

Urban unr

By Noman Ahmed

Combating terrorism and different acts of violence in the cities requires proper urban planning that can provide a comprehensive framework to manage areas that are densely populated and hard to access

can hardly be done under the so-called theory of 'strict law enforcement'. It requires a careful review and analysis of the possible causes that give rise to terrorism.

Large urban agglomerations are usually ripe contexts for terrorist acts, especially when they are heterogeneous in social composition. Certain circumstances develop where the sense of social, economic or political deprivation creates a feeling of hatred and resentment against the prevailing system. This is more common among young people compared to the older ones. Thus, such a population becomes an easy target for brain-washing by skillful propagandists. Religious doctrines promoting cults of self-righteousness, political rivalries leading to unresolved heated issues and concurrent manipulation leading to illegal pursuits and coercion by the influential and powerful, usually nurture terrorist activities. Normally, such activities are justified as rightful acts by ring leaders of the perpetrators and their unknown preachers. Secrecy remains a central trait of such neo-converts. Often brain-washing and propaganda affect the minds of these young people so drastically that they shed the fear of death or disability while carrying out extremist acts. When political process breaks down and a sense of aloofness increases from state affairs, a whole breed of extremists crops up. This regiment is quite capable of executing any kind of task. It will make a useful case study to see the impact of terrorism on a society where democracy has deep roots compared to the one where it has hardly germinated.

A dangerous factor that helps promote terrorism is the assumption that after committing the act, one can get away easily. This assumption evolves from several considerations. The perpetrators either



INACCESSIBLE STREET: One of the many narrow streets that are part of

The gangs of Lyari

ACCORDING to a social activist who lives in Lyari, two groups have been trying to gain control over activities related to the underworld. One group, led by Rehman Dacoit, was once known for committing petty thefts and robberies in the Kalakot area. As activities of the group expanded, it started to hold sway over some other areas, including Mewashah, Rexer Lane and Chakiwara.

Arshad Pappu Dacoit and his accomplices are allegedly involved in drug trade. They started from the Kabari (Junk) Market of Shershah and gradually spread to some other localities. As it happens in the underworld, each group is now facing its rival's threat. They are out there to eliminate their 'business' rivals, and want to wield complete power in the area. At present, the business of extorting money from

control of some strategic points. They harass and kill each other whenever fight between the two groups breaks out.

Traffic congestion and hotchpot development in Lyari provide extremely favourable conditions for gangs to survive. To step into the area is a high constrained affair. Few entries and exits are available. These points are risk places as both gangs operate along the entry - and exit-points to maintain vigil on extortion opportunities. Drugs are also regularly pushed into the area through these routes and the residents are forced to lead a life under tremendous fear. Many innocent lives have been lost in the gang war. The cold-blooded murder of Anwar Bhajjan, former leader of the Baloch Ittehad Tehrik and a noted social worker, has increased this feeling of insecurity among the

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IT would be extremely hard to subscribe to the official claim that there is peace in the demographically largest city of the country, Karachi. Last year, the citizens of Karachi witnessed some of the bloodiest terrorist acts in the months of May and June. Bomb blasts at two mosques/imam bargahs, target killings of renowned religious scholars and political leaders, and an attack on the motorcade of a senior army commander were events that terribly shook the city. Some critics were of the opinion that there was hardly government functioning in the province.

Here, it would be apt to mention that since December 2004, a notorious gang war has claimed dozens of precious



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entry - and exit-points to maintain vigil on extortion opportunities. Drugs are also regularly pushed into the area through these routes and the residents are forced to lead a life under tremendous fear. Many innocent lives have been lost in the gang war. The cold-blooded murder of Anwar Bhaijan, former leader of the Baloch Ittehad Tehrik and a noted social worker, has increased this feeling of insecurity among the residents of Lyari.

Development works leading to neighbourhood upliftment and transport pro

an unrest

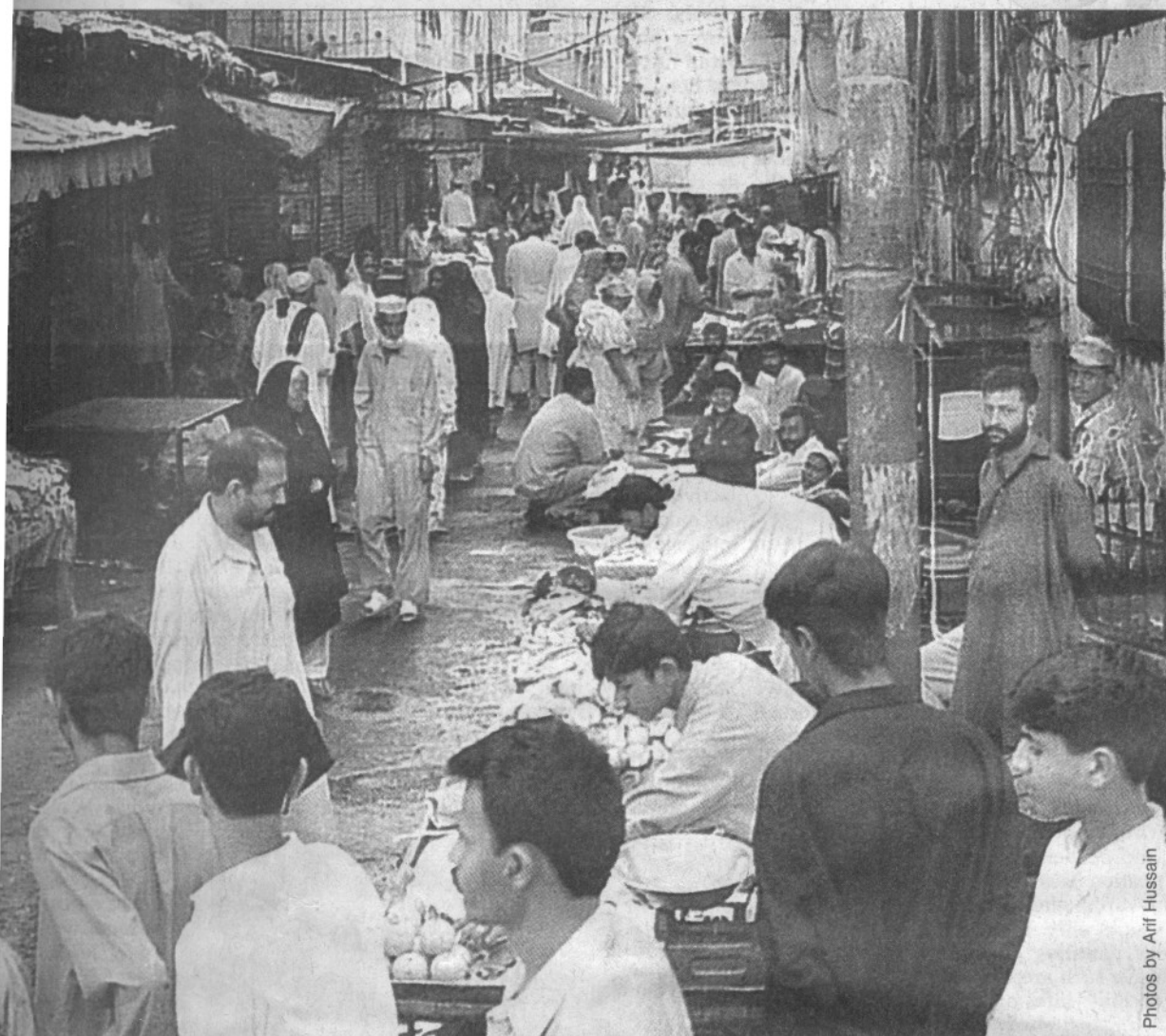
policemen and political activists of a particular rank and file in Karachi display indicative clues to the authorities concerned to unravel the mystery.

In many situations, when an act of violence or terrorism occurs, the establishment instantly points its finger towards a foreign hand. With very few exceptions, that foreign hand has never been detected. The reasons are quite different from this initial assumption. Internal rifts among gangs, clashes and attempts of a clash between armed wings of different religious or ethnic parties/groups, the clandestine hand of the pro-establishment elements and planted agents of any inside or outside group connection with such elements, can cause urban violence.

The physical structure and form of the city or neighbourhood also affect its peace and tranquillity. There are several factors that contribute to urban violence and give rise to terrorist activities. And accessibility and openness of neighbourhood is a vital one. From the physical planning's perspective, accessibility to an area refers to the available choices of entry-points, routes and exit-points. This has to be rationally provisioned. A populous area with very few entry-points can become a victim of terrorism. In December 1986, Aligarh Colony, Qasba Colony, Frontier Colony and Orangi Town were practically cut off from the city when barbaric terrorists unleashed their wrath. Thousands of innocent lives were lost. Similarly, limited accessibility to Landhi and Korangi gave rise to the 'no-go-area' syndrome.

There are many conditions pertinent to accessibility. Narrow winding streets with unpredictable layouts; recurring cul-de-sacs; dissimilarity of street pattern and layout; and poor road conditions that disrupt vehicular access and absence of street light/visibility, adversely affect accessibility. At present, Khwaja Ajmer Nagri, Ittehad Town in Baldia and Gulshan-i-Bihar in Orangi are a few examples of settlements with constrained physical access. No wonder that the names of these localities keep surfacing in violence-related incidents.

Uneven density and scattered urban structures also become problem-points and hideouts for criminals. As much as 50 per cent of the urban population in Karachi resides in katchi abadis.



Photos by Arif Hussain

ACCESSIBLE STREET: One of the many narrow streets that are part of life in Lyari

the gangs of Lyari

CORDING to a social activist who lives in Lyari, two groups have been trying to gain control over areas related to the underworld. One group, led by Rehman Dacoit, was known for committing petty thefts and robberies in the Kalakot area. As the group expanded, it tried to hold sway over some other areas, including Mewashah, Rexer Lane and hakiwara.

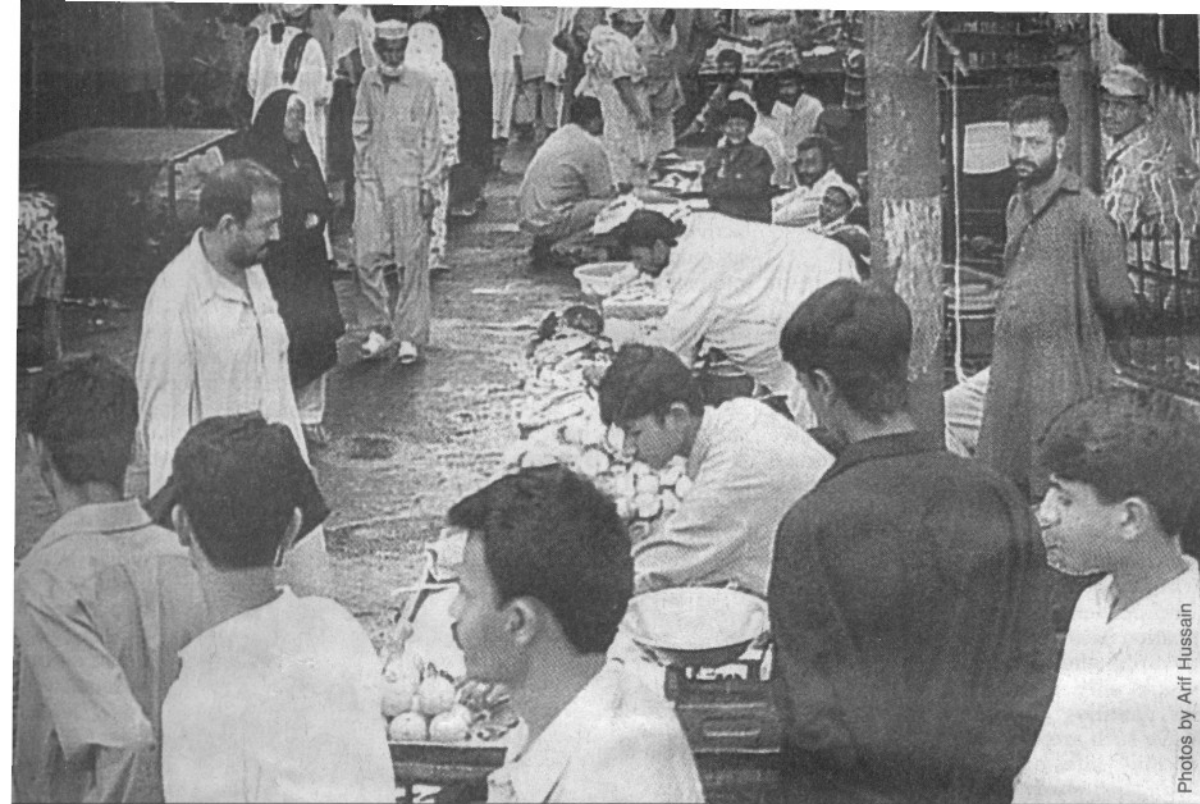
had Pappu Dacoit and his accomplices allegedly involved in drug trafficking. They started from the Kabari Market of Shershah and gradually spread to some other localities. As the underworld expands, each group is now facing its rival's threat. They are out there to eliminate their

control of some strategic points. They harass and kill each other whenever a fight between the two groups breaks out.

Traffic congestion and hotchpotch development in Lyari provide extremely favourable conditions for gangs to survive. To step into the area is a highly constrained affair. Few entries and exits are available. These points are risky places as both gangs operate along the entry - and exit-points to maintain vigil on extortion opportunities. Drugs are also regularly pushed into the area through these routes and the residents are forced to lead a life under tremendous fear. Many innocent lives have been lost in the gang war. The cold-blooded murder of Anwar Bhaijan, former leader of the Baloch Ittehad Tehrik

ects are grossly inadequate in Lyari. As mentioned by Lyari Town Nazim Abdul Khaliq Juma, Lyari has been completely neglected as far as the planning for development projects goes. Probably, Lyari is made to suffer because of the political tussle with the CDGK. In assigning jurisdictions, revenue generating areas with commercial potential have been cut off from Lyari and handed over to another town. Congestion, social and other disorders are forcing the unemployed youth to take part in anti-social activities.

The menace of gang wars is not just confined to Lyari alone. It has now spread to Lea Market. Here, life is already quite affected. The shutters of a number of shops come down as soon as the sun sets. Roads and streets become desolate at 8.00pm. No public transport is seen in the inner parts of the neighbourhood late in the evening. Ambulances and taxis refuse to enter



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NARROW STREET: One of the many narrow streets that are part of life in Lyari

The gangs of Lyari

ACCORDING to a social activist who has lived in Lyari, two groups have emerged, trying to gain control over the area. One, led by Rehman Dacoit, was known for committing petty thefts and robberies in the Kalakot area. As the group expanded, it came to hold sway over some other areas, including Mewashah, Rexer Lane and Mawara.

Pappu Dacoit and his accomplices are allegedly involved in drug trafficking, having started from the Kabari Market of Shershah and gradually moved to some other localities. As is the case in the underworld, each group is now facing its rival's threat. They want to eliminate their rivals, and want to wield power in the area. At present, the business of extorting money from transport and vehicles carrying various kinds of goods is being conducted. Both groups are trying to gain

control of some strategic points. They harass and kill each other whenever a fight between the two groups breaks out.

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Uneven density and scattered urban structures also become problem-points and hideouts for criminals. As much as 50 per cent of the urban population in Karachi resides in katchi abadis. These settlements have undergone tremendous transformation over a period of time. What began