

A Guide to Disaster Management

BANGLADESH, being the disaster-prone country it is, many of her concerned citizens have delved deeply on the subject of natural catastrophes — the most common being floods, cyclones and drought. There is precious little one can do about the last item beyond what is already being done by the government at various stages of its development since its post-liberation period; i.e. engaging in negotiations with its neighbouring countries concerning the flow of water from the mighty rivers which end up in Bangladesh.

Cyclones and floods however, fall in a different category and although no power on earth can "control" these natural forces, humans can certainly alleviate the suffering unleashed by them. Much research and soul-searching have gone into this subject — much more attention being paid to it than in the days of a rather indifferent administration in Islamabad; with the result that a whole plethora of studies have appeared covering its manifold aspects.

One of the latest of this genre is a monograph by Dr Faruq Aziz Khan, an adviser to Comilla Proshika. A host of information is compressed in this learned treatise and one will discover facts not readily available in other "more popular" publications. Most lay readers would wish however that the language was less technical and the style more journalistic. On the other hand, researchers may find this no barrier to the substantial facts laid bare.

Useful charts (dating from 1960) of historical records of the cyclones which have plagued the country, with its various maximum wind speed, height of storm surges and deaths are mapped out: as are brief descriptions of the "killer cyclones" of 1970, '85 and '91. A host of technical data concerning flood cycles, weather satellites and their role in

BOOK REVIEW
Living With Natural Hazards:
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 Author: Faruq Aziz Khan
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 Reviewed by NANCY WONG

Living with Natural Hazards



BANGLADESH

weather forecasting will probably enlighten serious readers of this subject. A lot of people who may not be aware of the wonders of modern science will be reassured by the knowledge that space meteorology (with equipment provided by USAID and NASA) play a vital role in weather forecasting and is alive and well here.

Avoiding all efforts to humanize the face of disaster, the

author has presented a wide range of facts dealing with cyclones and flood which periodically haunt Bangladesh. Some useful suggestions such as specific training programmes be



undertaken to educate the people about what to do when disaster strikes, starting from the school level, is certainly worth implementing. One is reminded of the thorough educational programmes and regular drills instituted by the Japanese government in preparing their citizens for earthquakes. A friend posted in Tokyo was highly impressed by the fact that every school knows precisely where to send its students and what to do in the event of an earthquake; to ensure safety for all.

While this monography may not end up as a popular best-seller, all concerned with disaster management will find it most relevant.

Video Movies : Alternative Communication

REVIEW
 by Raffat Binte Rashid

"I used to think I was worth only less than a cow or a goat. But now I realize that as an individual I am just as important as a man. A woman can accomplish as much as a man can do, there is no difference." This is the realization of Shahimuda Bulu, a grassroots development activist, working as a field organizer of Banchete Shekha, a rural cooperative for destitute women. Her conjugal life is a repetition of the same story of thousands of women in Bangladesh. After parting ways with her husband, she joined the cooperative and today she is a community leader. Through sheer determination and hard work she is self-reliant and able to help other women of her locality, to work productively and improve their living standard.

This hardship and determination, unusual strength to break the chain of slavery by a woman, her struggles and success are all portrayed in a documentary video film "Tale of a Woman" (Ekjon Bulur Aakhyan) a Protishabda production.

The plight of women in our country will always remain contemptible, unless and until they dare change their own fortune. Their meek personality, submissive attitude towards everything, fear of establishing their right will continue to worsen this discrimination. But among them are a few who might emerge strong and act as pathfinders to others. Tale of a woman is a documentary that projects such a determination.

"Face in the millions" (Miehiler Mukh), also a Protishabda production brings another aspect — the harsh reality — into focus. This documentary video film is about one of the martyrs of the mass uprising of 1990. Monwar Hossain born and brought up in an alley, wasn't just a dreamer. Even though he wrote poems in a book with flowers on its cover... he was a man of the streets. He couldn't accept the cruelty injustice around him; he voiced against oppression, tried to resist the autocracy. With people around him, he became stronger than his oppressor. He became a martyr on Oct 10 '90, thus igniting the fire to burn out all oppression and injustice.

This documentary film is important because of the life within it has a third dimension besides the length and the width. Prof Sirajul Islam Chowdhury commented, "Zakir Hossain Raju, the vibrant young writer and director of both the documentaries, organised a group of media activists under the banner of 'Protishabda Alternative Communication Centre', PACC with a view to building a country-wide alternative audio-visual communication network.

At 23, Raju has been able to leave mark of his creativeness both at home and abroad. All his documentaries have different approach as and deep in-

sights. A 59-minute film 'Miles to Go' (Durar Jatra) was on the parliamentary election of 1991, depicting the contemporary socio-political situation of the country. Besides, a news reel video, "Bangladesh February 1992," focused on 10 different issues of the month February, Rohingya, Ekushey, book fair, and others.

"PACC aims at encouraging a greater sense of responsibility, professionalism among alternative media practitioners, to foster a horizontal exchange of ideas, information and experience within Bangladesh, so



I used to think I was worth less than a cow or a goat. But now I realize that as an individual I am just as important as a man: Tale of a Woman.

that the potential of alternative communication for development is more fully realized and explored by the organization and individuals engaged in similar activities," Raju described.

To help others in this domain, PACC organised video workshops jointly with the Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre (AMIC) Singapore, once in 1992 and again this year. These workshops are attended by various people from different walks of life, interested in refining their skill," Raju said.



Waiting for the outcome: Miles to go

Andaman Islands: A Holiday Spot

By a Correspondent

YOU may have read about the Andaman Islands in a novel or a history book. If you have, it was probably described to you as a penal colony, where many Indian freedom fighters were tortured and imprisoned for life. All of this is true; however, what you may not know is that the Andaman Islands have recently become a popular tourist destination. I know that because it was to these islands that I and my fellow classmates took off for our annual school trip.

Indian Airlines flies to the town of Port Blair every other day from Madras and Calcutta. Since Calcutta is closer to us, that is the route which we followed. We arrived in the South Andamans the morning after we had left Dhaka. Upon my arrival, I was greeted with the gentle, cool breeze of perfect island weather, which, except for some occasional rain, lasted throughout my journey. A tourist bus came to the tiny, one-room airport to pick me

or heard from again. The huge, seven-winged jail was built in the late eighteenth centuries. It has now become a national monument, and honors the hundreds of men who died there. Every night, there is a sound and light show at the Cellular Jail which recounts and illustrates the atrocities which were committed there by the British, and then by the Japanese, who took over the Andaman Islands during World War II. It's actually quite an eerie place at night, and sometimes you get the feeling that all those bruised souls are somehow lurking in the shadows.

Another mystery that surrounds the Andamans is the story of their indigenous people. The islands are classified as a restricted area and tourists are only allowed to visit certain parts of it. The Indian government has done this because there are a few tribes in the scattered islands which are on the verge of extinction. These tribes are primitive—they know



The infamous and famous Cellular Jail

drawings, paintings and blending these shots together with modern technology, I am sure, much more appreciating films are possible in future. Even though there are limits to filming here but editing is done on a very professional manner. Levy commented.

"Girls and boys here are very organized. They plan a pre-production script, make a story board and then go for a good shooting. They are very creative and enterprising. Within their boundaries they are able to produce their best. I think the girls are much stronger and creative, they should definitely be given a chance. The males with their chauvinistic attitudes are not bad either," Levy added laughing.

Wayne Levy, a lively instructor, gave small tips on shots — long and short, close ups, interviews and many other positions which helped every eager student. The students had an outdoor shooting class and with a day's editing the class projects were screened at Goethe Institut. Wayne Levy is presently supervising such workshops in India, the Philippines and Singapore. Student-taking part in the course were very much encouraged to boost video technology in Bangladesh.

Until very recently short film meant little more than propaganda documentaries in the service of the leaders and parties in power. But these young men with an inexhaustible zest for life are out to set new boundaries and expand the spectrum. Protishabda Alternative Communication Centre has set a new trend of low cost filmmaking. Finding the 35 or 16 mm film out of reach, they set out with easily accessible VHS cassettes, and fearless spirit to do what they think is the best way to make the under privileged understand their stand better. Their works have priority access to grassroots people, mid-level development activists, social workers and media-activists.

PACC within its mini world is bound to reach to the skies of Monwar's dream or break the invisible chains of Bulu's life. It has set out on a mission to leave marks in the millions.

A Tale of the Patriots



BOOK REVIEW
Muktijuddhe Noi Mash
 (Nine Months in the Liberation War)
 by Major General M S A Bhuiyan
 Publisher: Ahmed Publ'g House
 Reviewed by
 A K M Salahuddin Ahmed

freedom fighter's pen alone. The initial days of the liberation war has been very well described in this book. The war of Kumra in Chittagong is really every touching. The author led this battle along with EPR, Police and Army's combined forces against Pakistan Army. Apart from this, details of the famous battle of Montala, Taliapara and Akhaura are also described in this book. Not only the details of war, but a good number of adventurous experiences and post-war memories have also been incorporated in this volume of 160 pages. Moreover, there is a chapter on '25th March — revenge to take'.

In one of the chapters, it is mentioned that on the first encounter of 26th March night the enemy suffered severe casualties. Two officers and 150 soldiers died including the Pakistani Battalion Commander Lieutenant Colonel Shahpur Khan. Two trucks of ammunition were captured. Fourteen of our valiant freedom fighters sacrificed their lives.

On the night before, that is on the 25th March, Major Zia drafted his historic speech. He then translated the speech into English and read out from Chittagong Radio Centre in both Bengali and English. He did realise that people would not respond to his call and on the contrary, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was under the custody of Pakistanis. How could he announce the name of Sheikh Mujib while he was not present. But for a greater cause, in

the next day's transmission he declared that he was conducting the liberation war on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

This was told because Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was not an individual only to the Bangladesh. He was a history all by himself. He was the symbol of freedom movement, a source of revolutionary spirit. There was no choice but to use his name to induce the Bangladeshis for the liberation war. The war of Independence that started on the morning of 26th March 1971 did require a call to the Bangladeshis on the name of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. If the people had known that Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was under custody of Pakistan Army and he was not with the freedom fighters, the start would have been full of chaos and confusion only. And that is why, knowing fully well, this lie needed to be publicised as a source of inspiration for the liberation war.

It is now well conceived that the inclusion of the name of Sheikh Mujib in Major Zia's speech had a positive impact which gained momentum in the liberation war and that helped the issue to take a political colour.

The author in his description of Shadhin Bangla Betar Kendra wrote that, he made request to all in the Chittagong Radio through a broadcast to report to 'Lalighir Maidan' with available arms. Because, on 29th March it was seen that people from all corners of Chittagong were fleeing towards their home through Chittagong — Cox's Bazar and Chittagong — Kaptai road. Chittagong Radio at that time repeatedly broadcasted to report to Captain Bhuiyan at 'Lalighir Maidan' with available weapons.

The truth, of course, has been revealed now. Everybody has now come to know that this announcement from Chittagong Radio was a fake one to deceive the Pakistanis. It is beyond any doubt that there had been lot of confusion at that time.

In addition to this, the author in his book, has mentioned about his mother, his

comrade Lieutenant Baduzzaman who became a martyr, about valiant hero Dula who fought fearlessly. Dula's contribution has not been ascertained anywhere. But the author has done so as a co-fighter. Dula used to visit him from time to time. While the third publication of this book was on the offing, Dula appeared all on a sudden to meet the author and explained about his financial hardship. The author helped him by giving him some money and asked him to keep in touch if anything could be done for him. While talking to the author, Dula with a sigh of frustration questioned him, 'Sir, I fought with you. The country got liberated. But look at me. You did not even give me a medal.'

The author remained quiet. Dula's voice appeared to be very sad, soaked. He did not find any language to console Dula Mian. Yet, he said, "Does everybody get a medal?" "Sir, I have not seen many in the front. Still they got awards. But I was almost dying in the front."

"Many of the fighters did not get gallantry awards, like you. Look Dula, we did not fight for any medals. We fought for the independence. The country has become independent. What else could we ask for?"

Dula rinses his tears. His sentiment was heart touching. Dula could have been honoured with a gallantry award. If the actual heroes are not given due recognition, no one would volunteer to fight for the country in future.

Countless freedom fighters like Dula Mian fought a great battle and gave birth to a state.

The book is full of emotion and initiative of a freedom fighter which strongly speaks of his patriotism. Plain language and simple presentation has enlightened the book. The book should be read by all, at least those who want to know the nation, the country and its birth.

FROM BOSNIA TO MALAYSIA

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 Besides Bosnian language, they are learning English, Arabic and even Malaysian language. Opportunities of higher studies for those who need have also been made.

ABIM has provided job for a dozen of Bosnian women while efforts are being made for others.

There are many skilled and semi-skilled workers among these Bosnians, so it would not be difficult to find jobs for them," said an ABIM official.

From Bosnia-Herzegovina to Malaysia — it is a long way. Culture and environment of the two countries are different.

Language

Continued from page 10
 ncess in the world with their knowledge of different languages.

While speaking about the utility of languages, Madame De Staël, a feminist writer, said "Nier vier Sprachen kann, er hat den wert vier Menschen." (He who speaks four languages, has the value of four men).

Both Liaquat and Ashraf are the vivid examples of Madame De Staël's words. Because they have proved it in their lives which is very rare in the country.