

# Managing Change in Turbulent Times

by Monwarul Islam

History has shown that no social organisations, regardless of how cleverly designed or implanted, work effectively unless sustained by the right attitudes.

THE growing awareness of human and democratic rights, increasing opportunities for private initiatives and the falling barriers to trade and travel have released powerful forces that are leading to the disintegration of the traditional social structure at an accelerated pace. In a number of countries inadequate policy packages have compounded the problem. The results are a rolling, colliding and confused mass of people in conflict with itself. The trend cannot be reversed, no matter how deeply the traditionalists deplore the loss of ancient moorings or the pacifists mourn the passing away of the age of innocence. But rather than let the forces work themselves out through devastating convulsions, every nation can decide to manage the change in a more constructive fashion.

The clamour for the government to find solutions, as has become customary in all developing countries, is clearly not going to help. Growing commitments on the one hand and limited resources on the other, have already begun to undermine the ability of public agencies to perform their traditional regulatory functions. Furthermore, the degree of openness and flexibility required to promote popular participation to resolve conflict and build compromises cannot be mastered by the government apparatus. The responsibility to manage change would fall largely on the civil society.

Governments could still have a significant role to play

in areas where the civil society interacts with public agencies, ranging from the distribution of scarce resources to the provision of public service. With a rising expectation sweeping all segments of the society, the questions of access, transparency and costs of the allocation mechanism have become highly explosive and divisive issues for all. Providers and consumers of public services must have a common ground to meet, perhaps through local committees, to analyse problems and devise solutions.

In order to enlist the spontaneous cooperation of the people in implementing national policy and programmes the decision making process must be made more open, consultative and flexible. It is now widely realised that developing countries do not so much lack the forms of democracy as they do its content and spirit. The real objective of democracy is to seek the greatest good of the greatest number. Political parties begin to address these concerns by making themselves more democratic in spirit. As they become more sensitive to popular concerns, instead of foisting their favoured ideological burden on the people, they will brighten their own chances to govern.

For many countries heading the list of worries are crimes and corruption. To prevent the sense of insecurity and outrage spiralling into violence the rule of law needs to be strictly enforced. Anti-crime vigilantes, committees, at local levels, with concerned civic leaders and trained volunteers, and

supported by the authorities, could go a long way in maintaining law and order without significant additional expenditures. Strong anti-corruption legislation and an independent and effective enforcement system for all levels are an essential first step towards conflict resolution. It is a measure of the rage felt by the common man that the People Power has been invoked successfully in the name of fighting corruption to force government out of office.

Mixed public-private governance structures are necessary for some of the specialised regulatory functions such as fair trade practices, consumer protection and the preservation of the environment. As far as possible, independent statutory agencies established to regulate work in these areas should have such mixed representations from all stakeholders.

Beyond the domains of the public and mixed institutions lies the wider field of NGOs and the private interest groups. They are useful in crystallising the social perceptions and needs and addressing them in a constructive and peaceful manner. Because participation, dialogue and consensus-building is their preferred way to meet challenges and create opportunities, these civil society institutions should be consciously encouraged and nurtured.

In countries with strong religious sentiments, the religious leaders can choose to remain the faithful of the enduring values bestowed by religion — honesty, compassion, justice, tolerance and respect for our common human dignity. Com-

munities rent apart by religious violence in historical times need to forget the follies of the past in order to together build the future. Religious leaders and others concerned with the spiritual basis of society should actively include a human dimension in their tasks, by creating organisations that stand by the deprived and the oppressed, help the needy, train the poor to earn a living, care for the sick and provide relief in times of disaster.

Like biological diversity on earth, linguistic and ethnic diversity should also be accommodated and indeed, preserved in recognition of the unique contribution that each community makes to enrich and sustain the environment in which we live.

For each of us there is a crucial choice to be made on how we make use of the unprecedented stock of knowledge and power that science has made accessible to us. This raises questions of ethics and morality and the content of the education system, both formal and informal, that profoundly influence our thoughts and action. History has shown that no social organisations, regardless of how cleverly designed or implemented, work effectively unless sustained by the right attitudes.

We must ask ourselves whether matters such as ethics, morality, human rights, democracy and social responsibility should not form part of our academic and practical education in the new millennium. The author is an international civil servant based in Geneva.

# Karachi: Earthquake Scene-II

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

In Turkey, the earthquake score now stands at some 50,000 dead and 500,000 homeless. The building control authorities of the Turkish cities, like ours, are corrupt to the core, and have their fair share of unscrupulous crooked builders and developers.

IF Nawaz Sharif feels that he can survive and do wrong for ever by amending the Constitution, changing the laws, subverting the judiciary, oppressing and taxing the people at will, and by misgoverning with deliberation, he is surely mistaken.

As far as Karachi is concerned, the recent strike was sustained by the people. The lame-duck crooked opposition leaders, who grab at any available opportunity to make a nuisance of themselves, did their utmost to use it to their advantage. It was an effective strike of stomachs belonging to various denominations, some deserving some not. When stomachs rebel against authority they do so irrespective of the consequences that may follow.

Thanks to Nawaz Sharif, the economy of Karachi effectively stopped generating as of noon on Friday the 3rd and not gained momentum until noon on Tuesday the 7th, after the armed forces had celebrated their victories over the years from 1965 onwards, the year during which Ayub Khan declared September 6 as 'Defence Day', a public holiday, to commemorate his 'great victory'.

Now to the subject matter of this column, an extension of what was written last week — dangerous buildings.

In Turkey, the earthquake score now stands at some 50,000 dead and 500,000 homeless. The building control authorities of the Turkish cities, like ours, are corrupt to the core, and have their fair share of unscrupulous crooked builders and developers. Ishak Alaton, a 70-year-old Turkish businessman, philanthropist, and commentator on Turkish norms and practices, has this to say about the recent catastrophe:

"Our company, Alarko, has constructed hundreds of houses and factories in that particular area. I am proud to say that in these constructions that were built in the last four decades, not one single crack occurred. The simple reason is that we, like all serious contractors and builders in that area, applied the prevailing Turkish codes of construction, which allow for an earthquake that would be 9.2 on the Richter scale. The great loss of life is the result of unscrupulous small developers and builders setting up apartments in loose riverbeds and land reclaimed from the sea without laying the

necessary foundations. Unfortunately, no technical control by the municipalities was applied, due to the collusion between unscrupulous builders and local municipal bureaucrats."

The people of Karachi may not remember how to save its own skin in its own particular convoluted way, the Karachi Building Control Authority (KBCA), under pressure from concerned citizens (mainly the NGO SHEHRI which has the good fortune of being guided by the public-spirited volunteer Engineer Roland de Souza), published a public warning in Dawn on January 10, 1997.

The warning listed 262 buildings. The text read: "The following buildings which were constructed against the approved building plans have been sealed by the KBCA and therefore the general public is informed not to enter into any transactions with the builders."

It informed the people yet again that in terms of the Sindh Building Control Ordinance 1979 it is mandatory that people occupy premises only after the builders have been given completion and occupancy certificates by the KBCA.

Again, under pressure and to cover themselves, another warning was published by the KBCA on September 1, 1998, listing 26 high-rises of the 262 buildings, all 26 on the Sharea Faisal: Jason Trade Towers, Al-Kamran Centre, Fortune Centre, Progressive Square, Business Avenue, Shaheen Towers, Amber Towers (Block 6), Amber Castle, Shaheen View, Doctors Plaza, Amber Pride, Marine Faisal, Hannan Centre, Tax Free Plaza, Anum Classic, Kawish Crown, Metropolitan Bank, Faisal Towers, Fayyaz Plaza, Amber Towers (SMCHS), Mehdi Towers, Falaknaz Towers, three unnamed high-rises standing on 15-A, 20-A and 29-A Block 6, and one unnamed high-rise on 47 Darul Aman.

This time the warning was more specific. People were told that these buildings "are being constructed in contravention of the approved building plans... additionally the unauthorised construction is potentially dangerous as [buildings] are being built without an approved plan, [they] have not been properly supervised by a KBCA licensed architect/engineer. They are being constructed in violation of the earthquake resistance design."

Through collusion between

the KBCA building controllers, their lawyers, the builders and their lawyers, even after publication of this notice most of these dangerously constructed buildings have been completed and a number of them are occupied.

Take the case of Fortune Towers, standing incomplete on the left of Sharea Faisal going towards the airport. This construction, from point one, was challenged by the NGO SHEHRI, so far unsuccessfully.

On August 8, 1997, the KBCA duly granted, approved a plan, which it should not have done, for the construction of ground plus twelve commercial floors on a residential plot not legally converted. On December 18, 1997, the KBCA, approved a revised building plan allowing ground plus sixteen floors.

This incomplete structure should cover a built-up area, illegally allowed by the KBCA, of 113,068 square feet. But what stands today covers a built-up area of 364,826 square feet, over three times the area originally approved. Needless to say, the structure does not meet with earthquake resistance standards.

Next, to Al-Karam Centre on the right of Sharea Faisal going towards the airport, opposite the Nursery market. The approved plan allowed for ground plus eight floors.

The builders built ground plus twelve, under cover of stay orders of sorts obtained from courts. Subsequently the High Court vacated the stay orders leaving KBCA free to act.

It started demolition proceedings in accordance with the law and had demolished or rendered uninhabitable the top two floors when the Secretary of Housing and Town Planning (HTP), Faisal Saud, instructed the Director-General of the KDA and the Commissioner of Karachi to stop the demolition work. At noon on May 3, 1999, it was stopped.

On May 4, 1999, I wrote to Governor Haider: "On May 4, Faisal Saud was asked at the meeting of the KDA Governing Body why he had interfered with the due process of law. He advised that he had done so on your instructions conveyed to him on the telephone by your Military Secretary. It seems that you have been misinformed and thus have ordered as you did. It is inconceivable that you could have stilled the due process of law, allowing

time to the builders to have the building occupied by rented crowds."

Some days later I met the governor but he did not disclose who or what had got under his skin. The order had been issued by him whilst he was in Islamabad.

The illegally approved plan of this building permitted the building of 21,361 square feet. The builder built 86,130 square feet, over four times as much. Now, the builders and their organisation, the Association of Builders and Developers (ABAD), feel that whatever the builders built illegally and not in accordance with the law of the land, and every other criminal act, should be regularised by the government.

They recently wrote to the editor of Dawn, copying me: "The negative attitude of SHEHRI towards regularisation of irregular illegal buildings has made the issue more complicated. In every major city of Pakistan, regularisation is considered a compoundable offence, whereas because of bias and blackmarketing attitude of this NGO neither KBCA entertains plans for completion/regularisation nor Government has come up with any final answer to this apathy."

The committees constituted and notified to oversee the operation of the KBCA and the KDA Governing Body, on both of which sit responsible representatives of the people to some extent effective. That is proven by the fact that Secretary, HTP, Faisal Saud, wants both disbanded and reconstituted with purchasable individuals and bodies.

The secretary is frustrated, and in his frustration, from January 1 of this year, he has transferred and reposted 43 officers angling to be posted to positions of their liking. Of the 43, by law the secretary was empowered to transfer only three, the KDA Governing Body having the authority to transfer the other 40. But then, it is said that transferring and reposting is a lucrative business.

To make things worse, Ghous Ali Shah, in his perfect wisdom, has assigned the portfolio of Housing and Town Planning to Dost Mohammed Faizi. People well know the propensities of Ghous and of Faizi, and they will resist.

To live in a dwelling which meets with laid-down standards is their legitimate due.

# Negative Leadership!

by Alif Zabr

The tongue is the most volatile weapon to leave lasting impressions. It could be positive or negative, but hardly neutral.

MORE often than not we seem to thrive on negative leadership of the other players in the field. Add to this negative cunning, the raking of the past of the opponents; seeking other sickly baits during the trapping exercise; nothing that virtues sink to the bottom, and vices float up as pollutants, and move with the tides of the times. Some tend to live in the past, restless about the present, and indifferent about the future; taking a bohemian attitude — that the future would take care of itself. Playing proxy with the future invites bugs.

However, the sardonic pleasure is the fact that the future does take care of itself, but impartially. It is the Law of Compensation, so far unchanged in the history of civilization. Timeless laws are of course independent of time; and Time is the greatest reckoner.

This back-biting through monitoring of the panorama of

the past is another form of blackmail and/or character assassination. The reason for depending on the past is that the critics have nothing positive about themselves to offer, to balance the negative qualities of the opponent. There are proverbs in every society on this type of human weakness — looking for the mole in others' eyes and forgetting the mole in one's own.

Our politics is at present passing through this phase, but it is taking too long to come down to the normal residual level as noticed in other 'normal' societies; (this term 'normal' has gained wide acceptance, even in the vernacular, in our present day society at the popular level). The political leaders are quick to quote circumstantial evidence for this lingering malignity in our society; moaning the absence of the proper foundation or base for the cultivation of the fine art of political fence-manship.

Bickering is not a monopoly, but a human trait. It may be due to lack of raw materials or tools in one's armoury to corner the opponent, in a planned and credible way, as the lawyers do in a court (the knights of the courts have a natural inclination towards politics as a pastime). But lawyers are crafty word-smiths, and try to defend the clients, right or wrong, proving that language is a much abused and overused tool in the moral and ethical market. Since language is pliable, it is dangerous to that extent, and may be harmful to the user and the target. Earthquakes sway the tops of buildings; and 'mirquakes' shake up the belly. Ask what are the specifications suitable for the versatile politicians, who always rest under dynamic conditions.

Another human frailty or pastime is looking for alibis, to condone or condemn. This may be done to suit the mood of the moment, or it is pompously

classified as circumstantial exigency. This type of defensive mechanism is also seen in children standing trial before parents for micro naughty mishaps. All these types of human weaknesses apply mostly to the common man, whereas a leader is supposed to be above the common stream of consciousness.

The politicians use a versatile tool to sway the masses. The tongue is a multipurpose weapon to eat the opponent, without digesting him; and eat the goodies leaving the wrappers as evidence. It can lie flat after the truth escapes, and it can twist a lie to provide smooth evidence. It causes war when it beckons peace, and causes confrontation when peace is declared (as in E. Timor). The tongue is the most volatile weapon to leave lasting impressions. It could be positive or negative, but hardly neutral. Therefore it is not advisable to depend on lip-service.

# Indonesia: Economic Agenda after Election

by A S M Nurunnabi

What's needed are real punishments that might discourage wrongdoing by government officials, and brave judiciary to carry them out. The challenge for the next government, as opined by analysts, will be to find the courage to apply the law.

INDONESIA'S democratic election created enormous optimism that economic recovery was just around the corner. The present reality is that huge obstacles lie ahead and a new era of populist politics could complicate decision-making, as observed by analysts.

Jakarta's politicians fell all over themselves when International Monetary Fund Managing Director came to visit Jakarta last June. Presidential candidate Megawati Sukarnoputri and the incumbent B J Habibie, both pledged fealty to the Fund's economic-recovery blueprint and silenced dissenters in their camps. "No matter who leads Indonesia's next government, the IMF has a firm hand on the tiller," the World Bank Managing Director who visited Jakarta subsequently declared. "The theme is continuity."

However, softer voices could be heard warning that the job was far from finished and about to be seriously complicated by Indonesia's political transition.

The newly elected parliament is an unshackled one — able for the first time in decades to propose legislation of its own and may be even see it become law. This new power promises to make it a rambunctious body, with all members under pressure to deliver goodies to voters who have suffered from job losses, rampant inflation and high anxiety for two years. While law makers can also begin to clean up endemic corruption and government waste — a process that is key to the country's long-term economic survival — economists and politicians say the drive to reach consensus on economic policy is likely to be a messy one that may constrain short-term growth.

Observers feel the next president almost certainly — Megawati or Habibie — will confront populist and legislative challenges like no one has faced since Megawati's father and Indonesia's first president, Sukarno, dispensed with

democracy 40 years ago. "The agenda for economic and political reform confronting Indonesia following the recent crisis bears comparison with the magnitude of the reform effort undertaken by Russia following the fall of the Berlin wall," commented a keen analyst attached to a UN agency.

To date, it has been noted by observers that precious little progress has been made towards repairing insolvent banks and restructuring massive foreign commercial debt — two key contributors to the economic collapse — and the new populist politics are unlikely to quicken the pace. "The proximate causes of the economic crisis have not yet been addressed," said a top World Bank official. But it was noted by observers that the IMF and the small group of local economists who have had Habibie's ear and pushed for progress in these areas will now have to talk over a growing chorus of voices trying to pull the government away from the Fund's reform agenda.

A wide spectrum of Indonesians want the economy fixed, but they want their interests looked after, too. On labour issues, there are arguments for and against wage freeze advanced by opposing labour leaders. Government subsidies are another contentious issue. While the poor sections of society want the subsidies to continue, Indonesia's Finance Minister is lobbying to lift the country's gas and electricity subsidies, as demanded by the IMF. The role of foreigners in Indonesia is another sore point. While a trade group named the Real Estate Association of Indonesia warned, "We must prevent foreign control over the country's property sector" and suggested that property assets seized from failed banks be given to that trade group for management, there has been no unanimity of opinion on the issue.

Striking a balance among all these competing interests is considered by observers to be vitally important, since the economists estimate that In-

onesia needs to grow at 4 per cent to 5 per cent a year just to absorb new entrants to the work force. But there are pessimistic forecasts that Indonesia could easily be locked into a 2 per cent-3 per cent growth scenario for a decade if there is no pushing forward. That would expand the ranks of the poor, already estimated to be 20 per cent of the country's 200 million people.

From the IMF's viewpoint, these are the things that need to be done: building a strong banking system, restructuring \$65 billion in corporate foreign debt, winning back the confidence of domestic businessmen, particularly ethnic Chinese scared away by attacks, giving more financial autonomy to the provinces and ending too-cosy relations between business and government that allowed corruption to flourish under Suharto.

It's a very daunting task, as felt by observers. Dozens of interviews with policy-makers, multilateral agencies and business people revealed a collective concern that an immediate return to high growth isn't possible. If recovery means return to annual growth of 7 per cent, the average during the decade before the crash, most see it five years down the road.

Many economists and politicians across the political spectrum have made building a real, functioning democracy the country's top priority. They acknowledge that it will be difficult to fully address the huge economic problems at the same time. That means widespread expectations that economic growth will soon return to previous levels are unlikely to be met.

The first test will come as the effort to clean up Asia's sickened banking system makes a move. Under Suharto, Indonesia's banks had evolved into little more than personal finance vehicles for their owners and the politically powerful. After Suharto's fall, government nationalised most of the banks and now controls 85 per cent of the system by assets. The

Indonesia Bank Restructuring Agency, or IBRA, is spending \$85 billion, mostly by issuing government bonds, to rebuild the banks, and stripping out for repacking and sale the roughly 75 per cent of their loan books that are nonperforming. IBRA also plans to sell assets pledged as collateral, but the process is only just beginning. And it has run up against interference from everyone from nationalist politicians to vested business interests, and experienced scandals within its own ranks.

Another festering problem is the \$65 billion in overdue corporate debt that is blocking new capital inflows and the revival of the banking system. Indonesia has made less progress with the problem than any of Asia's fallen tigers.

Asked what should be at the top of the country's fix-it list, Indonesia's economic minister ticked off the following: More transparency; accountability and better governance. "If we can do that," he said, "we can get back to 5 per cent-6 per cent growth in three years." But there is an almost total absence of administrative or legal sanction for high officials. No high-level government official has been prosecuted, let alone convicted, on charges of corruption or abuse of power within memory.

This is where democracy should come in. Opposition leaders see newly unleashed and unmuzzled political parties, non-government organisations and the media as key watchdogs that will help constrain the bad behaviour of once-untouchable officials. But that won't be enough, as observers feel. In their opinion, what's needed are real punishments that might discourage wrongdoing by government officials, and brave judiciary to carry them out. The challenge for the next government, as opined by analysts, will be to find the courage to apply the law for the first time in modern Indonesian history even when it has to turn that law on some of its friends.

David O'Byrne writes from Istanbul

AFTER the tears and suffering, the recriminations...

Turkey's worst earthquake in 76 years, which shook a 300-kilometre stretch of the country's densely populated industrial north-west, has left a trail of mayhem: 6,000 buildings demolished, an estimated 50,000 people killed and hundreds of thousands left homeless.

And while the bulldozers are still tearing into piles of rubble in search of the missing, the shock of the survivors is turning to rage.

Confronted with the sight of cheaply constructed high-rise apartment buildings reduced to rubble, few could hold back their anger.

"For 20 years all we wanted was to have a flat of our own," says lorry driver Hasan Karik, typical of many whose dreams of home ownership have ended.

Karik struggles to make his family comfortable in a shabby tent on a muddy field.

With no insurance to cushion the loss, many are focusing their anger on rogue construction companies which have peddled dreams of cheap home

ownership, trading substandard materials and shoddy workmanship for fast profits, under the eyes of tolerant — some would argue conniving — officials.

One builder, former literature teacher Veli Gocer, is believed to have fled Turkey after the collapse of 500 of the 3,000 flats he constructed. Hundreds died.

Within days of the quake, angry crowds in the heavily-hit seaside town of Yalova attacked and destroyed Gocer's office and home, neither of which were damaged in the catastrophe.

Gocer blames local officials for failing to ensure him for using substandard building materials.

"I was new to the business and didn't understand," he claims. "None of the officials who inspected my buildings told me what I was doing was wrong."

Later I changed the materials I used and all those buildings survived the quake.

Unlike hundreds of developers who have disappeared as fast as their buildings collapsed, Gocer has offered to return to Turkey to face trial.

Even so, those whose dreams lie buried in the rubble of their collapsed homes will have an uphill struggle for justice.

To conduct a prosecution we need evidence that the materials, construction system or workmanship were deficient," points out Ilkiz Okatan of the Istanbul Bar Association, the professional body for lawyers.

"The biggest problem is that rescue work and the clearing of rubble to remove corpses are causing that evidence to be moved," he adds.

While some municipalities in Istanbul have carefully preserved samples of the collapsed buildings, possibly with prosecution in mind, in other areas officials have started dumping the cleared rubble at sea.

"We are starting to work with the justice department and the municipalities to ensure that proper procedures are followed so that those who lost their homes will be able to open civil cases against the builders," says Okatan.

These civil cases will be for compensation for the loss of relatives, loss and damage to property, injury and loss of earnings.

Okatan also envisages criminal prosecutions of local officials or politicians who have allowed the erection of substandard buildings. "Where we have evidence of wrongdoing, we will pass it on to the state prosecutor who will decide whether there is a case."

Given the scale of the disaster, the caseload is likely to be enormous. "It will be the largest event in Turkish legal history and it will last for years," confirms Justice Ministry official Ahmet Kahraman.

While builders may face jail sentences of up to eight years, few observers hold out much hope of substantial financial compensation. "There could be tens of thousands of cases," Okatan observes. "I doubt if many of the builders have any insurance, so most survivors will get little compensation."

The prospects are made even bleaker by widespread suspicion that there may be little political support for moves to prosecute local politicians and officials who may be held responsible for much of the officially-sanctioned housing.

