

# THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Britain finally drops 'war on terror'

17 Jan 2008, 1947 hrs IST, Rashmee Roshan Lall, TNN

LONDON: In the clearest indication yet of the UK's public disengagement from the US 'war on terror', British ministers have finally dropped the term and decided henceforth to refer to jihadis as mere "criminals" rather than a homogenous ideology-ridden group of desperadoes.

The British government's attempt to distance itself from received American wisdom on the issue is seen as part of its increasing focus on preventing indoctrination of young Muslims.

On Thursday British Home Secretary Jacqui Smith outlined plans to target websites promoting extremism in what she described as an attempt to use technology to stop "vulnerable people" being "groomed for violent extremism". Smith said the "major long-term challenge" faced by the West was "stopping people becoming or supporting terrorists".

The Home Secretary's speech at the International Centre for Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence here, came as the British domestic intelligence agency, MI5, continues to monitor dozens of websites seeking to recruit for Al-Qaida. Just days ago, a website regarded as an authoritative voice of dissident Islamist views, referred to "the creation of Al-Qaida in Britain".

To the dismay of British politicians and policy wonks, the site, which is known to be visited by several-millions, urges young Muslim men to rise up against infidels such as "Brown and Blair" and carried a threat to kill Britain's new Prime Minister Gordon Brown. According to MI5, the internet is an important factor in exposing people to radical views but "More often radicalisation seems to arise from local contacts and from peers.

It is in this context that the British government's parallel, newly-outlined move to drop the controversial term 'war on terror' assumes importance.

In December, Britain's youthful foreign secretary David Miliband insisted the term "war on terror" had not been banned at the Foreign Office "but I tend not to use it". Miliband added, "That is mainly because it has come to be associated in a narrow way with the use of force against terrorism, which while sometimes necessary is not sufficient. Terrorism inspired by Al-Qaida needed (and needs) a military response in Afghanistan; it needs tightened security measures at home and abroad (see the recent bombing in Algeria); but we also need to engage the ideology and grievances which can increase radicalisation and lead to violent extremism".

According to British media reports quoting unnamed bureaucrats, London is desperate to ensure that "as you disrupt radicalisation you must be aware of how you describe it and must not do so in a way that is inadvertently inflammatory".