

RESURGENCE OF TERRORISM

The horrendous bomb blasts in the financial capital of India, Mumbai, killing two hundred innocent people and injuring more than one thousand persons in the second week of July has once again underlined India's vulnerability to terrorism. In fact, the terrorist attacks coincided with the terrorist attacks on tourists in Kashmir which killed more than half a dozen tourists and injured local people in dozens and scores. That terrorist attacks are aimed at carrying out mayhem and carnage, apart from diffusing terror and fear among populace, is clear. However, the fact that both the sites targeted in recent terrorist attacks have a high commercial profile deserves some careful analysis.

Mumbai is internationally recognised as financial and commercial capital of India. Its trade and commercial potential and importance needs to be hardly over-emphasised. The city has faced the second major terrorist attack during the last couple of years, the 1993 serial bombings aside. It is clear that the attacks are aimed at shattering the economic structures of the state apart from making it insecure for the future investors.

In Kashmir, it is a tourist season which has been attracting large number of tourists from within and outside the country. The tourist industry forms the backbone of economy of Kashmir. During the last three months, more than three lac tourists visited Kashmir. The attacks on tourists are clearly aimed at driving away the visiting tourists and scaring away the prospective visitors to the valley. The local media reports in Srinagar lament that ninety percent advance bookings in hotels have been cancelled. In sum, economy appears to be the specific target of the new terrorist attacks.

It may be recalled that Bangalore, which has emerged as the hub of science and Information Technology in India, witnessed terrorist attacks on some significant installations in the recent past. The national as well as international investors find the city of Bangalore quite conducive from various angles for big investments. The peaceful environs of the city is the major factor in attracting investors to it. The terrorist acts, it seems, were aimed at introducing fear and insecurity in the otherwise peaceful atmosphere of the city. Thus, a pattern with the objective of targeting India's trade and commercial centres is gradually unfolding. There is an urgency in unraveling this design and identify its origin, sources and capacity.

It is relevant to comprehend the dimensions of this nefarious design. For the present, three dimensions may be considered and debated. One, the ideological component in which strategy of targeting commercial hubs and efforts to cripple the trade and business activities is gaining prominence in the planning of terrorist attacks. In pursuance of this strategy, the loss of human beings becomes collateral and destruction of economy assumes the centre stage for perpetrators of terrorism. Two, the design may

have its origins and sources which go well beyond the boundaries of one specific country. There is likelihood of an existing invisible consortium operating at the regional level. Third, the design may have larger targets across the territorial frontiers of the region, which would unfold over a period of time. It needs to be recognised that in the horrendous business of terrorism there are no permanent friends or foes. The experiences of Afghanistan and Pakistan's operations in Waziristan provide illustrations to the point.

In order to fight the menace of terrorism, a South Asian regional initiative and trans-national cooperation is the need of the hour.