

# Financiers and patrons of militancy



ANM NURUL HAQUE

**T**HE capture of two JMB kingpins Shaekh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai is certainly a matter of relief for the nation which has lived in a dreadful condition generated by the militants in the last many months. The capture of two top leaders may have weakened the JMB, but their propensity to destabilize the government and the country as well still exists, as the network of hardened militants remains beyond the reach of the law-enforcers. The elements supportive of the militancy, who yet remain fugitive from the law, are reported to be reorganizing some 500 JMB activists who have moved to remote areas, to continue their deadly activities under a different banner.

During interrogation by the Task Force Intelligence (TFI) the JMB chief Abdur Rahman admitted that his militant outfit has been fuelled through funding both from home and abroad. According to a media report, the government has already listed 25 local JMB financiers, including some high profile politicians who have been put under surveillance. Some NGOs have also been allegedly supplying funds to militants. The home ministry on March 16 formed a three-member probe committee to investigate into source of funds of the JMB.

Police arrested a manager of Islami Bank on charge of cooperating with the militants for smooth monetary transaction. The Bangladesh Bank probe teams also found some lapses in banking norms and suspicious transactions with three branches of Islami Bank and served show-cause notice to the bank. The Islami Bank on March 16 suspended

## BY THE NUMBERS

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five officials including the managers of its three branches and also issued show-cause notices to 18 others for their suspected involvement in dubious transactions. The banks and NGOs running with religious ideology should also be brought under surveillance and audit mechanism be applied for detecting militancy financing.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Barrister Moudud Ahmed told the media on March 11 that a tough law with provision of death sentence for patrons of militants would be enacted soon. The draft of the Anti-terrorism Act, prepared in the style of the Anti-terrorism Act of the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) was placed to the cabinet on March 13. The cabinet decided that a committee would further review the draft of the proposed Act which would be enacted into a law for awarding of speedy punishment to the patrons and financiers of the militancy. All the cases relating to militancy and terrorism will be tried in the Special Tribunal if the Anti-terrorism Act is enacted into a law.

Terrorism could not make much headway without the help of money laundering. So the government is also going to enact tough laws to check money laundering and terrorist financing in the country. The cabinet at its weekly meeting held on December 19, with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia in the chair, discussed the draft of the proposed Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Act 2005, aiming to stop sending illegal money to Bangladesh and prevent terrorist financing.

The draft Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing Prevention Act 2005 provides for a Financial Crime Investigation and Prosecution Office and allows the government to take foreign assistance to rout the crimes. The law drafted by the Bangladesh Bank defines terrorist acts and prescribes harsh punishments including life imprisonment and death sentence for them. The government has also decided to form a Financial Intelligence Unit to combat financial crimes and financing of terrorism.

Two experts of US Treasury Department's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN) are assisting Bangladesh in detecting and routing sources and channels of funds to the militants. They will illustrate and orient a selected group of police, judicial, customs and Bangladesh Bank officials as to how FinCEN operates to safeguard the US financial system from abuses and crimes like terrorist financing.

Bangladesh is likely to be able to strengthen monitoring of bank accounts and fund transactions to detect terrorism financing effectively from now on, as the country has since acceded to an international anti-terrorism convention. As well as the International Convention for Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism, Bangladesh had earlier acceded to 11 other anti-terrorism conventions, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) on December 9, 1999. The country is now well equipped to detect terrorist financing.

The capture of two JMB kingpins by Rab was only a partial success in dealing with the militancy. The other

part of dealing with the militancy espousers, which is indispensable to root out terrorism, remains unattained. Nabbing and quizzing of the JMB leaders will bear no fruit, until their patrons and financiers are identified and brought to justice. But the nation is yet to see any initiative against them. The government would have no other option but to bring the financiers and patrons to book, ignoring their political fealty, if it is really keen on rooting out militancy. Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai should not be made scapegoat to conceal the patrons of militancy through bluffing people.

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# Investing in reality



IKRAM SEHGAL writes from Karachi

**W**RITING in Time magazine issue of March 13, 2006, noted analyst Alex Perry says that three days before US President Bush arrived in Hyderabad "to praise everything that is right about India," Naxalites killed 30 government followers in a landmine attack a short distance away. An estimated 10,000 Naxalite guerrillas control hundreds of square miles in the central hinterland. Taking over an entire town in November 2005 for a few hours, Naxalites freed 400 prisoners from the district jail. The Naxal movement claimed 892 lives in 2005, up from the 653 killed in 2004.

Armed insurgencies cause daily casualties in Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, Assam, etc -- not counting Kashmir, a total of 17 or 18 full-fledged insurgencies. Most of Bihar is in a state of anarchy, motorists are advised to head for safety if they have a flat tire. Last Monday two trains were attacked, one with 200 passengers. With Maoist guerrillas increasingly active throughout rural Nepal, anarchy is likely to also spill over into a wide swath of Uttar Pradesh. Economically resurgent and very visibly so, India has its share of militancy-creating and sustaining problems. In the face of all this, India's international image of "Incredible India" is really incredible -- and praiseworthy. To its great credit, India is not only coping with the disparate militancies, but effectively keeping them under wraps from international cynosure.

Conscious of rural deprivation (thousands of farmers have committed suicide in the past year because of failed crops and crushing debt load), the Manmohan Singh government is giving priority to rural poverty alleviation schemes to curb rural resentment. In this fine balancing act, without the rich becoming richer, the poor could not be made less poor. The boom in the Indian economy is very real and very positive, proliferating prosperity acting as the engine of change for the whole nation, give or take a few hundred million.

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## AS I SEE IT

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each other's misfortunes and problems. South Asians would be better off helping each other wherever they can, however they can and whenever they can. One way of helping each other is to find solutions to bi-lateral disputes, or alternately, coming to feasible compromise arrangements. India is the economic locomotive for whole of South Asia.

The two existing militancies in Pakistan each need different approach in different degrees, needing economic input, both also need political handling. The rule of law must be established by the military forces of law and order, the civilian only called in to ensure internal security when paramilitary forces fail. The military's aid-to-civil power must depend upon two primary factors, viz (1) the level of militancy existing and (2) the level required to be curbed to, keeping in mind, viz (1) the militants are Pakistani until proven otherwise and (2) collateral damage among non-combatants has to be avoided. The prime mission must be "image damage-control."

Late Zulfikar Ali Bhutto enforced Governor's rule with Akbar Bugti as governor by sacking Governor Ghaus Bux Bizenjo and the elected political government of Chief Minister Sardar Attaullah Khan Mengal. The political government decided in 1973 to use the military for political purposes, the reaction was full-scale insurrection in the Marri and Mengal areas. Forced into insurgency by their Sardars, the tribals lived (and still live) in extreme poverty in primitive conditions for the most part, having nothing except a mud roof over their heads, no electricity, no water, no sanitation, no education, no medicine, no nothing, period!

The permissive cruelty of the hereditary rulers is illustrated graphically by the despair written on the faces of the rural Baloch. Almost anyone who came into contact with the military units begged them to stay and not leave them to the mercy of the tribal Sardars. A small core of tribals (blindly loyal to the Sardars) continued to fight us, and fight very well, for no reason except because the Sardar said so.

While they had the stomach to fight one got the distinct impression

that their heart was not in it. Why did only a small number of Marri and Mengals bear arms? Except for a hard core, the feudals never trust their own flock. Their autocracy being enforced through fear, they fear that some among their own tribe may turn their guns on them. Instead of consolidating the gains made on the ground through the military's blood and sweat, we abandoned the tribals to their vicious rulers.

A policy of appeasement by the Federal and Provincial Governments since 1977 has seen the Sardars again raise militias, this time with sophisticated weapons available in the wake of the Afghan War, and help from our so-called "friends" with a vested interest in keeping Balochistan aflame. No civilized society can afford that the rule of law is flouted by violent means, it is an invitation to anarchy. Anyone outside the pale of law and using violent means to subvert it thereof is a criminal and must be dealt with as such.

Hamstrung by political initiatives, the Frontier Corps (FC) in Balochistan has done an excellent job. Without adequate manpower and proper equipment they have the two districts (out of 26) affected within reasonable control. While recruiting, training and getting better equipped to levels that can adequately cope with the ongoing tribal militancy, FCs have presently reacted to attacks with restraint and without going on the offensive themselves. This "containment" has been good enough to keep the army from getting involved in internal security duties.

Once FC Balochistan is ready, operations to root out the militants must go hand-in-hand with development activity to ameliorate the lot of the poor Baloch, who have only suffered (and are suffering) at the hands of their cruel and greedy Sardars. While economic initiatives must go apace with political initiatives across the whole spectrum, we cannot allow criminals to go free. At this moment Akbar Bugti's bluff has been called by the forces of law and order, he is on the run and desperately hoping that his friends in the media will get him relief at the negotiating table.

During the Afghan War, the

Federal Administered Territorial Areas (FATA) served not only as a fertile recruiting ground for Mujahideen, it also served us launch pads for operations across the border and logistics in support of Mujahideen operations. With agriculture sparse and almost nothing else to fuel the local economy, the male population work as hired guns, smugglers, etc to eke out a living. We must phase out the Afghan Transit Trade and declare FATA as a Special Economic Zone, without duties on goods and commodities the FATA economy will be energized, our smugglers will become businessmen, and hopefully even industrialists. And what's new? To start with Afghanistan, and later all Central Asian States, will order goods and commodities from this giant logistics base for the region. Incentives are already being proposed for industries manufacturing goods in FATA, the US accepting in principle importing goods without duties from such zones.

The army has already broken the back of the militancy but it may be required to do an extensive mopping-up, force-multiplying political and economic initiatives. Foreigners having families must not be disturbed, provided they give due parole that they will not participate in any militant activity. When the people of the area perceive the benefits to be accrued from the economic initiatives they will convince the misguided to come in from the cold for the general public good. They will provide the inherent security needed for investment.

India is a shining example where even in the presence of widespread militant activity proliferating throughout the land, economic uplift is very much possible. We have a great opportunity before us to turn adversity into economic boom.

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# The reform proposal seen from a different angle

**I**n this instance, the committee proposition and concurrent bitter criticism of the reform proposal in the same breath can be construed to have been a gimmick to bide time. The PM's stance might appear to be one that calls to mind the thought-provoking presentation of the great American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) when he said: "No man can, for any considerable time, wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which is the true one."

KAZI ALAUDDIN AHMED

**R**EFORM, like charity, must begin at home. Once well at home, it will radiate outward, irrepressible, into all that we touch and handle, speak and work, ever kindling new light by incalculable contagion, spreading in geometric ratio, far and wide, doing only good wherever it spreads, and not evil" -- so said the great author-philosopher of England Thomas Carlyle.

In tune with the thought-provoking, truthful, reality-based observation of Carlyle we too here in Bangladesh have to look at the "reform" proposition of the Awami League led 14-party alliance in the same light. Reform, like any other idea denoting change for the better, is obviously a relative term to be seriously reckoned with. It has to take into account the subject in which reform is sought for.

If it is an individual, well, his or her personal attitude, educational background, cultural heritage, social status, mental receptivity and power of understanding the projected outcome of reform, etc will have to be taken into concurrent consideration. If it is an institutional reform that is conceived of, the overall regional and national impact of the proposed reform will have to be kept in view. Yet in either case, the involvement of individual or individuals invariably comes in. When it pertains or relates to any national issue the process of reform proposition turns out to be all the more critical. And when it is a political reform to be taken care of, the process will naturally be very tricky and cumbersome.

Our subject of discussion here is the proposal for reform tabled by the Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition in parliament Sheikh Hasina on behalf of the 14-party alliance. Broadly, the whole proposition relates to two institutional bodies, namely, the Caretaker Government (CTG) and the Election Commission (EC). By the way, it is pertinent to remember that the concept of "caretaker government" has been the brain-child of the opposition Awami

League.

The induction proposal of such a non-partisan caretaker government was ridiculed publicly by the present Prime Minister and BNP chief Begum Khaleda Zia as a product of insane brain or a child's innocent demand. Initially the proposition was straightaway rejected by her, and all of her own she went for an election in February 1996. Parties in the opposition led by Awami League didn't participate. We can remember how that election was nullified and how Begum Zia was compelled to get the CTG concept duly authenticated by the Jatiya Sangsad through an amendment of the constitution.

In the national election of 2001 under a CTG headed by Justice Latifur Rahman, the BNP-led 4-party alliance won a landslide victory, bagging two-thirds of the seats. Yet the total percentage of vote received by Awami League was higher than the 4-party alliance. The defeated Awami League complained of a large-scale rigging manipulations and unfair means on the part of the CTG and of the EC.

Since his appointment as the chief of the CTG, the new incumbent was found to have been unusually enthusiastic in re-structuring even the administrative machinery much beyond his jurisdiction. He was observed to have been very busy with his "homework" even before he was formally appointed by the President. In the first place he made a sort of weird strategic plan on as many as thirteen (13) secretaries of different ministries before he could take his seat. Even he moved hurriedly to his official residence obviously to pre-empt any second thought on the part of the President as to his appointment which had already set in lot of controversy in the media.

The CEC Abu Sayeed, on the other hand, behaved himself as if in a hornet's nest. Many of his decisions didn't get the support of the other two election commissioners. Besides, in spite of being himself the chief of the Election Commission, he couldn't exercise any administrative control on the Secretary -- the position being

accountable to the Prime Minister's Office. Prior to his relinquishing the office of CEC he made a statement which replicated his lamentations and limitations for an unworkable system.

Among the limitations of the CEC, or for that matter, the whole Election Commission, could have been part of it from the apparently outrageous personal intervention of the chief of the caretaker government. The ultimate result of the 2001 election, notwithstanding the fact that the opposition Awami League polled 43 percent of the total vote cast as against 39 percent of the winning 4-party alliance, couldn't be as clear as it should have been. It is true that in such election one will lose and the other win. Yet, efforts should be there to make the whole process of election absolutely transparent and free from dubious intervention of the custodian in the conduct of national election.

The demand for reform of the Caretaker Government and of the Election Commission was formally placed in the Jatiya Sangsad in its last session by Awami League chief and leader of the opposition Sheikh Hasina. On the last day of the session the prime minister announced her willingness to set up a committee to examine the opposition reform proposal. The committee would comprise members from both the entities. On the face of it, the announcement of the leader of the house appeared to have been the right step. Yet the leader of the opposition considered the PM's statement too vague and inconclusive to merit immediate agreeable comment.

Over the past few days since February 28 (the day PM made the announcement) the doubt expressed tacitly by Sheikh Hasina seems to have been not totally unfounded. The Prime Minister in her public meetings across the country continues making blistering remarks on the reform proposals of the opposition. She harps on the same string, stating that the opposition (AL in particular) "is sure to lose in the next election and hence asks for reform of the Caretaker Government." Her latest

remark stipulates that Awami League doesn't want to contest election under a caretaker government and that the army will be under the direct control of the President and not of the CTG, as proposed by the AL-led 14 party alliance. So, such remarks in public meetings shall be enough to present the status of her inner mind which is palpably averse to any reform.

Co-incidentally, the price of mind as presented by the Prime Minister has a striking semblance to a queer but usual practice in vogue in the area of management. It says that when the management of an organization has reservation about any reform proposal from its employees, it consigns the problem to a committee so as not to see the light of day.

In this instance, the committee proposition and concurrent bitter criticism of the reform proposal in the same breath can be construed to have been a gimmick to bide time. The PM's stance might appear to be one that calls to mind the thought-provoking presentation of the great American novelist Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) when he said: "No man can, for any considerable time, wear one face to himself, and another to the multitude, without finally getting bewildered as to which is the true one."

Reform of any system depends much on provisions it holds but it would be an exercise in futility unless the implementers are equally in a state of reform in their thoughts, attitude, and action. All these salubrious inputs will only then be deployed towards bigger benefit of the people at large. Yet there is no guarantee that the reform at both ends will give the desired results. This fear is expressed, keeping in view the massive involvement of people in the election having diverse social, educational, and financial standing. Even then the reform, when worked out through a consensus, will have to be put on test to gain newer experience. Concurrently, let us make honest endeavour to reform our mind-set to meet the statutory reforms and the purposes thereof.

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# The death of a monster

**I**n Serbia, news of Milosevic's death was greeted with widespread declarations that he was murdered. That convenient fiction fits perfectly with the international-conspiracy theories used by Serb nationalists to explain away the ethnic cleansing, the death camps and rape hotels, the slaughter of all the males of Srebrenica and a thousand other atrocities.

ROD NORDLAND

**W**HEN Slobodan Milosevic began his rise, Yugoslavia was the freest, most prosperous country in Eastern Europe. Before he was through, his homeland was a smoking ruin, sacrificed in the name of feeding his insatiable craving for power. As the Berlin wall came down, he morphed from a communist into a hard-line Serbian nationalist. In the next decade he launched four disastrous Balkan wars, killing 250,000 people, leaving 2.5 million homeless. He reduced his native republic, Serbia, to one of the poorest nations in Europe. Then he called elections and lost so badly that the new government soon sent him to The Hague, where he became the world's first head of state to stand trial for war crimes, on 66 counts including genocide and crimes against humanity.

Milosevic was a spoiler to the end, dying in custody last week at 64 with no formal verdict. He couldn't have scripted his exit better if he had killed himself, the way his own parents did when he was a child. Officials at The Hague say there are no suspicions of foul play in his death. The prisoner was known to be suffering from high blood pressure and heart trouble, and an autopsy was in progress late Saturday.

By the time he died, he had dragged out his trial for four years, with possibly another to go. He would surely have been convicted; there was little doubt of that anywhere outside Serbia, where his countrymen are continuing to deny his responsibility --

and their own -- for Europe's most vicious bloodbath since World War II. "He will be declared innocent (in Serbia) for the crimes that he had been accused of," says Belgrade human-rights activist Miljenko Dereta. The country's strongest political entity today, the Serbian Radical Party, is more rabidly nationalist than Milosevic ever was. His countrymen hate the United Nations' war-crimes tribunal so much that they would almost surely topple their current government if it obeyed international demands to hand over the fugitive general who is accused of organizing the genocide in

Bosnia, Ratko Mladic, who has been openly hiding in Serbia.

With his death, Milosevic has only worsened Serbs' distrust of the outside world. In Serbia, news of Milosevic's death was greeted with widespread declarations that he was murdered. That convenient fiction fits perfectly with the international-conspiracy theories used by Serb nationalists to explain away the ethnic cleansing, the death camps and rape hotels, the slaughter of all the males of Srebrenica and a thousand other atrocities.

He died a despised man. Even many Serbs condemned him for

losing Bosnia and Serbia's own province of Kosovo, which they hold sacred as their nation's birthplace. His one-time best friend, the mentor who helped him win his first Communist Party leadership bid, was Ivan Stambolic. Milosevic had him assassinated in 2000 by secret police who snatched Stambolic while he was out jogging. Milosevic's wife, Mirjana, reacted bitterly to the news of her husband's death. She asked The Hague to send his corpse to Moscow, where she now lives. Back home in Serbia she's facing charges of corruption and murder. The "Butcher of the Balkans" will be laid to rest far from the scenes of his many crimes.

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With Zoran Cirjakovic in Belgrade.

