

Pull Up the Socks Now

Foot steps are being heard of a countrywide flooding. Combined with the flash floods from the east it is now the monsoonal onslaught that has put the Padma-Brahmaputra-Meghna basin into a spate.

We must get a comprehensive preparedness strategy ready to be able to meet the multi-faceted challenge as it gradually unfolds before us. We have an order of priorities to suggest. The first imperative is to have an effective forecasting mechanism capable of predicting the course and intensity of the floods. In other words, what we are looking for is advance information about the direction of the phenomenon rather than a post-facto explanation of what has happened.

It is extremely important to focus next on evacuation of marooned people. The notion with which we begin is that a sheer swell of waters renders people homeless but destitution of no less a degree occurs from river erosions and bank slides, too. Every district administration must keep a fleet of mechanised boats ready for evacuation and rescue operations. People rush for embankments realising little that what they are going to cling to themselves crack under flood-pressure.

Flood-time engineering and repair work are essential elements of preparedness. Snapped road communication has to be restored wherever possible. Similarly, choked tubewells must receive prompt attention to be serviced back to life. On the short term, we have to provide the affected people with water purification tablets, minimum sanitation, food, vaccines and medicines. The distribution network should spread beyond the relief centres to reach the homes of people who may not escape the contagion if left uncared for.

The vision of long-term succour, needless to say, includes house-building assistance and support to rebuild the victims' economic lives.

Security at ZIA

We are worried over the situation at the Zia International Airport. From reports published in the national dailies and the periodicals it looks as though it has turned into a veritable hell. Break-down of the security system, rampant corruption and harassment of passengers have transformed a place that should have ideally been an epitome of comfort, convenience and service into a dreaded spot. It has been like that for quite some time now, and people have been suffering all this while.

But now that they themselves have started feeling the heat and some of the foreign airlines have threatened to close down their services, the authorities have woken up. A standing committee headed by the relevant minister has reportedly been formed to look into the matter. The main problem at the ZIA is lack of coordination among different agencies. As there is no integrated system of command none of the relevant agencies like Customs, Immigration, Police, Civil Aviation, Biman is obliged to feet accountable for its conducts. Naturally corruption crept into the organisation and over the years strong vested interests have developed on it. In fact ZIA has turned into a battle ground of the jealous and vicious groups of agencies working there. Poor passengers are bearing the brunt of it. Let alone an integrated command of relevant agencies, the premier international airport of the country is not even under the jurisdiction of one police station. This is absolutely untenable.

Examples from abroad can be helpful in curing the ailing airport. John F Kennedy Airport of New York is under a unified authority. Close to home, Bangkok airport is run by the Bangkok Airport Authority. Unless we all the relevant agencies are fused into a single unit employed to ensure the maintenance of the airport things will not look up. The standing committee will be well-advised to guard against the temptation and persuasion to fall for piece-meal solutions. Take time but make sure an integrated management system is put in place to ensure efficiency, security and convenience at the airports.

Japan in Quandary

Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto's resignation following his party LDP's debacle in the election to the upper chamber of Diet has no doubt conformed to an exemplary tradition of that country: gracious acceptance of failure by people in high places. Nevertheless, this time it could not be more inauspicious. For although the Japanese have slapped the electoral defeat on the Liberal Democrats out of sheer anger over their inability to turn a corner from the deep economic crisis they are faced with no better days seem ahead of the country by virtue of the electoral verdict either.

The LDP stays in power because of the fact that it has majority in the Lower House where the party can legislate on important matters bypassing the opposition. Hashimoto's successor will be from the same party. So, it will not be the changing of the guard that goes with a total change in the power structure. But what has happened as a result of the angry voter outburst at the first opportunity is that the opposition parties have got a handle to demand mid-term elections for the Lower House. Choice of Hasimoto's successor may not be easy, and when one is made, he will have to negotiated through the public disapproval of the LDP in the recent polls.

Such political uncertainties in Japan are sure to cause jitters in the Asian markets with knock-off effects on the global financial market-place to boot. We are worried for Japan which is confronted with not merely an economic but also a political crisis. How much we wish Japan to be stable both economically and politically at the earliest.

Hartal: Can't We Do Without It?

by M Badrul Haque

As the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina is in a unique position now to make hartal calls less acceptable by the general public. This will necessarily involve accepting any legitimate demands the Opposition may have.

The consequences of repeated hartals or, for that matter, the tolerance of the common people of such myopic politicians.

My guess is that those who are prone to hartals as a tool for achieving their goals in a democracy are not the typical readers of this daily, nor are they likely to pay much heed to what the paper and its readers may have to say about their meaningless strikes. The strong editorial position against hartals has to be supplemented by suggestions to make hartals less acceptable to the general public.

In this article, I will make two suggestions for the readers to consider. Both are based on common sense and my general impressions of the psyche of the two key politicians. Before making the suggestions, I recall a remark made by the present Prime Minister a few years back at a meeting, organized by the Washington Awami League chapter.

Although the meeting coincided with Iftar, a large number

of expatriates came to hear Sheikh Hasina at a Church in Washington, D.C. Sheikh Hasina's biggest challenge was to explain the many hartals called by the Awami League, then in Opposition.

With confidence, Sheikh Hasina claimed her party's claims that hartals were in the national interest and that because of the concern for the common people, the hartal duration had been reduced to half-a-day at a time, allowing people to get along with their normal work and business afterwards. Subsequently, a senior community member rightly pointed out in a local weekly that despite the claims to the contrary, the economy suffered from the hartals as did the common people especially if they marketed perishable goods (fish, vegetables, etc.), for example.

I recall the above event because, from my vantage point, I sense that Sheikh Hasina is relatively more sensible than Begum Khaleda Zia. If Sheikh Hasina could not be convinced that hartals are bad for the economy and the common people, it is going to be even harder

to convince Begum Zia. Indeed, for the past two years or so, it appears that she has tried to make an issue out of almost everything that the governing party achieved.

As the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina is in a unique position now to make hartal calls less acceptable by the general public. This will necessarily involve accepting any legitimate demands the Opposition may have. As I am in no position to know which of the Opposition demands may be legitimate, if any, I will defer this to others.

My first suggestion involves demonstration of a higher level of political maturity by the present Government. I cannot gauge the majority feelings in Bangladesh but, from abroad, it appears that in the name of giving Bangladesh his rightful recognition the present Government is actually cheapening his name. Even if a bridge, a university, a hospital, etc. were not named after Bangladesh, his contributions and weaknesses will remain historical facts.

Instead of naming everything that is significant after Bangladesh, the Government

should consider naming some of the national institutions also after other great leaders of Bangladesh, including the late Ziaur Rahman. Naming important landmarks after different leaders not only are fair but also demonstrate a higher level of maturity that appears absent in the present mood of Bangladeshization.

The onus is on the Government to demonstrate that it is fair. If the general public perceives the Government as fair then even the BNP workers may not respond to the hartal calls.

The second suggestion is to include the common people in the development of long-term strategic directions for the country. Recently, I listened to a presentation on how the general public was involved in shaping a strategic development framework for the Dominican Republic. According to the presenter, the immediate impact has been far fewer strike calls and responses to these calls by the general public.

The process involved the government identifying about ten strategic areas for discussions by stakeholder groups

with a mandate to produce recommendations. While the government funded the cost of the meeting, it did not choose the committee members nor put any time limit on deliberations. The stakeholder groups themselves identified the persons that represented them in each of the strategic area discussed.

Such stakeholder involvement help to make the general people more aware of the development process and make them feel that they are involved in shaping it. If done in Bangladesh too, this will not only weaken responses to political hartal calls but also help achieve consensus on important issues such as privatization and loan defaulters.

The Government could ask the UNDP and the World Bank for financial and logistical supports. In June of this year, the Board of the World Bank approved the Partnership Approach to Development Assistance which mandates the Bank to support the Dominican Republic-type approach to framing strategic frameworks. With a five-year plan only recently introduced, the Government could launch a long-term strategic framework, say, upto the year 2020.

The writer, a PhD, stays in the US.

BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Verbatim Text of Cross-examination of Investigation Officer

Following are the excerpts of cross-examination of Abdul Kahar Akand, Investigating Officer (IO) of the Bangabandhu Murder Case, by Abdur Rezzak Khan, defence counsel for Col (Retd) Shahriyar Rashid Khan: Q: Did PW-13 Dafadar Shafuluddin tell you that 'Subedar Major Sayeed Ahmed took us to parade and soldiers of 2 Field Artillery were in my jeep?' A: He did not tell me in this way. But, said that some other from Artillery boarded on my jeep from Mohakhali.

Q: The witness told you that the soldiers who got into the jeep from Mohakhali were of 2 Field Artillery. A: He did not tell me about 2 Field Artillery.

Q: Did he say that Shahriyar used to stay at Bangabhaban after August 15? A: He did not say that Shahriyar used to stay, but said that he used to come and go.

Q: Did another witness, Ziauddin, told you that he either saw Shahriyar at Bangabhaban or saw him discussing there. A: No, he mentioned few names.

Q: Did PW-24 Havilder Aminur Rahman tell you that 'Major Shahriyar, Major Majed and Capt. Mostafa went inside a house (Serniabat). A: No, he did not say this.

Q: Didn't the witness tell you that the officers came out from that house after 10 to 15 minutes. A: He told me that members of a force came out.

Q: Did the witness tell such that he saw Shahriyar at the radio station at 6:30 pm? A: He told me that Shahriyar and other officers came to radio station and saw them coming and going at about 6:30 pm.

Q: Did he say that the members of the Rakshik Bahini were disarmed at the radio station? A: No.

Q: Did PW-43 Prof Korshed Alam tell you that Shahriyar went to attend a conference at Daudkandi by an army jeep? A: He did not say about army jeep.

Q: Didn't the witness said that after the conference Farooq, Shahriyar went to Mush-taque's house along with Mushtaque. A: He said Major Rashid and others.

Q: Did PW-27 Havilder Harunur Rashid say that he had a SLR with him and took 400 rounds of ammunition, but did not fire any ammunition. A: He told about SLR, but mentioned nothing about ammunition.

Q: Did you collect the names and record the statements of the outstation commanders, with whom PW-45 Major General (Retd) Shafulah had talks on August 15 morning. A: I talked to them, but did not record their statements, except of Brig Shahjahan.

Q: Did Shafulah tell you that he told Bangabandhu 'Sir, from now and today onwards I have become a victim of circumstances.' A: No.

Q: Did Shafulah tell Col Salauddin to convey his order to Col Shafait Jamil to move with three battalion of force and to resist the attackers. A: No, Salauddin did not tell me this.

Q: Did Shafulah say that he told the outstation commanders that what has happened had happened without his knowledge and he had instructed Col Shafait to resist. A: No, he did not say that.

Q: Shafulah told you that he had observed during his stay at Bangabhaban that all the conferences were confined to whether martial law would be imposed or not and drafting proclamation. A: No.

Q: Did you take statement of any quarter guard, or commanders or 2 IC of Shafulah, Brig Khaled Mosharrar or of Shafait Jamil. A: I have interrogated a guard of Shafait Jamil and ADC of Shafulah but did not record any one's statement. Shafulah's ADC was Capt Humayun Kabir.

Q: Besides, this two, did you take statements of any other? A: I interrogated Brigade Major Hafizuddin.

Q: None of them are witnesses in this case. A: No.

Q: Did you record statements of any of the staff of Air and Naval chiefs. A: No, I did not find it necessary.

Q: PW-47 General Khalilur Rahman became the Chief of Defence and took the responsibility after August 15, 1975. A: He was given appointment to the post.

Q: He told you that Shahriyar was made his staff officer. A: Yes.

Q: Did PW-49 Md Khan tell you that some armed people in an aggressive mood kept confined General Shafulah in a room at 46 brigade. A: He said that about 14 to 15 people wearing khaki and black uniforms were seen in alert position.

Q: He did not say that an armed officer escorted him to the radio station. A: He told me that Shafulah was escorted at the radio station.

Q: Did you ask any authority about the internal security matter? A: Why I will ask.

Q: When the killing of Bangabandhu took place, Khandaker Mushtaque was a minister. Did you interrogate the private secretary or staff or any of the police guard of Mushtaque's house. A: None was found. I did not

give any written requisition to the concerned ministry for that, but inquired about that.

Q: Did you record the statement of Secretary of the ministry, which was held by Mushtaque? A: I didn't find it necessary.

Q: Did you record any statement of one Appeal Mahmud? A: I interrogated him.

Q: Did you record statement of one Saidul Islam? A: Shahriyar has mentioned one of his relation named Saidul Islam, but he was not found.

Q: Did you interrogate any person of Shahriyar's cantonment residence, or of the flat at Property Enclave, from where he was arrested, or of anyone of his village home at Gopinathpur, Kashba. A: I talked to some local people while verifying his (Shahriyar) statement.

Q: Did the court examine the charge-sheet witnesses Md Ali, Motiur Rahman and Aziz Ahmed. A: I have nothing to say, because they were charge-sheet witnesses.

Q: Lance Naik Mofazzel was injured in the August 15 incident. A: Yes.

Q: Did you siege any minutes of any cabinet meeting presided over by Mushtaque after he became the President? A: No, I did not get those.

Q: Did you get the August 15 duty record of PW-40 Md Abdul Aziz, PW-23 Aminur Rahman and PW-29 Shehabuddin? A: No duty record was prepared on August 15 for the killing purpose.

Q: Did you review August 15 minutes, order book or of guard book of the radio station? A: No such record was found.

Q: Did you give any requisition for those records. A: I contacted for those, but did not get anything.

Q: You have arrested Shahriyar in jail killing case and took him to remain for several days. And failing to implicate him in that case, you made Shahriyar an accused in this case to save your skin. A: He was first shown arrest in the jail killing case and he is still an accused in that case and there are witness and proof about his involvement in that case.

Q: Failing to do anything against him, Shahriyar has been made accused in a number of murder cases to create pressure on him. A: He was made accused by those, who filed cases against him.

Q: You have charge-sheeted Shahriyar on a false charge. A: He (Shahriyar) has admitted his involvement with the case (Bangabandhu murder). Giving him proper honour I have interrogated him. You (lawyer) can ask him.

Q: Did you investigate the 3rd November army coup led by Brig Khaled Mosharrar? A: The 3rd November incident was a different thing. Jail

logic of proliferation licence. Bangladesh signed the NPT and CTBT not only because it felt that those treaties were a step towards achieving the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament, but also because those treaties served the present goal of nuclear non-proliferation for the good of mankind. Bangladesh contributed to the express will of the vast majority of the comity of nations that every country in the exercise of its sovereignty, "to decide on its security perceptions" must refrain from nuclear testing and weaponisation. The rest of the world is sending clear signals that by their attempts to gate-crash into the nuclear club, the two South Asian powers, earned neither status nor security. Bangladesh ought to take note, and must not sit on the fence for fear or for favour. The inequity of nuclear haves and have-nots is not redressed by adding to the number of nuclear weapon states but by pursuing the process of reduction of nuclear weapons arsenal already existing.

We have noted the Sino-US summit statement on South Asia expressing the resolve "to work together...and with others, to prevent an accelerating nuclear and missile arms race in South Asia, strengthen international non-proliferation efforts, and promote reconciliation and the peaceful resolution of differences between India and Pakistan."

We call upon all political leaders and patriots belonging to every school of thought in Bangladesh to recognise, in enlightened national self-interest, the bastion of Chinese goodwill in securing broader regional stability and growth, to refrain from the post-colonial habit of cheap anti-Americanism, and to extend support to positive Sino-US engagement for peace and security in South Asia. Bangladeshes must also persist with its annual motions in the UN General Assembly for a nuclear-free South Asia.

Another committee, please

Sir, Mohammadpur Preparatory and Girls School is a well known school of Dhaka city. Since its establishment in 1976 the school is being managed by a Special Managing Committee in violation of Government rules for management of private schools. As a result the same set of people are in the Committee for the last 22 years.

A Guardian Dhaka

Equal rights

Sir, I was watching on the TV the lecture delivered by President Clinton at the Beijing University during his recent 9-day long visit to China. He was talking about the human rights and democratic values etc. He was also asking the young Chinese people to come forward along with American young people to build a free society.

He was then asked questions about the present status of equality among different races of people in the USA. He admitted that still they could not yet achieve the equal status for all due to the mental framework of people in the society. Some people still do not get equal opportunity only because of their

OPINION

Support Positive Sino-US Engagement for Peace and Security in South Asia

Prof Talukdar Moniruzzaman, Sadeq Khan, Dr Mahub Ullah, Dr Aftab Ahmad, Dr Shamsur Rahman, Fazal M Kamal, Amanullah Kabir, Dr Osman Haider Choudhury

We are afraid that our political leaders have not yet fully woken up to the grave implications of nuclear weaponisation of India followed by Pakistan. With the nuclear tests, the peak of the strategic arms race between India and Pakistan has already upset the regional security of South Asia beyond measure. It is no comfort to the non-nuclear neighbours of India and Pakistan that a balance has been struck by nuclear parity between the two nations 50 years at feud with each other.

Fundamentally conflicting readings about the geopolitical climate are being given out from India and Pakistan. For instance, former Indian Prime Minister I K Gujral has told the Leader of the Opposition in Bangladesh that assertion of nuclear status by India and Pakistan would deter further war between the two countries that fought three wars in the first three decades of their independence. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan, on the other hand, has candidly told the UN Secretary General's special envoy, Alvaro De Soto that a fourth war between India and Pakistan would result in the use of nuclear weapons. He made it clear that in hot pursuit of Kashmir militants Indian aircraft should cross into Pakistan's air space, "we would retaliate quickly and decisively." Indian government leaders had earlier in May, before Pakistan exploded its own big bomb, bared India's nuclear milk-teeth to warn Pakistan to "roll back" from Kashmir valley or "be prepared for India's wrath."

A sudden nuclear strike over Kashmir by accident, impulse or design is a spectre that looms large. It goes without saying that the perils of nuclear conflict far beyond the bilateral concerns and boundaries of the two nations that are engaged in nuclear muscle-flexing it concerns us very much, at the safety of our citizens are at stake. Our leaders should not mince words in voicing our to-

tal opposition to our neighbours' nuclear bravado that brings the threats of a holocaust to our doorsteps. Bangladesh must take a firm position with the rest of the world in demanding that India and Pakistan abide by the UN Security Council resolution 1172, and stop nuclear weaponisation. We note that Pakistan is willing to do so if India does not, if strategic parity is assured between India and Pakistan by a regional test ban accord, and if the casus belli of their contention, the Kashmir dispute, is addressed internationally.

Indeed the flashpoint of a possible nuclear conflagration in South Asia is pinned on Kashmir. It does no good to hedge the issue. If bilateral talks expected in the coming SAARC summit fail to move the stone of impasse over that simmering dispute, it will become imperative for us, for our own security, to demand external intervention. The two disputes that were resolved between India and Pakistan in the past, those of Indus water-sharing and delimitation of the Rann of Kutch, both required external intervention.

A UN or other potent international initiative may very well be needed in Kashmir to save the subcontinent from impending nuclear disaster. The fate of many millions of people, unrelated to the dispute that might trigger the switch of nuclear madness, now hangs on the balance of aggravation or determination of the Kashmir issue. They have a legitimate right to be heard and to demand safety. Procrastination of futile bilateralism or technicalities of past protocols cannot stand in the way of a more comprehensive and vigorous initiative for peace in Kashmir.

The Prime Minister of Bangladesh was well advised to go to Delhi and to attempt to assess the chances of peace, but we are shocked to see her return a prisoner to the fallacious

logic of proliferation licence. Bangladesh signed the NPT and CTBT not only because it felt that those treaties were a step towards achieving the ultimate goal of nuclear disarmament, but also because those treaties served the present goal of nuclear non-proliferation for the good of mankind. Bangladesh contributed to the express will of the vast majority of the comity of nations that every country in the exercise of its sovereignty, "to decide on its security perceptions" must refrain from nuclear testing and weaponisation. The rest of the world is sending clear signals that by their attempts to gate-crash into the nuclear club, the two South Asian powers, earned neither status nor security. Bangladesh ought to take note, and must not sit on the fence for fear or for favour. The inequity of nuclear haves and have-nots is not redressed by adding to the number of nuclear weapon states but by pursuing the process of reduction of nuclear weapons arsenal already existing.

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