

Bid to blast holes in buoyant economy

JULY 12, 2006

By Suresh Nair

The serenity of my house was temporarily disturbed by a phone call. Involuntarily, I had a momentary glance at the clock adorning the wall opposite the sofa. It was 7 o'clock. **'Bhabhiji**

must have reached home, escaping scores of issues in the vigilance files she was handling at office - there will be a detailed discussion now 'was the first thought that crept my mind as I picked up the receiver. However, much to my surprise, it was a distressed voice of bhabhiji's mother on the other side 'Chottu, did you see the news? There has been serial blasts in the first class compartment on few Borivili bound local trains - the pause was punctuated with persistent sobbing! Mollu generally is on board the said train, its her daily schedule - the fear gripping her was getting evident! Chottu, what do we do now, I cannot get to her mobile as well 'all lines appear to be jammed 'please try and let us know if there is any news 'and for me, the rest of her words were lost - **the fear of the unknown engulfed**

'memories of the train that home the next day after struggling for survival in a bus the whole evening and night, during the now famous 26/7 nature's fury came haunting back! Not again, God! With great anxiety, I flicked the channels 'my parents had by now virtually collapsed on the sofa, the evening prayers even more frantic! The news channels was cashing in on the maniac madness. Within a spate of 20-30 minutes, life in Mumbai had been turned upside down. The reports said it all '

the TV channels vying for exclusive footages casually showed a body in tatters lying on the railway track;

a first class compartment looked anything else than what it was meant to look like 'junk metal with ripped off structures; nauseating pictures of blood scattered face of survivor! Meanwhile, efforts to be in touch with **Bhabhiji** and other acquaintances on their mobile were futile 'every single unsuccessful effort only raising my frustration!

As the tension at home was palpable, the annoyance within me was heightening! The manner in which the entire blasts were planned and executed was a slap on the face of those taking the mantle to protect the common man. All the blasts were during peak hours and that too in down trains i.e people getting home from work in Mumbai clearly manifesting the fact that the same was planned in such a manner to generate the worst casualties. And to think of it, all the blasts (if reports are to be believed) ripped through the first class compartments clearly showing that a somewhat elite segment of commuters were targeted. The message sent out was clear. Terrorize those for whom terror would do the most damage 'the man on the roads will react, but for the **professional lot, terror will indirectly hurt the buoyancy that economy had achieved**, will shake the edifice of their future and force, even though a small lot, to look at home away from the maddening Mumbai'.

As we continued to haplessly follow the news channels and intermittent calls on the land line, assuring **Bhabhiji's**

parents that all ought to be fine, the talk of 'intelligence failure' had started to do rounds 'it always does, so what if the picture during the 1993 serial bombings which was then aimed at the landmark institutions of the city was slightly different because the Indian visual media was not adept at the said time to carry such breaking news with alacrity and give such gory pictures of frustrated barbaric act? So what the Mulund blasts were lesser in intensity and damage? At each stage, intelligence failure has always been the butt of comments 'sadly, the story continues! I do not want to enter to the specifics, it is not worth it 'only thing that comes to mind is for Christ's sake, it is high time those responsible is made accountable for such lapses!

One cannot get away from reports stating that intelligence sources had been fearing 'for long' that Pakistan based terror groups were 'planning something big' in Mumbai! Stop this crap please! It only tantamounts to burying alive the relatives of all those whose very existence have been ripped after by such tragedies!

I agree with those who would claim this is not the time for such fault finding exercises, that this is the time

to stand united and fight terror with iron hand!

But dear, all these words are good for those standing on the dias on the Republic day and churning out specially tutored speeches! Ask those family members who like mad had to search every inch of the railway track, railway platform, umpteen number of hospitals searching for a glimpse of their loved ones 'spare a thought of those who are still searching, hoping against hope for a miracle. I believe for all those and for those who care for them, such rhetoric would be nothing more than absolute nonsense!

As anticipated, the big wigs were apparently making their way to Mumbai from the cozy comfort of their cocoon and yes, the 'Z'triple plus

security was further fortified! The opposition was happy with the piece of cake, 'the Government has been caught napping'and 'the Government has no right to remain in power'"blah, blah, blah. The Government contributes also 'the Government will bear the treatment costs'and the ilk of ex-gratia payment and so on - projection time for some, face saving exercise for the other 'the naked truth of the most **farcical institution called politics!**

One of the many times the phone ring came with a big relief 'it was my **Bhabhi**

who was stuck up in the train behind the one which was hit by the terror strike 'after being stuck up in the train, she along with her friends managed to walk through the railway track, came to know about the awful blast which missed 'them', reached a place where sanity apparently prevailed and called back home to say she is with us! The ghost of the past was exhumed! The relief was back on the face on my parents! The thanksgiving intensified!

I sat late into the night 'attempting to contact friends, sending SMS to all those who were concerned . News that trickled in clearly showed that the indomitable lifeline of Mumbai 'the chugging railways was clearly targeted - I was told there was chaos on the streets, the Mumbaikars spirit was seen with residents serving water, biscuits etc for commuters caught on the lurch . Many were already singing praises of the resilient Mumbai spirit! They say the horrors will be forgotten and life will be back to normalcy! Yes, may be 'but the fact remains as one goes out to work the next day to be with the tattered lifeline, most will have a silent prayer and loving kiss to the little ones before leaving home 'may be, we will meet again, some insane outfit notwithstanding! And please! I am not undermining the spirit of the Mumbaikars! But the fact remains that no one wants to walk into uncertainty - no one wants to walk out of the house not knowing whether he/she will come back 'the spirit of Mumbai remains, but if it was not for the 'struggle for survival', the fact that two days away from work but mean worried faces and empty stomachs at home, none would want to face disaster lurking around in the corner again 'Yes! the goodness of Mumbaikar did surface, will surface 'but please, please we do not need another tragedy to be told about this all over again 'and to exemplify this all over again!

I do not want to initiate a discussion on how hopeless technology is, if the cell networks keep collapsing every time there is 7/7 or 9/11 or 11/7 or 26/7 'the list could continue! 'I have stopped bothering as to why VIPs make their rush to such spots when all it can add is to the prevalent confusion of the local force. Are they to attend to notoriously famous and subtly called 'protocol'duty or attend to the exigencies thrown up by such barbaric acts? I do want to hit the keys to condemn the mindless madness of such barbaric acts 'enough has been said out it, enough will be said, my words will be lost in the more artistic and researched pieces which will flow.. I am not bothered whether the Sensex is all set to crash, I have no money holed in there anyway! Whatever was to be lost, is lost anyway!

All I know is that as the only major city to be hit twice by such nightmarish terror, all those concerned and in the seats of power 'please show some 'political will'to ensure that Mumbai does not gain the not so enviable place in history of having subjected to terror the third time around . We don't want special mention in history 'We want our loved ones to be safe and happy! We want to live! Can the 'blessed ones'ensure our right to live? Only if any one is listening!!!

(The views expressed are personal of the author)