

Let's prevent repeat of use of WMD as in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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THE inaugural World Peace Forum opened yesterday in Kuala Lumpur, a date that coincided with a tragic event of untold proportions, though not as well known as the devastation of the Japanese in Hiroshima.

August 6 was the day that the bombing of Hiroshima took place at precisely 8.15am in 1945.

It is regarded as a single largest mass irradiation in history, perhaps the first use of a weapon of mass destruction.

While Hiroshima is so much talked about, another tragic incident of equal dimension just three days later is being overshadowed. It took place on Aug 9, also in Japan, but involving a different city, Nagasaki.

Few probably remember that Nagasaki too was the target of an atomic bomb — a second atomic bomb, as though the evil and sufferings inflicted on Hiroshima was not enough.

Nagasaki was bombed at precisely 11.02am on the fateful day. The exact point is now marked by the black stone monolith where an international peace park stands as a symbol of the aspiration for world harmony.

Reportedly, a B-29, *Bockscar*, was supposed to have set out for the Kokura Arsenal, on the southwest Japanese island of Kyushu.

But instead of canceling the deadly mission due to foul weather, the pilot headed for Nagasaki, then the home of a Mitsubishi torpedo factory. There *Bockscar* unleashed another weapon of mass destruction (WMD), codenamed "Fat Man".

The Nagasaki bomb is said to be much more powerful compared to the estimated equivalent explosive force of 12,500 tonnes of TNT as in the case for Hiroshima.

It is partly because of its geographical location that Nagasaki was spared from being annihilated.

About one third of the city was destroyed and if it was said that this area would be devoid of vegetation for 75 years. The human and environmental tragedy is just as barbaric and equally inhumane.

Though the two cities were nominally military targets, the overwhelming majority of casualties were civilians.

To some Hiroshima and Nagasaki are two incidences that must be separated in time because they are victims of the same terrorist act conducted by any rogue nations, as seen today.

According to the Nagasaki Peace Declaration, the City of Nagasaki "was instantly transformed into ruins" as a result of a single atomic bomb dropped from an altitude of 9,600 metres.

As for Hiroshima, the bomb exploded midway to cause maximum devastation. In this case it was detonated 500 metres above the ground, emitting heat rays of several thousand degrees Celsius.

One estimate puts the damage by the atomic explosion as follows: areas leveled the bomb are as massive as six million square meters.

The number of houses damaged were conservatively estimated at 18,400. Most were completely burned (11,574).

Like the case of Hiroshima, the blast sent out is expected to be in two forms of radiation: gamma rays and flying atomic splinters called fast neutrons.

Though these do not travel as far as gamma rays, but being heavy, they cause 10 times more damage to the body's cells.

Thus, the toll inflicted on humans is far worse. The numbers killed were put at more than 73,000, and injured slightly more.

A total of almost 150,000 human lives were involved. More disgusting is that it is "unleashed against a civilian population of women, the elderly, and blameless children".

Altogether, the two bombings killed an estimated 110,000 Japanese citizens and injured another 130,000. By 1950, another 230,000 Japanese had died from injuries or radiation.

By far leukaemia induced by radiation and other forms of cancers have been increasing and claimed many more lives since.

For more than 50 years, the atomic bomb survivors are still suffering from constant anxiety over their health, and are stalked by death.

It can be argued that the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki marked the first use of atomic WMD in modern wars. Consequent to this atomic bombs became the weapons that are much sought after.

They were developed by the USSR (1949; now Russia), Great Britain (1952), France (1960), and China (1964).

A number of other nations, particularly Israel, are believed to have atomic bombs or the capability to produce them.

Countries like North Korea and Iran have been accused of having similar programmes at least, though the status of Iraq still remains uncertain.

Although the smaller Soviet successor states that inherited nuclear arsenals (Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and Belarus) have reportedly relinquished all nuclear warheads (by having them removed to Russia), generally the reduction of global atomic armamentarium has not changed much.

And given the level of violence and the number of wars in the world today, the inaugural World Peace Forum must seriously attempt to find some answers to the lingering controversial question:

Can the bombing of the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki be prevented from recurring? Or could it be that this time on another Asian (including West Asian) be the next target by the same group of nations?

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