary Charles Clarke are aimed at Islamic militants in the aftermath of the London bombings on July 7 and 21 but others, such as Modi and Khalistanis who take a militant line

on Sikh self-rule, could also be caught by the measures.

The rules are tougher than before because Britain can now expel foreigners who have been living here for years. British-born nationals cannot be deported but foreigners who have acquired British nationality can in theory be asked to return to their countries of origin after being stripped of their UK citizenship.

The UK is seeking agreement with a number of countries that deportees would not be tortured or face the death penalty. Clarke said British

missions abroad had been asked to draw up a list of people, whose names might figure on a banned list.

There would be no difficulty to deporting people to India, now considered a "safe" country by the UK government. In the past, several Sikhs were able to claim asylum by arguing their lives would be put at risk if they were returned.

A home office spokesperson confirmed: "We are drawing up a list with the help of various sources, such as the foreign and Commonwealth office and the police."

What was launched today was Britain's version of India's much-hated Prevention of Terrorism Act, though in the UK's case it applies to foreigners.

The list of "unacceptable behaviour" is intended to prevent the propagation of views that would: "foment, justify or glorify terrorist violence in furtherance of particular beliefs; seek to provoke others to terrorist acts; foment other serious criminal activity or seek to provoke others to serious criminal acts; or foster hatred which might lead to inter-com-

munity violence in the UK". The home office and police will be keeping a sharp eye on: "writing, producing, publishing or distributing material; public speaking including preaching; running a website; or using a position of responsibility such as teacher, community or youth leader".

The Islamic Human Rights Commission said it was "alarmed" at the list of unacceptable behaviour. It warned that the new grounds for deportation amounted to the "criminalisation of thought, conscience and belief".

UK conduct code for immigrants

By Rashmee Roshan Lal/TNN

London: Britain has announced a tough new "code of unacceptable behaviour", which will govern entry into the country for non-UK citizens, in a hardening stance on immigration and border controls post-7/7.

Home secretary Charles Clarke published the grounds on which foreigners considered to be promoting terrorism can be deported or excluded from the UK. Foreigners, whose behaviour directly or indirectly threatens public order, national security, or the rule of law, could henceforth be arbitrarily frog-marched out of Britain.

South Asia observers said that even though the new code would chiefly affect Islamist radicals, right-wingers of every religious hue, including American televangelists and saffron preachers could theoretically be barred from entering the UK.

Civil liberties campaigners said the new code of conduct for foreign nationals appeared to reveal the extent to which the UK is "losing all its values".

The new list of unacceptable behaviour will apply to extremists using any means including writing, preaching, running a website or using a position of responsibility such as a teacher, community or youth leader.

Foreigners could be deported if they were suspected of fomenting terrorism or seeking to provoke others to terrorist acts; justifying or glorifying terrorism; fomenting other serious criminal activity or seeking to provoke others to serious criminal acts; fostering hatred which may lead to "intra-community violence" in the UK; advocating violence in support of particular beliefs; expressing "extreme views that are in conflict with the UK's culture of tolerance".

But in a statement issued by the United Nations from Geneva, Manfred Nowak, UN special rapporteur on torture, criticised Britain's plans to deport terrorism suspects to countries that may have committed human rights abuses in the past.

Nowak said it meant nothing for the UK to say it would deport radicals to countries with whom it signs an agreement the returnee will not be tortured. He said such assurances were "not an appropriate tool to eradicate this risk". On a note of scathing criticism, he said the UK's plan reflected a tendency across Europe to circumvent international obligations.



UK plans more deportations

VIJAY Dutt
London, August 23

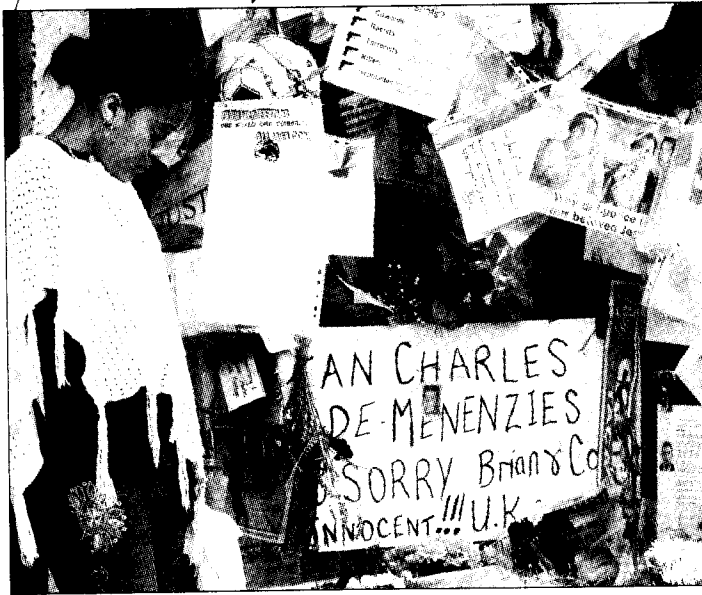
THE BRITISH government is readying for a new wave of expulsions of "preachers of hate" from the country. Ten radicals, including Jordanian Abu Qatada — said to be the deputy of Osama bin Laden in Europe — are already in custody awaiting deportation. Operations are now on to round up other fanatic clerics who are not citizens of UK.

The security services and the immigration department have already handed over a list of foreign-born radicals they would prefer out of the country and home secretary Charles Clarke said he would soon issue rules on deportation or barring of extremists from the UK.

Echoing Prime Minister Tony Blair, Clarke said: "The rules of the game have changed, both here and abroad. So this week I will be publishing, and then acting upon, new ways of dealing with preachers of intolerance and hatred and extremists who try to exploit the openness of our society to oppress others."

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) has brought pressure on Clarke to water down the proposals. The MCB is already complaining that the BBC gave the council a bad name because of its biased reporting.

The BBC had in its *Panorama* programme shown that the council was not properly vetting new members before admitting them. Some of these members



The makeshift memorial for Menzes at the entrance to Stockwell tube station. Two representatives of Brazil are in UK to probe his shooting.

had links with extremist groups in Pakistan. According to the channel, the founder members of the group were also sympathetic to radical elements in Pakistan.

Government sources have told the *Hindustan Times* that under the present climate, Clark would stick to his guns.

The new deportation laws were imperative to win back the confidence of the general public. Especially after investigations found that a quarter of all terror suspects arrested in Britain since the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington were asy-

lum seekers. In fact, it is alleged that at least two of the suspects in the failed July 21 attacks obtained asylum in the UK using bogus passports, names and nationalities.

They and their associates have raked in tens of thousands of pounds in state welfare handouts including free housing and healthcare worth up to £1500 a year per person,

This revelation has put pressure on the government to review its asylum policy.

Britain is the top destination for asylum seekers and the ac-

Asylum claims down

New figures out on Tuesday show that the number of people applying for asylum in the UK has decreased

21 per cent drop in applications for the April to June period this year compared to last year

11 per cent decrease during the same period compared to the first three months of the year

Tony McNulty, the immigration minister, said he was happy with the figures but more needs to be done

Migrationwatch UK, a lobby group welcomed the drop in applications but said the government should "get a grip" on the removal of failed applicants from the country

ceptance rate for seekers is 18 per cent. Last year 26,291 applications were made for asylum. The problem has been compounded by the fact that most of the applicants who are refused asylum just melt away into the multi-cultural society that is Britain and become untraceable.

Intelligence sources fears that among these "melters" — asylum seekers who disappear — and the illegal immigrants who number around 55,000, there could be several "sleepers", or prospective terrorists, who cannot be monitored.

British police rethink shoot-to-kill policy

Senior officers have said there is anxiety about whether using the tactic again would result in another innocent being killed

Vikram Dodd

LONDON: Britain's top police officers are reviewing the controversial shoot-to-kill policy after its first use ended in the gunning down of an innocent man.

The review by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) comes amid a continuing dispute around the London Metropolitan police (known as the Met) Commissioner, Sir Ian

Blair, over his handling of the killing of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell underground station in south London.

A senior police source and member of ACPO said: "The review is not theoretical, it is looking in great depth."

Among the issues to be considered are: Whether any other non-lethal weapons exist or are in development that could rap-

idly incapacitate a suspected suicide bomber; how much intelligence is needed before officers are authorised to shoot to kill; how to assess intelligence rapidly when under massive pressure; how to ensure effective communication between commanders at base and those pursuing a suspect.

The review will also look at the bomb attacks on London on July 7 and 21, seeking to draw

lessons from them. The two attacks will also be examined to provide "real-time" scenarios to help develop the best way to implement the policy.

In addition, it will focus on the lesser-known Operation Clydesdale, which covers tactics on a planned raid against a suicide bombing suspect and which also authorises officers to shoot to kill.

The policy, which claimed De Menezes's life, is known as Operation Kratos.

Senior officers who support the policy have privately said there is anxiety about whether

The review will also look at the bomb attacks on London on July 7 and 21, seeking to draw lessons from them

using the tactic again would result in another innocent being killed.

De Menezes died on July 22 at Stockwell tube station after being mistaken for a suicide bomber. The case is under investigation by the Independent

Police Complaints Commission. A string of blunders have emerged, including the white Brazilian man being misidentified as a black African terrorism suspect.

Senior officers have met in the past month to learn early lessons from the Stockwell incident. Senior officers believe that the shoot-to-kill policy must be retained, but they have been discussing ways in which the risk of killing innocent people can be minimised.

Part of the review will look at intelligence. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Report rap on London police

London, Aug. 17 (Reuters): London's police chief faced acute embarrassment today after a leaked report revealed how a series of blunders led to a Brazilian man being shot dead by officers who wrongly thought he was a suicide bomber.

Jean Charles de Menezes was shot eight times by police on an underground train on July 22, the day after four would-be bombers failed in attacks on London's transport system.

The Brazilian electrician was dressed suspiciously in a heavy coat, had fled armed officers, vaulted over ticket barriers and run onto a train.

But leaked documents obtained by ITV News said CCTV footage and eyewitness accounts showed he was not wearing a padded jacket which could have concealed a bomb, and walked calmly through the station, even stopping to collect a free newspaper.

According to witnesses and statements made by police officers involved, de Menezes then boarded a train and was restrained by a surveillance officer before he was shot.

The leaked report said the intelligence operation may

have been botched because an officer carrying out surveillance had gone to the toilet when de Menezes left his home apartment block, which police suspected housed one of the suspect bombers.

London's metropolitan police commissioner Ian Blair at first said the shooting was linked to the failed attacks on July 21, which came exactly two weeks after four suicide bombers killed 52 people on

three underground trains and a bus. He said de Menezes had been challenged but had refused to obey police instructions. He later apologised for the death.

Former London police commander John O'Connor said the reports were "catastrophic" and would put Blair under pressure.

"Whoever has leaked this report has caused him a great deal of embarrassment," he

told BBC. Police and the home office (interior ministry) have declined to comment on the ITV report until the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) completes a full investigation.

"The IPCC made it clear that we would not speculate or release partial information about the investigation, and that others should not do so. That remains the case," the IPCC said.



(Left) A picture taken from British broadcaster ITV News shows the body of Jean Charles de Menezes in an Underground train after being shot by the police. (Right) Jean Charles de Menezes. (Reuters, AFP)

But campaigners said there should now be a full public inquiry to clear up whether CCTV footage had captured the dead man's final moments on film, or why cameras were not working as media reports have suggested.

"The de Menezes family ask for only one outcome and that that be swift; that is that the entire truth surrounding Jean Charles' death be made public now as a matter of urgency," the family's lawyers said in a statement.

"It is neither sane nor responsible to have issues of such enormous public importance ... to be allowed to drift towards ... an unspecified and perhaps inappropriate hearing."

A campaign group supporting de Menezes' family said the killing now resembled an illegal execution and called for the police's shoot-to-kill policy to be suspended.

"The police's version has not only been shown to be incorrect but the public were deliberately misled. It's evident we have been told lies and half-truths about how Jean died," Asad Rehman, a spokesman for the group, said. Alex Alvez Pereira, de Menezes' cousin, said the officers involved should face murder charges.

18 AUG 2005

মেনেজেসকে ঠান্ডা মাথায় খুন, বিপাকে স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ড

শ্রাবণী বসু • লন্ডন



১৭ অগস্ট:

লন্ডনে দ্বিতীয় দফায়
বিস্ফোরণের পরে
২৪ ঘণ্টা পার না
হতেই এক

‘সম্মতবাদী’কে গুলি
করেছিল লন্ডন পুলিশ। টিউব
স্টেশনের ভিতরে বহু যাত্রীর চোখের
সামনেই লোকটি যখন ‘দৌড়ে
পালানোর মতলব করছিল’, তখনই
তার পিছু নিয়ে আসা এক দল সশস্ত্র
পুলিশ ‘পয়েন্ট ব্ল্যাঙ্ক’ দূরত্বে, তার
মাথায় গুনে গুনে সাত-সাতটি গুলি
করেছিল। রীতিমতো ফিল্মি কাঁচা।
‘ভারী জ্যাকেট পরা, ওই সন্দেহজনক,
অপ্রত্যাশিত ব্যক্তিকে লন্ডন পুলিশ
গুলি করে মারার পরে বলেছিল, জঙ্গি
দমনে নয়া নীতি প্রয়োগ করা হয়েছে।

কিন্তু, ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই বদলে
গিয়েছিল দৃশ্যপট। জানা গিয়েছিল,
চার্লস দ্য মেনেজেস নামে এক নিরীহ
ব্রাজিলীয়কে ‘ভুল করে’ গুলি
করেছিল লন্ডনের ‘দক্ষ’ পুলিশ। বিশ্ব
জুড়ে ক্ষিপ্ত প্রতিক্রিয়ার মধ্যেই লন্ডন
পুলিশ জানায়, “ভারী জ্যাকেট পরা,
সন্দেহজনক হাবভাবের ওই যুবকটিকে
আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গি বলেই মনে হয়েছিল।

ছাড়া, সে দৌড়ে পালানোর চেষ্টা
করায়, সেকেন্ডের ভগ্নাংশের মধ্যে
সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে তাকে গুলি করতে হয়।
যদি আশঙ্কা সত্যি হত, অথচ তাকে
গুলি না করা হত, এবং বিস্ফোরণ হত,
তবে লন্ডনের বিখ্যাত পুলিশের অবস্থা
খারাপ হত।”

বেশির ভাগ মানুষ মানতে না
চাইলেও লন্ডনবাসীদের একাংশ কিন্তু
বিশ্বাস করতে শুরু করেছিলেন
স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ডের এই ‘অজুহাত’।

কিন্তু মেনেজেসের মৃত্যুর তদন্তের
জন্য গড়া নিরপেক্ষ তদন্ত কমিটির
রিপোর্ট কাল রাতে ফাঁস হয়ে যেতেই
বেরিয়ে এল সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন তথ্য। রিপোর্ট
থেকে স্পষ্ট, নিজেদের পিঠ বাঁচাতেই
সে দিন একের পর এক মিথ্যা
বলেছিল স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ড।

রিপোর্টে স্পষ্ট, সে দিন মেনেজেস
মোটাই মোটা প্যাড দেওয়া জ্যাকেট
পেরেননি, যা থেকে সন্দেহ হতে পারে
যে তিনি এক জন আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গি।
তাঁর পরনে ছিল হালকা ডেনিমের
জ্যাকেট ও প্যান্ট। স্টেশনে ঢোকার
জন্য মেনেজেস গেট টপকে ছিলেন
বলে লন্ডন পুলিশ জানিয়েছিল। তদন্ত
রিপোর্টে জানা গিয়েছে, সে কথাও
সত্যি নয়। মেনেজেস স্বাভাবিক
ভাবেই স্টেশনে ঢুকেছিলেন। সেখানে
দাঁড়িয়ে বিনা মূল্যের সংবাদপত্রও
নেন নির্দিষ্ট ব্যাক থেকে। মাত্র এক
বারই তিনি দৌড়েছিলেন। ট্রেনে
ওঠার সময়। এ সবই ধরা পড়েছে
স্টেশনের ক্রোজড সার্কিট টিভিতে।
ট্রেনে উঠে নিজের আসনে বসার
পরেই তাঁকে গুলি করে পুলিশ। তা-ও
একটা বা দুটো নয়, তাঁর মাথা লক্ষ্য
করে সাতটা গুলি করেছিল পুলিশ।
তবে পুলিশ দেখে সে মোটেই
পালানোর চেষ্টা করেনি।

স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ডের ভুলের শুরু
আরও আগে। মেনেজেস যেখানে
থাকত, সেখানেই ছসেন ওসমান বলে
এক সন্দেহভাজন জঙ্গি আছে বলে
মনে হয়েছিল গোয়েন্দাদের। সেই

ANAD.

মতো নজরদারিও চলছিল। কিন্তু
মেনেজেস যখন বাড়ি থেকে বেরোন
তখন পুলিশের ধারণা হয়েছিল
তিনিই ওসমান। তবে, তাঁদের কাছে
কোনও উপযুক্ত প্রমাণ ছিল না
কারণ, ঠিক ওই সময়েই কর্তব্যরত
অফিসার ‘প্রকৃতির ডাকে সাড়া দিতে
গিয়ে নিজের জায়গায় ছিলেন না
মেনেজেস তাঁর চোখের আড়াল হতে
তিনি বাকিদের জানান, গোট
ব্যাপারটা সামাল দিতে। মেনেজে-
স যখন বাসস্টপে পৌঁছন, তখনই তাঁকে
গুলি করার পরিকল্পনা চূড়ান্ত হয়ে
গিয়েছিল বলে রিপোর্টে জানানো হয়

এর পর ট্রেনে খুব ঠান্ডা মাথা
গাঁকে গুলি করেছিল পুলিশ।

স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ডের যাবতীয় সাফা
ফাঁস হয়ে যাওয়ার পরে, এখন বিতর্ক
নতুন করে শুরু হতেই পারে। বিপা
আঁচ করে, তাই এ বার আর মুখ
খুলতে রাজি হননি স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ডের
চর্চারা। এ নিয়ে কোনও মন্তব্য করতে
গিয়ে হননি স্বরাষ্ট্রমন্ত্রী চার্লস ক্লার্কও।

Britain bars Bakri's entry

Associated Press

LONDON, Aug. 12. — The British government today said it had barred radical Muslim cleric, Omar Bakri, from returning to the country, saying the presence of the Islamic preacher who has spent the last 20 years in Britain was no longer "conducive to the public good".

The move came as Britain's top legal official today defended plans to deport another radical cleric and nine other foreigners suspected of posing a threat to national security.

Jordan said today that it would ask Britain to extradite one of those detained, cleric Omar Mahmoud Othman Abu Omar, also known as Abu Qatada, who Spanish officials have previously described as Osama bin Laden's spiritual

ambassador in Europe. Bakri (45) left Britain last weekend after coming under increasing pressure from the British government for his hard-line rhetoric after last month's transit bombings. Bakri, who has dual Syrian and Lebanese citizenship, had insisted that he planned to return to north London, where his wife and children live.

The home office said home secretary Mr Charles Clarke had written to Bakri to inform him he would not be allowed back into Britain.

The cleric has 14 days to write to Mr Clarke to appeal.

"The home secretary has issued an order revoking Omar Bakri Mohammed's indefinite leave to remain and to exclude him from UK on the grounds that his presence is not conducive to the public good," a home office statement said.



Bakri has been accused of fomenting religious hatred.

Britain detains 10 clerics



A police van arrives at Bow Street Magistrates Court in London on Thursday where 10 people are appearing before the courts to face charges in connection with the 21 July attempted bombings. — AFP

Associated Press

LONDON, Aug. 11. — British authorities today detained 10 foreigners suspected of posing a threat to national security, including a radical Muslim cleric described by officials as Osama bin Laden's "spiritual ambassador in Europe." A government official, speaking on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue, confirmed that the Palestinian cleric Sheik Omar Mahmood Abu Omar, also known as Abu Qatada, was taken into custody. The cleric's lawyer, Mr Gareth Peirce, could not be reached today.

Home secretary Mr Charles Clarke issued a "notice of intention to deport" to the 10 foreigners, the Home office said.

The detentions came a day after Britain signed an extradition agreement with Jordan, where Abu Qatada was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for involvement in a series of explosion and terror plots, and after Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair announced measures to deport radical Islamic extremists following the July terrorist attacks.

Human rights activists have protested against measures that would allow Britain to

deport suspects to countries where they could face torture. As a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights, Britain is not allowed to deport people to countries where they may face torture or death.

A spokeswoman for the Home office said that the 10 detained today would not be deported until agreements had been signed with all their countries' governments.

Abu Qatada is among a group of 10 foreign terror suspects released in March after Britain's highest court ruled that the controversial anti-terrorism legislation passed in the wake of the 11 Sept. attacks was unlawful.

He was swiftly re-arrested under new anti-terror measures that allow suspects to be electronically tagged, kept under curfew, denied the use of telephones or the Internet and barred from meeting outsiders — without being charged or tried.

Meanwhile, several people appeared in court today charged in connection with the failed July 21 bomb attacks.

They include the wife and sister-in-law of Hamdi Issac, who is suspected of trying to blow up a subway train on 21 July.

A new mood of nationalism in Britain

Hasan Suroor

SINCE LAST month's terrorist outrage in London, Britain is riding on a wave of aggressive nationalism, verging on jingoism in some quarters. Seldom have voices straddling the conventional ideological divide sung so closely from the same hymn sheet as in the current debate on religion, identity and culture provoked by the recent attacks. From *New Statesman* and *The Guardian* on the liberal Left to *Spectator* and *The Telegraph* on the Right, the refrain is the same: restore "Britishness" to Britain.

There is, of course, a vital difference. While the Left wants this done within the broader framework of pluralism, the Right wants immigrant communities to immerse their distinct identities completely into the "mainstream." The mood, however, is so heavily nationalistic and the tone so strikingly similar that it is not always easy to tell the difference.

Consider this: "By bending over backwards to accommodate the cultures and religions of migrant communities, we have been in danger of undermining the very ideals that attracted immigrants here to begin with."

And then read this: "We should teach British history. We should think again about *jilbab*, with the signals of apartness that it sends out and we should scrap faith schools. We should forbid the imams from preaching sermon in anything but English; because if you want to build a society where everyone feels included, and where everyone shares in the national story, we cannot continue with the multicultural apartheid."

Both have a slightly xenophobic feel associated with fringe groups. But, in the post-7/7 and 21/7 climate these have become mainstream views. The author of the first is Tristram Hunt, a prominent historian with impeccable liberal credentials, and the second comes from Boris Johnson, editor of *Spectator* and a "liberal" Tory MP. Mr. Johnson's comments were entirely pre-

The refrain on the Left and the Right is the same: restore "Britishness" to Britain. The debate is starting to sound more like an anti-immigrant tirade.

dictable. One expects Tories — however "wet" — to say something of this sort but what is disturbing is Mr. Hunt's angst over what multiculturalism has allegedly done to Britain.

Writing in *New Statesman*, Mr. Hunt chided the Left for its queasiness over accepting the idea of patriotism and said that with "Islamofascism" on the rampage "it is increasingly unsustainable to maintain this refusal [on the Left] to engage with the virtues of nationhood."

His argument is that if the Left does not "engage" with the issue, it would be hijacked by the Right or what he calls the "Great Britain camp" with its own "story of Britishness" and notions of patriotism. But is it also not an admission that the Right is winning the argument and since we cannot beat them, let us join them? The issue we should be addressing is: how did it come to such a pass that the Right is seen to be winning the argument in the first place?

Even in this age of ideological vacuum and promiscuity, there is still need, one believes, to distinguish between supremacist notions such as those implied in the shrill calls for restoring "Britishness" to Britain, and ideas that recognise and respect differences. Historically, the integrationist approach in which all other identities are expected to disappear into a national mainstream, represented by a majority culture, has not been successful. We saw this in parts of Eastern Europe where well-meaning attempts to build societies around a common ideology transcending religious and cultural differences did not work.

The American "model" is often cited as an example of successful cultural assimilation where everyone is American first and anything else later. But Britain is not America. The modern America started life as a land of immigrants where everyone came from somewhere and then united behind certain common values. Rather than any given American values defining the immigrants, it was the early settlers whose values defined America. America today represents the shared values of its pioneer settlers. These values were not imposed on them.

Still, the grand American "melting pot" has not been sitting quietly. It has boiled over many times and ethnic strife remains very much a part of American life, especially in the deep South.

The British experience of peacetime immigration is more recent and, for all the scary stories, it has been pretty good. In Britain, there has been nothing on the scale of America's race riots in the last century; and indeed more Indians and Pakistanis have killed each other in communal violence in their own countries than what they may have suffered in Britain as a result of racial attacks.

Much is made of British "tolerance," portrayed as a uniquely "British value" ("Britishness," if you like), as a factor in maintaining racial harmony but what is not acknowledged is the contribution of immigrants, especially the first generation who took all the racial abuse and provocation on the chin and moved on. It is the second and third generation, born and brought up in Britain, who reacted when told to "go

home." For them, Britain was home and they resented being treated as outsiders.

Immigrants are routinely accused of not "integrating" with their adopted country, but this is true only to the extent that all immigrants, including British immigrants in other countries, tend to stick together in a new place. And Britons should know (America is dotted with places named after British towns by early immigrants) as this letter in *The Daily Telegraph* underlines: "Those who bemoan the lack of assimilation shown by ethnic minorities into the British way of life should pay a visit to certain areas of southern Spain, northern France and parts of Italy. They will find that our own economic migrants perform in much the same way that is criticised here. The Brits form their own enclaves, organise bridge clubs and watch *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders* on Satellite television."

"White flight" and "ghettos"

Yet, when immigrants in Britain form their own enclaves, organise their own community centres and watch *Saas bhi kabhi bahu thi* on television they are accused of promoting "ghettoisation" and "segregation." The fact is that segregation started with "white flight" from areas where immigrants from Asia and Africa came and settled. As white families fled in horror and value of property crashed, more immigrants moved in setting up their own shops, schools and places of worship. This is how the "ghettos" were formed.

Attempts at integration by immigrants further suffered when the second and third generation young people faced racial discrimination, first at school and in the playground, and then in jobs. People like Meera Syal, Hanif Kureishi, and Sanjeev Bhaskar, portrayed as icons of a multicultural Britain, had to struggle hard to find acceptance in a predominantly white culture.

People born and educated in Britain and "blessed" with a Yorkshire accent (for Asian immigrants are forever slated for not being able to speak English, let alone in a local "British" accent) are still called "Pakis" or Asians rather than simply British as their white fellow citizens with a Yorkshire accent are. Why?

A reader in *The Times* asked: "...why is the term 'Asian' so often used to describe people with brown skin? Most of those around us in this country with dark skins are not from Asia. They are born and educated here. They are English (or Scottish, Welsh etc). Their families may originate in India, Africa, or the Middle East...but we are all British and we should be trying to see ourselves as one society full of many variations."

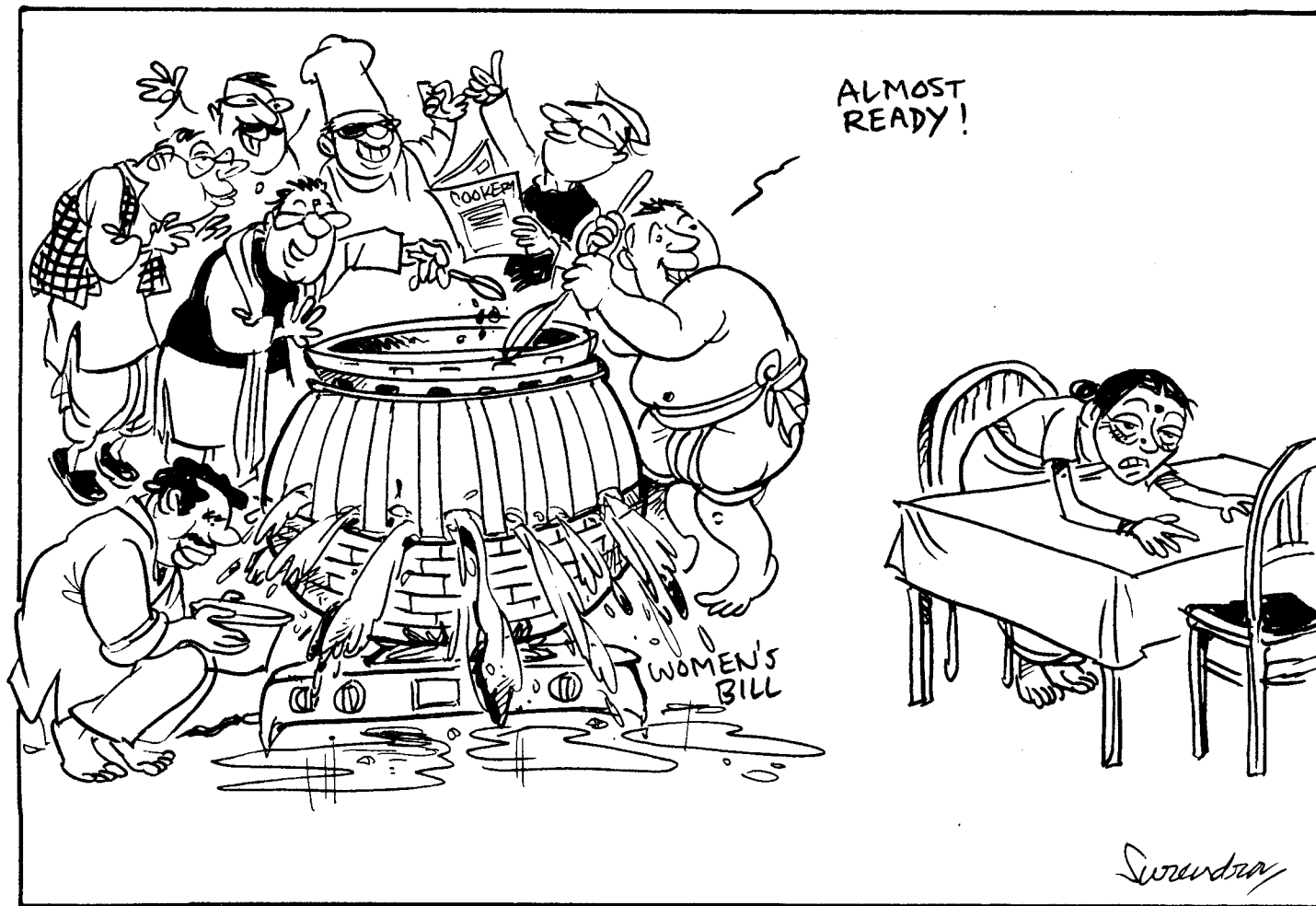
Applying such labels to people who are British — except for the colour of their skin which they cannot help — does more to emphasise separateness and undermine integration than the inability of a 70-year-old farmer from Jalandhar or a grandmother from Mirpur to speak English. Likewise, racial profiling, which makes even the most pukka British brown sahib a potential suspect in the campaign against terrorism, is hardly like to promote integration.

In a letter to *Financial Times*, a self-confessed "brown Englishman" Malcolm Subhan said: "As a good 'brown Englishman' I took my assimilation into Western society for granted — until it suddenly occurred to me, a few months ago, that to the white-skinned 'natives' I am a dark-skinned foreigner, an outsider...What should I do to let people know that I am one of them. Hand out cards setting out my credentials?"

It is all very well to keep banging about what immigrants should do to integrate, but as Max Hastings, a former newspaper editor, says, it is equally important to ask: "Do we try nearly hard enough to make welcome those newcomers who, in the fullest sense, want to belong?"

But interventions such as these are becoming rare in a debate that is starting to sound more like an anti-immigrant tirade and — Prime Minister Tony Blair's disclaimers notwithstanding — suspiciously directed at a particular ethnic group.

CARTOONSCAPE



Blair bid to boot out terror



PM's prescription

- New anti-terrorism legislation in the autumn, to include an offence of condoning or glorifying terrorism anywhere, not just in the UK
- Automatic refusal of asylum for anyone who has participated in terrorism or has anything to do with it anywhere
- The addition of the Hizb ut-Tahrir and al-Muhajiroun Islamist organisations to the list of prohibited groups
- A consultation over powers to order the closure of a place of worship which is used as a centre for fomenting extremism
- Consultation with Muslim leaders about drawing up a list of those not suitable to preach who will be excluded from Britain

On the terror trail

Two women charged

British police charged two sisters, Yeshshiemebet Girma, 29, and Muluemebet Girma, 21 of south London, under the anti-terror laws on Thursday. They were charged with failing to disclose information that could have helped police secure the arrest, prosecution or conviction of a person involved in the July 21 attacks. **AP, London**

Stolen passports

Interpol has sought data from Pakistan on some 41,000 passport books stolen even before they were issued. Some 4.30 lakh passports and documents have been stolen or lost over the world according to the global policing body estimates but in Pakistan alone the missing rate is unusually high. Interpol officials have identified a clear link between terrorist activities and use of stolen or forged passports and sought data from the Pakistan interior ministry. **PTI, Islamabad**

Britons keep away

Nearly one in three adult Britons has been put off visiting London since the July bombings, suggests an opinion poll for CNN and Time magazine. The figure of 31 per cent of Britons is virtually on par with the 32 per cent of French adults who felt likewise, and well above the 20 per cent of Germans wary of coming to the British capital. The findings also revealed that 33 per cent of those living in greater London said security fears had put them off public transport. Seventy-one per cent of Britons said they would be prepared to accept delays and longer journey times or higher costs if it meant tighter security on trains and buses. **AFP, London**

The Iraq link

Tony Blair doesn't think so, but one month on, the vast majority of Britons see the conflict in Iraq as a major factor behind the London bombings. According to polls, more than eight in 10 Britons think that Iraq has helped in radicalising young Muslims in Britain, some of them to the extent of being ready to become suicide bombers. **AFP, London**

New laws to combat religious hatemongers

JAMES Sturcke and SIMON Jeffery
London, August 5

BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair has announced new measures to deport religious extremists who incite hatred. The Prime Minister said the government was launching a short one-month consultation on new grounds for excluding and deporting people from the UK. They would include fostering hatred, advocating violence to further a person's beliefs or justifying or valuing such violence. Two Islamist organisations will also be added to the list of banned outfits.

"Let no one be in any doubt that the rules of the game are changing," Blair said. He added that the British public had responded with "unity, dignity and tolerance" to the terror attacks on London.

Much of the insistence on strong action to weed out extremism was, Blair said, coming most vigorously from Muslims who were "deeply concerned lest the activities of the fanatical fringe should contami-

nate the good reputation of the mainstream Muslim community in our country". He added that the government was prepared to amend the Human Rights Act in respect of interpretation of the European convention on human rights if legal obstacles arise.

"Once the new grounds take effect, there will be a list drawn up of specific extremist websites, bookshops, centres, networks and particular organisations of concern," Blair said. "Active engagement with any of these will be a trigger for the home secretary to consider the deportation of any foreign national."

The government will also consult on legislating specifically for an appeal process, which does not stall the deportation procedure. He said the government was seeking assurances from around 10 countries, including Lebanon and Algeria, that deported people would not be mistreated when returned home.

After a short consultation period, parliament could be recalled next month to discuss the new leg-

FOLLOW UP

London blasts probe

islation. Existing powers to strip people of their British nationality if they act against the interests of this country could be extended to apply to naturalised citizens involved in extremism. He said the government would also consult on setting a maximum time limit for all future extradition cases involving terrorism. Blair said that ministers were already examining a new court procedure that would allow a pre-trial process.

Blair was asked if it was wise to run the risk of alienating Muslims by "cracking down" with new legislation and falling into the trap al-Qaida had set. "This is the balance that we have to strike," he replied. "I think people are well able to see between tough measures to drive out extremists and measures aimed at the Muslim community as a whole."

Of course there will be those who try and exploit it ... but I think the Muslim community is far more sensible than that and they know perfectly well that these people are a menace to their own community, never mind to the rest of us."

Blair dismissed the latest al-Qaida video blaming him for the "destruction" in central London and warning of more attacks.

He was also asked whether the new measures were a classic case of shutting the stable doors after the horse had bolted. Blair said his government had passed the Terrorism Act of 2000, the Anti Terrorism Crime and Security Act of 2001, and the Prevention and Terrorism Act 2005, which had been "fiercely opposed in both Houses of Parliament".

"I think to be frank what has changed since the attacks on July 7, is that people now understand that when we warned of the terrorist threat, it was not scaremongering," he said.

The Guardian

UK mulls tighter border controls

Alarm After 21/7 Terror
Suspect Escaped To Rome

London: British authorities are mulling how to tighten border controls after a suspect in London's July 21 botched bombings took a Eurostar train to leave the country and travel to Italy, officials said on Sunday.

Hamdi Issac, also known as Osman Hussain, was arrested in Rome on Friday after fleeing London aboard a Eurostar train to Paris on July 26, five days after the attack on the British capital's transport system.

He is wanted in connection with the abortive bomb attack on a London Underground station at Shepherd's Bush in west London, one of four unsuccessful attacks on London's transport network. A home office spokesman confirmed that checks at the Eurostar terminal at Waterloo were increased following the initial July 7 suicide bombings, which left 56 people dead, including the four attackers.

The bolstered checks were lifted on July 17, but reintroduced after the July 21 attacks, which appeared to be a copycat of the first bombings—except that the bombs failed to go off.

"There are currently passport checks at Waterloo. All these decisions are taken in close consultation with the police, and the situation is kept under review, in liaison with the Special branch," said the spokesman. He declined to



Court-appointed defence lawyer Antonietta Sonnessa leaves a Rome prison where London bomb suspect Osman Hussain is being held

speculate on the specifics of how Issac may have got through the Waterloo checks. "It's the subject of a police investigation and I cannot comment," he said.

House of Commons leader Geoff Hoon echoed the home office comments, implying that extra passport checks could be introduced. Hoon told the BBC that British ministers will be looking into claims that passport checks at Waterloo are inadequate.

"I'm aware that the home office will be looking at that. Certainly in recent times there has been enhanced security for those leaving the country as well as for those coming into the United Kingdom," he said. Agencies

Marksmen swamp London

Police fear third terror cell may launch attack

VIJAY Dutt
London, August 1

THOUSANDS OF marksmen were deployed on London's streets and rooftops on Monday after warnings that another team of suicide bombers was plotting a third attack on the capital. The police had until Sunday rounded up 19 suspects, including seven in Brighton, but intelligence reports warned of fresh attacks by a new group, believed to be made up of British Muslims.

This group also had plans to attack last week — according to security sources — and that is why 6,000 police, half of them armed, were present at Underground stations throughout the week. Security was especially tight on Thursday when the police feared another copycat attack. The members of this third terror cell are thought to be of Pakistani origin but born in Britain. They have links with the Leeds-based terror cell that staged the July 7 attacks in which 52 people died. Three of the suicide bombers involved in that attack were also of Pakistani origin. All three had visited their country of origin sometime last year.

According to intelligence received, the bombers are intent on attacking London tube trains and buses once more to demonstrate how the network can call on more recruits whenever necessary. According to information passed on by US security, this third group of would-be bombers met at Finsbury Park mosque, which some of the July 7 bombers were also known to have visited regularly. Richard Reid, the shoe-bomber was also a regular there.

The hunt for people who provided money, shelter and logistical support to the bombers has intensified. Officers said there were still many people "out there" who were directly involved in planning and plotting the attacks.

Scotland Yard has dismissed the claim made by the suspected July 21 bomber, Hussain Osman, that the devices were meant only to scare passengers. Osman alleged during his interrogation in Rome that the July 21 devices were not meant to kill anybody. The Yard said the devices were studded with razor sharp nails and only failed to explode because of a clumsy mistake by the bombmaker. Sir Ian Blair, the Met Police commissioner said the bombs were designed to kill and that London had a lucky escape.

The arrest of Osman and his brothers in Rome has alarmed the Italian government. It said the calls made by Osman on the mobile he was carrying showed that an international network was helping him. The Italian interior minister confirmed the presence of autonomous Islamic cells in that country, "which could represent a concrete threat". Italy, according to security sources, could be the next target for Islamic terrorists.



MUSHARRAF CHARGE Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has accused the UK of providing a safe haven to Islamic militants in a bid to project itself as a champion of human rights.

STUDENT EXODUS The ruling Pakistani Muslim League-Q and other religious groups have opposed Musharraf's decision to expel foreign students (photo above) studying in madrasas in Pakistan.

Mosques urged to combat fanatics

HT Correspondent
London, August 1

MOSQUES IN Britain have been urged by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Association to combat violent fanatics through a "grass roots revolution" at its annual convention where members were asked to focus on peace. The meeting was among a series held across the country by Muslim organisations to debate terrorism.

Rafiq Hayat, the association's national president, called on members to honour the "true meaning of Islam — peace, tolerance, respect and service to humanity". He said: "It's time for all Muslims to say enough is enough. We wish to practise Islam as exemplified by our founder Prophet Mohammad (peace be upon him). The word Islam means peace but we have to live by it in order to grow."

"We call for a grass roots revolution in mosques across the UK where ordinary people wish to make a fu-

ture, for the sake of themselves and their children and for the sake of humanity, turn away from the harbingers of hate and root out fanaticism." A group spokesman urged anyone who may be able to help police trace terrorist cells to follow "common sense" and tell what they know.

Elsewhere, thousands of families are attending the Living Islam festival in Lincolnshire. The annual event is organised by the Islamic Society of Britain, an organisation which says it wants to strengthen the contribution of British Muslims to society. Organiser Jeffrey Beere said this year's event had taken on a crucial additional meaning.

"Islam is the faith of 1.6 million Britons. Its teachings fly in the face of the messages of hate that were behind the attacks on our capital. This is an opportunity in a million, a chance to live the universal values of compassion and care and to provide our youth with a positive, whole-

some self-image," he said. Speakers include some of the most influential voices advocating a progressive application of Islam in the Western world.

Followers of the Salafi sect of Islam, a conservative or "pure" reading of the faith, are also organising lectures to speak against the attacks. Some western analysts have associated Salafist thinking with al-Qaida because some militant groups in West Asia describe themselves by the same name. But British followers of the sect say the association is completely wrong because they themselves have been targeted by militants for speaking out. Scholars linked to Birmingham-based Salafi Publications will explain why they say Islam condemns suicide bombers as "perpetrators of evil".

A debate was held on Friday in Bradford and will be followed by others at mosques in Birmingham and London throughout August.

Bombing suspects held in London, Rome

Liverpool Street station closed after bomb scare

ASSOCIATED Press
London, July 29

RAIDS IN London and Rome rounded up the last of the four suspected attackers from the failed July 21 bombings in Britain, officials and media reports said. Two of the suspects were picked up in west London following raids by heavily armed police. London police did not confirm their identities.

Italian police in Rome arrested Osman Hussain, a naturalised British citizen from Somalia, as part of an ongoing investigation in the bombings, said interior minister Giuseppe Pisanu.

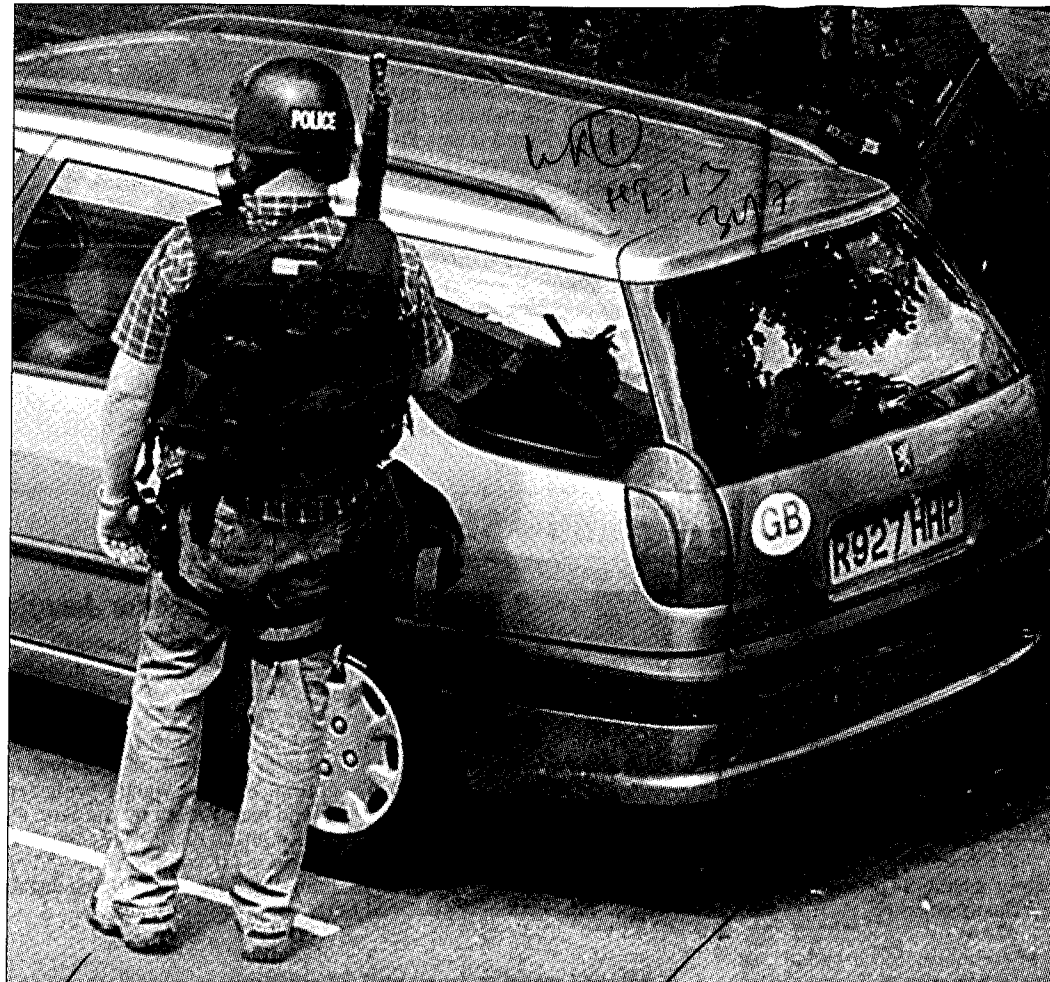
Another man being sought in connection with the July 7 attacks in London is in custody in Zambia, a Zambian official said on Thursday. Haroon Rashid Aswat, 31, was arrested in the border town of Livingstone, having crossed into Zambia from Zimbabwe, according to the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. Scotland Yard police headquarters declined to comment on the arrest.

The police also arrested two women at the Liverpool Street train station in central London and evacuated the area. The

women were pinned to the ground in a raid. One woman is believed to have been in a line for the Stansted Express, which goes to one of London's airports. The police were searching a number of suspect packages in the station.

The police raided two residences on Friday in west London and arrested two men at one address and one at another, a Metropolitan Police spokesman said on customary condition of anonymity. The police operation was carried out in at least two locations in Notting Hill about a quarter-mile apart. Media reports said one of those arrested was believed to be Muktar Said Ibrahim, 27, who allegedly tried to blow himself up on a double-decker bus in east London. The second suspect arrested in London is believed to have been responsible for the attempted bombing near Oval Tube station.

One of the Tube stations closed after the July 7 attacks reopened on Friday. Several bouquets of flowers lay at the entrance to the Edgware Road station in a tribute to the seven people killed there. But passenger numbers were visibly down — a sign of nervousness among Londoners despite a huge police presence.



A heavily armed plain-clothes police officer takes up position in the Notting Hill area of London on Friday.

Unionists meet IRA call with scepticism

VIJAY Dutt
London, July 29

THE IRA declared the end of the war with the British on Thursday, after almost four decades and 3,637 funerals. It also promised a farewell to arms, stating that it had ordered its units to abandon their weapons. But there was no apology to the victims and their families.

The timing of the self-liquidation has not been lost. The IRA declared its intention to end the war in the midst of terror fears in London and realising that manhunts and bombings would now be part of British life for a number of years to come.

The IRA also declared that its members "must not engage in any other activities whatsoever, except peaceful ones". This has been intercepted as a declaration of stopping all kinds of criminal activities including drugs and bank heists. The Provisionals' leadership said the organisation would pursue a democratic strategy of achieving a united Ireland through "purely political and democratic programmes through exclusively peaceful means".

Tony Blair hailed the declaration as "a step of unparalleled magnitude" but there still is a lot of scepticism among the Unionists. Its leader Rev Ian Paisley said it would be months and years before one could be sure that the IRA has really laid down arms.

In Belfast on Thursday evening there was no visible jubilation, rather a wary and cautious optimism that finally peace could return to the troubled province. Most said it would take months possibly longer before it could become clear whether this was really an historic breakthrough. Having suffered for decades, many are as yet not ready to take IRA's words seriously.

London and Dublin hope that the decommissioning would be completed by Christmas. The IRA has agreed to bury arms in the presence of Canadian General John de Chastelain and a Protestant and Catholic priest.

Sinn Fein chief Gerry Adams held press meets to impress upon Washington, London and Dublin, that getting into government was his next priority. There is speculation that Adams would try to become president of Ireland.

21/7: British police arrest 9 more suspects



A policeman stands outside a fast-food restaurant, the scene of several arrests on Thursday in south London. Reuters

GRAHAM BOWLEY

LONDON, JULY 28

British police arrested nine men in raids in south London's Tooting on Thursday in connection with the aborted bomb attacks on the capital on July 21. The arrests came a day after the seizure in Birmingham of Yassin Hassan Omar (24), of Somali origin, a suspect in last Thursday's attacks. Omar's arrest was the most important breakthrough so far in the investigation into the London terror bombing campaign.

Three other men were also arrested on Wednesday in a second house in Birmingham. Other raids were made in Finchley and Enfield in north London, and at a house near Stockwell tube station where three women were arrested under anti-terrorism laws.

Despite Omar's arrest, police said that they still do not know where the three other bombers are or the identity of two of them. However, on Wednesday they issued a new photograph of a suspect in the July 21 abortive bombings.

The police are searching for Muktar Said Ibrahim, a 27-year-old originally from Eritrea, whom they believe was also a would-be bomber.

The nine men arrested in Tooting on Thursday were not believed to include any of the three bombers who are still at large. Early reports suggested police raided a flat above a Turkish kebab shop and took away three men, believed to be of Turkish origin. Six other men were arrested from a nearby property opposite Tooting Broadway station.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said in London on Wednesday that he was "greatly heartened" by the operations. However, on Thursday, London's transportation system was on precautionary high alert, with the British transport police making their "largest deployment ever" on the London Underground, a spokesman said.

Man held for anti-tank missile in house

LONDON: Police said on Thursday, they had arrested a man in Leicestershire the day before, after finding an anti-tank missile, among other weapons, in a house. Officers stressed the arrest was not terrorism related and that it was a criminal investigation. Army weapons experts were called for inspections and the anti-tank missile was found to be "inert", designed for practice purposes only, said a police spokeswoman. She also said a 62-year-old man, who has not been named, was being questioned about the find. PTI

Sir Ian Blair, Metropolitan police chief, warned the British public that the failure of the attacks on July 21 "should not be taken as some indication of weakening" of the bombers' capability. "This was not the B-team. These were not amateurs," he said.

As the investigation unfolded, the body of a Brazilian man fatally shot on Friday by the police in a London subway train was scheduled to be sent home to his family.

In a television interview, Sir Ian said there had been 250 incidents since July 7 in which police believed they were pursuing a suicide bomber. Seven came close to ending like the case of Jean Charles de Menezes, the Brazilian shot seven times in the head and once in the shoulder in a station in south London.

Wednesday's arrests came on a day of intense police activity that included the detention of a man at Luton Airport before he boarded a plane France. He was later released.

Two men removed from a train in Lincolnshire, and held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, were also released on Wednesday.

In a related development on Wednesday, the police released a man who was arrested last week after the attacks of July 21 and said that no further action would be taken against him. —NYT

For bombing motives, Africa says look at home

C. BRYSON HULL

NAIROBI, JULY 28

THE anger that may have caused two East African immigrants to try to bomb London was more likely bred in Britain where they grew up, than Somalia and Eritrea—nations they left as children—locals and diplomats in Africa said.

The national origins of the suspected bombers—Yassin Hassan Omar (24) and Muktar Said Ibrahim (27)—sparked British press speculation about their links to militants in the Horn of Africa.

But in East Africa, where many bristle at the notion of the region as a terrorist playground, local indignation is running high.

"Suicide bombings are unheard of in Somali culture," said Ahmed Nur Mohamed, a Somali immigrant in Nairobi. "It does not matter whether a Somali is in a big city or in the bush... we are not known to blow up ourselves."

A British High Commission spokesman in Nairobi also pointed out that "Scotland Yard have offered no evidence of any recent contact with this region" by Omar and Ibrahim.

Kenya's government rejected a report saying the two had travelled to Britain on Kenyan passports, saying that the two went on UN refugee papers in the 1990s and became British citizens.

—Reuters

WKT
4/3

LONDON BOMBINGS

Vital clue found

277

Jason Bennetto, Cahal Milmo & Kim Sengupta

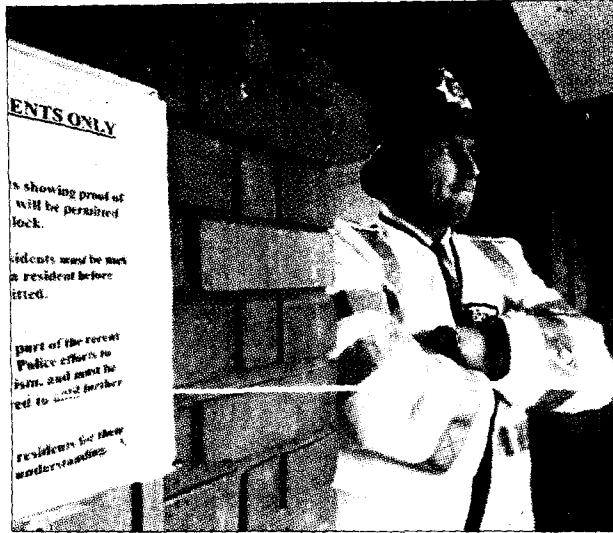
LONDON, July 26. — Vital evidence in the hunt for the four failed suicide bombers was revealed yesterday after police named two of the terrorists.

Details of an unusual plastic container used to hold the home-made bombs in last Thursday's attacks on three Tube trains and a bus in London were released yesterday. Only 100 stores in Britain sell the Indian-made container, police said.

The hunt for the bombers became even more urgent with the disclosure that there is growing evidence of a fifth terrorist who dumped his bomb and fled. One of the two men named as a potential suicide bomber was Muktar Said Ibrahim (27), also known as Muktar Mohammed Said, who is accused of trying to blow up a No. 26 bus in Hackney Road, east London, on Thursday.

Police raided a flat in north London yesterday where Ibrahim is thought to have lived.

Police named the bomber who tried to detonate his device on the Tube at Warren Street on 21 July as 24-year-old Yasin Hassan Omar. The two men are thought to have been in Britain for several years, although



A police officer stands guard in front of a residential building in New Southgate, north London, on Tuesday. — AFP

they are believed to be of a Somali background and their terror cell has links with east Africa.

The Home Office refused to disclose whether they were living in Britain illegally.

The disclosure of a link to east Africa could have a big impact on the investigation into the attacks because it is likely to widen the focus of inquiries beyond Asian communities.

The deputy assistant commissioner Mr Peter Clarke, the head of the Metropolitan Police's anti-terrorist branch, said the four suspects were all attempting to be suicide bombers.

Police have published the first details of compo-

nents used to make the bombs.

The explosives were placed inside plastic food storage containers that were then put in dark coloured rucksacks and sports bags. Scotland Yard appealed for any shopkeeper who had sold five or more of the containers to any customer to contact police.

Police have found a fifth bomb, which contained the same explosive as the other four devices, which were similar to the explosive used in the 7 July suicide attacks that claimed 56 lives. The investigation by the police and MI5 is focusing on the addresses and associates of the four bombers captured on video. — **The Independent**

27 JUL 2005

Wk 18 THE FALL 24/77

Innocence is invariably the first and the worst victim of war. Britain is now engaged in a war against a disembodied enemy. Despite the clues that have been discovered after the July 7 blasts, the police in Britain are still working only on the basis of suspicion. There is no clear idea of how widespread the terrorist networks are and hence no clear action plan for their elimination. The police and the common people wait with fear for the fire next time. But the common people now face a different kind of terror. This is the fear of the police, armed now with orders to shoot on suspicion. One innocent man has already been killed as the British police have lost their innocence. The traditional British bobby has acquired macabre features. The shoot-at-sight order is a reflection of the enormity of the menace that threatens London. It is also characteristically double-edged. There is no other way to make London safe from attacks by terrorists except by giving the police unprecedented powers. Terror can only be countered by terror. But the use of terror by the police cannot be as indiscriminate as that of the fanatics who are the targets. Terrorists count their success by the number of innocent people they kill. The police have to use violence against terrorists so that those who are innocent can get back their sense of security and carry on with their normal lives. Reports suggest that the London police are failing to provide this security and, in fact, are making the innocent more frightened.

The sense of insecurity and foreboding is related, of course, to the cold-blooded killing of a Brazilian in Stockwell station in south London by policemen. Mr Ian Blair, the commissioner of the Metropolitan police, admitted that the man — now identified as Jean Charles de Menezes — was innocent. But Mr Blair could not provide any assurance that someone else would not be shot in a similar manner. On the contrary, he emphasized that such killings remained a possibility. Such are the unusual circumstances prevailing in London that people living there or visiting have to accept that the guardians of law and order can at any given moment turn into killers. A face of British civilization is undergoing a cruel transformation, albeit under the pressure of the most trying conditions.

Mr Blair has, however, displayed rare courage by admitting that his men had killed an innocent man by mistake. Not many police chiefs would be so honest. In India, there have been many instances which have provoked the suspicion that somebody innocent had been killed and incriminating evidence planted on the corpse to cover up the killing. Mr Blair has grasped the nettle. This honesty will stand his force in good stead, unless of course the admission is nothing more than insouciance in the face of the death of an innocent and ordinary human being.

POLICE IDENTIFY TWO SUSPECTS, RELEASE PHOTOS

Hunt on for bombers

AFP/PTI

LONDON, July 25 — British police today identified two suspects, who allegedly staged the failed attempts to blow up a London bus and a subway train last week, by name and released two new photographs of them.

Mr Peter Clarke of Scotland Yard told a press conference that Mukhtar Said Ibrahim was the name of the man who tried to blow up the bus and Yassin Hassan Omar was the one who tried to bomb the subway train.

The pair are among four suspects the police have been looking for since last Thursday's near-simultaneous attacks on three subway trains and a bus in London.

Mr Clarke, who is deputy assistant commissioner and head of the Metropolitan Police's anti-terrorist branch, said Ibrahim, 27, was believed to have recently visited an address in north London, which police were searching today.

Ibrahim, a heavy-set, dark-skinned man with a moustache and beard, appeared smiling in the photograph released by the police.

British police today questioned the third suspect in the failed attacks as they raced against time to trace the attackers in the biggest ever manhunt in Scotland Yard's history.

The third suspect was arrested late Saturday near Stockwell in south London from where two other suspects were arrested on Friday, police said.

Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair said the investigation was "racing against time", amid reports that last Thursday's attackers were planning to strike again.

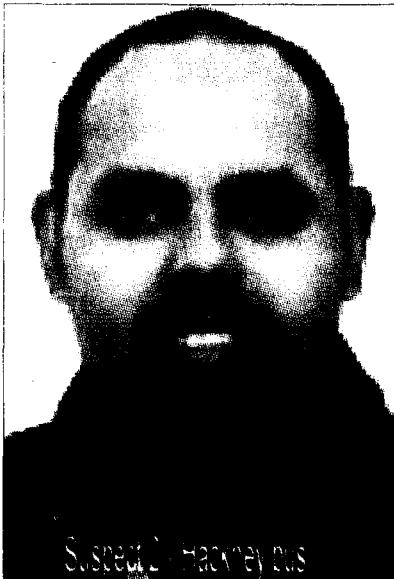
Senior officers believe the



Suspect 1 - Oval incident

12:25:32.92 21/07/05 C2/2 719

Pictures released by Scotland Yard on Monday shows the two suspects in the attempted bombing on 21 July. — AFP



bombers could be preparing to strike while being harboured at safe houses in the capital, the Press

Association reported. Sir Ian urged his officers to "move on" with the probe after a plainclothes detective shot dead 27-year-old innocent Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes at Stockwell tube station.

Foreign Secretary Mr Jack Straw spoke to his Brazilian counterpart Mr Celso Amorim to convey his regrets over the killing.

Menezes' family have said they may sue the British police over the killing.

British police had said it will have to shoot suspects in the head to prevent suicide blasts.

Criticising the fatal shooting of Menezes, the British media said that the police action has "badly shaken" the trust of ethnic communities in them.

26 JUL 2

THE STATESMAN

Suspects named amid fears of third attack

Mission abandoned by fifth terrorist

VIJAY Dutt and Agencies
London, July 25

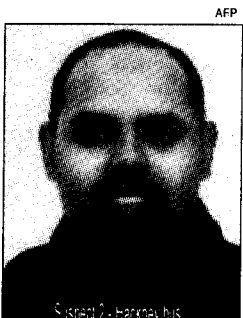
BRITISH POLICE on Monday named two men who allegedly staged failed attempts to blow up a London bus and a subway train last week, releasing a new photograph of the suspected bus bomber.

It is feared that a third cell of sleepers, possibly of North Africans, might be waiting to be activated and that a truck or a car bomb may already have been made. This is apart from the likely attack by the bombers on the run.

Telephone "associations" between the first two gangs have also been established. But it is unclear whether the two cells were telephoning one another or if they both were speaking to the same people.

Peter Clarke of the Metropolitan Police told a press conference that Mukhtar Said Ibrahim, 27, was the name of the man who tried to blow up the bus and Yassin Hassan Omar, 24, was the one who tried to bomb a subway train on July 21.

The two are among five suspects the police have been looking for since last Thursday's



Yassin Hassan (top) and Mukhtar Said-Ibrahim

near-simultaneous attacks on three subway trains and a bus in London. There were five bombers, not four, a fact confirmed after the police found a packet containing a bomb in a park very near Shepherd's Bush tube station. The police don't know why the fifth terrorist abandoned his mission.

Ibrahim, a heavy-set, dark-skinned man with a moustache and goatee beard, appeared smiling in the photograph released by the police. Police also released a new photograph of a still unidentified man who allegedly tried to blow up a train between Stockwell and

Oval stations in south London. He appeared standing holding on to a strap in an apparently empty Underground train wearing a dark sweatshirt with "New York" stamped on the front. The same man was shown last week running down the corridor of an underground station wearing the same sweatshirt, which police said was later discarded.

Scotland Yard and intelligence agencies are now looking into the possibility that the two sets of bombers met on a trip to a white-water rafting centre in North Wales to finalise their plans.



THANK YOU! Tony Blair is shown a CT scan machine inside University College London Hospital on Monday where he was visiting to thank the nursing staff for their efforts in response to the bomb blasts.

Slain man's family to sue British govt

ASSOCIATED Press
London, July 25

THE FAMILY of a Brazilian electrician, who was mistaken for a terrorist and slain by British police, on Monday threatened to take legal action, but a senior officer insisted the new threat posed by suicide bombers made deadly force a necessary option.

Police shot Jean Charles de Menezes, 27, in a subway car after mistaking him for a suspect in the investigation into Thursday's botched bombing attempts on three subway trains and a bus. Officers later said he had no connection to the probe and expressed deep regret for his death.

"They have to pay for that in many ways, because if they do not, they are going to kill many people," his cousin Alex Pereira told BBC. "They killed my cousin; they could kill anyone."

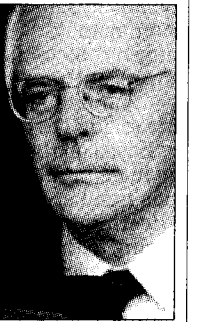
But Chris Fox, president of the Association of Chief Police Officers, said police had to have the option of using lethal force to stop suspected suicide bombers.

"We have a series of tactics which range from disruption to the very, very final moment when you have to shoot, and the aim is to prevent the criminal or suspect causing harm to other people," Fox told BBC.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said that Britain was "desperately sorry" for the death of Menezes. "We are all desperately sorry for the death of an innocent person, and I understand the feelings of the young man's

Major has no sympathy

EVEN AFTER the killing of an innocent Brazilian, most in Britain have not criticised the police and instead blamed terrorists for creating a situation where the police have to resort to shoot to kill policy. Sir John Major, former prime minister, has demanded that the people who "spit hate" at the British way of life should be deported.



HTC, London

family," Blair said. "But we also have to understand that the police are doing their job in very difficult circumstances and I think it's important we give them every support."

Blair's spokesman said foreign secretary Jack Straw spoke to his Brazilian counterpart Celso Amorim about the "context" in which anti-terror police killed Menezes. "As Jack Straw said yesterday, we deeply regret what happened," he said.

The spokesman refused to comment on the specifics of the death but urged understanding for the new challenges that police faced.

6 JUL 2005

London police defends shoot-to-kill policy

WFO
SR

257

Jason Bennetto
in London

July 24. — The head of the Metropolitan Police today defended his force's "shoot-to-kill" policy when dealing with suspected suicide bombers, adding that more people could be shot dead.

The comments by Sir Ian Blair, the police commissioner, followed the shooting of Jean Charles de Menezes (27), an innocent Brazilian electrician, who was killed by police on Friday in Stockwell Tube station, south London.

The death has provoked strong criticism of the police by the dead man's family who described the Met as "stupid and incompetent".

Sir Ian said: "Somebody else could be shot. But everything is done to make it right. This is a terrifying set of circumstances for individuals to make decisions."

The country's most senior police chief defended the actions of his officers, saying: "What we have got to recognise is that people are taking incredibly difficult fast time decisions in life-threatening situations.

"It wasn't just a random event and what's most important to recognise is that it's still happening out there. There are still officers out there having to make those calls as we speak," Sir Ian said.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attack on the USA the British police have adopted a "shoot to kill" policy

Third suspect arrested

LONDON, July 24. — Police have arrested a third man in south London as part of their investigation into the attempted bombings of three subway cars and a bus on 21 July, a police spokeswoman said today.

The man was arrested late yesterday in the same area as two other men, and in the same neighbourhood where a Brazilian electrician was mistakenly killed by police had lived.

The man was arrested "on suspicion of the commission, investigation or preparation of acts of terrorism", said the police spokeswoman. The suspect was taken to a central London police station for further questioning.

Two men were arrested on Friday in the south London area of Stockwell, one subway stop away from the Oval Tube station, which was one of those targeted in the 21 July bombing attempts. Also in Stockwell on Friday, police shot and killed 27-year-old Jean Charles de Menezes, mistaking him for a terrorist.

The most recent suspect was arrested in nearby Tulse Hill, where Menezes had shared a flat with cousins, the police spokeswoman said. Police said they raided a home in Tulse Hill yesterday, but it was not immediately clear if that was when the third suspect was arrested. The police spokeswoman refused further comment. — AP

when dealing with suspected suicide bombers. Previously firearms officers were trained to shoot someone who "posed a threat to life" in the body, usually twice, to disable and overwhelm them. But with the threat of suicide attacks this was altered to allow officers to shoot a suspect, who was thought to be carrying explosives, in the head. The firearms officers are told to shoot the suspect several times so they cannot activate a bomb, and to avoid hitting their body in case they accidentally detonate explosives with a bullet.

The shoot-to-kill procedures for dealing with suicide bombers would remain in place, insisted Sir Ian. "They have to be that

because there is no point in shooting at someone's chest because that is where the bomb is likely to be," he told Sky News. "There is no point in shooting anywhere else if they fall down and detonate it. It is drawn from experience from other countries, including Sri Lanka. The only way to deal with this is to shoot to the head."

The policy had been "reviewed and reviewed" for many months and was a national one, not just for London, he said.

Mr Jack Straw, the Foreign Secretary, also defended the "shoot-to-kill" policy. He said it was essential that police were able to deal effectively with the threat of a suicide attack.

— The Independent

2 JUL 2005 THE STATESMAN

UK police shot the wrong man

The Independent & Associated Press

LONDON, July 23 — The man, officers killed in a dramatic subway shooting, apparently had nothing to do with a series of bomb attacks on London's transit system, police said today, calling it a "tragedy" and expressing their regret.

Police had pursued the man, whose identity has not been released and who was not believed to be armed or carrying a bomb, and shot him point-blank yesterday at the Stockwell station in south London. Police later claimed that he was "directly linked" to the attempted bombings of the previous day.

But today, a spokesman for Metropolitan Police said: "The man was unconnected to the incidents of Thursday," in which bombs placed on three subway cars and a double-decker bus failed to detonate properly, and was "probably unconnected" to the 7 July suicide bombings. "He's not believed to be connected in any way to any of the London bombings," a police source said on condition of anonymity.

The disclosure came as Scotland Yard released photographs of the four suspects, taken from closed-circuit television cameras at the three Underground stations and on a bus where the bombing attempts were made.

All the images showed young men of Asian appearance, and police warned people not to approach any of them, who are now the targets of the most intense anti-ter-

Suspect arrested

LONDON, July 23. — Police investigating this week's failed bombings today said they had arrested a second man in a south London neighborhood close to the scene of one of the attacks and where officers shot another suspect dead in a subway train. Thousands of officers conducted a manhunt amid hopes the publication of images of four suspected attackers would lead to their capture. Earlier, the Metropolitan Police said the second arrest late last night was "in connection with our inquiries" into Thursday's attacks. The first suspect, whose identity has also not been released, was being questioned at a high-security London police station. AP

rorism probe seen in Britain.

Though police refused to discuss "operational tactics," but sources and security experts said it was clear from the incident that officers were operating under revised guidelines. The man's death is expected to renew controversies about killings by police firearms officers of innocent people. Muslim leaders said last night they were concerned that a "shoot-to-kill" policy was now in operation in London.

The leader of a human rights group called for a quick and thorough investigation into the shooting, and a Muslim leader said the news would make London's immigrants and Muslims more fearful.

W. 2913 988
W. 11

COPS CHASE SOUTH ASIAN MAN TO DOOR OF TRAIN AND PUMP IN FIVE BULLETS

'Terrorist' shot on Tube

Is it shoot to kill Muslims?



People wait outside the police cordon as the area close to Stockwell Underground Station in London was closed to traffic after a bombing suspect was gunned down there on Friday. — AFP

The Independent

LONDON, July 22. — Police today shot dead a suspected terrorist, apparently of South Asian origin, after a chase to the doorway of a London Underground train. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Sir Ian Blair, said the shooting at Stockwell Station was linked directly to the "ongoing and expanding" operation in the wake of yesterday's attacks across the capital. He said: "This man was challenged and refused to obey police instructions."

Sir Ian appealed for calm, saying that police needed the understanding and co-operation of all communities. He added: "We know there are rumours sweeping London and I appeal to everyone to listen to the facts."

Passengers evacuated from the south London station described seeing armed police chasing a suspect before opening fire. There were unconfirmed reports that police believed the man who had been shot was one of the attackers involved in yesterday's incidents.

Passenger Mr Mark Whitby, speaking to BBC News 24, reported the man had been shot five times at close range after he jumped on a train at Stockwell Station. He had been sitting on the train reading his paper as it was stationary with its doors open in Stockwell station when he heard people shouting "Get down, get down!" He said that the Asian man had been seen running on to the train pursued by three plain-clothes police officers. He said the man had tripped and been pushed to the floor. He said: "One of the police officers was holding a black automatic pistol in his left hand. They held it down to him and unloaded five shots into him. I saw it. He's dead, five shots, he's dead." He reported the man did not seem to be carrying a weapon or wearing a

2397
rucksack. Passenger Ms Briony Coetsee, 23, said: "We were on the Tube when we suddenly heard someone say 'Get out, get out' and then we heard gunshots — someone was shooting. Somebody in plain clothes who I thought was a civilian cop had his gun out and started shooting and told us to get out."

Mr Chris Wells, a 28-year-old company manager, said he had been travelling on the Victoria Line towards Vauxhall when he left the train at Stockwell. He saw about 20 police officers, some of them armed, rushing into the station before a man jumped over the barriers with police giving chase. He said: "There were at least 20 of them (officers) and they were carrying big black guns. "The next thing I saw was this guy jump over the barriers and the police officers were chasing after him and everyone was just shouting 'Get out, get out'". Mr Christopher Scaglione, 35, a fashion designer, was also on a Victoria Line tube train shortly before the incident. He said: "I was just on my way out when I heard at first a little bang, not like a bomb and more like a gun, and then people were shouting. People then started to run and I heard two or three more bangs..."

A large area around Stockwell Tube Station, an interchange for the Northern and Victoria lines in south London, was cordoned off and traffic approaching the area ground to a halt.

A major police operation was reported at Harrow Road where bomb disposal officers were deployed.

Al-Qaida group claims onus

A statement posted today on an Islamic website in the name of an al-Qaida ally claimed responsibility for the latest blasts targeting London's transport system. Abu Hafsa al Masri Brigade also claimed responsibility for the 7 July bombings, adds AP from Cairo.



This man photographed at Oval Tube Station on Thursday is suspected by Scotland Yard to be one of the four involved in the latest bombings. — AFP

LONDON, July 22. — British Muslims said they feared police were operating under a "shoot to kill" policy after a man was gunned down at Stockwell Station. The Muslim Council of Britain called on police to explain why the South Asian man, reported as a "suspected suicide bomber" by Sky News, was shot.

Police have confirmed that officers pursued and shot a man, but have offered no explanation for the shooting. A Muslim Council spokesman said Muslims were "jumpy and nervous" and feared reprisal attacks. "I have just had one phone call saying 'What if I was carrying a rucksack?'," said Mr Inayat Bunglawala, referring to the rucksack bombs used in the London attacks. "It's vital the police explain why the man was shot," Mr Bunglawala said. "We are getting phone calls from quite a lot of Muslims who are distressed about what may be a shoot-to-kill policy."

The fear of reprisals heightened after the attempted firebombing of the Buckinghamshire home of one of the 7 July suicide bombers, Germaine Lindsay, on Friday. Massoud Shadjareh, chair of the Islamic Human Rights Commission, asked the government to take responsibility for creating the "political environment" for these attacks. — The Independent & Agencies

'They fired five shots. He was dead'

London Police Chase Suspected Suicide Bomber In Tube Station, Kill Him

By Rashmee Roshan Lall
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

London: The police in the British capital fired their first shots on home soil in the war on terror when they challenged and killed a suspected suicide bomber at a London underground train station, less than 24 hours after the city was hit by a second wave of terror attacks in two weeks.

The shooting, described by shocked and mesmerised eyewitnesses as a "Hollywood-style" event in the heart of the world's financial capital, targeted an "Asian or Pakistani man" trying to flee from the police.

The dramatic shoot-out, held at about 9 am GMT, came as the London police acknowledged that they were hunting at least four men who had attacked the city's transport lifeline at mid-day on Thursday. The dead suspected bomber is thought to be one of the men being hunted by London's Metropolitan police after Thursday's attack on three train stations and a bus. The bombers fled after the detonators went off, causing small blasts, but failing to detonate the bombs themselves. London police commissioner Sir Ian Blair later said the attempted explosives attacks were "clearly an attempt to kill".

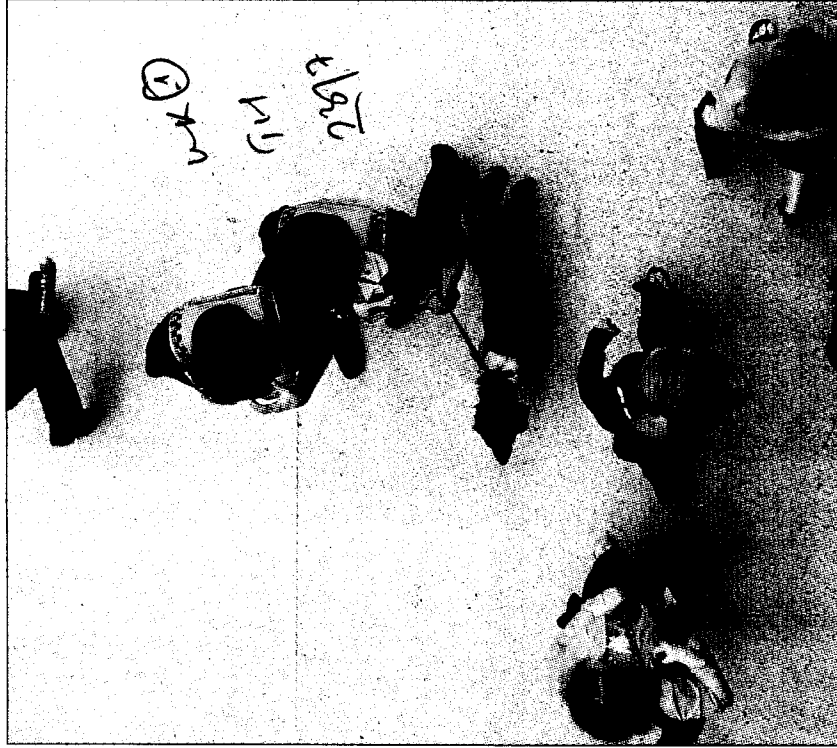
Mark Whitby, an eyewitness who was travelling on the train the dead suspected bomber reportedly tried to board, said he had seen a man of Asian appearance

community, he added, "He looked like a Pakistani." Whitby said the man was wearing a heavy coat, which was rather too warm for Britain's ongoing balmy summer. He said he and the police were obviously unsure about whether the man was wired-up with explosive under his heavy padded jacket. Whitby, one of those being questioned by the police, said he "saw the gun being fired five times into the guy, and he was dead".

Even as two of London's underground train lines were suspended following Friday's incident, the police evacuated passengers from the affected train station. They also cordoned off a 200-metre area around the station.

Whitby said he had been sitting on the train reading paper "when I heard a load of noise, people saying, 'Get out, get down'. I saw an Asian guy run onto the train hotly pursued by three plain-clothes police officers. One of them was carrying a black handgun—it looked like an automatic. They pushed him to the floor, bundled on top of him and unloaded five shots into him."

Whitby continued, "When he got on the train I looked at his face. He looked from left to right, but basically looked like a cornered rabbit, a cornered fox. He looked absolutely petrified." He said the man "sort of tripped" but "were hotly pursuing him and couldn't have been more than two or three feet behind him at this time".



Counter-terrorism police officers patrol the Liverpool Street station with a sniffer dog on Friday looking for fingerprints, DNA and other forensic evidence from Thursday's attacks

Five times by "plain-clothes police officers" with a handgun. In a crucial, killer comment dreading by Britain's large South Asian com-

23 JUL 2005 THE TIMES OF LONDON

স্টেশনে গুলি করে মারল

পুলিশ, হতভম্ব লন্ডন

নিজস্ব প্রতিনিধি, লন্ডন, ২২ জুলাই: টেমসের তীরে সন্ত্রাস আর আতঙ্কের রাজত্ব অব্যাহত।

টিউব স্টেশন এবং বাসে চারটি বিস্ফোরণের ২৪ ঘণ্টার মধ্যেই ফের আতঙ্ক ছড়াল টিউব স্টেশনে। এ বারে অবশ্য কোনও বিস্ফোরণ ঘটেনি। বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো হতে পারে আশঙ্কায় পুলিশ তাড়া করে এক জনকে, তার পরে তাকে গুলি করে মারে। সন্দেহভাজন এই জঙ্গি আত্মঘাতী ছিল কি না বা সঙ্গে বিস্ফোরক ছিল কি না, সে সব নিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট করে কিছু জানা যায়নি। জানা যায়নি তার পরিচয়ও। পুলিশ কীসের ভিত্তিতে স্টেশনে এক জনকে গুলি করে মারল, সেটা নিয়ে তাই প্রশ্ন উঠছেই। আজ সকালে স্টকওয়াল স্টেশনে এই ঘটনার জেরে ভিস্টোরিয়া এবং নর্দার্ন লাইনের মধ্যে টিউব চলাচল বেশ কিছুক্ষণের জন্য বন্ধ হয়ে যায়।

দক্ষিণ লন্ডনের স্টকওয়ালের সঙ্গে প্রায় একই সময়ে আতঙ্ক ছড়িয়েছিল পূর্ব লন্ডনেও। বোমাতঙ্কের জেরে সেখানে একটি মসজিদ ঘিরে ফেলে পুলিশ। শেষ পর্যন্ত অবশ্য কিছু ঘটেনি। হ্যারো রোডে একটি ইন্টারনেট ক্যাফে ঘিরে তল্লাশি চালানো হয়। সম্ভাব্য জঙ্গিদের খোঁজে ওই এলাকায় আরও তল্লাশি চলবে বলে পুলিশ সূত্রের খবর।

আজকের ঘটনা ঘিরে এখনও পর্যন্ত ধোঁয়াশা থাকলেও কালকের বিস্ফোরণের পিছনে ফের আল কায়দার হাতই দেখা যাচ্ছে। আল কায়দার সহযোগী সংগঠন হিসাবে পরিচয় দিয়ে আবু হাফস আল-মাসরি ব্রিগেড আজ ইন্টারনেটে দাবি করেছে, “ব্রিটেনের রাজধানীর কেন্দ্রে হামলা চালিয়ে আমরা সমস্ত ইউরোপীয় সরকারকে একটাই পরিষ্কার বার্তা দিয়েছি। সেটা হল, ‘কাফের’ সেনারা ইরাক না-ছাড়া পর্যন্ত আমরা থামব না।” দ্বিতীয় একটি বিবৃতিতে তারা পরিষ্কার হুমকি দিয়েছে, এর পরে রোম, আমস্টারডাম, ডেনমার্কের পাল। এদের সকলেরই সেনা রয়েছে ইরাকে।

লন্ডনে ৭/৭-এর পরে এবং গত বছর মাদ্রিদ বিস্ফোরণেও এই সংগঠনটি দায় স্বীকার করেছিল। লন্ডনে প্রথম বারের বিস্ফোরণের মতো এ বারেও আল-মাসরি

বিবৃতি দিয়েছে তুলনামূলক ভাবে অপরিচিত ওয়েবসাইটে। আল-মাসরির দাবির পাশাপাশি লন্ডনে সৌদি আরবের দূত এবং প্রাক্তন গায়োন্দা প্রধান যুবরাজ তুরকি আল ফয়জলও বলেছেন, পরপর বিস্ফোরণের কায়দা একেবারে ওসামা বিন লাদেনের আল কায়দার মতো।

ওভাল, ওয়ারেন স্ট্রিট ও শেফার্ডস বৃশ টিউব স্টেশন এবং হ্যাকনি রোডে বাসে বিস্ফোরণের সূত্রের খোঁজে তদন্তের মধ্যেই আজ স্টকওয়ালের ঘটনা ঘটে। পুলিশের ধারণা, কালকের চারটি বিস্ফোরণের সঙ্গে যোগ রেখেই আরও বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানোর ছক ছিল জঙ্গিদের। মেট্রোপলিটান পুলিশ কমিশনার ইয়ান ব্র্যারের কথায়, “বোম্বাই যাচ্ছে জঙ্গিদের উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ হয়নি।” তবে আজকের ঘটনায় নিহত ব্যক্তির সঙ্গে বিস্ফোরণের যোগসূত্রের ব্যাপারে মুখ খোলেনি পুলিশ। তারা শুধু বলেছে, “সকাল ১০টার একটু পরেই সশস্ত্র অফিসারেরা স্টকওয়াল স্টেশনে ঢোকেন। তাঁরা এক জনকে চ্যালেঞ্জ করেন এবং কথা না-শোনায় গুলি করেন। লন্ডন অ্যান্থ্রাধ্যাক্স সার্ভিস ঘটনাস্থলে এসেছিল। ঘটনাস্থলেই ওই ব্যক্তিকে মৃত বলে ঘোষণা করা হয়।” ঘটনার আগে কেনসিংটন এবং ঘটনার পরে ডব্লিউল স্টেশন বন্ধ করে দেওয়া হয়েছিল। এই দুই স্টেশনের মাঝে হল স্টকওয়াল।



স্টকওয়াল স্টেশনে বিভ্রান্ত পুলিশও। — রয়টার্স

ব্র্যার জানিয়েছেন, সন্ত্রাস-দমন অভিযানের অংশ হিসাবেই আজ এক জনকে গুলি করা হয়েছে। পুলিশের সন্ত্রাস-দমন শাখাও বলেছে, ক্লোজড সার্কিট টিভি-র ছবি দেখে এবং কালকের বিস্ফোরণস্থল থেকে পাওয়া ছেঁড়াখোঁড়া রুকস্যাক ও অন্যান্য প্রমাণ থেকে অনেক সূত্র পেয়েছে পুলিশ। সেই অনুসারেই এক জনকে অনুসরণ করা হয়েছিল, পরে গুলি চালানো হয়।

কিন্তু ক্লোজড সার্কিট টিভি-র সাহায্য নিয়ে কালকের চারটি বিস্ফোরণের জন্য দায়ী সম্ভাব্য চার জঙ্গির ছবি প্রকাশ করে দিয়ে তাদের সন্ধান তথ্য চেয়েছে পুলিশ। সেটা হয়েছে

- রুকস্যাকের আতঙ্ক তাড়া করছে লন্ডনকে...পৃঃ ৫
- মুশারফের বিরুদ্ধে কট্টরপন্থীদের বিক্ষোভ...পৃঃ ৫

গুলি, হতভম্ব লন্ডন

উপরে নির্দেশ আছে, সন্দেহভাজন কোনও ব্যক্তিকে গুলি করে মারতে হবে। আগে নিয়ম ছিল শুধু গুলি চালানো যাবে। কঠোর নীতি নিয়ে পুলিশ সন্ত্রাস মোকাবিলায় নামার পরে স্বভাবতই ব্রিটেনের মুসলিম সম্প্রদায় আরও সন্ত্রস্ত হয়ে পড়েছেন। সন্দেহ হলেই কেন গুলি করে মারা হবে, তার ব্যাখ্যাও দাবি করেছে মুসলিম সংগঠন। বর্তমানের পক্ষ থেকে অবশ্য ফের আশঙ্কা দেওয়া হয়েছে, মুসলিমদের উপরে প্রত্যাঘাত করার কোনও মানে হয় না এবং তেমন ঘটনা ঘটলে কড়া হাতে মোকাবিলা করা হবে। এই আশঙ্কায় মতোও কিন্তু ঘটনা ঘটছেই। ৭/৭-এর এক আত্মঘাতী জার্মান লিডসের বাড়িতে আতঙ্ক লাগানোর চেষ্টা হয়েছিল বলে খবর পেয়েই তল্লাশি শুরু করেছে পুলিশ।

সাধারণ মানুষ থেকে পুলিশ-প্রশাসনের কর্তা, সকলেই এখন আশঙ্কিত। তাদের আরও বিস্ফোরণ বা জঙ্গি হানার। তাঁদের কপালের ভাঁজ আরও বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে ‘বানিং ক্রস’ তত্ত্ব। লন্ডনের উত্তর, দক্ষিণ, পূর্ব ও পশ্চিম সব প্রান্তেই বিস্ফোরণ ঘটেছে। এই বিস্ফোরণগুলিকে সরলরেখা দিয়ে যোগ করলে একটা ক্রসের চেহারা নেয়। আল কায়দা ইউরোপের হুমকি অনুযায়ী, লন্ডনকে উত্তর থেকে দক্ষিণে এবং পূর্ব থেকে পশ্চিমে জালিয়ে দেওয়া হবে। একেই বলা হচ্ছে ‘বানিং ক্রস’ তত্ত্ব। এখনও পর্যন্ত ঘটনাপ্রবাহ সেই হুমকির সঙ্গে মিলে যেতে শুরু করায় আতঙ্ক আরও জ্বালিয়ে বসছে। টনি ব্র্যারের দেওয়া জঙ্গির মতোও কঠোর নীতির অঙ্গ হিসাবে এখন পুলিশের

প্রথম পাতার পর স্টকওয়ালের ঘটনার পরে। সূত্রাং যাকে আজ মারা হয়েছে, সে যে ওই চার জনের মধ্যে পড়ছে না, সেটা পরিষ্কার হয়ে যাচ্ছে। নিহত ব্যক্তির সঙ্গে তা হলে বিস্ফোরণের যোগ দিক কী রকম, সে ব্যাপারে বহু প্রশ্নেরই উত্তর মিলবে না।

জানিয়েছেন, রুকস্যাক কাঁখে, জ্যাকেট পরিহিত এক ব্যক্তিকে দৌড়তে দেখেছিলেন তাঁরা। পিছনে বন্দুক হাতে দৌড়ছিলেন আট-নজন পুলিশ অফিসার। চিংকার করে যাত্রীদের সরে যেতে বলছিলেন তাঁরা। হুড়াহুড়ি এবং আতঙ্কের মধ্যে ওই ব্যক্তি ব্যারিকেড টপকে প্লাটফর্মের ভিতরে ঢুকে পড়ে। তার পরেই তাকে গুলি করে পুলিশ, সে মাটিতে পড়ে যাওয়ার পরেও গুলি করা হয়। খুব কাছ থেকে পাঁচটি বুলেট বিয়ে দেওয়া হয় তার শরীরে।

Panic revisited two Thursdays later

People caught up in a series of incidents around London this afternoon give their accounts of events

"I was in a middle carriage and the train was not far short of Warren Street station when suddenly the door between my carriage and the next one burst open and dozens of people started rushing through. Some were falling, there was mass panic. It was difficult to get the story from any of them but when I got to ground level there was an Italian young man comforting an Italian girl who told me he had seen what had happened. He said that a man was carrying a rucksack and the rucksack suddenly exploded. It was a minor explosion but enough to blow open the rucksack. The man then made an exclamation as if something had gone wrong. At that point everyone rushed from the carriage."

Victoria Line passenger Ivan McCracken

"I was going into the station, and I heard a noise. Then I heard noises, like shouting and screaming, and suddenly I saw a guy coming out and people chasing him. He came out from the station, he was running and he was a little bit confused, looking right and left. I couldn't really catch him because I was carrying two heavy bags, and then he passed by me. There was another guy who was chasing him. We saw a policeman, so we waved, like, he was going that way. I don't know if they caught him"

Hugo Palit at Warren Street station

"As far as I know from what a lady at the top of the escalator was saying, someone came into the carriage, dumped the bag and ran out. Some people tried to stop him but he ran out. I was in the carriage next to the one where the bag was. All of a sudden there was a popping, it sounded like champagne popping. I didn't think anything of it at the time but then I heard a lot of shouting from the next door carriage. People started saying, 'Smoke, smoke'. One of the train guys came through and said 'Get off the train, we're evacuating, everyone out'. As we were walking past the carriage we could see the bag sitting on the chair. It was a big, black rucksack, like the backpack-type ones that you get. When they got upstairs, people were really distressed, one lady was crying."

A witness at Oval station

"We work underneath the station in the arches and police came in and kind of told us to get out basically, just to drop everything and get out. We have left all our cars and everything in there. We didn't hear any noise but we didn't hear trains for about a good half-an-hour before and they just told us to get out and we ran out. When we first came out of the arches we just mingled around but now they are telling us to get back."

Rebecca Hamilton near Shepherds Bush station
The Guardian



A television grab shows an unidentified man being escorted from Whitehall near Downing Street by armed police officers on Thursday.

Situation under control, says Blair

JAMES Sturcke and Agencies
London, July 21

TONY BLAIR said this afternoon that police had the situation in London under control once more, after explosive devices were reported on public transport at lunchtime. The Prime Minister said he hoped the capital would quickly get back to normal and announced that he was returning to his scheduled meetings after consultation with the government's emergency committee, Cobra.

"These incidents obviously have been serious," Blair said during a briefing held in Downing Street. "We know why these things are done. They are done to scare people and to make them worried. In this incident there appear to have been no casualties. We have to react calmly and continue as much as possible as normal." Blair's engagements for the



afternoon include a meeting with intelligence and security officials to discuss government responses to the terrorist threat. The Prime Minister indicated that the meeting would go ahead.

"I am meeting the Australian Prime Minister now and will then go back to the cycle of meetings. The police are fairly clear about what has happened. We will get the transport system back

running as soon as possible. I think that police and security services have got the situation under control and we want to get the transport system back to normal as soon as possible."

Blair thanked Australian Prime Minister John Howard, who is currently on a visit to Britain and who stood beside Blair during his briefing, for his country's support. He earlier cancelled a visit to a school in east London to meet cabinet colleagues and security services at Cobra's underground meeting room in Whitehall. Blair's meeting this afternoon with senior officials from the police and intelligence services is one of several planned to formulate the government's response to the July 7 attacks. It aims particularly to discuss what new powers those services may need to deal with the threat of terrorism.

The Guardian

TIMELINE

12.25pm Police evacuate Shepherd's Bush station following an attempt to set off an explosion.

12.30pm Emergency services called to Oval station. 20 or 30 passengers evacuated.

12.45pm London ambulance service sends five vehicles to Warren Street station after reports of a rucksack exploding.

1.15pm Pubs and offices near Warren Street station evacuated.

1.22pm London Underground suspends services on the Hammersmith and City, Victoria and Northern lines.

1.30pm Driver of a number 26 bus reports a bang followed by a smell of smoke from the upper deck while driving along Hackney Road.

2.24pm Metropolitan Police confirm armed officers have been deployed to University College hospital where they are dealing with an incident.

3.10pm London Underground suspends Piccadilly and Bakerloo lines.

3.20pm British Transport Police confirm no trace of chemical agents found at Warren Street station.

3.25pm London Fire Brigade says officers deployed at Warren Street tube station as precaution.

4pm Armed police and dog handlers arrive at Shepherd's Bush to begin searches of sealed streets.

22 JUL 2005

THE HINDUSTAN

বেসামাল লন্ডনে ফিরল সন্ত্রাস

২১ জুলাই ২০০৫

এ বারেও বিস্ফোরণ টিউবে-বাসে, রক্তপাত নেই, তাই স্বস্তিতে ব্লেয়ার

শ্রাবণী বসু • লন্ডন



আতঙ্কের জর্ডন। শেফার্ডস ব্রুশ টিউব স্টেশনে বিহ্বল শিশু। বৃহস্পতিবার বিস্ফোরণের পরে। - এ এফ পি

২১ জুলাই: পনেরো দিন আগেই তাঁর ছাইয়ের মতো ফ্যাকাশে মুখ দেখেছিল গোটা বিশ্ব। আজ, ফের লন্ডনে চার-চারটি বিস্ফোরণের পরেও ব্রিটেনের প্রধানমন্ত্রী টনি ব্লেয়ার ততটা বিহ্বল নন। এই স্বস্তি কিন্তু নেহাতই বরাত জোরের। নইলে ৭/৭-এর পর ফের লন্ডনের ডায়েরিতে আর একটা 'সন্ত্রাস-দিবস' হিসাবে ঢুকে যেতেই পারত ২১/৭।

৭/৭ থেকে ২১/৭। 'অ্যাকশন রিপ্লি' টিক ১৫ দিনের মাথায়। বৃহস্পতিবারেই। ঘটনাচক্রে আজই দুপুর একটা নাগাদ ৭/৭-এর নিহতদের বিশেষ স্মরণ-অনুষ্ঠান হওয়ার কথা ছিল। আবার তিনটি টিউব স্টেশন আর একটা দোতলা বাসে বিস্ফোরণ। যদিও এ বার অনেক ছোট আকারে। জুলাইয়ের সাত তারিখ বিস্ফোরণে নিহত হয়েছিলেন ৫৬ জন। আজ কেউ মারা যাননি, আহতের সংখ্যাও মাত্র এক। দু'জনকে ধরা হলেও পরে পুলিশ জানিয়েছে, তারা অস্ত্র আজকের ঘটনার সঙ্গে জড়িত নয়।

সাত তারিখ বিস্ফোরণের মুখে পড়েছিলেন অফিসযাত্রীরা। সকাল ৮টা ৫০ মিনিটে। আজ সময়টা আরও পরে। দুপুর সাড়ে ১২টায়। তখন অধিকাংশ অফিসেই চলছিল লাঞ্চ ব্রেক। সে বার আক্রান্ত হয়েছিল লিভারপুল স্ট্রিট, কিংস ক্রস এবং এজওয়ার্ড রোড স্টেশন। এ বার প্রথম বিস্ফোরণের খবর পাওয়া যায় ওভাল স্টেশন থেকে, ১২টা ৩৮ মিনিটে। দ্বিতীয়টি ওয়ারেন স্ট্রিটে, ১২-৪৫-এ। এখানেই এক বৃদ্ধা সামান্য আহত হন। ১২টা ৫১ মিনিটে শেফার্ড ব্রুশ স্টেশনে একটি বিস্ফোরক ভরা প্যাকেট পাওয়া যায়। তবে তা থেকে বিস্ফোরণ হয়নি। এর পরেই, ট্যাভিস্টক স্কোয়ারের ঘটনার পুনরাবৃত্তি ঘটিয়ে ১টা ৪২ মিনিটে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে একটি দোতলা বাসে। এ বার হ্যাকনি রোডে, ২৬ নম্বর রুটের বাসে। বিস্ফোরণের ধাক্কায় বাসটির জানলা খুলে বেরিয়ে আসে।

সন্ত্রাসবিরোধী অভিযানে অন্যতম সঙ্গী অস্ট্রেলিয়ার প্রধানমন্ত্রী জন হাওয়ার্ডের সঙ্গে বৈঠকের মধ্যেই আজ সাংবাদিক সম্মেলনে এলেন ব্লেয়ার। বললেন, "মানুষকে সন্ত্রাস করে তুলতেই এই হামলা। কিন্তু আমরা সন্ত্রাসবিরোধী অবস্থান থেকে সরছি না। লন্ডনের মানুষ আজ ফের প্রমাণ করলেন, তাঁরা কী ধাতুতে তৈরি।" ৭

জুলাই বিস্ফোরণের পরে ব্লেয়ার বা পুলিশ-প্রশাসন তৎক্ষণাৎ কারও নাম নেননি। শুধু একটি অখ্যাত গোষ্ঠী নিজেদের আল-কায়দা ঘনিষ্ঠ বলে দাবি করে ঘটনার দায় স্বীকার করেছিল। আজও ব্রিটিশ প্রশাসন একই ভাবে

বলেছে, ৭/৭-এর সঙ্গে আজকের ঘটনার যোগ আছে কি না, তা এখনই বলার সময় হয়নি। আল কায়দার হাত আছে কি না, বলা যাচ্ছে না তা-ও। তবে, সে দিন যে ধরনের বিস্ফোরক ব্যবহৃত হয়েছিল, আজও সেই ধরনের

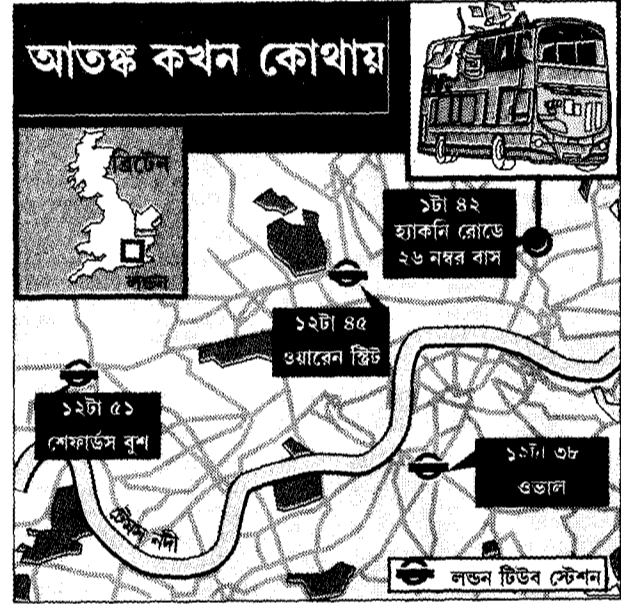
বিস্ফোরক নিয়েই হানা দিয়েছিল জঙ্গিরা। কপাল ভাল যে, বিস্ফোরণ খটাতে শেষ পর্যন্ত তারা ব্যর্থ হয়েছে। মাত্র দু'সপ্তাহের মধ্যে, এমনকী যখন ৭/৭-এ নিহতদের পূর্ণাঙ্গ তালিকা অবধি প্রকাশ করা যায়নি, তার আগে ফের এই হামলা অবশ্যই লন্ডনের নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থার শিকড়ে কাপুনি ধরিয়ে দিয়ে গেল।

ওভাল স্টেশনে আজ বিস্ফোরণের উৎস ছিল একটি কালো রঙের হোল্ডঅল। একটি লোক হোল্ডঅলটি নিয়ে ট্রেনে উঠেছিল। তার পর হঠাৎই সেটা নামিয়ে রেখে দৌড় দেয় সে। দু'সপ্তাহ আগের দগদগে স্মৃতি বুকে নিয়ে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে লোকটিকে তাড়া করেন যাত্রীরা। তবে ধরতে পারেননি। তার পরেই কিছু একটা ফটার আওয়াজ, 'অনেকটা শ্যায়েপনের বোতলের কর্ক ফটার মতো।'

ওয়ারেন স্ট্রিটের প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীরা জানিয়েছেন, একটি লোক তার পিঠ থেকে একটি রকসাক ট্রেনের কামরার ভিতরে ছুড়ে ফেলে পালায়। তার মধ্যে একটা পেরেকবোমাও ছিল। প্রত্যক্ষদর্শীদের কথায়, তারা গুলি চলায় মতো শব্দ পেয়েছেন, বাতাসে টায়ার পোড়া গন্ধ ভাসছিল। তবে পুলিশের মতে, গোলাগুলি চলেনি। ডিটোনেটরগুলি ফেটেছে, তবে বিস্ফোরণ হয়নি। এই ঘটনার পরেই খবর রটে যায়, লোকের তাড়া খেয়ে দুকুতী কাছেই ইউনিভার্সিটি কলেজ হাসপাতালে ঢুকে পড়েছে। পুলিশ ক্রত গোটা জায়গাটা ঘিরে ফেলে। স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ড সূত্রেই বলা হয়েছে, লোকটি সম্ভবত এশীয়। ছ'ফুট দু'ইঞ্চি লম্বা। তার গায়ে নীল রঙের জামা, আর তা থেকে অনেকগুলো তার বেরিয়ে ঝুলছিল। প্রায় দু'ঘণ্টা হাসপাতাল চক্র অবরোধ করে রাখার পর পুলিশ শুধু জানায়, অপারেশন শেষ। কিন্তু লোকটি ধরা পড়েছে কি না, স্পষ্ট নয়।

তবে, ডাউনিং স্ট্রিট সংলগ্ন কড়া নিরাপত্তা ঘেরা হোয়াইটহল এলাকা থেকে এক ব্যক্তিকে ধরা হয়েছে। তার সঙ্গেও একটা রকসাক ছিল। তবে তাতে বিস্ফোরক ছিল কি না, জানা যায়নি। তাকে ধরতে পুলিশের বিশেষ বেগ পেতেও হয়নি। লোকটি নিজেই ফুটপাথে শুয়ে পড়ে মাথার উপরে হাত তুলে দেয়। ডাউনিং স্ট্রিট লাগোয়া গ্রেট স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ড থেকে আরও এক

এর পর সাতের পাতায়
● চাকরির খোঁজে এসে...পৃঃ ৭
● ঘোষণা বুশের ...পৃঃ ৭



ঘর অগোছালোই, হাড়ে হাড়ে বুঝছে লন্ডন

ইসলামাবাদ ও লন্ডন, ২১ জুলাই: পাকিস্তানকে দোষ দিয়ে লাভ নেই, ঘর গোছাতে হবে ব্রিটেনকেও। পাকিস্তান টিভিতে পাকিস্তানের প্রেসিডেন্ট পারভেজ মুশারফ যখন কথাগুলো বলছেন, তার বেশ কয়েক ঘণ্টা আগেই এই প্রবন্ধের উত্তর হাতড়াতে হয়েছে লন্ডনকে। ৭ জুলাইয়ের পর নিরাপত্তা, তত্ত্বাবধি, ধরপাকড় শুরু হয়েছে। কিন্তু ব্রিটেনে কী চলছে? নিরাপত্তা কোথায়? পাল্টা প্রশ্ন ছুড়ে দিয়েছেন মুশারফ। বলছেন, "অনেক জঙ্গি সংগঠনই ব্রিটেনে অবশ্যে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে। তাদের দিকে নজর দিক ব্লেয়ার সরকার।"

পারভেজ তো সেই প্রশ্নই তুলেছেন। অনেক বৃহত্তর পরিপ্রেক্ষিতে। ৭ জুলাইয়ের বিস্ফোরণে নিহত জঙ্গিরা ব্রিটেনের নাগরিক কিন্তু তাদের শিকড় পাকিস্তানে। সে দেশের মাদ্রাসায় তাদের যাওয়ায় ছিল, এই তথ্যের সূত্র ধরে পাকিস্তানের উপরে আন্তর্জাতিক মহলের চাপ বাড়ছে, ধরপাকড় শুরু হয়েছে। কিন্তু ব্রিটেনে কী চলছে? নিরাপত্তা কোথায়? পাল্টা প্রশ্ন ছুড়ে দিয়েছেন মুশারফ। বলছেন, "অনেক জঙ্গি সংগঠনই ব্রিটেনে অবশ্যে ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে। তাদের দিকে নজর দিক ব্লেয়ার সরকার।"

নজর তো দিতেই হবে ব্রিটেনকে। তা সে দেশের নিরাপত্তা ব্যবস্থাই হোক, বা দেশের ভিতরে জঙ্গি ঘাঁটি-আরও ময়না তদন্তের প্রয়োজন। কারণ এই ঘটনা বুঝিয়ে দিয়ে গিয়েছে, ৭/৭-এর পরের সতর্কতা, নিরাপত্তার মধ্যেও সংগঠিত ভাবে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানো সম্ভব। কিন্তু ঘটনা কারা? প্রাথমিক ভাবে বিশেষজ্ঞেরা তুলে ধরছেন দু'টি সম্ভাবনা। ভয়ঙ্কর আশঙ্কার কথা। একটি ধারণা অনুযায়ী, ৭/৭-এ জড়িত একই জঙ্গি গোষ্ঠী এ বারও জড়িত। তারা ফের দেখিয়ে দিয়েছে, যতই ধরপাকড় হোক, নিহত সদস্যদের পরিচয় জানা যাক, পুলিশ তাদের টিকি ছুঁতে

ঘর অগোছালোই,

প্রথম পাতার পর

পারেনি। দেখিয়ে দিয়েছে, লন্ডনের বুকে, এত নিরাপত্তা, সতর্কতাকে তুড়ি দিয়ে উড়িয়ে দ্রুত, সংগঠিত আঘাত হানার ক্ষমতা তাদের আছে। একই ধরনের বিস্ফোরক দিয়ে। রয়াল ইনস্টিটিউট অফ ইনটারন্যাশন্যাল অ্যাক্টিভিস্টস-এর রবার্ট আয়ার্স এই তত্ত্বের জোরালো সমর্থক। কারণ তাঁর কথায়, “চার জন জঙ্গি মারা গিয়েছে ঠিকই। কিন্তু যে অর্ধের জোরে, প্রশিক্ষণের জোরে তারা বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছিল, সেই পরিকাঠামো তো শেষ হয়ে যায়নি। সেটা তো রয়েছেই গিয়েছে। ফলে এমন ঘটনা তো হওয়ারই ছিল।”

তাতে অবশ্য প্রশ্ন ওঠে, ৭ জুলাই যারা এত বড় ঘটনা ঘটাল, তারা এ বার ‘সামান্য’ ঘটনাতেই খেমে থাকল কেন? আয়ার্স মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন, লুটন স্টেশনে জঙ্গিদের ব্যবহৃত যে গাড়ি পাওয়া গিয়েছিল, তাতে প্রচুর বিস্ফোরক পাওয়া গিয়েছিল। হয়তো দ্বিতীয় বিস্ফোরণের জন্যই এই মালমশলা জোগাড় করা হয়েছিল। পুলিশ ধরে ফেলায় সেই বিস্ফোরক ব্যবহার করা যায়নি। কিন্তু দ্রুতই পুলিশি ব্যবস্থাকে তারা ফাঁকি দিয়েছে অনায়াসে। পরিকল্পনা মতো দ্বিতীয় বিস্ফোরণ ঘটিয়েছে। কারণ তাদের সব থেকে বড় উদ্দেশ্য তো লোকজনকে আতঙ্কিত করা। আজও তো লিডসের একটা বাড়িতে তল্লাশি চালিয়ে কিছু বিস্ফোরক নিষ্ক্রিয় করেছে পুলিশ। ৭/৭-এর জঙ্গিরা এই বাড়িটা তাদের কারখানা হিসাবে ব্যবহার করত বলে খবর। কিংস কলেজের নিরাপত্তা বিশেষজ্ঞ মাইকেল ক্লার্ক বলছেন, ৭/৭-এর পাণ্ডারা যে ভাবে পুরো কাজটা করেছে, বোম্বাই যাচ্ছে, তারা পেশাদার, তারা জানে কী করছে। তাঁর কথায়, “একটা বিস্ফোরণ নয়। তারা বড় একটা অভিযানে নেমেছে। আসলে জঙ্গিদের মানসিকতাই আলাদা। একটা-দুটো বোমা ফাটানো নয়, তারা

মানুষের মনে এই ভয়টাই ঢোকাতে চায়, সব জায়গায় বোমা লুকনো আছে। ফাটল বলে। এই ভয় নিয়েই আমাদের বাস করতে হবে যদি না সরকার কিছু করে বা জনগণ নিজেরা কিছু করে।”

আজকের বিস্ফোরণ মূলত আতঙ্ক ছড়াতে, স্বীকার করছেন টনি ব্রয়ারও। বিস্ফোরণের প্রভাব বা তীব্রতা কম বলে ব্যাপারটা উড়িয়ে দেওয়ার নয়, তা মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছেন তিনি। তবে ৭ জুলাইয়ের ঘটনার সঙ্গে আজকের যোগাযোগ আছে কি না তা এখনই বলা সম্ভব নয়, জানালেন ব্রয়ার।

বিশেষজ্ঞদের একাংশ বলছেন, হয়তো এই কাজ অন্য কোনও দলের। ৭/৭ এর অনুসরণে বিস্ফোরণ ঘটানোই ছিল তাদের লক্ষ্য। তা হলেও মূল প্রশ্ন এড়ানো যাচ্ছে না। কারণ, যে-ই করে থাকুক, আজকের বিস্ফোরণও সংগঠিত। ষড়যন্ত্র করে পরিকল্পনামাফিক তা ঘটানো হয়েছে। সুতরাং এত নিরাপত্তা, তল্লাশি, ধরপাকড়ের অর্থটা কী? একটা বড় ফাঁক তো রয়েছেই গিয়েছে। মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের কর্তারা অবশ্য প্রথম থেকে একটা কথা শুনিয়েই রেখেছেন, লন্ডনের টিউব রেল, যেখানে লক্ষ লক্ষ লোক যাতায়াত করেন, সেখানে জনে জনে তল্লাশি চালানো সম্ভব নয়। নিশ্চিত নিরাপত্তার ব্যবস্থা করা সম্ভব নয়। সাধারণ মানুষকেই সতর্ক থাকতে হবে। তাতে যদি বিপদ এড়ানো যায়। আজও দোষীদের ধরার জন্য সেই সাধারণ মানুষেরই দ্বারস্থ স্কটল্যান্ড ইয়ার্ড। মোবাইলে কেউ ছবি তুলে থাকলে তা পাঠাতে বলা হয়েছে পুলিশকে। নিরাপত্তার ফসকা গেরো কোথায় তা নিয়ে হিমশিম, অন্য দিকে বিদেশি জঙ্গি নয়, দেশে জন্ম-কর্ম যাদের তারাই সেই দেশের বিরুদ্ধে অস্ত্র তুলে নিচ্ছে, এই বাস্তবের সঙ্গে খাপ খাওয়াতে না পারা। দুয়ে মিলে আজ আর এক বার বিভ্রান্ত হয়ে রয়েছে লন্ডন।- পিটিআই, রয়টার্স

জঙ্গি দমনে জেহাদের ডাক মুশারফের

প্রথম পাতার পর

পৌঁছেছে। মুশারফের নির্দেশের পরে কয়েক দিন ধরেই এই অভিযান চলছে। বিশ্বের যে কোনও প্রান্তে সন্ত্রাস হলেই পাকিস্তানের নাম চলে আসে বলে দুঃখ করেছেন মুশারফ। কিন্তু সেখানেই না-খেমে ব্রিটেনের মতো দেশকে পরামর্শ দিয়েছেন, ঘরে দৃষ্টি দিতে। একেবারে ৭/৭-এর তদন্ত থেকে প্রাপ্ত তথ্য তুলে ধরে বলেছেন, সে দিনের চার আত্মঘাতী জঙ্গির মধ্যে তিন জন না হয় পাক-

বংশোদ্ভূত। চতুর্থ ব্যক্তি যে জামাইকার বংশোদ্ভূত, সে ক্ষেত্রে কী বলবে ব্রিটেন? তা ছাড়া, প্রথম তিন জনের বাবা-মা শুধু পাকিস্তানি। তাদের বড় হওয়া, শিক্ষা, জীবিকা সবই তো ব্রিটেনের। সুতরাং, ব্রয়ারের দেশ দায় এড়ায় কী করে? এর পরেই মুশারফ বলেছেন, একে অপরকে দোষ দিয়ে লাভ নেই। সন্ত্রাস মোকাবিলায় পরস্পরকে সহযোগিতা করলেই বরং কাজের কাজ হয়। তবে লন্ডন-কাণ্ডের নিন্দা করতে ভালেননি।

বলেন, এতে পাকিস্তান ও ব্রিটেনে বসবাসকারী পাকিস্তানিদের ভাবমূর্তি ক্ষুণ্ণ হয়েছে। মুশারফ যে ভাবে ব্রিটেনকে ঘর গোছাতে বললেন, কাল প্রায় একই টঙে লন্ডনের মেয়র কেন লিভিংস্টোন বলেছিলেন, সন্ত্রাসের বাড়বাড়ন্তের জন্য পশ্চিমী দুনিয়া অনেকটা দায়ী। যে অবস্থায় মুসলিম যুব সম্প্রদায় সন্ত্রাসের পথে হটছে, একই পরিস্থিতিতে পশ্চিমী তরুণেরাও এই সিদ্ধান্ত নিত। — রয়টার্স, পি টি আই

22 JUL 2005

ANADIPAZAR PAKISTAN

Blair's base under attack again

WKT
51-3
272



Oval Station cordoned off after a series of bombs exploded in London's transport system on Thursday. — AFP

'...Then all hell broke loose'

The Independent

LONDON, July 21. — Mr Haider Iqbal was on his last delivery of the day for his courier company when he noticed the ashen-faced travellers leaving the Hammersmith & City line Tube station in Shepherd's Bush shortly before 12.30 p.m.

But only after he stopped his van near the west London station did the 42-year-old Turk realise he was witnessing the immediate aftermath of an attempt to again inflict terror and disruption on the capital.

Later, his van marooned behind a police cordon, Mr Iqbal said: "There was a man in a blue suit who looked very pale and shaken. He said he thought he was very lucky because someone had left a bag in his carriage and all hell had broken loose.

"He said the man carrying the bag had suddenly run out of the station and people ran away from the train. He said he thought he had narrowly avoided being killed. He was holding a sandwich he had crushed without noticing."

Police are investigating witness reports that a black or Asian man was seen climbing down a wall beside the



A TV grab of a man arrested in Downing Street on Thursday. — AFP

platforms, trying to climb a fence to enter gardens, then sprinting towards the nearby BBC TV Centre.

Meanwhile, passengers on a Tube train in south London desperately tried to catch a man who fled after his rucksack exploded in a carriage, witnesses said.

A woman who was on the train at Oval station on the Northern Line described seeing a man dash off the train at about 12.30 p.m., leaving the bag behind. Others said a man waiting at the station dumped the bag in a carriage and fled back up the escalator.

The passenger told Sky News: "There was a little explosion. As soon

as the door opened the man ran away and people were trying to run after him. There were three men struggling with him but he ran off and they couldn't catch him." Another witness said: "There was a popping, it sounded like champagne popping. Then I heard shouting from the next-door carriage. People started saying, 'Smoke, smoke'. One of the train guys came through and said 'We're evacuating, everyone out'.

"As we were walking past the carriage we could see the bag sitting on the chair. It was a big, black rucksack, like the backpack-type ones that you get.

"Those in the ticket hall upstairs said they saw a young man of Asian appearance aged about 18 run through the station, pursued by others shortly before 1pm. Several passers-by also gave chase with one even attempting to rugby tackle the man," she added.

Hugo Caillat (25), who lives nearby, said he was inside the station buying a ticket. "I heard people shouting and then this young Asian came running past. He was looking around to see if anyone was behind him. He looked confused. He was shouting: 'What's wrong with these people?'"

UK Special Branch to track Muslims

VIKRAM Dodd
London, July 20

SPECIAL INTELLIGENCE units are being planned across Britain to monitor Muslims so the authorities can collect "community by community" knowledge of where extremism is building up. The special squads, to be known as Muslim Contact Units and staffed by Special Branch officers, will be established in areas including Yorkshire, northwest England and parts of the Midlands. After the London bombings police admit their intelligence of what goes on in Muslim communities is "low", and urgently needs to be boosted. The police and Home Office say that a Muslim Contact Unit operating in London has already helped thwart extremist attempts to recruit young British Muslims to violent jihad, by working with Islamic communities.

The establishment of the special units is one of the first concrete counter-terrorist measures to emerge after the London bombings. Tony Blair met moderate British Muslim leaders on Tuesday and agreed on a taskforce to produce measures to tackle extremism.

The Special Branch units will have language skills and seek detailed knowledge of the Islamic communities in their areas. They will fulfil two roles, helping protect Muslim communities from Islamophobic abuse and attacks, while also gathering intelligence on extremist activity.

The Guardian

21 JUL 2006

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

বিশেষজ্ঞদের মতে দায়ী ব্রিটারের ইরাক-নীতি

শ্রাবণী বসু • লন্ডন

১৮ জুলাই: লন্ডন বিশ্বেফারণের জন্য কি ব্রিটারের ইরাক-নীতিই দায়ী? ব্রিটেনে এই বিতর্কে নতুন ইন্ধন দিল বিশেষজ্ঞদের একটি রিপোর্ট।

লন্ডনের একটি গবেষণা প্রতিষ্ঠান আজ ব্রিটেনে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপের জন্য ব্রিটারের ইরাক-নীতিকেই দায়ী করেছে। লন্ডন বিশ্বেফারণের সরাসরি উল্লেখ না করলেও রয়াল ইনস্টিটিউট অফ ইন্টারন্যাশনাল অ্যাফেয়ার্স-এর বিশেষজ্ঞেরা বলেছেন, আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক প্রসঙ্গে বুশের পাশে থাকার জন্য

শ্বেফারণ

সম্ভ্রাসবাদীদের লক্ষ্য হয়ে উঠছে ব্রিটেন। ইরাক যুদ্ধের সঙ্গে ব্রিটেনে সম্ভ্রাসবাদের সম্পর্ক নেই, প্রধানমন্ত্রী ব্রিটারের এই দাবি সম্পূর্ণ খারিজ করে দেওয়া হয়েছে এই রিপোর্টে।

পল উইলকিনসন এবং ফ্র্যাঙ্ক গ্রেগরির লেখা রিপোর্টে বলা হয়েছে, “ইরাকের বর্তমান পরিস্থিতিতে সম্ভ্রাসবাদের মোকাবিলা আরও কঠিন হয়ে পড়েছে। আফগানিস্তানের কারজাই সরকারকে মদত দিয়ে ওসামা বিন লাদেনকে ধরা নয়, ব্রিটেনের আর্থিক ও অন্যান্য সাহায্য ব্যয় হতে থাকে অন্য খাতে। সেই সুযোগে আল কায়দা আরও নতুন জঙ্গির প্রশিক্ষণ ও তহবিল বাড়ানোর কাজ চালিয়ে নিয়ে গিয়েছে। ইরাকের পরিস্থিতিতে কারণ হিসাবে দেখিয়ে লোককে উসকানো তাদের পক্ষে সহজ হয়েছে।”

বিশেষজ্ঞদের ভাষায়, “আফগানিস্তান ও ইরাক নীতি আর আমেরিকার ঘনিষ্ঠতম বন্ধু হয়ে ওঠা— দু’য়ে মিলে সম্ভ্রাসবাদীদের লক্ষ্য হয়ে

উঠেছে ব্রিটেন।” সম্ভ্রাসের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযানে ব্রিটেনের ভূমিকা নিয়ে ব্যঙ্গ করে রিপোর্টে। বলা হয়েছে, “ব্রিটেন আমেরিকার সঙ্গে কাঁধ মিলিয়ে সম্ভ্রাসবাদ বিরোধী অভিযান চালাচ্ছে। কিন্তু সিদ্ধান্তগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে ব্রিটেনকে চালকের আসনে দেখা যায় না। সব সময় সে পিছনের আসনেই থাকে।”

এই রিপোর্টকে কার্যত ‘সম্ভ্রাসবাদের জন্য অজুহাত খোঁজার সামিল’ বলেছেন ব্রিটেনের বিদেশমন্ত্রী জ্যাক স্ট্র। তাঁর দাবি, ব্রিটেনে জঙ্গি কার্যকলাপের সঙ্গে ইরাক যুদ্ধের কোনও সম্পর্ক নেই। ব্রাসেলসে তিনি বলেন, “সম্ভ্রাসবাদের জন্য অজুহাত খোঁজা এ বার বন্ধ করা উচিত। যে সব দেশের সঙ্গে ইরাক-যুদ্ধের সম্পর্ক নেই, তেমন অনেক দেশও তো সম্ভ্রাসবাদের শিকার হয়েছে।” রিপোর্টের সমালোচনা করেছেন প্রতিরক্ষা মন্ত্রী জন রিডও। সম্ভ্রাসবাদ শুধু ব্রিটেনের নয়, আন্তর্জাতিক সমস্যা বলে মন্তব্য করেন তিনি। রিডের কথায়, “ইতিহাসই আমাদের শিখিয়েছে, কোনও সমস্যার মোকাবিলা না করে পাশ কাটিয়ে গেলে ক্ষতিই হয় বেশি।”

বিদেশি উগ্রপন্থীদের জন্য ব্রিটেনকে ‘আদর্শ ডেরা’ হিসাবে তৈরি করার জন্য ব্রিটারকে দুষেছেন পল এবং ফ্র্যাঙ্ক। তাঁদের অভিযোগ, উত্তর আয়ারল্যান্ডের সম্ভ্রাসবাদীদের দিকেই বেশি মনোযোগ দেওয়া হয়েছে। কিন্তু অন্য দেশের অনেক জঙ্গি নব্বইয়ের দশক থেকেই ব্রিটেনে ডেরা বেঁধেছে। অর্থ জোগাড় করেছে। এ জন্য অনেক রাষ্ট্র ব্রিটেনের উপর ক্ষুব্ধ হওয়া সত্ত্বেও এই সরকার তাদের অব্যাহতই কাজ চালাতে দিয়েছে।

No inquiry on Intelligence lapses: UK

LONDON, July 17. — Britain today said there will be no inquiry into why the bombers who carried out the London blasts were not nabbed earlier amidst reports that one of them had been assessed by an intelligence agency as not posing a threat, even as a set of proposed anti-terror laws were circulated among lawmakers for speedy adoption.

Lord Chancellor Charles Falconer said “now is not the time” for an inquiry, but for a decision on what legal steps were needed against terror, referring to the anti-terror Bill on which discussions will begin tomorrow.

The London bombings did not mean that the intelligence and security services had failed or that existing laws were wrong, Falconer said.

He also denied that Britain has been “ultra-liberal” on Muslim refugees, saying “what we have got to do now is unify all the forces in our society, in particular in the Muslim community against those people who are fundamentally at odds with our values”.

His comments came after the *Sunday Times* reported that British intelligence agency MI5 had assessed one of the four bombers, Md Sidique Khan, but decided he was not a threat.

Also today, Defence Secretary Mr John Reid said Britain could start scaling back its troop presence in Iraq over the next 12 months. In an interview with the CNN, Mr Reid said neither Britain nor the USA had “imperialist ambitions” in Iraq. — Agencies

Continued on page 2

Battle cry against 'evil ideology'

London, July 16 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair called today for a hearts and minds struggle against the "evil ideology" of al Qaida as the death toll from last week's London suicide bombings rose to 55.

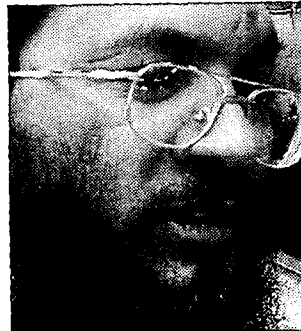
Pakistani security services detained two men overnight in Lahore on suspicion of links with one of the four British Muslims who blew themselves up on July 7 on three London underground trains and a bus.

Blair called for a battle of ideas against what he called the fanatical beliefs and perversion of religion behind the London attacks and others around the world by the militant Islamist al Qaida network.

He said the opponent was an "evil ideology" and a strain within Islam that was altogether removed from the "essential decency and truth" of that religion. "It is not a clash of civilisations — all civilised people, Muslim or other, feel revulsion at it. But it is a global struggle. It is a battle of ideas and hearts and minds, both within Islam and outside it," Blair said.

He said claims by militant Islamists to act in the cause of the Palestinian, Afghan or Iraqi people were belied by attacks in those countries in which innocent civilians were killed.

"We should lay bare the almost devilish logic behind



Asadullah Farooq, administrator of the Manzoor-ul-Islam madarsa, denies any link with Shehzad Tanweer in Lahore. (Reuters)

such manipulation," he said. "Why, if it is the cause of Muslims that concerns them, do they kill so many with such callous indifference?"

He said such an ideology could only be beaten "by confronting it, symptoms and causes, head on".

Pakistani security forces detained two men overnight in Lahore on suspicion of links with another of the bombers, Shehzad Tanweer, bringing the total number of arrests in Pakistan to six.

"We are interrogating whether these two people had any links with Tanweer," an intelligence official said.

Officials of two security agencies today questioned teachers, students and other staff of a madarsa in Lahore which Tanweer was thought

to have visited in 2004. The school has connections with Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Asadullah Farooq, administrator of the madarsa, later denied any link with Tanweer.

"Neither any person with this name (Tanweer) visited us nor do we know him," he said. "We have stopped entertaining foreign students after 9/11," he said referring to al Qaida's attacks on the US on September 11, 2001.

Pakistani intelligence officials say Tanweer met Osama Nazir, a member of the Jaish-e-Mohammed, in Faisalabad in 2003. Nazir was arrested last December for the 2002 bombing of a church in Islamabad that killed two Americans among others.

Four men were rounded up from Osman Town neighbourhood in Faisalabad this week, relatives and locals said. Nazir had also been arrested in Osman Town. Farhat Bibi, the wife of one of the detained men, Shehzad Ahmed, said she had not heard from her husband since the night of July 12 when he was taken away at gunpoint by some 20 men in black uniforms and a handful in plain clothes.

"They asked my husband his name and where he came from and then took him away," the mother of two children said.

Another man, Nazir Ahmed, was rounded up from an adjoining lane in the same way, relatives said.



A CCTV footage shows bombing suspects (from left to right) Hasib Mir Hussain, Jermaine Maurice Lindsay, Mohammed Sadique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer at Luton train station in central England. (Reuters)

98-167

7/7: Egyptian biochemist held, 'explosives' found

amounts of a substance — suspected to be explosive material — was seized.

A spokesperson for the Leeds University said he was doing a doctorate in an environment-friendly study involving “chemically-inactive substances” with implications for the food industry. The Egyptian government was sponsoring his studies. Elnasher had also studied at the North Carolina State University in 2000.

Citing sources close to the investigation, the BBC reported that the explosive found in Leeds was TATP (triacetone triperoxide), made from freely available ingredients.

It said the material is thought to be similar to that used by British “shoe bomber” Richard Reid, who tried to blow up a transatlantic flight in 2001 with explosives in his shoes.

London police Chief Ian

Blair said detectives are confident they will find an Al Qaeda link.

Warning that another attack is “a strong possibility”, Prime Minister Tony Blair said the hunt is now on for the financiers and bomb-makers.

Police admit they are puzzled about the last 81 minutes in the life of one of the bombers, Hasib Hussain, captured on grainy CCTV images. Police are still baffled about why he may have changed his original target and instead blew up a bus.

The Pakistani intelligence sources, meanwhile, said one of the attackers, Shehzad Tanveer, met a man in 2003, who was later arrested for bombing a church in Islamabad.

Pakistani security agencies are investigating possible links between Pak-based militant groups and Tanveer, who blew himself up in a train near Aldgate station.

98-167

7/7: Egyptian biochemist held, 'explosives' found

MICHAEL HOLDEN

LONDON, JULY 15

BRITAIN'S investigation into last week's suicide bombings widened today with the arrest of a US-trained Egyptian biochemist in Cairo and Pakistan probing links between an attacker and the Al Qaeda.

Magdy Elnashar, 33, a student of Leeds University, was wanted for questioning in the 7/7 bomb attacks that killed at least 54 people and injured 700 in London.

The Egyptian interior ministry said he had been detained while on a holiday.

Media reports said Elnashar had left Britain two weeks before the blasts. He travelled by metro and bus, changing trains twice.

According to British newspapers, Elnashar had rented a house in Leeds, which was raided by police on Tuesday. Large

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Egypt chemist from UK university held

Extremism wake-up call for community

London, July 15 (Reuters): Britain's most senior policeman called on the country's Muslim community today to end its "denial" about extremists in its midst and to engage actively in the fight against terrorism.

Muslim leaders have expressed shock that four British-born Muslims were the perpetrators of last week's attacks on London which left at least 54 dead. But Metropolitan Police Commissioner Ian Blair said Muslims could do more to help find those plotting further atrocities.

"We have a moment now in which we can engage with the Muslim community and move them from what could be described as a bit of denial into active engagement around counter-terrorism," Blair told BBC TV.

"Who are the preachers of hate? Who are the people who are looking to groom bombers?" Blair asked, adding that a number of British Muslims had been to Iraq and training camps abroad.

"The Muslim community somewhere will know who these people are. We've now got to engage with them so that they give us the information," Blair added.

Moderate Muslim groups already cooperate with police on security issues but acknowledge that many alienated young Muslims have drifted away and become vulnerable to indoctrination.

"There is a deep sense of alienation in parts of the community, from poverty, from unemployment, from poor education," said Daud Abdullah, assistant secretary general of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB), the country's largest Islamic organisation.

"I think we have to work more with our youth. We have to win their hearts and minds and bring them back from the fringes," he said.



Two men at a mosque in Leeds, England, after Friday prayers. (AFP)

Police chief warns of further bombings

AMIT ROY

London, July 15: Operation Thesis, the codename for the investigation into the London bombings, today netted an Egyptian chemist who was picked up in Cairo and protested his innocence.

Magdy El Nashar, 33, who studied for a PhD at Leeds University, is thought to have links to a flat in Leeds being searched by anti-terrorist officers. He had apparently given the keys to the flat to the bombers.

Was this an innocent let or was he part of the plot?

El Nashar was detained in a suburb of Cairo following a worldwide search involving the FBI, Interpol and other agencies.

Leeds University confirmed that he came to Leeds to study for a PhD in the school of biochemistry in October 2000, sponsored by the National Research Centre in Cairo. He was awarded his PhD on May 6 this year.

"We understand he was seeking a post-doctoral position in the UK, and that his visa was updated by the home office early this year," said a spokesman for the university. "He has not been seen on the campus since the beginning of July."

A man who knew the scientist told a paper in Yorkshire: "He was extremely charming and very intelligent, a very typical Egyptian with perfect manners. He was obviously quite a brilliant chemist."

Britain's most senior policeman, Sir Ian Blair, the Metropolitan Police commissioner, warned today that there



A crowd in front of Magdy El Nashar's home in Cairo.

was a "very strong possibility" of further terrorist bombings. He described the bombers themselves as "foot soldiers" and said the fact they were dead did not mean attacks were less likely.

He believes detectives will establish a "clear link" between the bombers and al Qaida, who have in the past launched attacks in waves.

Blair said he was very concerned by the scale of explosives found at another property in Leeds. The tests on the explosives show the bombers used ingredients commonly available to members of the public. Detectives are trying to establish whether the four bombers used acetone peroxide — also known as "Mother of Satan" and TATP — an explosive which has been chosen for al Qaida operations.

Peter Clarke, head of the

Metropolitan Police anti-terrorist branch, said: "There are a number of things we need to establish. Who actually committed the attacks? Who supported them? Who financed them? Who trained them?"

Richard Reid, the British-born shoe-bomber who had planned to blow up a Paris-Miami flight, had a spiritual leader in Pakistan, it has been alleged. And now, with the four British bombers — three British born but from Pakistani families and one of Jamaican origin — the trail is leading to madaras in Pakistan.

Shehzad Tanweer, 22, one of the four, spent time at Markaz-e-Dawa, a "notorious" religious school in north Pakistan, the *Daily Mirror* reported today. The madarsa was allegedly co-founded by Osama bin Laden.



Magdy El Nashar

Terror: Young, British

AMITROY

London, July 13: The four young men, one only 19 and another 22, who arrived at King's Cross station at 8.30 am last Thursday, seemed so happy together. They were laughing and joking and carrying military-style rucksacks.

"You would think they were going on a hiking holiday," commented a senior security source who saw them on closed-circuit television.

Without elaborate farewells, the four friends went their separate ways to blow themselves up, kill 52 other people and maim 700.

Britain is also pondering the deeper question: "But they were British, one even liked cricket, what led them to become suicide bombers?"

It seems likely the trail will lead to Pakistan.

Hasib Mir Hussain, 19, Shehzad Tanweer, 22, and Mohammed Sadique Khan, 30, were British Pakistanis from West Yorkshire.

The identity of the fourth is known to police but has not been announced. He is also

thought to be British Pakistani from the same area.

Although their nationalities were British, the four lived in the parallel Pakistani universe that exists in Britain. Most who inhabit this world are normal, law-abiding citizens but a section of youth has been radicalised by events outside Yorkshire — Britain even — in Pakistan, Afghanistan, West Asia and eastern Europe.

At least Shehzad is known to have been to Pakistan. "He said he went to Afghanistan for a couple of months and for four months he was in Pakistan, in Lahore. I know he went with a group of people from Beeston (in Leeds), all young," said a neighbour.

Shehzad is also as British as they come — a cricket fanatic who helped out at his father's fish and chip shop.

"I cannot believe it," said his uncle Bashir Ahmed.

Today, the police are looking for the mastermind behind the operation because they do not think the four acted on their own without a wider support group. Fears are being expressed whether

future suicide bombers have already been armed and instructed.

No timing devices were found when the bombs exploded, suggesting that the men were suicide bombers who detonated the explosives manually.

On Wednesday last week, the three from West Yorkshire drove to Luton railway station in a couple of hired cars. There they met the fourth man and the team caught an early morning train the next day to arrive at King's Cross Thameslink station, about 100 yards from King's Cross mainline station, at 8.30 am. CCTV caught them as they passed along a subway passage.

Their hired cars had been left at Luton railway station, along with some bomb-making equipment which police have now destroyed in 10 controlled explosions.

Over the next few weeks and months, a story will emerge linking these men to Pakistan, home to many militant groups, Afghanistan and the al Qaida network.

■ See Page 3

14 JUL 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Evidence points to suicide bombers

4 suspects in London attacks

AMITROY

London, July 12: Anti-terrorist police in London said today they believe they have identified the four men who carried out the London bombings which killed at least 52 people and injured 700.

Sections of the media are reporting that the men were home-grown British Muslims and perhaps the country's first suicide bombers. If the men do turn out to be British Muslims, as now seems more than likely, the

UNMASKED



The young woman who became an immediate symbol of the London attacks when she was photographed in a surgical burns mask outside Edgware Road station was identified as 24-year-old Davinia Turrell. She has made a "dramatic improvement", her sister said on Tuesday. (AP)
■ See Page 4

chances are they could be of Pakistani origin.

There were three simultaneous explosions on the London Underground on Thursday last week at 8.50 am, followed by a blast on a number 30 bus at 9.47 am.

Police said at least one of the bombers died at the scene of an explosion. Property belonging to other suspects has been found at the scenes of the other explosions.

After a day of raids across West Yorkshire, an area with a large Pakistani population, one man has been arrested there and was brought to London for questioning.

Deputy assistant commissioner Peter Clarke, head of Scotland Yard's anti-terrorist branch, said: "The investigation quite early led us to have concerns about the movement and activities of four men, three of whom came from the West Yorkshire area. We are trying to establish their movements in the run-up to last week's attack and specifically to establish whether they all died in the explosions."

He said: "Today we executed six warrants under the Terrorism Act at premises in the West Yorkshire area. These included the home addresses of three of the four men. We know that all four of these arrived in London by train on the morning of Thursday, July 7."

Clarke revealed that closed-circuit TV footage showed the four men at King's Cross Station shortly before 8.30 that morning. One of them who had set out from West Yorkshire was reported missing by his family to the casualty bureau.

"We have been able to establish that he was joined on his journey to London by three other men," Clarke added.

Police have found personal documents bearing the names of three of the four men close to the sites of three of the explosions. Some of the property of the man reported missing was found on the bombed bus in Tavistock Square.

The property of a second man was found at the scene of the Aldgate blast and of a third's — with his name — at the sites of the Aldgate and Edgware Road explosions.

"We have strong forensic evidence that it is very likely that one of the men from West Yorkshire died at the explosion at Aldgate."

13 JUL

THE TIMES

12 JUL 2005

THE STATESMAN

Backlash toll rises, eight mosques targeted

Agencies

5/1 1/27 W/O

LONDON, July 11. — Attacks on at least eight mosques and two gurdwaras were among more than 70 incidents of violence reported across Britain since last week's terror attacks in London.

"More than 70 incidents targeting the Muslim community had been reported as of Friday, most of them minor," said the Muslim Forum of the Liberal Democrats Party, Britain's third largest political party. It said mosques in the USA and Australia had also come under attack.

Information received by police and Muslim groups showed that there had been attacks on more than eight mosques and two gurdwaras since the terrorist outrage on Thursday.

According to *Muslim News*, an independent monthly, a petrol bomb was thrown at Al-Madina

Downing Street off limits

LONDON, July 11. — Police today closed several streets in central London where most government offices and many famous landmarks are located, including Parliament, Big Ben and 10 Downing Street. Police also blocked access to Whitehall and evacuated cars and pedestrians from nearby Parliament Square. Also today, police briefly evacuated the King's Cross subway station after coming across an item in the street that was unattended. — AP

Jamia Mosque in Leeds on Friday, but major damage was averted as the fire service quickly put out the flames. Mazhirul Uloom London, an educational and cultural institution in east London, had its windows smashed in an early morning attack on Saturday, and two mosques were attacked in Bristol at the weekend. According to BBC, inci-

dents reported by individual police forces included arson attacks on mosques in Leeds, Belvedere in Kent, Birkenhead in Merseyside and Telford in Shropshire. And the Muslim Council of Britain has reported several attacks on mosques in northwest London. Two gurdwaras — one in Erith, Kent, and another in Leeds — have reported arson attacks.

Addressing the House of Commons Mr Tony Blair said: "Fanaticism is not a state of religion but a state of mind. We will work to make the moderate and true voice of Islam heard as it should be." The death toll in Thursday's serial blasts in London today rose to 52, police said here.

In New Zealand, Muslim leaders tightened security at their places of worship across the country today after mosques were vandalised in a northern city in apparent backlash to the London bombings.

More reports on page 2

LEAKED DEFENCE MEMO OUTLINES TROOPS PULLOUT PLAN

11/2 Brits mull Iraq exit

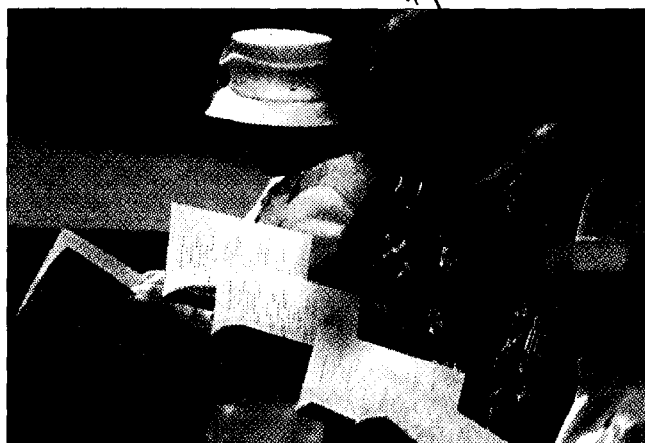
Nigel Morris in London

July 10. — Secret proposals to pull most British troops out of Iraq within nine months have been drawn up by Mr John Reid, the British Defence Secretary.

Under the plan, the British contingent could be reduced from 8,500 to 3,000, with some soldiers coming home as soon as October, with more returning next April. US troop numbers could also be more than halved over the same period.

The suggested "military drawdown" is set out in a leaked memo from Mr Reid to Mr Tony Blair. The defence ministry confirmed the document was genuine, stressing that it was one of several papers setting out "various scenarios" affecting the troop presence in Iraq.

Ministers have always maintained that Allied soldiers won't leave the country



END OF A WAR... BEGINNING OF ANOTHER: The Queen and members of the royal family gather at a prayer service to mark the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II at Westminster Abbey n Sunday. — AFP

until Iraqi security forces are considering capable of taking over. But the paper discloses that a detailed "exit strategy" is being considered by the defence ministry and proposes a possible timetable.

British troops patrol the mainly Shi'ite south of the

country, which has been relatively stable since an uprising last August.

The paper, entitled 'Options for future UK force posture in Iraq', says there is a "clear UK military aspiration" to hand over to Iraqi control the Al Muthanna and

W.M. (W) 5/1-3
Maysan provinces in October and the other two UK-controlled provinces the following April. "This should lead to a reduction in the total level of UK commitment in Iraq to around 3,000 personnel, ie small scale," it says.

The paper, marked "UK eyes only", says Washington is also discussing plans to cut its force of 176,000 to just 66,000 by early 2006. "There is a strong US military desire for significant force reductions to bring relief to overall US commitment levels. Emerging US plans assume 14 out of 18 provinces could be handed over to Iraqi control by early 2006."

But in an observation that will embarrass Whitehall, Mr Reid says the Americans are divided over whether to cut troop numbers so sharply. The Pentagon wants a "relatively bold reduction", while US commanders in Iraq favour a more cautious approach. — **The Independent**

Madrid angle to London blasts

Thousands evacuated from Birmingham city centre after bomb scare

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: The man, who allegedly masterminded the Madrid train bombings last year, was on Sunday reported to be emerging as one of the suspects behind last Thursday's explosions on the London Underground in which at least 50 persons were killed and hundreds injured.

He was identified as Mustafa Setmariam Nasar, a 47-year-old Syrian-born Spanish national, with links to Britain. He was alleged to have organised Al-Qaeda "sleeper" cells in the country for launching a terrorist attack to coincide with the general elections in May.

Investigators mum

Officially, security agencies were tight-lipped about their line of inquiry and made clear that they were not looking for any specific individual, but the British media quoted sources as saying that Nasar was "one of many suspects".

The Sunday Times said that Spanish security forces had warned four months ago that Nasar had "identified" Britain as a likely target of a terrorist attack. It claimed that "coded commands" attributed to Nasar and seized from a flat after the Madrid bombings were thought to have included threats to other European countries, including Britain.

Spanish investigators said Nasar, now believed to be in Iraq, had set up a "sleeper" cell in Britain. But they believed he was planning an attack to coincide with the British general election in May, rather than the G-8 summit last week...Nasar is at



FEAR OVER THE CITY: Guests bide their time outside their hotel after they were evacuated following a security alert in the city centre of Birmingham, England, on Saturday. - PHOTO: AP

the centre of a network of connections uncovered by British and Spanish police between Britain and Madrid bombings," the newspaper said.

Another suspect was said to be Zeeshan Hyder Siddiqui, a 25-year-old British national who was arrested in Pakistan recent-

ly for his alleged Al-Qaeda links.

Amid feverish speculation as to who might have been behind Thursday's carnage, the former Metropolitan Chief John Stevens ruled out the involvement of foreign terrorists and insisted that it was the work of British-born extremists. He dismissed

as "wishful thinking" theories suggesting that people from outside Britain were behind the bombings. In his opinion, the attack was "almost certainly" carried out by British-born citizens "brought up here and totally aware of British life and values". Meanwhile, thousands of peo-

ple were evacuated from Birmingham city centre on Saturday night after suspicious-looking package found on a bus triggered a security alert.

The security level across the country has been raised amid warnings that terrorists could strike again.

19 JUL 2005 THE HINDU

Police believe mastermind is in France

Extradition plea sent to Paris

VIJAY Dutt
London, July 10

THE HUNT for the mastermind behind the London bombings shifted to France on Saturday after MI5 and Scotland Yard asked a "North African" terror suspect from that country be handed over to the British authorities. Sources say the latest clues have led detectives to suspect that a North African cell was behind the murderous attacks.

A formal request for the extradition of the "Islamic radical", who is believed to have fled across the channel after Thursday's attacks, has been filed with the concerned agency. The name of the wanted man has not been divulged to the media but he is believed to be high up on the list of potential masterminds drawn up in the hours after the blasts.

Other intelligence agencies across Europe have also been asked for information on some more individuals who are regarded as al-Qaida masterminds. The belief that those responsible for the blasts are from the Continent has intensified. The Scotland Yard has asked for help from similar European agencies and over 100 intelligence men from them were involved in a closed door meeting with Yard officials in London recently.

Police sources hinted that among the many suspects being sought for questioning was a Syrian-born Spaniard, Mustafa Setmariam Naser, who was allegedly involved in last year's Madrid train bombings. He was reported to have later travelled to Britain. Detectives also want to question Zeeshan Hyder Siddiqui, 25, a British national allegedly trained to make bombs in al-Qaida camps in Pakistan. He was arrested in Pakistan last year.

In a related development, the Moroccan Muslim cleric identified as a potential suspect in the London attacks made an appearance on Al-Jazeera TV, protesting his innocence. Mohammed Al-Guerbouzi, who has been under investigation in connection with two previous attacks — the 2003 suicide bombing in Morocco and the al-Qaida attack in Madrid last year — declared: "I affirm that I am not in hiding or on the run and the British police are not looking for me because they know where I live and my address," he said, with his face blacked out.

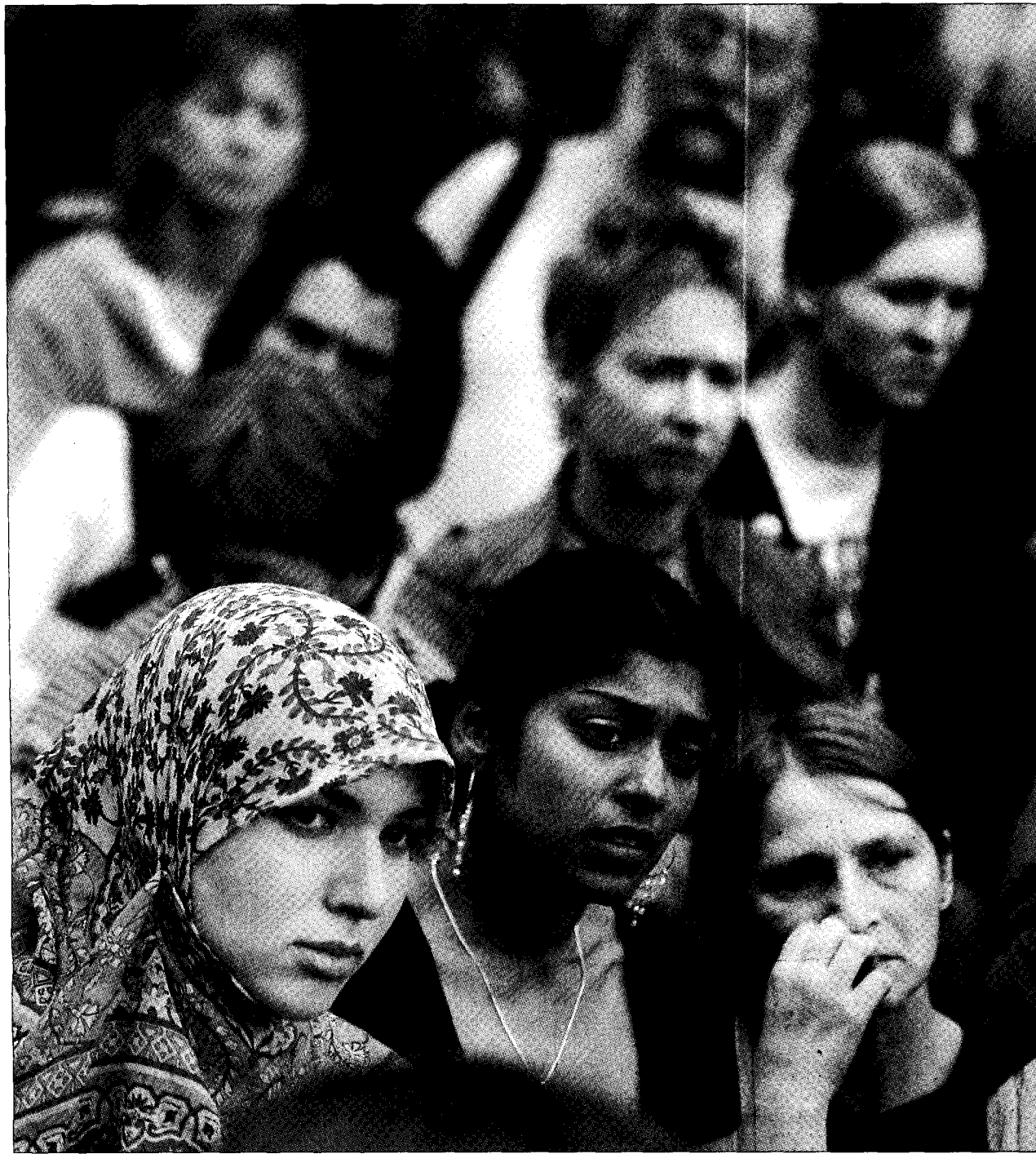
The British police believe that under a plan drawn up by the suspected mastermind, a team of at least four men used commercial high explosives with sophisticated timing devices to mount the attack. This conclusion is based on a detailed examination of the timings of the explosions and early forensic analysis of the four blast scenes.

The search for the bombers has zeroed on a young North African who was injured in the blast and is believed to have come here recently from continental Europe. Sources said there was major interest in this man, who is thought to be living in north London. Inquiry about him could lead to the three other bombers. It is suspected that all of them initially travelled together before going their separate ways.

Senior officials maintain that the explosion on the bus was key to their hunt for the bombers.



A cop looks for clues at a blast site in London.



People observe a minute's silence in memory of blast victims at a park near King's Cross, London, on Saturday.

Fear and fury stalk London

HT Correspondent
London, July 10

THREE DAYS have passed since the London blasts. But the after-shock still lingers.

A trainee solicitor has been walking to her place of work and back since the day of the attack. It takes her over 40 minutes either way but she does not mind, she feels safer walking she says. She got on to a bus for the first time on Saturday, to visit a friend. There were many other passengers and she felt quite confident. But when a bearded man climbed into the bus carrying a bag, she panicked.

The passenger next to her turned to look at her as if to confirm her own suspicions. That is the other effect of the terror attack. Londoners who normally try to avoid looking at even their neighbours are now talking to perfect strangers. This is a sign of nervousness and the need for reassurance. They will possibly revert to their famously cold behaviour soon but presently they have become warm and emotional, like after the sudden death of Princess Diana, a sense of shock and grief having brought the people together.

The number of people travelling by buses and on the Underground is rising steadily but there is a very noticeable air of uneasiness. Furtive looks are exchanged and many seem to monitor all the passengers boarding at every stop. No one seems to enjoy burying their nose in the paper anymore, as was the norm on the London Underground.

Like the young solicitor, now even on streets people keep a wary eye out and seem to be giv-

ing every passerby the once-over. There is less traffic on the roads although the mayor lifted the congestion charge for two days. Schools are to open on Monday but most parents want to personally escort their children to make sure school authorities have taken the necessary precautions.

Fear still stalks London because there is no guarantee that the attacks will not recur. All the bombers are at large and, if they are British, they may have stockpiled bombs to use in a second wave of attacks like it happened in Madrid.

There is an eerie feeling as one passes King's Cross. Engineers and rescue workers are still wrestling with the heat and the damaged tunnel to extricate bodies trapped in two carriages. When all the bodies are brought out, the toll is expected to go up to 80.

The dead had not been named until Saturday. Identification has been a slow process because of the catastrophic nature of the injuries. In some cases there may be very little left of the body to bury. The other problem is that the dead may include overseas tourists.

But pass through Brick Lane and you will sense more fury than fear. Most of the people in this area are from Bangladesh. A young woman remarked: "They are blaming all Muslims." Many have a number of tales to tell about police discrimination. One young man asked a reporter why al-Qaida was being blamed though there was no evidence as yet to link it to the blasts. Another shouted that Britain wants "us out. I bet Tony Blair did it so people hate us more."

DIY video for bombing buses Shrines attacked in backlash

FORMER MET Police chief Lord Stevens believes the people who planted the London bombs were almost certainly born or based in the UK. He told a Sunday paper that suggesting foreign attackers were to blame was "wishful thinking". Lord Stevens said it is thought 3,000 British born or based individuals have been trained in al-Qaida camps. The authorities believe that either these British individuals or others they had trained were most likely to have been the attackers.

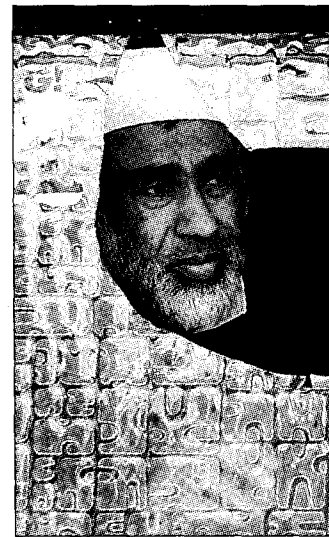
Not that anyone needs to go all the way to Afghanistan to learn how to make a bomb, a DIY video showing how to make a suicide belt bomb for use on a crowded bus is circulating among terrorist websites. The chilling 26-minute tape gives a step-by-step guide on how to pack the belt with shrapnel and high explosive and then detonate it on board for maximum loss of life. Not much is known about the origin of the video but it was possibly shot in the Palestinian territory. Some attribute the video to the Hizbollah.

The police fear that the device used to blow up the double-decker bus may now be the "weapon" for future attacks in Britain.

This would substantiate Lord Stevens claim that there are a large number of homegrown terrorists here. He stressed that suggesting people of other nationalities were responsible for the atrocities was "a damaging illusion". Meanwhile, it is understood the UK's threat assessment has been returned to its highest level, after having been lowered soon after the general election.

A leaked British official document also revealed that the al-Qaida was secretly recruiting affluent, middle-class Muslims in British universities and colleges. A network of "extremist recruiters" is circulating on campuses targeting people with "technical and professional qualifications", particularly engineering and IT degrees. A joint Home Office and Foreign Office dossier - Young Muslims and Extremism - prepared for the Prime Minister last year, said Britain might be harbouring thousands of al-Qaida sympathisers. The confidential assessment, covering more than 100 pages of letters, papers and other documents, forms the basis of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, codenamed Operation Contest.

HTC, London



Nizam Shah looks through broken windows at a mosque in Auckland, New Zealand, after an attack linked to the London bombings.

NABANITA Sircar

FOLLOWING THE London blasts, there have been reports of some backlash attacks. An arson attack on a gurudwara is believed to have been triggered by the bombings. Police are also investigating a number of assaults on Muslims and an attack on a mosque.

A West Yorkshire police spokesperson confirmed that they are treating as "suspicious", a fire in a gurudwara at Armley, Leeds. There is growing fear among Sikhs in Britain that they may become targets of racist attacks. A spokesman for the Sikh Commission on Racism & Cohesion said: "Following 9/11, visible communities like the Sikhs and Muslims became immediate targets of public racism. Anyone that was considered to be Muslim... was targeted with vicious verbal racism,

taunts and also physical attacks"

The Hindu Forum of Britain has also appealed that the community remain extra vigilant and ensure security at temples.

Early on Sunday morning fire broke out at the Wirral Islamic Cultural Centre, Shah-jalal Mosque, on Birkenhead, Merseyside. The mosque building was empty at the time of the attack. But one man who lives in a flat above the mosque was treated for smoke inhalation at the scene.

Chief Superintendent Alan Jones of Merseyside Police described the attack as "senseless and very dangerous". He added: "It is of great importance in the current climate that Merseyside sees itself as one community and we must be united in our condemnation of those that would target people based on their age, race, religion or gender."

On the trail of terror

uk ① 57-8

■ TUBE BLASTS WITHIN SECONDS OF EACH OTHER, SAY POLICE ■ 49 BODIES RECOVERED SO FAR



Mr Tony Blair meets a team of paramedics at the London Ambulance Services headquarters. PTI

Blair pushes to uproot the root cause

107

Agencies

LONDON, July 9. — British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair today said the underlying causes of terrorism must be dealt with as security measures alone cannot protect the country from attacks.

The underlying causes of terrorism must be "pulled up by their roots," Mr Blair said adding "all the surveillance in the world cannot stop people going on a bus to blow up innocent people. "That is why ultimately, although we have to take the measures necessary, 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." That meant people within the Muslim community standing up and saying they abhorred violence which was "wholly inconsistent" with their faith, Mr Blair added.

Associated Press

LONDON, July 9. — Three bombs made of high explosives erupted in the London Underground within seconds of one another, police said today, saying closer examination of technical data offered a clearer picture of the coordinated attacks that killed at least 49.

The bombs went off within seconds — not minutes — of one another, suggesting that they may have been detonated by synchronized timers rather than by suicide bombers.

The explosions were so destructive that authorities haven't been able to identify a single body and were depending on fingerprints, dental records and DNA analysis, detectives said.

Sophisticated coordination is a hallmark of the Al-Qaida, the outfit suspected by British officials to have possibly been behind the London blasts.

"A slightly different picture is emerging around the timing of these bomb incidents," deputy assistant commissioner Mr Brian Paddick said at a Metropolitan Police brief-

'The bodies are so mangled that detectives have not been able to identify a single one'

ing on Thursday's bombings. "All three bombs on the London Underground system actually exploded within seconds of each other, at 8.50 in the morning." The first bomb exploded at the Aldgate station in east London. Two more went off within seconds, he said.

The bombs were composed of "high explosive" — probably not homemade material. A fourth destroyed a bus near a subway entrance.

Forty-nine bodies have been recovered from the bombings, but were so mangled that detectives have not been able to identify a single body.

"It is a very harrowing task," a senior detective, Mr Jim Dickie, said. "Most of the victims have suffered intensive trauma, and by that I mean there are body parts as well as torsos," he added.

More bodies remain trapped underground, police said. Recovery

crews were hampered by heat, dust and other "difficult conditions", deputy commissioner Mr Andy Trotter of British Transport Police said. Many of the Underground tunnels are more than 100 feet (30 metres) beneath the surface.

Subway passengers around the capital remained wary on today, a day after most of its lines reopened. Ridership remained steady but light. "Everyone's looking around a little bit more," said Mr William Palmer, a student.

At King's Cross station, near the site of the deadliest of the three subway bombings, Underground service was partially restored.

Flowers and sympathy cares piled up outside honouring the dead — at least 21 were killed on the train bombed between King's Cross and Russell Square stations.

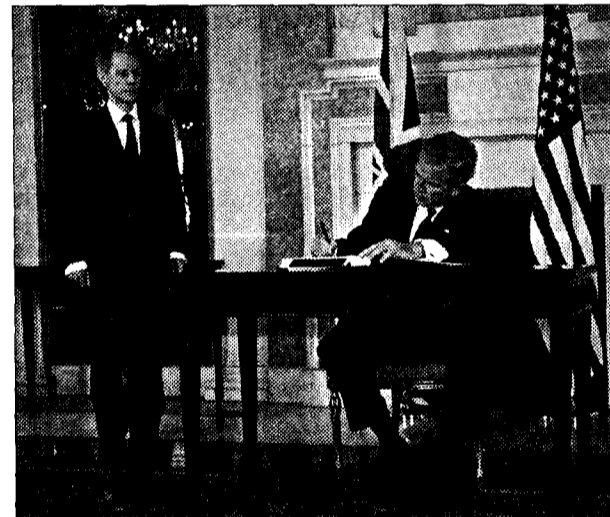
"Madrid is with London," read one card. Another said: "Everyone has gone to the best place, which is heaven."

Sir Ian Blair, commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, said he expected the toll to rise but doubted it would reach triple digits.



Londoners observe a minute of silence to remember the blast victims on Saturday. AFP

Bush salutes British resilience



President Bush signs the condolence book in the British embassy in Washington. PTI

President Bush paid tribute to the British people today, two days after deadly bombings struck London's transit system, and reiterated his pledge that the "cause of freedom will prevail" against terrorists who are trying to shake the will of the free world.

Hailing the British, survivors of the Nazi blitz, as resilient, Mr Bush said they and Americans stood together to defeat the "murderous ideologies" of the 20th century and will do so again in the 21st.

Mr Bush went to the British Embassy after returning from the G-8 summit yesterday to sign a book of condolence. He noted that the bombings took place as G-8 leaders were discussing how to fight poverty and HIV/AIDS, clean the environment and improve the lives of the world's people. "The contrast could not be more vivid between the intentions and the hearts of those who care deeply about human rights and human liberty, and the evil intentions and acts of those who rejoice in the death and suffering of the innocent," he said.

TERRIBLE THURSDAY BRINGS TERROR LIVE

'Half the bus was in the air'

James Sturcke
in London

July 7. — Describing the Russell Square blast, eyewitness Mrs Belinda Seabrook said she saw an explosion rip through the bus as it approached the square. "I was on the bus in front and heard an incredible bang. I turned round and half the double-decker bus was in the air," she said.

Mrs Seabrook said the bus was travelling from Euston to Russell Square and was "packed" with people turned away from the Tube stops.

An eyewitness in the Tavistock Place area told *Sky News*: "I was walking along. There was a whole crowd of people around the bus. The next thing I knew I was on the floor and shed loads of glass were raining down. Someone fell on me and someone fell on him. For a moment I thought I was going to be trampled... I picked myself up and everyone was running. There was glass everywhere... We ran into a building and a security guard was saying 'get in, get in'. Then the security guard said 'get out' — which was a bit scary." Asked about the possibility of a terror attack, she said: "I saw the bus ripped out at the back... it couldn't have been anything else."

Mr Franklin Burney, a 70-year-old American tourist, said: "It was the

loudest explosion I have ever heard. I have been in the military and I've never heard anything like it before. But the whole incident was screened by trees in front of the hotel which may be protected us from any blast."

Bystander Mr Raj Mattoo, 35, was standing on a corner when the bus exploded nearby. He said: "The explosion seemed to be at the back of the bus. The roof flew off and went up about 10 metres. It then floated back down... I shouted at the passengers to get off the bus. They went into Tavistock Park nearby. There were obviously people badly injured. A parking attendant said he thought a piece of human flesh had landed on his arm."

The bomb near Russell Square rocked the Tavistock Hotel. Receptionist Ms Sam Elliott said: "People were running in, some obviously injured. One man was being carried by other passengers. We just did not know what happened."

Parking attendant Ade Soji (35) of Dagenham, Essex, said he had to run for his life after the bus exploded. "I was helping a member of the public with directions when the bus stopped and the driver asked me the name of the street. I told him Tavistock Square and he called me over. Just as I was about to



On the M1 motorway soon after the blasts. — AFP

go, I heard the bus explode. In another second I would have been dead. I had to run for my life. I looked back and saw the roof flying over."

It was then that he noticed his colleague, Pedro Da Silva, holding his head and in pain. He took him to the Tavistock Hotel where he was being treated on the floor of the bar by a paramedic.

Mr Soji said: "I think a piece of metal hit him on

the head and he can't get up." Mr Soji's uniform was covered in blood. He said: "I think this is blood from the passengers. I can't believe what has happened. Surely when you are working in central London you should be safe."

Taxi driver Mr Michael Michael (48) from Cockfosters in north London, was due to pick up a fare from University College Hospital at 9.30 a.m. He was opposite the hospital

in stationary traffic. He said: "There were police everywhere, the roads were all gridlocked, nobody could move. I had to turn my car off at one point." He turned off down a side street and ahead of him saw a bus explode. "It was in a bus... bam... the top of the bus just ripped up. I heard the sound, and I could see the bus from a distance. The roof went up. You could see a big impression in the roof and the rest

of it was all off." Witnesses to the bus explosion told *BBC Radio 5 Live* that the bomb was probably on the top deck of the bus.

"There were at least one or two fatalities laid out on the pavement. It was a bomb on the top deck of the bus," said one man.

Another witness added: "Suddenly there was this thud. People on the bus said there had been an explosion behind us."

— The Independent

'All this teaches you, appreciate your life'

Tim Moynihan at Aldgate East Station

July 7. — A man today told of passengers' terror when their underground train ground to a halt after an apparent explosion in London.

Arash Kazerouni (22) said: "There was a loud bang and the train ground to a halt. People started panicking, screaming and crying as smoke came into the carriage. A man told everyone to be calm and we were led to safety along the track."

Mr Kazerouni, from Edmonton, North London, who works for Barnet Council, was heading from Liverpool Street to Cannon Street for a job interview in IT support. He said: "Everyone was terrified when it happened. When they led us to safety, I went past the carriage where I think the explosion was. It was the second one from the front. The metal was all blown outwards and there were people inside being helped by paramedics. "One guy was being tended outside... His clothes were torn off and he was pretty badly burned. This whole thing teaches you, appreciate your life, you don't know what's round the corner." Police sealed off several streets around Aldgate and told people to stand back as ambulances were bringing out casualties.

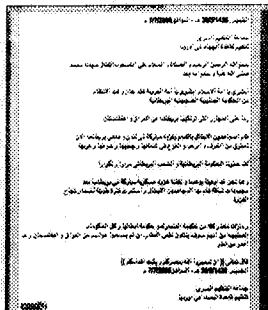
Sarah Reid (23), a student doing work experience, was on the carriage next door to the one which was struck by the explosion. Speaking after the ordeal, having been led out down the track, near Liverpool Street station, she told how she saw a carriage ripped apart with the roof blown off. "I think some people may have died," she said. The blast had pulled some people's clothes off. She added: "I was on the train and there was a fire outside the carriage window and then there was a sudden jolt which shook us forward. The explosion was behind me. Some people took charge. We went out of the back of the carriage." She said the explosion happened at 8.50 a.m. but she was not able to get off the carriage until 9.30 a.m.

Miss Reid said an announcement came on but cut off after saying: "Hello". "There was really hard banging from the carriage next door to us," she said, describing events immediately after the blast. "That was where it happened," she added.

She said there was a fire which she had seen initially outside the window of her carriage. Describing being led away from the scene, she said: "A carriage was split in two, all jagged, and without a roof, just open. I saw bodies. I think."

— The Independent

'Al-Qaida' claims 'credit'



A screen grab shows the 'Al-Qaida' statement — claiming responsibility for the attacks on an Islamist website — on Thursday. — AFP

BERLIN, July 7. — An outfit calling itself the "Secret Organisation — Al-Qaida in Europe" has posted a claim of responsibility for the blasts in London, a German magazine reported today.

Der Spiegel reported that the group posted its message on a web site popular with Islamic militants, which it did not name. It said the group claimed the explosions were in retaliation for Britain's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Rejoice, Islamic nation. Rejoice, Arab world. Time has come for vengeance against the Zionist crusader government of Britain in response to the massacres Britain committed in Iraq and Afghanistan," the statement read. A photograph was also displayed. "The heroic *mujahideen* carried out a blessed attack in London, and now Britain is burning with fear and terror, from north to south, east to west," it said.

The statement went on to warn the governments of Denmark and Italy that they would face "the same punishment" if they don't withdraw troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. — AP

Fear stalks Italy

John Phillips in Rome

July 7. — The increasingly unpopular Italian military deployment in Iraq by the government of Mr Silvio Berlusconi, the Prime Minister, has left Italians nervous since the Madrid Al-Qaida attacks and the London blasts could cost the media mogul the next year's general election, political sources said.

Italy has turned the page on two decades of domestic terrorism by the Left-wing Red Brigades and neo-Fascist gangs in the 1970s and 1980s. Although surviving members of the Red Brigades periodically carry out assassinations, they are a shadow of the organisation that rocked Italy in 1978.

Nervousness in Italy's security services about the possible impact of Mr Berlusconi's subservience to US policies was evident at the 2001 G-8 summit in Genoa where elaborate anti-aircraft defences were mounted but the only violence was between police and anti-globalisation demonstrators.

Since September 11, Italian police have rounded up scores of north Africans and Arabs suspected to be Al-Qaida sympathisers and there is evidence that Naples, Milan and other cities have been used as transit points for Osama bin-Laden's supporters.

The deaths of 17 Italian soldiers in a suicide truck bomb attack on their Iraqi barracks at Nasariyah last year and a series of hostage crises culminating in the death of Nicola Calipari, an Italian Intelligence agent shot by US troops after releasing journalist Giuliana Sgrena from captivity in Baghdad, heightened public opposition to the deployment of Italian forces in Iraq.

So did the disclosure by Italian magistrates last month that the CIA had kidnapped an Islamic cleric,



PARTNERS IN WAR ON TERROR: Mr Silvio Berlusconi and Mr Tony Blair at Gleneagles on Thursday. — AFP

From protecting premiers to protecting people

LONDON, July 7. — Metropolitan Police officers in Scotland for the G-8 summit are to be urgently redeployed to London following today's terror attacks on the capital, it was confirmed today. The officer in charge of G-8 policing during this week's gathering of world leaders at Gleneagles said many of the 1,500 Met officers north of the border would be sent back south. Chief constable Mr Peter Wilson, of Fife Constabulary, who is also head of the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland, said: "The support and professionalism of our colleagues from England and Wales have been a major factor in the successful policing of this summit. The absolute priority for us is to make sure we now meet their needs and re-deploy officers as quickly as possible in order to deal with this crisis." He said it was likely that the 1,500 officers in Scotland from the Met — which has a force of 30,000 officers — would be going back to London. A special force of 12,000 officers has been created from across Scotland, England and Wales to police the G-8 north of the border. Mr Wilson insisted he would still have enough manpower to cope with trouble.

— Jude Sheerin/The Independent

ic, Abu Omar, in Milan and flew him to Egypt where he was reportedly tortured.

Mr Berlusconi's government denies that it had authorised the CIA the "extreme rendition" of Abu Omar but public opinion is sceptical about the whole episode and the Italian government's role in it. Concern that Italy may be the next target after London could make Mr Berlusconi's policies more unpopular though the wily Italian leader doubtless will seek to play up his official friendship with Mr Tony Blair and the deep-seated Italian sympathy for Britain and all things English.

Egyptian envoy killed

Associated Press

CAIRO, July 7. — Al-Qaida in Iraq said in a web posting today that it has killed Egypt's top envoy in Iraq, posting a video of the blindfolded diplomat who is seen to be identifying himself.

"We announce in the name of the Al-Qaida in Iraq that the verdict of God against the ambassador of the infidels, the ambassador of Egypt, has been carried out. Thank God," a written statement in the web posting said.

The video does not show the envoy, Mr Ihab al-Sherif, being killed.

Al-Qaida in Iraq, headed by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, said yesterday that it had sentenced Al-Sherif to death as an "apostate" for his country's support of the USA and the new Iraqi government. The group had previously beheaded several foreign hostages, including three Americans.

Mr Al-Sherif, who was sent to Baghdad in early June, was abducted from a Baghdad street last Saturday. The video shows a man who appears to be the diplomat, blindfolded and wearing a polo shirt. He identifies himself as Mr Al-Sherif, says he is the head of the interests section in Iraq and gives his address. He then says he previously worked in Israel, where Mr Al-Sherif was part of the Egyptian embassy.

The claim's authenticity could not be immediately confirmed. Egyptian officials could not be immediately reached.

The statement said Al-Qaida had hoped to kidnap more ambassadors. "The reason we delayed the announcement of capturing him was to be able to capture as many ambassadors as we can," it said.

Khin Nyunt faces trial

YANGON, July 7. — The Prime Minister ousted by Myanmar last year and accused of corruption, Khin Nyunt, has been moved from house arrest to Yangon's notorious Insein prison and will face trial soon, sources in the prison department said on Thursday. The exact date of trial and the charges are not known as yet. The military leaders here last October ousted Khin Nyunt, also a former military intelligence chief, in a move seen as cementing the power of hardliners who are less willing to reach an accommodation with pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi. — AP

Karadzic son detained

PALE (Bosnia-Herzegovina), July 7. — The son of wanted war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic was detained today, NATO said. Aleksandar Sasa Karadzic was taken into custody from his home in Pale, a one-time stronghold of his fugitive father about 16 km east of Sarajevo. A statement said Karadzic's son has been transferred to "a safe location" and his detention occurred without incident. Aleksandar Karadzic is suspected of rendering support to an indicted war criminal and may have some information vital for locating the indicted war criminals or identifying their supporters. A UN war crimes tribunal has indicted former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his military commander, Ratko Mladic, for genocide and war crimes, including a 1995 massacre. These two are the tribunal's most wanted fugitives. Karadzic is presumed to be in hiding in the Serb-held part of Bosnia, while Mladic is believed to be in Serbia. — AP

Gun & bear it

ROME, July 7. — Italian Parliament has given initial approval to a contested Bill which was passed in the Italian Senate yesterday. It now goes to the lower House for its final approval. The measure would represent an exception to a current law ruling that self-defence must be proportionate to the threat. — AP

NYT reporter jailed

WASHINGTON, July 7. — A US judge has sent *New York Times* reporter Judith Miller to jail after she refused to disclose the name of her confidential source to a grand jury probing the leak of a CIA operative's name. The grand jury's investigation seeks to determine whether senior Bush administration officials broke the law by knowingly leaking the name of a covert CIA operative, Valerie Plame, to the media in 2003 as retaliation for an opinion piece written by her diplomat husband. — PTI

Chocolate shocks

SYDNEY, July 7. — Master Foods, the company that makes the Mars and Snickers bars in Australia, ordered the withdrawal of both brands last week after receiving a letter claiming that seven contaminated bars had

WORLD

been placed on shelves in Sydney. The company's president, Andy Weston-Webb, said "no proper connection" had been made between the chocolates and the reported illnesses, which included stomach aches, diarrhoea and headaches. — AP

Rice skips S-E Asian meet

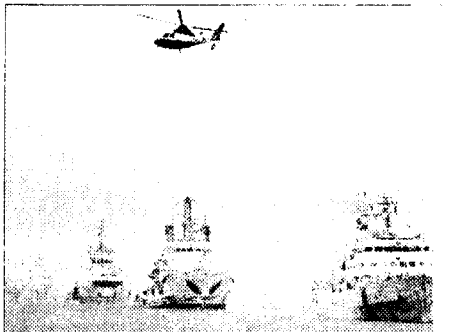
WASHINGTON, July 7. — US Secretary of State Ms Condoleezza Rice will not attend a key Southeast Asian meeting this month, officials said amid warnings that the move could be viewed as a slight by the region's leaders. Rice had told Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers that she could not make it to the Asean ministerial meeting in the Laotian capital Vientiane in late July due to a clash of schedules, regional diplomats said, reforms in military-ruled Myanmar. — AFP

'N Korea wants to talk'

SEOUL, July 7. — Nuclear disarmament negotiations with North Korea could resume if other countries in the talks stopped provoking the communist nation, Unification minister Chung Dong-Young was quoted as saying by South Korea's Yonhap news agency. South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun said "although it is taking a long time and entails many difficulties, we have not once given up" hope that it will be resolved. "But he stressed neither country would risk a rupture of the talks. "Under no circumstance will North Korea choose nuclear weapons, and under no circumstance will the USA choose military force," Roh said. — AP

Gyanendra's birthday

KATHMANDU, July 7. — Birthday celebrations of Nepal monarch King Gyanendra brought to light the divisions between the government, the Opposition parties and the Maoist insurgents. Although celebrations were on in full swing, Communist guerrillas continued their offensive against security forces. The vehicle of a team of armed policemen hit a mine at Parbatipur village in Nepalgunj in midwestern Nepal today. Four securitymen were injured. — SNS



POWER SHOW: Chinese coast guard ships participate in a sea rescue practice on Thursday off the port of Shanghai. China and Hong Kong held joint emergency response exercises on Thursday. Taiwan too conducted military exercises on the day. — AFP

reline
On-Line-iron removal system.
 • Removes iron & turbidity instantly.
 • Can be installed after the over head tank or after existing water pump.
 • No recurring expenditure.
 • Completely non-electrical therefore uninterrupted supply.
 • Protects Washing machine & cooler.
 • Capacity: Available-100 Litres per hour & above.

Zeolite (India) Pvt. Ltd.
 An ISO 9001 Company
 3447, N.S.C. Road, Kolkata-74
 Ph. : 2471 3844/2481 1220
 Telefax : 033-2471 0943

LONDON BLITZED



There has been a series of terrorist attacks in London. It is important that those engaged in terrorism realise our determination to defend our values and our British way of life is greater than their determination to cause death and destruction in a desire to impose extremism on the world. It is particularly barbaric that this has happened on a day when (G-8) leaders are meeting to help defeat poverty... the summit will continue. We are resolved to defeat terrorism. We know that these people act in the name of Islam but we also know that the vast majority of Muslims are decent, law-abiding people who abhor terrorism as much as we do. They are trying to use the slaughter of innocent people to cow us but they will not succeed.

Tony Blair

Rejoice, Islamic Nation. Rejoice, Arab world. The time has come for vengeance against the Zionist crusader government of Britain in response to the massacres Britain committed in Iraq & Afghanistan. Secret Organisation of Al-Qaida in Europe

War on Terror will continue... till the ideology of hate is overcome. They have evil in their hearts.

George W Bush

Airtel
 Express Yourself
Opinion Poll
 Are multiplex better than cinema halls?
 SMS your answer as "Say Yes" or "Say No" to 500.
 Yesterday's Poll Results
 Are multiplex better than cinema halls?
 Yes 60%
 No 40%
 only on Airtel

The Independent

LONDON, July 7. — A series of explosions ripped through the British capital's two most famous symbols today — the London Underground and a red-coloured double-decker bus — in a series of terrorist strikes during morning rush hour that left at least 37 dead, over 700 injured and London crippled. The last time Londoners were subject to a coordinated bomb blitz of this nature — though not of the same magnitude — from an enemy was during Hitler's blitzkrieg during World War II. Hours after the blasts there was still no official death toll but survivors reported seeing piles of bodies.

Police specified no claims of responsibility for the attacks, that took place just a day after an overjoyed city had celebrated its successful bid to hold the 2012 Olympics and in the midst of the Group of Eight leaders' summit. British Prime Minister Mr Tony Blair is hosting in Scotland. But an Arabic-language website said a group calling itself Secret Organisation of Al-Qaida in Europe had posted a claim on an Islamic website. It said the explosions were in retaliation for Britain's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan and warned two other "crusader" European countries — Italy and Denmark — that had troops in Iraq of similar strikes. "Heroic mujahideen carried out a sacred attack in London, and here is Britain burning in fear, terror, and fright," the statement, that could not be authenticated, added. British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw said: "The attack has all the hallmarks of an Al-Qaida operation."

The whole of Europe was in a state of alert and the explosions sent stocks plummeting across the continent. Transportation systems in major American cities also were ordered to be vigilant.

Bloodied victims fleeing from debris-strewn blast sites were the enduring images of London on Thursday. Streets echoed with sirens and the entire bus and underground transport network was shut down. A visibly shaken Mr Blair declared London had suffered "a series of terrorist attacks" clearly timed to coincide with the G-8 summit. Mr Blair was flanked by G-8 leaders as he read a statement before heading to the capital. (Late tonight, he rejoined G-8 leaders in Scotland.)

"Those responsible have no respect for human life," he said. "It is not an attack on one nation but on all nations and on civilised people everywhere."

Explosions hit the London Underground on a train between Aldgate East and Liverpool Street, another between Russell Square and King's Cross, and a third at Edgware Road Station. A double-decker bus packed with commuters exploded near Russell Square — its mangled wreckage, the roof ripped off, could be seen near the British Museum.

Seven people died in the first blast in a tunnel 100 yards from Liverpool Street Station, 21 died in the blast at King's Cross/Russell Square and five died at Edgware Road Station in an explosion involving three trains. There were at least two deaths in the bus blast at Upper Woburn Square, the BBC reported. It is not yet clear where the two other confirmed fatalities occurred. No warnings were given as the train blasts went off within 18 minutes of each other starting at 8.51 a.m. The explosion that ripped apart the double-decker bus was reported at 9.47 a.m.

A police spokesperson told a news conference that they didn't know "if (the blasts) were carried out by suicide bombers or packages left in the Underground or on the bus". There is no indication that these were anything other than conventional explosives, he added, and said no arrests had been made. "We are concerned that this is a coordinated attack. We are aware that one of the sites does contain indications of explosives," Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair said. He told residents "not to call the emergency services unless it is a life-threatening matter" indicating the scale of the rescue and relief operations underway.

The explosions were initially blamed on a power fault but it soon became clear that it was a coordinated terrorist attack on London. The G-8 gathering had prompted fears of a terrorist spectacular. The scale of the explosions and the disruption it has caused in London's transport network is bound to provoke comparisons with Al-Qaida attacks on the Madrid railway network. Home Secretary Mr Charles Clarke said: "Police are in operational command and dealing with the situation in accordance with well-established procedures. Health services are in support to deal with the terrible injuries that there have been. Underground services have been suspended and we advise people not to make unnecessary journeys in London at this stage."

Describing the bus explosion, eyewitness Mrs Belinda Seabrook said: "I was on the bus in front and heard an incredible bang. I turned round and half the double-decker bus was in the air." Mrs Seabrook said the bus was travelling from Euston to Russell Square and had been "packed" with people turned away from Tube (Underground) stops. Survivors of the Tube blasts described scenes of total chaos. Mr Simon Corvett, 26, from Oxford, was on the eastbound train leaving Edgware Road station when the explosion occurred. He said: "All of a sudden there was this massive bang. It was absolutely deafening and all the windows shattered." He added: "The train came to a grinding halt, everyone fell off their seats. There were just loads of people screaming and the carriages filled with smoke. You couldn't really breathe and you couldn't see what was happening." Mr Corvett joined other passengers to force open the train doors with a fire extinguisher. He said the carriage on the other track was destroyed.

London mayor Mr Ken Livingstone, in Singapore for London's successful Olympic bid, termed the blasts "mass murder carried out by terrorists bent on indiscriminate slaughter". "This was not a terrorist attack against the mighty or the powerful, it was not aimed at presidents or prime ministers, it was aimed at ordinary working-class Londoners."

Mr Simon Tonkyn, who had been travelling from Paddington Station to Aldgate, summed up Thursday's trauma: "There was an enormous bang, a lot of smoke... I smashed through the carriage door to get out. Now I'm just numb."



FACE OF TERROR: A wounded woman with a makeshift gas mask across her face being led to safety. — PTI

UK has 5,70,000 illegal immigrants

1,405 Who Cited Indian Nationality Applied For Asylum In '04, Says A Report

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Britain has published its first official estimate of the number of illegal immigrants in the country, in a sign campaigners fear is a prelude to a tougher, more headline activist policy on asylum and immigration.

On Thursday afternoon, in a break with British tradition, the Home Office said it estimated Britain to be home to anywhere between 310,000 and 570,000 illegal immigrants. The estimate was prepared using data gathered in April 2001, officials said.

Significantly, the official estimate comes just weeks after British prime minister Tony Blair's government began the process of legislating on a new Immigration and Asylum Bill, which is meant to toughen up the entry process into the UK for people from non-European Union countries and prevent abuse of lax immigration laws.

The government estimate, just eight weeks after Blair went on television to deny there was any way of arriving at a reliable figure for illegal immigrants, comes just 24 hours after one British newspaper front-paged its own estimate of countries that exported the most asylum-claimants to Britain.

Afghanistan. The paper said the "regimes in these countries inspire the most applications for asylum in the UK." The estimate said 1,405 people who cited their nationality as 'Indian' applied for British asylum in 2004. Of these, 305 were forcibly deported by the British authorities after their asylum claims failed.

India, said the newspaper contributed roughly the same number of asylum claimants as Iraq (1715 applicants; 760 removals); Sudan (1310 applicants, 220 removals); the Democratic Republic of Congo (1460 applicants; 65 removals); Pakistan (1710 applicants; 475 removals); Afghanistan (1390 applicants; 795 removals).

Only Iran, China, Somalia and Zimbabwe had more asylum claimants.

But Indian diplomats in Britain have long insisted that asylum-seekers, are of nationals of other Asian



A would-be immigrant waits to be transferred in the southern Spanish port of Tarifa recently

The newspaper listed India as one of countries as disparate, war-torn and ten countries, on a shortlist of 10 disturbed as Sudan, Somalia, Iraq and countries.

UK makes it tough for migrants

By Rashmee Roshan Lal/TNN

London: Britain signalled a move towards an Australian-style zero-tolerance policy towards immigrant workers, both legal and illegal, with a new law that could fine employers 2,000 pounds every time they hire an illegal alien; fingerprint all visa applicants in three years time; fine over-stayers and create a points system to govern entry for skilled, non-European English-speakers from countries like India.

The Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill unveiled on Wednesday in British parliament is said to be partly geared towards preventing illegal immigration travesties such as the headline-making news of 2000 when 11 Indian stonemasons were found working on a temple in west London for as little as 30p an hour, which is less than one-tenth of the minimum wage.



Immigration campaigners said the sting in the tail of policy changes was its determination to prevent appeals from refused visa applicants applying to work and study here.

The British government insists that the introduction of an Australian-style points system for skilled future migrants would help workers from outside the Euro-

pean Union to make a case for seamless entry.

Under the scheme, Britain's work permit system will give way to a points method by which a non-EU migrant will bump up his points tally the more skills he or she has. On Wednesday afternoon, Prime Minister Tony Blair said the new immigration bill would make for the "right balance for today's world allowing us to have the migrants we need but also the robust rules that prevent abuse of the system."

British home secretary Charles Clarke said that "The route to settlement is through skilled labour: the more skilled you are, the more likely you are to be able to stay."

The changes to immigration policy also envisage the creation of an e-border that dovetails with that of the USA. It will mean information-sharing on potential immigrants by the border authorities of Western countries.

BLAIR GOVT PLANS CONTROVERSIAL LEGISLATION

Bid to bar religious hatred

Nigel Morris in London

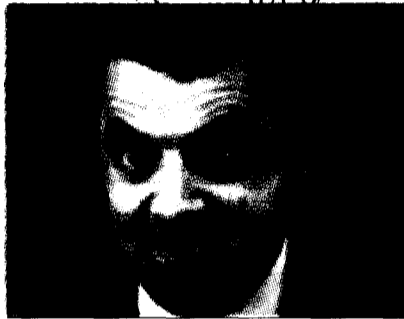
June 9. — Satanists, witches and cult members in Britain will be protected by a controversial new law banning incitement to religious hatred.

The legislation, which has twice been abandoned by the British government in the face of stiff opposition from Opposition parties, writers and comedians who argue it threatens free speech, is designed to protect Muslims from extreme prejudice.

But as it launched a fresh attempt to drive the law on to the statute book, the government said the proposed law would carry a wide-ranging definition of religion. Officials confirmed it could include satanists, pagans and religious sects.

The Racial and Religious Hatred Bill will also cover people defined by their lack of faith, such as atheists and humanists. Only one or two prosecutions a year are expected under the law, which will carry a maximum jail sentence of seven years, but ministers argue it will send out a powerful message that whipping up racial hatred would not be tolerated.

Mr Paul Goggins, the home minis-



Actor Rowan Atkinson has led a coalition of performers, academics and politicians who oppose the law, arguing it will inhibit discussion of religion and could criminalise satire.

ter, insisted that riots might not have broken out in northern towns such as Oldham and Bradford in 2001 had such legislation been in place.

He said the new criminal offence would be very tightly drawn and would not outlaw comedians' jokes, criticism of religion or provocative commentary on religion. "People will say offensive things, people will put on offensive plays and there may be literature that causes offence. But the test is: 'Does this incite hatred in another person?'" Mr Goggins

added: "This will be a line in the sand which indicates to people a line beyond which they cannot go. People of all backgrounds and faiths have a right to live free from hatred, racism and extremism."

The proposed measure covers comments made in speeches and other public appearances, media interviews and articles. It puts Muslims on the same footing as Jews and Sikhs, who are covered by race hate legislation.

The government had to give up its first attempt to bring in laws against religious hatred in 2002 because of fierce opposition in the Lords. A second effort was abandoned this week when time ran out before the general election.

The legislation has been backed by the Muslim Council of Britain and police chiefs. However, Salman Rushdie has complained that the measure would "sacrifice freedom of speech in order to placate Muslim voters", while Rowan Atkinson, the comedian, has denounced the legislation for being far too widely-drawn.

Actor and writer Stephen Fry said the Bill was "rather shaming" and "an embarrassment to the statute book". — **The Independent**

10 JUN 2005 THE STATESMAN

Britain to shelve vote on EU constitution

JEREMY LOVELL
LONDON, JUNE 6

BRITAIN will suspend legislation on Monday to set up a referendum on the new European Union constitution, already overwhelmingly rejected by voters in France and the Netherlands.

The move is a step short of publicly declaring the constitution dead, an act for which no EU government wants to take the lead for fear of being blamed for its demise.

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw will tell parliament at 1430 GMT that legislation to enable a referendum will be frozen for now because of the uncertainty about the constitution's future.

"It doesn't make sense to proceed at this point," Prime Minister Tony Blair's spokesman told reporters. "That does not mean we are withdrawing the option."

London does not want to call the charter dead unilaterally before it takes the presidency of the bloc in July. It insists any decisions should wait for the EU summit on June 16 marking the end of Luxembourg's presidency but officials say Blair sees no prospect now of winning support from Britons for the charter. "There is an issue to be discussed at the European Council," Blair's spokesman said. "Europe as a whole needs to think of the issues behind these votes."

Political analysts say Netherlands



An anti-EU constitution banner outside Downing Street in London on Monday. Reuters

and France have sounded the death knell for a charter that advocates argue is vital to streamline the 25-nation bloc's cumbersome bureaucracy but which opponents say would hand too much power to Brussels.

When Blair announced his referendum plan late last year, it was clear the intention was to hold it in the first few months of 2006.

French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder called for ratification to proceed after they held an emergency meeting in Berlin on Saturday. And Poland called on Britain on Monday to keep alive the ratification process by not shelving referendum plans.

Deputy Foreign Minister Jan

Trusczyński said that even though the constitution was "politically dead", the process of its ratification must continue.

"If the British hit the proverbial nail into the coffin of the constitution by saying they are backing out of a referendum, then there is a question about what would happen with ratification in other countries," he told private radio TOK FM. Britain's voice is especially important, he said, since it will take over the EU's rotating presidency in July.

Ten EU countries, accounting for about half the bloc's population, have approved the constitution but the rejections by French and Dutch voters have raised doubts about whether it remains viable.—Reuters

07 JUN 2005

Britain puts off vote on EU constitution

London, June 6

BRITAIN ANNOUNCED on Monday that it was shelving plans for a referendum on the EU constitution until its fate became clearer, driving another stake into the heart of the beleaguered treaty.

The move comes despite pleas by London's EU partners, notably France and Germany, to hold off, arguing it would bury the bloc's grand integration project after French and Dutch referendums last week which rejected the treaty. An official said the move was to allow Britain time to reflect on the fallout from those twin rejections. "There is a need for a debate and obviously a need for certain European leaders to get to-

gether and talk about how we're going to take this forward," he said.

Blair's official spokesman told reporters earlier that Blair was "not running away" from a referendum but it "does not make sense" to press ahead regardless of the "no" votes.

"If there is a constitution to vote on there will be a referendum in this country," he said. With analysts and some EU countries already saying the treaty is virtually dead in the water, putting plans for a referendum in Britain on the ice is seen as tantamount to signing its death certificate.

Polls here show a majority against the treaty, which is aimed at streamlining and harmonising how the EU is structured and run.

AFP

07 JUN 2005

Blair unveils agenda for perilous third term

London, May 17

PRIME MINISTER Tony Blair unveiled a packed agenda on Tuesday for what should be his most challenging parliamentary session yet after British voters, many angry over the Iraq war, slashed his majority this month.

The programme for Blair's third term — featuring contentious policies ranging from identity cards to new immigration controls — could mark his last chance to secure a lasting legacy before stepping down. But his fate lies in the hands of Labour party rebels.

Defeat on key bills could fatally undermine the power of a leader who already risks becoming a lame duck after he said he would not stand at the next election.

"My government will build on its programme of reform and accelerate modernisation of the public services to promote opportunity and fairness," Queen Elizabeth said in a ceremony in parliament's opulent House of Lords, raising the curtain on a historic third straight term for the centre-left Labour party.

Eager to show he has not run out of ideas, Blair's agenda contains 45 bills and five draft bills for a long, 18-month session. Blair has said he wants to serve a full term of four to five years but many analysts say he could be gone by the end of 2006. His ability to pass legislation with his majority cut to 67 from a huge 161 will define his final years in office.

Plans to introduce compulsory identity cards, aimed at stopping abuse of free public services and fighting terrorism, could face a rough ride from Labour left-wingers. Controversial policies on education and anti-terrorism only scraped through in the last parliament.

This time round, a hard core of 30-40 rebels, many of whom blame Blair and Iraq for Labour's looser grip on parliament, are spoiling for a fight and want to force a swift handover to finance minister Gordon Brown.

The government hopes a slim majority will tame rebels.

Reuters

18 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Dilemma of Blair's heir apparent

As long as the British economy doesn't go into recession, the prospects of Finance Minister Gordon Brown as Tony Blair's heir apparent look good. But it may not do to leave things too long.

William Keegan

GORDON BROWN, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer (Finance Minister), has often joked that "there are two kinds of chancellor: those who fail, and those who get out in time."

He will have had in mind not only his Labour predecessors, such as James Callaghan in 1964-67, and Denis Healey (1974-79), both of whom faced serious currency crises that tarnished their period in office. There was also the more recent example of Nigel Lawson, Chancellor under Margaret Thatcher from 1983 to 1989, who was for a while feted as having performed "an economic miracle" but whose "boom" turned to "bust" and who saw his reputation badly scarred.

Mr. Brown has been Chancellor of the Exchequer since May 1997, and is already in the record books as the longest-serving British Finance Minister since Nicholas Vansittart (1812-23). He too has been widely feted for presiding over happy years of reasonable economic growth, high employment and low inflation.

Enviably record

His record and reputation made an essential contribution to the Labour Party's election victory last week. Indeed, so important was Mr. Brown considered to be that he had to be brought back to the centre of the campaign after Tony Blair had sidelined him and tried to go it alone. The early part of the Labour campaign was disastrous, but picked up as soon as Mr. Brown was invited back to support the Prime Minister.

What both the campaign and the election itself showed only too clearly was that Mr. Blair had been badly tarnished by joining George W. Bush in the invasion of Iraq, and there were many voters for whom the election became a referendum on Mr. Blair himself.

When calling the Chancellor back, Mr. Blair assured him that, contrary to his original intention, he would not move Mr. Brown from the Treasury to the Foreign Office after a victorious election. Mr. Brown would not have been prepared to move, because, as the country knows to its cost, Mr. Blair has been his own foreign secretary, with disastrous consequences. Moreover the Blair camp had widely advertised the plan as a demotion and an intended insult to Mr. Brown.

So here we are, with Mr. Blair re-elected with a much-reduced majority, and very diminished authority. Indeed, the scene in the corridors of power is quite remarkable, with most people believing Mr. Blair's prime ministerial days are numbered, and the courtiers already behaving as though the man with the real power is Mr. Brown.

Some commentators are saying that Mr. Brown, who has been agitating for years to "take over" the premiership, might not wish



THE BIG TWO: Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair and Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown on the last day of campaigning for the election Labour won by a much-reduced margin. - PHOTO: AFP

to do so before a referendum on the European Treaty, expected next year. But if Mr. Brown really wants to wait so long, one must begin to wonder whether, as a number of sceptics believe, he is ever going to get that much-coveted job.

He ought already to have learned how reputations can change. After all, he was the leading contender to succeed the Labour leader John Smith in the early 1990s, but at the time of Smith's untimely death, Mr. Blair had pulled ahead in the popularity stakes. There are undoubtedly those who ask whether Mr. Brown, for all his ambition, really has the killer instinct.

Now, after such a successful period for the economy, the big question is whether, if Mr. Blair is not forced out sooner rather than later, something might go wrong on the economic front and Mr. Brown's reputation might suffer. For there can be little doubt

that Mr. Brown would be elected leader by the Labour Party if the vacancy arose soon.

As one who has covered the U.K. economic scene for many years, I wonder how long the good news can continue.

History suggests that it cannot go on like this, and certainly there has been a sharp slowdown in the growth of consumer spending as people's incomes have been hit by higher taxes and interest rates, and the impact of the end of the house-price boom on their sense of well-being.

Moreover the news seems to get gloomier and gloomier from the eurozone, which is by far the U.K.'s biggest export market.

Economic scene

Nevertheless, the news from the Bank of England has been far from discouraging from Mr. Brown's point of view. At his quarterly press conference on the bank's infla-

tion report, Governor Mervyn King painted a remarkably sanguine view of the outlook for the economy over the next year or so. As usual, Mr. King emphasised that the outlook was full of uncertainties, and he certainly did not expect the growth of consumer spending to recover to the hectic pace of recent years.

But he saw a recovery, and seemed less concerned about the so-called "black holes" in the government finances than many outside commentators. In the past, recessions in the U.K. have usually been caused by panic measures aimed at curbing an acceleration in inflation. The Bank does not seem to be worried, although it is careful to point to the usual caveats.

So Mr. Brown's luck may stay with him. But, personally, in his shoes I should like to move on as soon as possible. — ©Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005

Blair rejects quit call, shuffles cabinet



Cherie Blair at Downing Street on Monday. (Reuters)

London, May 9 (Reuters): British Prime Minister Tony Blair today rejected calls to resign as he reshuffled the ministerial pack after last week's election sharply weakened his Labour government.

Blair won an unprecedented straight third term for the centre-left Labour party last week, but voters whose trust in him was damaged by Iraq more than halved his majority.

Britain's political debate today was dominated by one question: when will he quit?

"The whole story of the government is going to be 'when is he going,'" said Labour parliamentarian Clare Short, a frequent thorn in Blair's side who resigned from the Cabinet over Iraq.

"There's a real danger the government looks divided, doesn't renew itself, we lose seats in local government elections and so on, and get weaker and weaker," she told BBC radio.

Blair announced last year he would serve a full third term of four to five years but then would not stand again —

a move that risks turning him into a lame duck, analysts say. His parliamentary majority fell at Thursday's vote to 67 from 161.

Forecasts for his departure range from months to two years. Finance minister Gordon Brown is Labour's heir apparent.

As Blair prepared to announce appointments of junior ministers to complete a reshuffle of his government, newspapers were full of speculation. The *Sun* tabloid even published a cut-out "fun resignation sweepstake". A poll in the right-leaning *Daily Telegraph* indicated 46 per cent of voters wanted Blair out by this time next year.

Some critics want Blair to go by September, when Labour holds its annual conference. Labour parliamentarian John Austin said he would stand for the leadership at the conference with the aim of paving the way for a more serious contender.

Others say Blair should quit around the 2006 September conference, allowing him

to bow out gracefully after Britain completes its presidency of the Group of Eight rich nations and the European Union this year.

But Blair shows no sign of wanting to give up: "I have not just gone through four weeks of Hell to bugger off in a few months' time," he was quoted by media as telling confidants.

Many political pundits see Britain's referendum on the EU constitution, planned for 2006, as the moment of truth.

Presuming France approves the treaty on May 29 and Britain's vote goes ahead, Blair will face a battle to convince sceptical Britons to back the project. Defeat could force him out. But Blair loyalists expressed dismay that a man who has seen off four leaders of the main opposition Conservative party since 1997 should be hounded out of office.

Blair could face a rough ride when he addresses new and old Labour members of parliament on Wednesday before presenting his new legislative slate to parliament on May 17.

10 MAY 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

IS Iraq war inflicts serious damage on Labour Party

Anti-invasion Liberal Democrats receive an electoral boost

LONDON: The Iraq war inflicted serious damage on the Labour Party in Britain's general election as Muslim voters ousted a loyal ally of Prime Minister Tony Blair in London and boosted the anti-war Liberal Democrats.

Labour lost its dominant majority whittled down in part by public disaffection over Iraq, despite Mr. Blair's efforts to sideline the issue.

The worst thrashing over the March 2003 invasion was suffered by Oona King, Labour incumbent in the heavily Muslim district of Bethnal Green and Bow, who was defeated by the anti-war lawmaker George Galloway.

Mr. Galloway, thrown out of the Labour Party two years ago over his virulent opposition to the war, ran on a Respect coalition ticket and beat Ms. King by a mere 823 votes, overturning her 10,000-vote majority from the 2001 polls.

Cheering supporters

"Mr. Blair, this is for Iraq. All the people you killed, all the lies you've told, have come back to haunt you," he told cheering supporters following the announcement.

Mr. Galloway, who previously represented a Scottish constituency, specifically targeted Ms. King because her working-class seat contains an estimated 40 per cent of Muslim voters, mainly of Bangladeshi origin.

Disfavour

Ms. King, who is half-Jewish and half-black, won her seat in 1997 at only 30 years of age and a strong re-election mandate in 2001, but courted disfavour with locals by supporting the invasion.

Mr. Blair has acknowledged that Britons remained divided over the conflict, but on Friday said he felt they wanted to "move on" and look toward the future.

The vote results indicate otherwise, said the Liberal Democrats, pointing to the "significant impact" the party had on battles across the country, even in those in which its candidates were placed second or third.

"I attribute some of that (the party's improved showing) to the anti-war platform, but our other policies have also played a significant role," deputy party president Fiyaz Mughal told AFP. — AFP

08 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

BLAIR UNVEILS CABINET ■ BLUNKETT REINSTATED ■ BROWN'S ALLY PROMOTED

All the Prime Minister's men

Associated Press

LONDON, May 7. Mr Tony Blair has unveiled his Cabinet, changing leadership in defence and health, while boosting the prominence of his European minister as he put his government back in business after a third term victory.

As expected, the British Prime Minister kept his powerful Treasury chief Mr Gordon Brown by his side as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr Brown's strong stewardship of the economy played a key role in securing the government's re-election.

Foreign Secretary Mr Jack Straw, who has repeatedly defended the government's decision to back the US-led invasion of Iraq, also kept his job.

Mr Blair's friend and ally, Mr David Blunkett, who was forced to quit as home secretary last year after he was embroiled in a messy affair with a married American publisher, was



Mr John Prescott, Deputy PM

brought back as Work and Pensions Secretary — a key role as the government tries to cope with Britain's looming pensions crisis.

Yesterday's reshuffle followed Mr Blair's Labour Party winning re-election. The triumph was tarnished by the government House of Commons majority being slashed from 161 to 66 by a volatile electorate disillusioned with politicians and angry over the Iraq war.



Mr Gordon Brown, Treasury chief

Mr Blair acknowledged voters had given him a bloody nose. "I have listened and I have learned," said the Prime Minister, who decided to skip a trip to Moscow next week to mark the 60th anniversary of the Allied victory over the Nazis. "And I have a very clear idea of what the people now expect from this government."

Mr Blair's weakened authority could make it harder for him to push



Mr Jack Straw, Foreign Secretary

through planned changes in public services and secure a yes vote in a referendum on the European Union Constitution.

In an indication of how seriously Britain takes that challenge, the new European minister, Mr Douglas Alexander, will also be allowed to sit in on the weekly Cabinet meetings.

Mr Alexander is a key ally of Mr Brown, and his promotion is seen as a sign the Treasury chief wields



Mr Geoff Hoon, Commons Leader

significant influence over Mr Blair after garnering so much support through the election campaign.

The election result may also strain the "special relationship" with the USA. "One of the conclusions of this is that he certainly doesn't have a mandate to launch another war along with President George W Bush," said Mr Robin Cook, who resigned from Mr Blair's Cabinet in opposition to the war.



Mr David Blunkett, Work and Pensions

In other changes, Mr John Reid, Mr Blair's tough-talking health minister was moved to defence, replacing Mr Geoff Hoon, who became the government's leader in the House of Commons.

Former House of Commons leader Mr Peter Hain replaced Mr Paul Murphy as Northern Ireland secretary.

Hunting with the hounds — page 9

'Lame duck' PM

Historic win, but reduced Labour majority

The Labour Party has managed to win a historic third term, making Tony Blair the longest serving prime minister the party has produced. Considering the historic nature of the victory, euphoria should be automatic but is conspicuous in its absence. Even Blair's first speech, as the mandate became clear, was subdued, emphasising that while the people had rejected the Conservatives, Labour must move forward learning lessons from the past. He cannot be surprised by the message that he himself should move on. Labour's majority is slashed from 165 seats to just around 60. Both Conservatives and particularly the Liberal Democrats have made major gains in marginal Labour seats. The anti-Iraq war vote and distrust of Blair have played a critical role in Labour's loss of support. Ethnic minority voters, traditional Labour supporters, have deserted, because of tighter immigration laws. Britain's 1.3 million Muslims, staunch Labour voters, have left because of Iraq and the new laws on terrorism, the brunt of which they face in their daily lives. A significant winner is George Galloway, who stood as a rebel Labour candidate from the Bangladeshi-dominated constituency of Bethnal Green and won on a purely anti-Iraq war plank. A disturbing trend is the gains made by the right-wing British Nationalist Party, improving its vote share by five per cent, particularly in white working class areas where voters feel marginalised by the economic boom.

Labour's success can be attributed to the buoyant economy since they first took office in 1997. High economic growth, low interest rates, inflation at a record low of 1.9 per cent and unemployment down to four per cent are all indicators which have made Britons feel they have never had it so good, and therefore want more of it. Also, as is normal in British elections, domestic and local issues like health, education and law and order have dominated in some constituencies. Blair deserves credit for his unprecedented third term, but his position in the party is greatly weakened. Analysts are already describing him as a "lame duck" prime minister. A post-mortem will show that the swing against Labour has been due to Blair and his unflinching support of the USA. He will find it more difficult to keep his flock together, and at the first opportunity demands to step down are bound to be heard. Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, the new rising star of the party, is ready and waiting in the wings. Although Blair has made it clear that he is not standing for a third term simply to leave it mid-way, he may not have a choice. The UK is not the USA!

07 MAY 2005

THE STATESMAN

Brown is the colour for dissidents

Colin Brown in London

May 6. — Mr Tony Blair today faced the first call by Labour dissidents to make way for Mr Gordon Brown.

Mr Blair would seek to use his election victory to draw a line under the rows over Iraq, but the left wing of the party is now threatening to become a serious thorn in his side. In an interview with *The Independent* Ms Alice Mahon, who stood down at the election as Labour MP for Halifax, became the first Labour member to call for Mr Blair to go.

Her assault would fulfil the Prime Minister's worst fears, and it explains what led Mr Blair in the last week of the campaign to call for a big majority to overcome his own left wing in parliament. Now that he hasn't got it, trouble is brewing.

The left are furious over suspicions that New Labour apparatchicks were behind the publication of a list of prominent left wing candidates, regarded as the 'awkward squad' shortly before polling day. The list included Mr Frank Dobson, the former Health Secretary, Ms Ronnie Campbell in Blyth Valley, Mr Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North, Ms Ann Cryer in Keighley, her son Mr John Cryer, Mr Paul Flynn in Newport West, Ms Glenda Jackson, in Hampstead and Highgate, Ms Lynne Jones



FROM KING MAKER TO KING TO BE? Mr Gordon Brown arrives at Downing Street on Friday. — AFP

in Birmingham Selly Oak, Mr Bob Marshall-Andrews in Medway and Mr John McDonnell, chairman of the Campaign Group, in Hayes and Harlington.

Ms Mahon confirmed the claims by Mr Brian Sedgemore, a fellow former Labour who defected to the Lib Dems, that a group of dissident left wingers are ready to launch a campaign to oust Mr Blair

and replace him with Mr Brown. Ms Mahon said: "I think there are quite a number of Labour members who stood down at the election, and others who are still in Parliament who are ready to call for Mr Blair to go."

"I think it is important he goes early. He has been saved by Brown during this election. There is no doubt about that. It was horrible

canvassing and finding everyone was against Blair. There really is a lot of dislike of the Prime Minister out in Labour areas."

Ms Mahon, who has been a member of the Labour Party for nearly 50 years, said she would quit the party if Mr Blair attempted to fulfil his intentions of going on for a full term. She claimed that many other Labour supporters in the country would desert the party before the next election, if he stayed.

A member of the Nato Parliamentary group, Ms Mahon added: "I've just come back from America and I have been talking to the neo-cons there. They are quite serious about bombing Iran. "My worry is that if we are with Mr Tony Blair, we get Mr George W Bush and an attack on Iran."

Another left wing Labour candidate said last night: "Mr Blair is living in cloud cuckoo land if he thinks he can serve a full term. We won't allow him to last more than a couple of years at best. And we would like him to go more quickly than that if we can get him out. I would not rule out a challenge to the leadership, if he tries to hang on."

The warning was the clearest indication that the rebels were determined to wreck his attempts to deliver an 'unremittably New Labour' agenda.

— *The Independent*

ইতিহাসের শিক্ষা

ইতিহাস সৃষ্টি করিলেন ব্রিটিশ লেবার পার্টির নেতা টনি ব্ল্যয়ার। পর-পর তিন বার পার্লামেন্ট নির্বাচনে দলকে বিপুল ব্যবধানে জয়ী করিয়া তিনি ব্রিটেনের ইতিহাসে দ্বিতীয় রাজনীতিক। প্রথম জনের নাম রক্ষণশীল দলের নেত্রী মার্গারেট থ্যাচার। টনি ব্ল্যয়ারের জনপ্রিয়তা আগের তুলনায় কিছুটা হ্রাস পাইয়াছে কিংবা লেবার পার্টির জয়ের ব্যবধান আগের দুইটি নির্বাচনের তুলনায় অনেকটাই কমিয়া গিয়াছে, ইহা কনজার্ভেটিভ দলের কাছে কোনও সাঙ্ঘনা হইতে পারে না। তাঁহারা ভোটদারদের দ্বারা উপর্যুপরি তিন বার প্রত্যাখ্যাত হইয়াছেন, তাহাই বড় কথা। সত্য, লেবার পার্টির ১৬৭ আসনের সংসদীয় গরিষ্ঠতা এ বার অর্ধেকেরও বেশি কমিয়া গিয়াছে। ইহাও সত্য যে বিজয়ী দল হইয়াও লেবার পার্টির তরফে প্রদত্ত ভোটের মাত্র ৩৬ শতাংশ দখল করার নজিরও ব্রিটিশ নির্বাচনী ইতিবৃত্তে খুব বেশি নাই। কিন্তু টনি ব্ল্যয়ারের এই জনপ্রিয়তা সঙ্কোচনের পিছনে কনজার্ভেটিভদের কোনও কৃতিত্ব নাই। ইহার জন্য অংশত দায়ী ব্ল্যয়ার সরকারের ইরাক নীতি এবং নাগরিক মধ্যশ্রেণির মধ্যে সেই নীতির বিরূপ প্রতিক্রিয়া।

রক্ষণশীলদের পরাজয়ের কারণ আক্ষরিক অর্থেই দলটির রক্ষণশীল থাকিয়া যাওয়া। যুগধর্মের সহিত এই দল আপনাকে পরিবর্তিত করিতে সচেষ্ট হয় নাই। প্রধানত সম্ভ্রান্ত উচ্চবর্গীয়দের স্বার্থের প্রতিনিধিত্বকারী এই দল একবিংশ শতকেও রাজপুরুষ ও অভিজাতদের সংকীর্ণ আর্থসামাজিক স্বার্থের বাহিরে তাকাইতে পারে নাই। এখনও এই দল অভিজাতদের বিশেষাধিকার রক্ষায় অতিমাত্রায় সচেতন। 'খেকশিয়াল শিকার'-এর মতো মধ্যযুগীয় রাজকীয় ক্রীড়া অব্যাহত রাখার পক্ষপাতী। এ ধরনের শিকার বা মুগয়া ব্যসনপ্রিয় রাজা বা যুবরাজদের প্রিয় শখ হইতে পারে, কিন্তু গণতন্ত্রে যে এ জন্য কোনও বন্যজন্তু সংরক্ষণ করিয়া রাখা যায় না, এই বাস্তববোধটুকুও তাঁহাদের যথেষ্ট নাই। এখনও 'ক্ষুদ্র ইংল্যান্ড'-এর মানসিকতা অতিক্রম করিয়া স্কটল্যান্ড, উত্তর আয়ারল্যান্ড, ওয়েলশ প্রভৃতি উপদ্বীপের সহিত মূল ব্রিটিশ ভূখণ্ডের সংহতির বিষয়টি তাঁহারা ভাল ভাবে অনুধাবন করিতে পারেন নাই। ইহার সহিত যুক্ত হইয়াছে অভিবাসন প্রশ্নে দলের অবস্থান। যে দেশের অন্তত ৭০টি আসনে অভিবাসীদের ভোট নির্ণায়ক, সেখানে অভিবাসনের বিরুদ্ধে অবস্থান গ্রহণের মূল্য তো দিতেই হইবে। অভিবাসীরা (যাঁহাদের সংখ্যাগরিষ্ঠ অংশই এশীয়) যে ব্রিটেনের অর্থনীতি, সমাজ ও সংস্কৃতিকে সমৃদ্ধ করিতেছেন, এই বাস্তবতা সম্পর্কে অন্ধতাই এমন মনোভাবের কারণ।

আর্থিক নীতির প্রশ্নেও কনজার্ভেটিভরা প্রকৃত মুক্তির সড়ক পরিহার করিয়াছেন। নেত্রী মার্গারেট থ্যাচার যে অবাধ বাণিজ্য ও উদারনৈতিক সংস্কারের নীতি অনুসরণ করিয়া ব্রিটিশ অর্থনীতিতে সমৃদ্ধি এবং কনজার্ভেটিভ দলকে নির্বাচনী সাফল্য আনিয়া দিয়াছিলেন, ১৯৯৭ সালে জন মেজরের ইস্তফার পর ব্রিটিশ লেবার পার্টিই সেই অর্থনৈতিক কর্মসূচি আত্মসাৎ করিয়া লয়। থ্যাচার যে পথে ব্রিটেনকে টানিয়া তুলিয়াছিলেন, টনি ব্ল্যয়ারের সরকার কার্যত সেই পথেই পথিক হয়। উপরন্তু শিক্ষা, স্বাস্থ্য এবং সরকারি পরিষেবায় বরাদ্দ উত্তরোত্তর বাড়াইয়া চলে। তাহাতে কোষাগারে কিছুটা টান পড়িলেও গণতান্ত্রিক রাষ্ট্রের কল্যাণব্রত নিশ্চিত হয়। ইউরোপীয় ইউনিয়নে সংযুক্তির প্রশ্নে আগামী বছরে অনুষ্ঠেয় গণভোট ব্ল্যয়ারের পরবর্তী কঠিন পরীক্ষা। এ পরীক্ষায় তিনি অকৃতকার্য হইলেও তাহার সুযোগ কনজার্ভেটিভ দল গ্রহণ করিতে পারিবে, এমন সম্ভাবনা কম। কেননা, চতুর্থ দফায় প্রধানমন্ত্রিত্বের প্রার্থী হইবেন না, এ কথা ব্ল্যয়ার জানাইয়া দিয়াছেন এবং ইতিমধ্যেই লেবার পার্টিতে ব্ল্যয়ারের উত্তরসূরি রূপে তাহার বর্তমান প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বী গর্ডন ব্রাউনের নাম উচ্চারিত হইতেছে। কনজার্ভেটিভ দলের নেতা মাইকেল হাওয়ার্ডকে অতএব আরও বেশ কিছু কাল অপেক্ষা করিতে হইবে। বস্তুত তত দিনই অপেক্ষা করিতে হইবে, যত দিন এই দল নিজেকে পাল্টাইয়া না ফেলিবে এবং একটি আধুনিক, ভবিষ্যমুখী উদার গণতন্ত্রকে নেতৃত্ব দিবার যোগ্যতা অর্জন না করিবে।

Blair's Back

British poll results hold lessons for India too

The good news for the British Labour Party is that it is back in power for an unprecedented third time. The bad news is that in both number of seats and share of votes Labour has come down significantly. Labour is likely to return with a majority of a little over 60 seats, which is more than 100 seats down from last time. A major reason for the reduced victory margin is the Iraq invasion, which alienated many Labour supporters. One of the last polls conducted by BBC found 23% of people surveyed cited opposition to the war as a reason for being reluctant to vote Labour. Around 21% said they did not trust Tony Blair and 21% cited insufficient control of immigration. Interestingly, the anti-war Liberal Democrats increased their share of votes to around 23% from 18%. Blair admitted the importance of Iraq on Friday when he said that the war had been a divisive issue. But it was not only Iraq that brought down Blair's share, the Conservatives did well on issues like taxes and immigration control. For Indians resident in Britain, the poll results won't change things much. While Britons of Indian origin have made their mark both economically and culinarily on contemporary Britain, they are yet to engage significantly in politics. When they do and if they keep expanding their business interests, who knows, they might yet colonise Britain, but not now.

What do these results mean for Britain watchers in New Delhi? By Blair's own reluctant admission, he recognised Iraq as something of a misadventure. Blair's unstinted support to the Bush administration's Iraq policy has made Britain closer than ever to its trans-Atlantic cousin. While it is good to be on the right side of the world's sole superpower, there can be a case of it being too much of a good thing. Proximity to Washington should not compromise any country's national interest. Britain, which today runs a risk of being hyphenated with America in international perception, would do well to bear this in mind. Post-election Whitehall could be more responsive to overtures from Europe rather than concentrate on holding hands with Washington. It could be a learning experience for India, too, as it seeks to enter a strategic partnership with the US. While it should continue to nurture its growing relationship with Washington, it should not appear overly servile in that partnership. It should retain some flexibility in areas such as seeking a permanent seat in the UN Security Council or managing its strategic interests in Asia.

07 MAY 2005

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Voters teach Labour the Iraq lesson

As expected, fear of the Conservative Party trumped anger against the Iraq war in the British general election to give the Labour Party an unprecedented third term in office. The party won mainly on the back of its reasonable economic performance in the eight years it has held power — and on the inability of the Tories to offer credible alternative policies. If anything, the emphasis on providing a tough immigration and asylum regime made the right-wing Opposition look like a one-programme party that did not deserve to be in power. But “historic” as this victory is for Tony Blair, voters decided to teach New Labour a lesson for the Prime Minister’s decision to take Britain into the war, and for his eagerness to be counted as the main ally of the Bush administration in its Iraq project. This much is apparent in Labour’s reduced majority. In the elections of 1997 and 2001, it won crushing victories; in the last election, with 413 seats in a 659-member House, it had a lead of 167 in the House of Commons. That lead has been halved.

Anger over the Iraq war was evident across the country, among young voters, and among minorities. It was dramatically expressed in the victory of the anti-war campaigner George Galloway — who was expelled from the party in 2003 — in a Labour stronghold. Having supported the war, the Conservatives, led by Michael Howard, can take no real credit for this sharp reduction in Labour’s majority. They gained as traditional Labour supporters switched allegiance to the Liberal Democrats in protest. The Liberal Democrats, who came out in firm opposition to the war, might not have made the deep incursions into the Labour vote they were hoping to make. Still, their 60+ tally of seats is their best performance since the 1920s.

The election outcome makes the British Parliament a more genuinely three-party affair than it has been in a long time. It is the first glimmer of hope for the Conservatives since 1997. By announcing that he will step down as the Tory leader, Mr. Howard has pre-empted calls for his ouster. For Labour, the result will prompt a major focus on domestic policies such as education, health, and law and order but the main rethink has to be on Iraq. Mr. Blair has promised to respond “sensibly and wisely” to the result but if Labour wishes to put Iraq behind it, a leader deeply entangled with the unjust, illegal, and damaging project, virtually on American command, must be persuaded or pressured to step down. This, in fact, will become inevitable if the view gains ground within the party that the third term was won “despite Tony.” As the dust settles on this general election, the intriguing question is whether Mr. Blair is willing to make way for his deputy and Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, one of the most visible and trusted faces of the party. And if so, how soon?

07 MAY 2005

THE HINDY!

Tony Blair wins historic third term

Acknowledges that Iraq was a "very divisive issue" causing losses to Labour Party

HD-1

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: British Prime Minister Tony Blair was back in Downing Street on Friday after leading the Labour Party to an unprecedented third successive term in office but the achievement was overshadowed by an embarrassingly reduced majority mainly as a result of the backlash over Iraq, and the Conservatives' campaign against immigration.

A visibly chastened Mr. Blair acknowledged that Iraq had been a "very divisive" issue as Labour lost more than half of its sitting MPs pushing its majority to well below the party's worst expectations — its share of the national vote plummeting to a historic low.

Despite his own impressive victory, Mr Blair's personal authority was seen to have been damaged because of the setback to the party prompting speculation that the pressure on him to step down might increase in the coming months.

Conservatives gain

The Conservatives pulled off an unexpectedly good performance picking up more than 30 seats on the back of a xenophobic campaign that seemed to have played well with voters not only in the predominantly white countryside but also with large sections of the urban electorate including Asian immigrants.

The party leader Michael Howard said he was "proud" of the campaign. "We have taken a stand on the things that really do matter to the people of this country," he said.

He indicated that he would step down soon to make way for a younger leader.

The Liberal Democrats significantly improved their share of the national vote but were not able to gain too many extra seats. They benefited mostly from the "protest" vote against Labour.

Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy said the voters had ushered in an era of "three-party politics" in Britain with his

party emerging as a "truly national party" poised to play a "big role" in Parliament.

Iraq, an issue

By mid-day on Friday, with most of the results declared, Labour's new majority stood at over 60 — down from 161 in the last Parliament.

The casualties included at least four ministers, Oona King, Stephen Twigg, Christopher Leslie and Melanie Johnson. Ms. King lost to George Galloway of the anti-war Respect Party in a high-profile East London constituency.

A former Labour MP, Mr. Galloway was expelled from the party after he appealed to the British troops in Iraq not to fight.

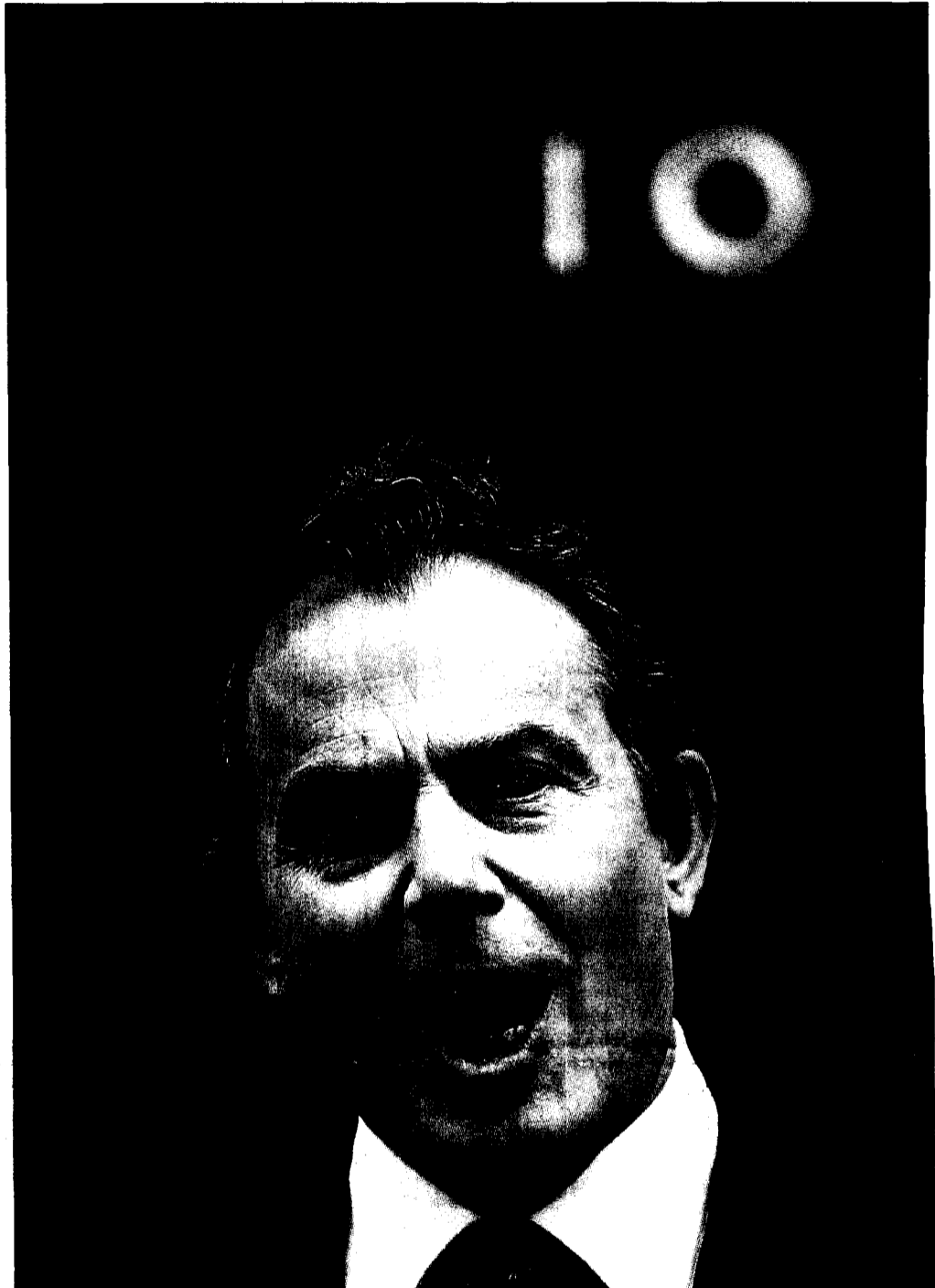
Foreign Secretary Jack Straw had anxious moments in his predominantly Muslim constituency of Blackburn before scraping through with a reduced margin.

Even the anti-war Labour candidates such as the former foreign secretary, Robin Cook, who resigned from the Government over Iraq, had a hard time. Mr. Cook said he was told by his constituents that they would not vote for him because of the Labour Party's support to the war. "If it was like that for me, it might have been at least as strong for others," he said.

Mr. Blair, who turned 52 on Friday, is the first Labour Prime Minister to have won three consecutive terms.

Reacting to the results, he admitted that the party did not enjoy the same level of trust as before. "We have to respond to that sensibly, wisely and responsibly," he said. But he insisted that the people still wanted a Labour Government.

In a House of 646, at the time of writing, Labour had got 355 seats, the Conservatives 197, Liberal Democrats 62, and others 13.



NOT A PERFECT 10: Britain's Prime Minister Tony Blair addresses the media outside 10 Downing Street, London, after his Labour Party won the general elections on Friday. — PHOTO: REUTERS

More reports on Page 14

THE HINDU

07 MAY 2005

Blair set to win third term despite voter anger over Iraq

Results today; Labour Party's majority expected to fall significantly

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: Despite widespread anger over Iraq and perceived loss of trust in him, British Prime Minister Tony Blair looked set to win a record third term in office as Britain went to the polls on Thursday in a bitterly-contested general election.

Voting, which was to go on until 10 p.m. (well past midnight in India), was slow initially but was expected to pick up later in the day as people stop at the polling booth on their way back from work.

Results would be known early on Friday.

As the voting began, with Mr Blair among the first of the three main national leaders to cast his vote, opinion polls unanimously pointed to an unbeatable Labour lead over its rivals. The only debate was about the size of a Labour majority with its current 160-plus strength predicted to plummet to well below 100.

Meltdown for Tories

The Conservatives, who have been out of power for eight years now, were reported to be in a "meltdown" with even some senior figures in danger of losing their seats. There was already speculation about the future of the Conservative leader Michael Howard who was elected only two years ago to make the party electable after two humiliating defeats.

The Liberal Democrats were expected to improve their tally because of their consistent opposition to the Iraq war. The party was likely to wrest a number of seats from Labour Party, especially in constituencies with a large Muslim electorate, upset over Iraq.

"We are a party that is on the up," its leader Charles Kennedy said.

The attention was focussed on the turnout and Labour was particularly keen to get as many voters out to the polling booth as



LAST-MINUTE CANVASSING: Voters being approached for support as they enter a polling station in Brick Lane in east London on Thursday. - PHOTO: REUTERS

possible. A low turnout was expected to hit Labour the most on the assumption that most of those staying away would be disaffected Labour supporters. Mr Blair again warned "wavering" voters that if they stayed home or voted for the Liberal Democrats to "punish" him over Iraq they could end up letting Conservatives in through the backdoor.

Blasts at British consulate in New York

NEW YORK: Two small grenades exploded in a concrete flower pot outside a multi-storey building housing the British Consulate in midtown Manhattan early on Thursday, shattering glass panel on the

front door but causing no injuries, hours after Britain went to polls.

The "toy grenades" filled with black gunpowder exploded at around 3.35 am in one of the flower pots kept outside the

building as barriers, blowing up a one-foot chunk from the cement pot.

Police sealed off the area and were examining the tapes from surveillance cameras for clues. - PTI

Forget Iraq, focus on economy: Blair

Sedgefield (England), May 4 (Reuters): On the eve of an election likely to give him an historic third term, Tony Blair appealed to Britons today to swallow misgivings over Iraq and return him to power as a reward for their healthy economy.

"Of course there has been disagreement about Iraq," the Prime Minister said as the US-led war to topple Saddam Hussein again dominated a news conference, his last of the campaign.

"(But) who do people trust with the economy, with the investment in our public services, with the interests of the country? I think we can make a pretty good case of it." Blair, well ahead in polls, was like his rivals engaged in frenetic last-minute campaign stops round England and Scotland.

He was then to spend the night in his constituency of Sedgefield, in northeast England, where he will vote after polls open at 0600 GMT tomorrow.

Blair hopes Britain's robust economy, which has outperformed its European neighbours during the global downturn of recent years, will be his trump card. Interest rates and unemployment remain low, while growth has been constant. But voters, including many in his own Centre-Left Labour Party, remain deeply uncomfortable with Blair's backing of President George W. Bush in Iraq.

Michael Howard, leader of the main Conservative Opposition, accuses Blair of lying over the legality of the war and over intelligence on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction.

In Sedgefield, an area of old mining towns and picturesque villages where Blair won a huge majority of almost 18,000 in 2001, the father of a soldier killed in Iraq is standing against him as an independent and seeking to garner

a protest vote.

As he knocked on doors, an upbeat Reg Keys said voters were upset over Iraq and responsive to his anti-Blair message. "What we are seeing here are cracks in the foundation of the Labour empire," he said. "People want something different."

Despite a week of attacks on his integrity, polls put Blair on course for victory, albeit with a likely reduction in his massive 161-seat parliamentary majority.

The latest survey today gave Labour a commanding 14-point lead on 41 per cent versus the Conservatives on 27. Other recent polls have put Blair between 3 and 10 points ahead.

If Blair is celebrating when the results come in on Friday — which is also his 52nd birthday — he would be the first Labour leader to win three successive elections.

Blair, who has said he will step down at the end of a third term, insisted economic stability and investment in health and education would be his domestic priorities.

Africa and the environment were his foreign policy priorities, he added. "I remain passionate about these things." Blair's first task on re-election would be to shape a new cabinet. He has already made clear his powerful finance minister and likely successor, Gordon Brown, will remain in his post.



A satirical comment is scrawled over a toilet paper roll at a cartoon gallery in London. (AFP)

Final push for British politicians

London, May 4

BRITAIN'S POLITICIANS were embarking on one final campaign push, the day before an election which appears increasingly likely to hand Prime Minister Tony Blair a third straight term in office.

Blair was expected to make his government's handling of the buoyant British economy during its eight years in power the centrepiece of his final push ahead of the start of polling on Thursday morning. "Now the people are in the driving seat," he said on GMTV breakfast television, in the first of a full slate of interviews and Labour Party rallies aimed at wooing legions of uncommitted voters.

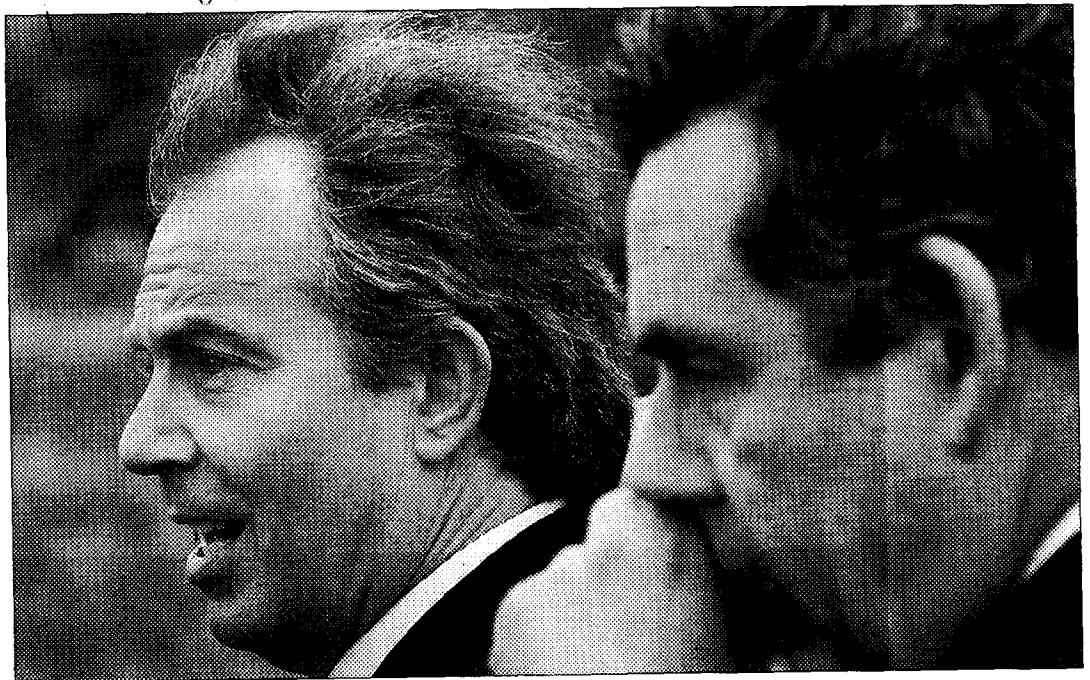
Meanwhile, the leaders of the opposition Conservatives and Liberal Democrats were making their own last campaign calls, urging voters to punish Blair over the unpopular Iraq war and other issues.

Despite a frantic, and sometimes bitter, campaign, both pundits and opinion polls have remained constant throughout: Blair's Labour Party is likely to be re-elected, albeit most likely with a smaller majority.

No new opinion polls were published in Wednesday's British papers, but the tone of the coverage suggested clearly that the election outcome was beginning to look a foregone conclusion.

The Daily Mail published a three-page guide to parliamentary seats in which so-called "tactical voting" could remove Labour lawmakers, thus helping "give Mr Blair a bloody nose". This appeared the best feasible outcome, the Blair-detesting newspaper admitted in an editorial column.

"If we're being honest, our support for a Conservative victory — which we concede is unlikely — is superseded by an even greater imperative: to di-



REUTERS

Tony Blair and Gordon Brown walk through Elstree Aerodrome on the last day of election campaigning.

minish the power of the overweeningly arrogant Mr Blair and restore a healthy democracy to this country," it said.

Meanwhile, Blair, in an interview with *The Sun* avoided politics altogether and talked instead about his happy marriage.

Blair is likely to succeed in large part because the Conservatives, who are on their third new leader since Labour took power in 1997, remain a shadow of the once-mighty political machine headed by former premier Margaret Thatcher.

Reports on Wednesday began to ponder whether current Conservative leader Michael Howard would be deposed if he failed to significantly increase the party's share of House of Commons seats, with some party bigwigs setting a notional target of at least 200 of the 646 seats at stake.

AFP

Immigration worries

Ilford, May 4

IN THIS closely fought district on the eastern outskirts of London, the opposition Conservatives — led by the son of a Romanian immigrant — are hitting hard on their promise to crack down on immigration. The message is resonating with many voters, even some immigrants. Others are disturbed by the anti-immigrant rhetoric.

"Sometimes I think the authorities are too soft," said Dalbir Deol Singh, a Sikh voter in the Ilford North constituency now held by the governing Labour Party. Although he's voting Labour, he says his children will vote for the Conservatives "because they feel

too many immigrants means trouble for all of us."

Immigration has emerged as a major issue with both Labour and the Tories pledging a tougher stand. The issue is touchy in a nation whose business prowess can be attributed to the energy and know-how of immigrants. Asylum applications rose to record levels in 2002, which Blair responded to by tightening admission procedure.

Conservative leader Michael Howard, has proposed putting caps on immigration levels and requiring HIV tests for newcomers. He has denied any racist motives and says he favours admitting more "genuine" refugees.

AP

05 MAY 2005

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Ahead of polls, Blair majority melting away

AMIT ROY

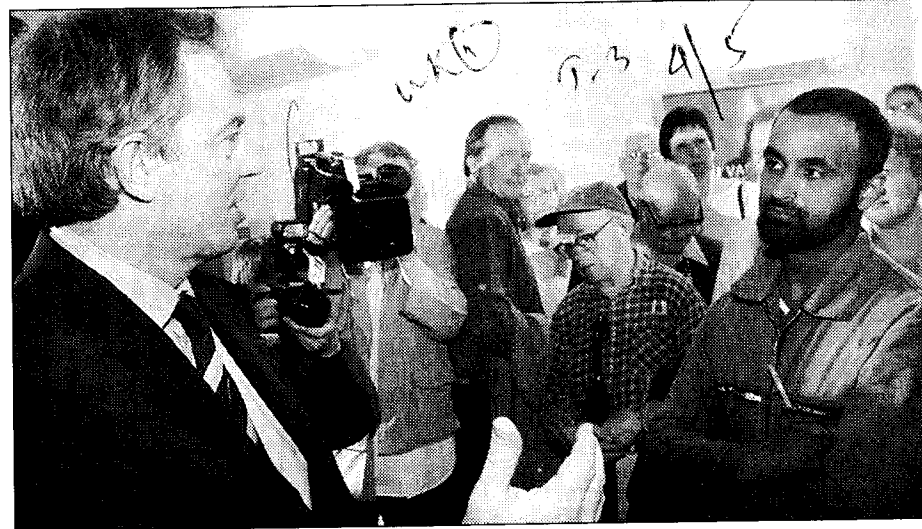
London, May 3: With only a day to go before Thursday's general election in Britain, Tony Blair's massive majority of 161 in the last parliament seems to be melting away faster than an ice cream in the Calcutta sun.

One of the Labour MPs who might lose his seat is 33-year-old Sikh, Parmjit Dhanda, who won the mainly white constituency of Gloucester in 2001 with a thin majority of 3,380.

Although opinion polls suggest Blair will still win with a majority of around 70, the real battle is taking place in about 70 or so marginal seats where tactical voting to oust the sitting Labour MP makes the final tally exceptionally hard to predict.

All in all, things do not seem to be going Blair's way, although a Labour defeat still seems the most unlikely of the various permutations and combinations. Complicating matters is a report that a third of the electorate could change its mind and that two-third of first time voters may not bother to turn out on May 5.

Most ominously for the Prime Minister, Iraq has forced itself back into the agenda with the family of Anthony Wakefield, 24, of the 1st Battalion The Coldstream Guards, bitterly blaming Blair for his death. He was killed by



Prime Minister Tony Blair (left) answers a question posed by Mohammed Jaffer (right) in Gloucester. (AFP)

a roadside bomb on Sunday, the 87th British soldier to have died in Iraq.

Normally, the British armed forces are very dignified about accepting death in action but, with Iraq, family after family has held Blair personally responsible for the loss of loved ones. Relatives of ten British soldiers who died in Iraq launched a bid today to take Prime Minister Tony Blair to court for "lying" over the reasons he gave for taking the country to war.

They delivered a letter to Blair's Downing Street office demanding the Prime Minister order a full, independent

public inquiry within 14 days or warning they would begin legal action. Today, Blair and his Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, were barnstorming marginals, including Gloucester, where the Prime Minister was harangued by an Indian mechanic, Mohammed Jaffer.

"Tony, can we trust you after Iraq?" asked Jaffer, who added he had previously always voted Labour.

"I think you have done a fantastic job of running this country, but foreign policy you need to look at really close up. We have lost hundreds of lives, thousands of lives. We got the

impression you were just following President Bush."

Jaffer's comments spell bad news for Dhanda for the former warned that Gloucester's Muslim community was deeply divided over whether to support Labour. Jaffer himself was "50-50" over the issue.

In response to Jaffer, Blair made his usual reply: "In the end, you have got to try to do as Prime Minister what you think is right for the country and some of those decisions are very, very difficult. I think what you have got to ask yourself in the end is when you look at the election, what is going to determine the future

of this country, and I believe it is the economy, the health service and schools and law and order and the things that affect people.

"Sometimes as a Prime Minister you will take decisions that people profoundly disagree with, but all you can do — and it is your duty to do this as Prime Minister — is to try to make the best decision that you think is in the interests of the country and leave the rest to the judgment of the British people."

The timing of the latest British death in Iraq could not be worse for Blair, for the newspapers and television are carrying heartrending interviews with his partner and photographs of their children.

Guardsman Wakefield's partner, Ann Toward, said: "It's Tony Blair's fault. He sent all those troops out. If he hadn't sent them out [Anthony] would still be here. He shouldn't have done it."

The guardsman's children — sons Scott, seven, and Corey, two — and his stepdaughter Stacy, 11, were distraught at their father's death, she said.

"Corey didn't understand but Scott and Stacy were devastated, cried and cried," their mother added. "They are still talking about him, watching him on the television."

London, May 3 (Reuters): Once Britons wanting to vent their political spleen either had to write to the *Times* or take their soapbox to Speakers Corner in London's Hyde Park for a rant.

Now they can blog.

The campaign for the May 5 election has witnessed an explosion of web logs — "blogs" — from candidates to journalists and political snipers tearing chunks out of the bombast pouring out of party media machines.

"I think this is probably

Britons blog to vent their anger

the most interesting phenomenon of this election," said Stephen Coleman of the Oxford Internet Institute.

"The key thing about blogs is that they are grass roots and somewhat subterranean," he said. "The party websites are extremely tech-

nocratic and centralised. The blogs are more what people were hoping would come out of the Internet."

All the parties come in for criticism, from Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour and the Conservatives — "Tories" as they are often called — to the Liberal Democrats.

"It's a pity that the Tories and Lib Dems are adopting the approach of calling the Prime Minister a liar ... The words 'pot calling the kettle black' spring to mind," said one message.

1984 anti-Sikh riots an issue in U.K. elections

Sikhs want U.K. politicians to put pressure on New Delhi

Hasan Suroor

LONDON: The 1984 anti-Sikh riots in India have emerged as a significant issue in Britain's general election campaign. Sikh voters are seeking a commitment from candidates that, if elected, they will help the victims get justice from the Indian Government.

There is widespread anger among the country's 7,00,000-strong Sikhs that more than 20 years after the "massacre", the perpetrators have still not been punished.

"We are asking every candidate who comes to us to give an assurance that they would raise our concerns in Parliament and lobby with the Government to take it up with the Indian Gov-

UK (1) HD-19 9/5
ernment," said Ajit Singh, who was a sarpanch in Jalandhar when the riots took place. Now he helps to run a gurdwara in Leicester, which has a sizeable Sikh electorate.

Families of many British Sikhs suffered in the riots, which followed the assassination of the then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi.

They are bitter that successive governments have failed to get them justice.

They want British politicians to put pressure on New Delhi to allow independent international human rights groups to investigate the killings.

In Leicester, Asian candidates Keith Vaz (Labour) and Paramjit Singh Gill (Liberal Democrat) said they shared the

concerns of their Sikh constituents.

Mr. Gill said he supported the demand for an investigation by human rights organisations and wondered why New Delhi should oppose it.

In Southall, a predominantly Sikh area in west London, voters said they felt "let down" as even a Sikh Prime Minister had not done anything.

"When Manmohan Singh became Prime Minister, we hoped that he would do something but he has also disappointed us," said a bus driver.

The Sikh Federation (U.K.), Britain's only Sikh political party, has urged voters to use the election to raise their concerns about the protection of minorities in India.

04 MAY 2005

THE HINDU

Blair goes public with war advice

Colin Brown in London

April 28. — The British attorney-general's questioning of the legality of the Iraq war was finally made public last night after his secret advice to the Prime Minister was leaked.

The publication of Lord Goldsmith's report could prove to be the smoking gun that opponents of the war have been waiting for to show that Mr Tony Blair misled parliament and the country over the war.

Last night, Mr Blair was facing renewed allegations that he lied about the legality of the war.

The document warned that British troops involved in any invasion of Iraq might face prosecution in the international courts and said that the "safest legal course" would be to secure a new Security Council resolution authorising war.

It also said that Lord Goldsmith believed that Britain and the USA would need "factual grounds" and "hard and compelling evidence" of Iraqi breaches of UN resolutions before taking military action.

The key six arguments used by Lord Goldsmith to question the legality of the war were leaked at the weekend, but the full report strips away the last vestiges of defence by Mr Blair for his claim, repeated this week, that the war was legal.

Rating goes up

LONDON, April 28. — A week ahead of general elections in Britain, the ruling Labour party seems headed for a comfortable victory with the rating of its leader, Mr Tony Blair, shooting up despite personal attacks by Tories, who allege he "lied" about the legal case for war on Iraq, according to a new poll. — PTI

The weekend revelations thrust Mr Blair's integrity to the heart of the election campaign. But the publication of the report could act like a knife through the heart of Labour's campaign, which has been struggling since the weekend to get back onto the agenda of the economy.

The revelation also put pressure on Lord Goldsmith. He denied he was leaned on by Downing Street. However, he now has to explain why he had changed his mind from questioning the legality of the war on 7 March 2003, to his two-page report to the Cabinet 10 days later saying the war was legal.

Lord Goldsmith challenged the Prime Minister's assertion that the war was justified because Saddam Hussein had flouted UN resolution 1441 on WMD.

"In these circumstances, I remain of the opinion that the safest legal course would be to secure a further resolution to authorise the use of force." — **The Independent**



A British soldier chats with an Iraqi boy during a patrol in a Basra street on Thursday. — AFP

29 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

An eye-opening British election

P rime Minister Tony Blair and the British Labour Party are blessed in having an opposition party whose basic programme and election campaign have had the effect of sending voters scurrying back to them. When Mr. Blair announced the May 5 parliamentary elections, most opinion polls showed Labour with a narrow lead over the Conservatives. The ruling party's ratings had slumped essentially because traditional Labour voters, disillusioned with Blairite policies, were turning to others, such as the Liberal Democrats. But for a leader who has evoked anger, hatred, and ridicule even within his own party for slavishly pitching his tent alongside the Bush administration's for the invasion of Iraq, Prime Minister Blair has made a swift comeback in the past three weeks. The polls now predict that Labour will sweep back to power, which will mean an unprecedented hat trick for the party. For this, Mr. Blair can thank the single-minded Tory focus on the issue of immigration and asylum. Michael Howard's shrill refrain calling for a ceiling on the number of immigrants and refugees allowed into Britain every year has found some resonance with voters. Alarmed that the Tory campaign might make inroads into a receptive electorate and not wanting to split the anti-Conservatives vote, once rebellious Labour supporters seem to have rallied behind the party again, despite their disagreement with Mr. Blair's foreign policy. Having supported the invasion of Iraq, the Tories evidently picked immigration as the one issue on which Labour would not be able to match its rhetoric. But Mr. Blair, an ardent promoter of multicultural, "cool Britannia", is trying to do exactly that. He has accused Mr. Howard of exploiting an emotive issue and playing up people's fears, but in the same breath, acknowledged concerns over immigration. The Labour Party has come out with its own set of dubious measures: a points system, such as the one in Australia, for economic migrants; and a tagging system to keep track of asylum seekers while their applications are processed.

The debate, with its clearly racist overtones, is an eye-opener. At least relatively speaking, Britain has enjoyed in recent times the image of a cosmopolitan and tolerant nation. It has its share of xenophobes, but even in the intolerant post-9/11 climate, it has been more welcoming of outsiders than any other country in Europe. Has this changed? This is the first election in which immigration is reported to be the pre-eminent issue before voters. Leaders of British industry have pointed out that fears about immigration are exaggerated and misplaced, and that far from being a drain on the country's resources, immigrants provide a steady supply of skilled workers. There are many altruistic reasons for allowing people to move freely across borders but there can be no more effective argument against tightening the immigration regime than that it can cripple the host country's industry.

25 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Blair warns ^{WKO} against division on immigration

Asylum not a political weapon

Hasan Suroor ^{HD-14}

LONDON: With the debate on immigration and asylum continuing to dominate the British general election campaign, the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, on Friday warned that it should not be used as a "political weapon" to divide the country.

In his first major intervention on a subject that has been driving opinion polls ever since the campaign began three weeks ago, Mr. Blair was, however, keen to show that he was not out of touch with the public mood saying that he "understood" the concerns over the issue.

Measures listed

He denied that his Government had been "pussyfooting" around the problem, as alleged by the Conservatives, and listed the measures it had already taken and those it proposed to take to deal with it, if returned to power next month.

Mr. Blair said it was not racist to talk about immigration or asylum but what was dangerous was to "play politics" with it. He warned the Conservatives, who have made immigration the main plank of their campaign, not to play on the "anxieties" and "worries" on the issue. "We should not use these issues as a political weapon," he said adding

^{23/4}
• Issue dominates poll campaign

• System must not be abused

• Howard "pandering to racism"

that at the same time it was important to make sure that the system was not abused by illegal immigrants and failed asylum-seekers.

Mr. Blair's intervention came two days after he was grilled on the BBC when he said he had no idea about the number of illegal immigrants in the country. He said the Conservatives themselves had admitted, when they were in power, that it was not possible to "speculate" on the number of people who continued to live in Britain illegally.

Ignoring the criticism from the Left that he was trying to "compete" with the Conservatives on a racially-sensitive issue, Mr. Blair promised tougher action to tighten up the system.

The Conservative Party leader, Michael Howard, was accused of pandering to racism after he suggested in a TV programme that there could be race riots if immigration went out of control.

23 APR 2005

THE HINDU

Radicals hijack UK poll meet

AMIT ROY

London, April 19: A group of 15 men, two of them masked, burst into the Central London Mosque in Regent's Park just as the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) was unveiling its election manifesto.

The council, which claims to be the voice of Britain's 1.6 million Muslims, has drawn up a list of 10 questions, covering immigration, education, religious discrimination and Iraq, which it wants voters to ask of their parliamentary candidates before making their choice.

From the Labour Party's point of view, the bad news is that the Muslim leadership is not asking the faithful to vote for Tony Blair. However, the good news from Blair's point of view is that no fatwa is being issued urging Muslims — and many of them are in key constituencies such as foreign secretary Jack Straw's Blackburn seat — not to support Labour.

But Muslim politics is a dangerous business, even in Britain. For the radical fringe, even the act of voting is *haram* or not lawful according to Islam. In marked contrast, the council wants Muslims to vote: "We encourage all Muslims to take an active part in all the issues of the election campaign."

At Regent's Park mosque, the biggest in the country, there was a large media turnout, which was hijacked by the intruders. There were

chaotic scenes as the council's secretary general Iqbal Sacranie suspended the press conference.

Sacranie's line was: "We know there is a lot of disillusionment out there about the manner in which anti-terror measures have been applied against our community in recent years. The questions are there to help guide British Muslims towards a more informed decision concerning the main issues facing them today."

One of the protesters, who said he belonged to the Saviour Sect, claimed voting in the general election was "an act of apostasy" and announced: "We are here to condemn you and your organisation." One of the masked men screamed: "Kaffirs. MCB are dirty kaffirs."

Another man yelled: "The MCB are a mouthpiece of the British government of Tony Blair and George Bush. They don't represent Islam. They don't represent British Muslims."

The Saviour Sect handed out a leaflet reading: "Vote today... become Kaafir tomorrow! Voting for any political party which has a policy of legislating a law is Kufr Akbar (a major apostasy) and will take you outside the fold of Islam. It will also nullify all your good deeds and guarantee your seat in hellfire forever."

After enjoying their 15 minutes of fame, surrounded by photographers and camera-

men, the men left. Ten policemen outside made no attempt to stop them.

The break-in was a major distraction for the council today issued a major document which sets out how it thinks a future government should conduct its relationship with British Muslims.

Much of what the council had to say on issues such as curbing terrorism, education, tackling unemployment among Muslims — half the Muslim population of Britain is British-born and under 24 — seemed eminently sensible.

However, the council could not resist a little dig at India for failing to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir, something which even President Musharraf hasn't raised.

"International law is enforced very selectively allowing some countries (example Israel, Russia, India) to flout UN resolutions with impunity," it said.

Perhaps the most important demand from the council is that in order to achieve a more equal and just society, Asians should be promoted not on the basis of their ethnicity, as has so far been the case, but their religion.

"For many Muslims," the council said, "religion — and not ethnicity — forms the primary basis of their primary identity." This is a crucial shift in the battle for equality and runs the risk of importing the Hindu-Muslim divide from the subcontinent into British public life.

20 APR 2005

THE TELEGRAPH

Blair sets 5 May date for British election

Associated Press

LONDON, April 5. — The British Prime Minister today called a national election on 5 May, triggering a four-week campaign that will test a volatile electorate's judgment of the Iraq war.

Despite lingering anger over the US-led invasion, Mr Tony Blair's governing Labour Party is widely expected to win a third term in office, bolstered by a strong economy. "We are proud of what we have achieved in the last eight years," Mr Blair said, after asking Queen Elizabeth II's permission to dissolve parliament. "It's a big choice and there's a lot at stake."

Standing on the steps of his Downing Street office, the Prime Minister said: "The British people are the boss and they are the ones who will make it."

Several opinion polls published today showed Labour giving ground slightly to the main Opposition Conservative Party, although still with leads of



The poll will be a personal test for Mr Blair. — AFP

between 2 and 5 percentage points. Given the margin of error, the parties were virtually neck and neck. Analysts, however, said the Conservatives would need a lead of several points to win the election, due to an uneven spread of constituencies across Britain's electoral map.

Third time lucky?

The poll will be an important personal test for

Mr Blair. A charismatic and dynamic leader, he helped catapult Labour to power in 1997 and win a second landslide election victory in 2001.

But the war, and the government's use of intelligence on Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, which turned out to be wrong, have severely dented his credibility.

The Prime Minister's popularity has been further eroded by his close relationship with President George W Bush and the perception that he slavishly follows Washington's foreign policy without exerting any real influence.

The alliance has caused tension within the Labour Party and one of its parliamentary candidates, Mr Stephen Wilkinson, today announced that he would now stand for the Liberal Democrats, the only major party to oppose the war. "Who could have thought that a Labour government would become a lapdog to Mr Bush's right-wing Republican administration," Mr Wilkinson said.

House panel criticises US troops

Associated Press

LONDON, April 5. — Excessive use of force by US troops in Iraq has antagonised Iraqi civilians and made the process of rebuilding the country more difficult, a UK parliamentary committee said in a report published today.

The House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee said the slow pace of reconstruction had fuelled the insurgency, and suggested Iraq had replaced Afghanistan as a training ground for international terrorists.

In Iraq, meanwhile, two militant outfits posted separate Internet videos claiming to have killed an Iraqi soldier and an alleged informant, and insurgents launched a string of attacks across the country that left four US soldiers dead.

06 APR 2005

THE STATESMAN

Britain gets its 'Pota'

ASSOCIATED PRESS

LONDON, March 12. — Britain's governing Labour Party claimed victory today for pushing through its contentious anti-terrorism law after an acrimonious two-day debate in parliament. The Opposition said it had forced the government to make key changes to the legislation.

"The British public will not be impressed with the way this

government has made such a muddle and mess of what is possibly one of the most important Bills of modern times," said Mr David Davis, a spokesman for the Opposition Conservative Party.

Ten suspects who had been detained without trial for up to three years — including a radical preacher accused of links to

the Al-Qaida — were free, although they faced "control orders" imposing a nighttime curfew and strict restrictions on their activities.

Mr Tony Blair won the support of parliament for the Prevention of Terrorism Bill yesterday, after one of the longest and bitterest standoffs in recent parliamentary history

of Britain. The law allows terrorist suspects to be put under house arrest or curfew or electronically tagged without charge or trial.

The Conservatives had opposed the legislation, saying it would infringe civil liberties and demanding a so-called "sunset clause" guaranteeing that the law would expire a year after

being passed. The government claimed such an Amendment would send a message that Britain was soft on terrorism.

To break the deadlock, the Prime Minister eventually agreed to a timetable for parliament to review and amend the law and promised parliament time to draft more wide-ranging legislation later in the year. The Conservatives said that was a "sunset clause" in all but name.

BLAIR GOVT, OPPOSITION HAIL PASSAGE OF ANTI-TERROR BILL

Lords reject anti-terror bill

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, MARCH 8. The British Government's controversial anti-terror legislation has been thrown out by the House of Lords on grounds that it infringes civil liberties by giving sweeping powers to the Home Secretary to take action against terror suspects bypassing legal processes.

The defeat, the biggest suffered by the Government in this term, is seen as a personal humiliation for the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, as some of his most loyal peers, including his one-time mentor, the former Lord Chancellor Derry Irvine, voted against it.

Although the bill was widely expected to have a rough passage in the Lords, the scale of the defeat, with at least 20 Labour peers joining the Opposition, took the Government by surprise. In a blow to its claim that the measures proposed in the bill had the support of security services, a former metropolitan police chief, Lord Condon, too voted against it.

No support

A flabbergasted Lord Falconer, the Minister who piloted the bill, admitted that he had found "no support in relation to my arguments" but there was no immediate indication whether the Government would accept the changes suggested by the Lords.

The bill empowers the Home Secretary to issue "control orders" against terror suspects placing severe restrictions on their movements, including 24-hour surveillance, denial of access to telephone and Internet — and in extreme cases — house arrest. The measures are intended to deal with cases where there is not sufficient evidence to put the suspects on trial but who are still seen by the Government to pose a threat.

The House of Lords insisted that "control orders" in all cases should be issued by judges and not by politicians as proposed in the bill. Under the Government proposals, the judiciary will be involved only in cases of house arrest but in all other situations, the Home Secretary will be the sole arbiter.

As the bill returned to the Commons for a debate on the Lords' amendments, the Home Office insisted that it "strikes the right balance between protecting the security of the nation and safeguarding individual liberty".

09 MAR 2005

THE HINDU

U.K. proposes tough immigration controls

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, FEB. 7. The British Government on Monday announced new tough immigration controls to check what it called the "abuse" of the system as the issue climbed on top of the domestic agenda ahead of a general election, expected in May.

Under the new proposals, the Government will use an Australian-style "points" system to determine the suitability of those who want to come and work in Britain.

The main criterion would be whether their education and skills match the demands of the job market, and only those

with skills that Britain really needs would be given work permits.

There will also be changes to rules relating to permanent residency and the number of dependants an immigrant can bring into Britain.

The present system, under which anyone who has lived here for four years can automatically claim right to stay indefinitely, is to be reviewed to make it more difficult to get British residency.

Curbs on dependants

The number of dependants who can accompany an immigrant would be restricted to immediate family members to

check what is described as "chain migration" where immigrants tend to bring in their extended family portraying them as dependants.

The proposals, which are part of a five-year programme that the Labour Party intends to implement if it is returned to power, were seen as a "panic reaction" to the Tories' bid to make immigration and asylum a major issue in their election campaign.

Tories have proposed annual quotas for immigrants and asylum-seekers accusing the Government of running a "chaotic" system.

Civil rights campaigners

called it a "bidding war" between the two parties, but the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, insisted that the Government was responding to public "worry" on the issue.

"The public are worried about this, they are worried rightly, because there are abuses of the immigration and asylum system," he told the BBC.

The Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, said: "Migration for work, migration to study is a good thing...What is wrong is when that system isn't properly policed, and people are coming here who are a burden on the society, and it is that which we intend to drive out."

U.K. under pressure on terror laws

By Hasan Suroor

HO-15
18/1
LONDON, JAN. 17. The British Government has come under renewed pressure to review its tough anti-terror laws following a House of Lords ruling that indefinite detention of suspected foreigners without trial is unlawful and discriminatory.

The ruling, widely hailed by human rights groups, has prompted two Government-appointed barristers to resign saying that they do not want to be part of a discriminatory regime.

They have called for changes to the controversial Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act 2001 under which while British citizens, suspected of terrorism, are entitled to a proper legal trial, foreigners are not.

Currently, 12 foreigners are languishing in high-security prisons and, as a result of the House of Lords ruling, they will be able to apply for bail.

Lord's verdict

According to legal experts, their detention could be quashed altogether by the review tribunal in the light of the Lords' verdict.

“But the move that the Government is likely to fear most would be an application to the European Court of Human Rights at Strasbourg.”

“It is likely that the court would reach the same conclusion as the law lords. In that event, Britain would have to release the men or put them on trial,” said Joshua Rozenberg, legal editor of *The Daily Telegraph*.

Rick Scannell, a “special advocate” appointed by the Government to deal with the cases of foreign suspects, resigned on Monday becoming the second barrister to quit in protest at the Government's reluctance to act on the law lords' ruling.

Special advocates

“I thought I could not in good conscience act in a system which continued to test the lawfulness of the detention of these men in a context in which the House of Lords had declared the very provisions upon which the detentions were based to be incompatible with the detainees' human rights,” he said amid speculation that more “special advocates” planned to resign if the Government did not move fast to respond to the ruling.