

How To Tame The Situation

Oil prices could hit \$200 a barrel in the next few months and price pressure is acute in India where inflation is hovering around double digit threatening even middle class segments of the population. Oil prices climbed from \$10 in 1999 to \$95 last year and crisis managers simply ignored it while championing growth euphoria. They seem to have lost their way and don't know how to cope with the situation. India's growth bubble may burst anytime soon though Bush's secretary of state Ms Condoleezza Rice thinks 'USA has a vital stake in India's rise to global power and prosperity'. Maybe it is one way to tell the Delhi Sultanate that Washington is still too eager to clinch the Indo-US nuclear deal before Bush leaves the White House.

And prime minister Manmohan Singh has reasons to remain optimistic about the controversial deal getting operational despite left opposition, hopefully before the announcement of time table for the next general election. This nuclear deal has been a good diversionary tactics for the Congress Party that looks totally disarrayed and politically bewildered, particularly after the recent poll debacle in the southern state of Karnataka. Having failed to contain price rise that matters in every poll Sonia Gandhi's Congress is moving in a vicious circle of blaming game. As for the main opposition—Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)—the less the better because they have no world vision other than 'terrorism' and enjoy pride in grilling the Congress Party for being soft towards 'terrorists', as if dozens of repressive laws that keep people behind bars without trial for years are not enough.

In truth their tough talk about terrorism means how to terrorise and marginalise the minority community and socially disadvantaged people. Each time there is a bomb blast the security agencies reach out their 'long arms of injustice' to pick a scapegoat from amidst ordinary people otherwise apolitical, to cover up their own incompetence in providing security to citizens. The hapless creature, decorated and demonised by the authorities is then paraded before the entire nation to create a public spectacle prior to its ritual sacrifice. The anti-terror club then calls for tougher measures to curb terrorism while the scapegoat disappears forever into the blackhole of the Indian prison and legal system.

The latest example of such scapegoats comes from Jaipur where within hours of the heinous bomb blasts that killed innocent people the Rajasthan state police has started harassing, arresting and deporting Bangladeshi migrant workers, mainly engaged in informal and unorganised sector and Bengali speaking muslims who might have migrated from West Bengal, not Bangladesh.

The 'law and order' machinery and big media in India, for the last one decade or so have been vigorously executing a general plan to continue their own brand of 'war on terror'. Arrests are routinely made on flimsy grounds and organisations, domestic and foreign, named but finally the law enforcing authorities fail to prove their claims in any of the cases. But the innocent languish in jails and suffer other kinds of victimisation and harassment. The real culprits, however, remain at bay and the threat of recurring violence remains undiminished.

For all practical purposes 'combat terrorism' has become a big industry in the Indian sub-continent today. Security Agencies will go bankrupt if there is no terror or violence backed by some international terrorist outfits. It's now an open secret how the police used to plant agents during the British raj just to keep 'terrorism' alive even in the event of non-violent agitation. There is every reason to believe that security agencies have their own men to do dirty business to divert public attention and create public opinion against a section of population with an ulterior motive.

'Terrorism' has come to stay permanently in Indian polity. If there are no terrorists, the authorities will create them. They need enemy to continue their unjust rule. A directionless terror campaign makes little sense for the committed terrorists but then it is the question of how to keep the issue of terrorism burning because the 2008 oil shock is unlikely to mitigate. Indications are that it may worsen further. The tragedy is that people are not mobilising and there remains no honours in being called left. □□□