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Opinion

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Our growing isolation

By Anees Jillani

ON July 25, eight small bombs exploded in quick succession across the south-Indian city of Bangalore, killing a woman and wounding at least 15 people.

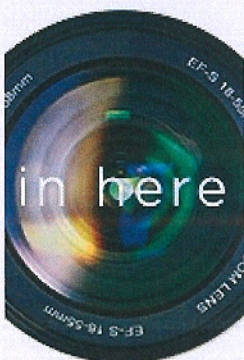
So far the Indian police has few leads into the bombings. The Bangalore Commissioner of Police told the media that timer devices were used in all the bombs, and explosives were used in a quantity equal to one or two grenades. India's home ministry said that it suspected "a small militant group" was behind the attacks, but has yet to give any details.

The next day, 16 blasts went off in Ahmedabad, resulting in more than 29 people getting killed and hundreds others injured. Mercifully, Pakistan and its premier intelligence agency, the ISI, have so far not been blamed. This is unlike the huge blast on July 7 at the gates of the Indian embassy in Kabul, blame for which was laid at the door of the ISI by a person no less than the Afghan president, Hamid Karzai. Next in line was Indian National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan who called for the destruction of the ISI. "We made this point, whenever we have had a chance ... There might have been some tactical restraint for some time, obviously that restraint is no longer present," Mr Narayanan stated.

The Kabul blast was followed by several low-intensity explosions in the Pakhtun-dominated areas of Karachi which thankfully did not result in any deaths.

Hopefully, the above blasts in Kabul, Karachi and Bangalore are not interlinked and a consequence of internal turmoil. Nevertheless, there is now little doubt

the
truth is



DAWN NEWS

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE

support, goodwill and votes. It is obvious that institutional reform, forget change, is a difficult task. But that the very obstacles to change are accommodated for personal ends disguised as political necessity is a morality no voter will accept in the future.

Perhaps the best free advice for the government today would be to avoid decision-making by the unelected and focus more on collective decisions towards enforcing hard-core institutional changes. The unelectables are merely buffers who are delaying institutional resolution and making challenges more insurmountable than they already were.

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Top

Gastronomy on the Seine

By Zafar Masud

WITH summer just about settling in to claim its supremacy over spring rain, wind and thunder, a lot has already started happening in France.

No, no, it has nothing to do with boring stuff like the French presidency of the European Union or the rising influx of African immigrants!

Here we are talking about exhilarating events like the quinquagenarian Madonna's live performances, spiked leatherwear and all, to promote her latest, sado-maso video entitled 'Hard Candy' (think 'hard core' please!) and the recurring TV shots of a resplendent Angelina Jolie (no spring chicken herself) in the corridors of a Nice hospital from where she has graced our famished world with her much awaited twins. At the same time we are privileged to see her 'partner' ('husband' is a thing of the past in these elated times) Brad Pitt looking like a diligent mother-hen and gathering in his arms the brood of children, whether borne or adopted by Angelina according to her whims at different moments in her life.

The oblique message by both women to the gullible young is as follows: "Kids are dying of hunger every day in Africa. It's your fault and you should be ashamed, you hamburger guzzlers! If you don't want that to continue, just make us richer. Never mind if we already are billionaires. Give us more. God bless you!"

None of those asinities, however, for a youthful Belgian lawyer who thinks on different lines. Merci beaucoup and God bless you, Michel Cloes!

Michel says the inspiration to put together an international gastronomy festival came to him after he successfully organised a lawyers' conference in Brussels a few years back.

"That thrilling experience and the haunting memories of the delicious dishes my

mother used to make ...”, said Michel finding a moment between taking calls on his cellphone and politely whispering instructions to his staff on the mini-yacht on the Seine in the heart of Paris, with a grand view of Notre Dame just behind him, “... both played tricks with my imagination until I was totally convinced that I must do something to attract the world’s great chefs, food experts, writers of cookbooks and bon vivants in the same spot for a few days so that they could exchange ideas and quite simply have a good time.”

A good time is what everyone had for three days at the ‘Gastronomy by the Seine’ festival on that luxury boat whose moment of glory was a dinner cruise until one in the morning under a candent July sky as chefs from different countries demonstrated their culinary skills and offered their varied menus, tirelessly and expressing unabashed pleasure and pride in their art.

It may not have been gastronomically correct to clutter one’s plate with Indian samosa, Japanese sushi, American turkey-roast, French soufflé and Italian ravioli all at the same time, but the temptation was too great and the elegantly dressed guests were trying their best to savour the delicacies one by one and retain the nuances of their distinct flavours and tastes.

In a daze one meandered through one group of experts to the other as conversations progressed headily. While a gourmet critic from New York perorated over the fine difference between crème fraîche prepared from the milk of cows grazing in pastures in the plains and the milk from the mountain variety, a Norwegian lady explained that her country’s fabled fresh-water salmon steak, available aplenty on board that night, was at its succulent best when flipped over the frying pan quickly, taking care that neither side absorbs heat for more than a few seconds, so the meat turns warm without getting cooked.

Good to know! The cruise also offered the guests, foreigners but also many indigenes, the possibility of admiring the undersides of the Seine’s stately bridges and to have an unusual view of well-known sites such as the François Mitterrand Bibliothèque, a smaller model of the Statue of Liberty and of course a scintillating Eiffel Tower, aglow with a million sparks as the yacht lingered facing it long enough to allow the guests to take photographs.

But that was far from being the most dramatic of the surprises cascading down one after the other in admirable cadence. While the guests were still under the spell of the Havanas following a cigar-tasting ceremony, in rushed a dynamic and youthful group of tenors, baritones, sopranos and mezzo-sopranos who delighted the audience with a string of arias and bel canto items from famous works by Mozart, Vivaldi, Rossini and many others that they sang mingling with the crowd, as a beautiful young woman in a pink dress played on a grand piano. What a delightful treat, gasped a lady, ecstatic. One could safely bet a million euros no one was thinking of ‘hard candy’ during those enchanted moments!

The other highlights of the festival during these three hectic and appetite-enhancing days were a gourmet book-signing ceremony, a seemingly unending array of culinary workshops, a young chefs’ cooking competition and discussions by experts on hot topics of international interest today: organic farming and sustainable fisheries.

The festival committee included such illustrious names of world gastronomy as the famed French chef and restaurant owner Guy Savoy and the world-rekknowned food critic Naomi Barry who once also did gastronomy columns for

the International Herald Tribune.

Michel Cloes, who has founded and heads the World Chef Culinary Network that was behind the event, was justifiably proud of his achievement of organising the first annual festival in the very home of world gastronomy. Beaming with delight he informed this writer he was looking forward to having a Pakistani stand next year.

It's a deal, Michel!

The writer is a journalist based in Paris.



Top

Climate change threat

By Andrew Simms

IF you shout “fire” in a crowded theatre, when there is none, you understand that you might be arrested for irresponsible behaviour and breach of the peace. But from today, I smell smoke, I see flames and I think it is time to shout. I don't want you to panic, but I do think it would be a good idea to form an orderly queue to leave the building.

Because in just 100 months' time, if we are lucky, and based on a quite conservative estimate, we could reach a tipping point for the beginnings of runaway climate change. That said, among people working on global warming, there are countless models, scenarios, and different iterations of all those models and scenarios. So, let us be clear from the outset about exactly what we mean.

The concentration of carbon dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere today, the most prevalent greenhouse gas, is the highest it has been for the past 650,000 years. In the space of just 250 years, as a result of the coal-fired Industrial Revolution, and changes to land use such as the growth of cities and the felling of forests, we have released, cumulatively, more than 1,800bn tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.

Currently, approximately 1,000 tonnes of CO₂ are released into the Earth's atmosphere every second, due to human activity. Greenhouse gases trap incoming solar radiation, warming the atmosphere. When these gases accumulate beyond a certain level — often termed a “tipping point” — global warming will accelerate, potentially beyond control.

Faced with circumstances that clearly threaten human civilisation, scientists at least have the sense of humour to term what drives this process as “positive feedback”. But if translated into an office workplace environment, it's the sort of “positive feedback” from a manager that would run along the lines of: “You're fired, you were rubbish anyway, you have no future, your home has been demolished and I've killed your dog.”