# SOUTH ASIA

was permissible in cases of terror-

ism. None of this is likely to hap-

pen unless of course a critical

point is reached. But all these

developments indicate how west

ern nations are prepared to for-

sake or consider forsaking cher-

ished long established values in

by and large, are decent peace

loving people prepared to make

sacrifices on behalf of the country

and in the interests of the nation.

The fault is in the quality of our

leadership. The bloody events that

were on yesterday and most

probably will continue today are

being inspired and sponsored by

our so-called leaders! We must

have leaders who should be

exemplary, who have the guts and

the spine to stop this savagery and

rally the nation together. They

should not be shy to speak of

All is not lost. The Sri Lankans,

national interests.

# INDO-PAK From Agra to Kathmandu

#### K. K. KATYAL

ROVIDED THE Maoists' revolt in Nepal does not come in the way of the SAARC Summit, a meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, and the Pakistani ruler, Gen. Pervez Musharraf. on its sidelines in Kathmandu is a certainty. This is to be regarded as a welcome development not because there is hope of a major advance in the bilateral field, much less a breakthrough, but because it could begin the process of reengagement, and undo the freeze that had set in, of late, and, thus, help contain tensions. However, a meeting by itself will not suffice - it will need to be accompanied and followed by positive approaches by each of the two sides, in particular by Pakistan which had chosen to continue with adversarial policies.

The two heads would have met in New York during the U.N. General Assembly session, as scheduled, in September. That would have been the first contact after the Agra summit and would have been followed by other meetings. The terrorist strikes in New York and Washington upset the calendar for the U.N. session and other multilateral events - and, consequently, of India-Pakistan contact. The re-scheduled U.N. session in November did take Mr. Vaipavee and Gen. Musharraf to New York but did not bring them together. Why? Because of India's reluctance, obviously arising out of factors connected with the post-September 11 situation. New Delhi's stand hardened when it did not find a let-up in the cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir even as Pakistan was welcomed as a partner of the U.S.-led international coalition against terrorism. India saw no immediate use for the dialogue, in view of the glaring mismatch between Pakistan's professions and actions. New Delhi's stand was not appre-

ciated abroad - evident from the exhortations by the U.S., the U.K.,

### NEPAL

the European Union and even by Russia, Pakistan linked Mr. Vajpayee's unwillingness to meet Gen. Musharraf in New York with domestic factors, in particular with the coming U.P. elections, where the BJP planned to make the resolve for a tougher line against terrorism a major campaign issue and, as such, did not like to risk a dilution (resulting from engagement with Pakistan). India, many in Pakistan believed, dragged its feet in the hope that domestic pressure from pro- Taliban fundamentalist groups would lead to uncertainties, causing

difficulties for Gen.Musharraf. Others in the world community ascribed the Indian stand to changes in the global equations, to India's disadvantages and in Pakistan's favour. In particular, New Delhi's ``no" was linked to its pique over this sudden turn, with Pakistan acquiring a sudden relevance and India feeling sidelined. New Delhi, went the argument, could not have relished the wooing by the U.S. of Islamabad which, not verv long ago, was shunned because of the military coup and related developments - and Washington's ``new beginning" with India not finding a

tangible manifestation. The fast-changing developments have now overtaken political and diplomatic factors, giving solace to New Delhi, providing considerable space to Indian diplomacy for creative steps. The geo-political equations have undergone another change, depriving Pakistan of some of the leverage it had acquired after September 11. Of this there is plenty of circumstantial evidence. The U.S did not accept Pakistan's plea to stop bombing operations in Afghanistan during Ramzan. It did not concede Islamabad's demand for not allowing the Northern alliance to occupy Kabul (The U.S. would have liked the NA to go slow but it is inconceivable that the Alliance troops would have gone ahead without a nod from Washington).

The U.S. did not oblige Islamabad on another issue - reject-

ing the request for a preferential treatment for Pakistanis fighting alongside the Taliban, following their surrender or capture. Having failed to prevent the ascendancy of the Northern Alliance, Pakistan may seek to make the best of the bad bargain - to begin with, by establishing contact with Mr. Burhanuddin Rabbani, head of the Afghan Government in exile, counting on his pro-Islamabad credentials during

the fight against the Soviet Union. It

will not be easy, given the dynamics of the politics of the NA

The continued involvement of Pakistanis - regular service personnel in particular - on the side of the Taliban during the U.S. operations in Afghanistan could not but have conveyed the message to the U.S. that Islamabad's professions of support to the international coalitions campaign against terrorism were not to be taken at face value. It would, however, be unrealistic to expect a marked shift in Washington's public stance in relation to Islamabad, but the discomforting evidence of the type provided by the deployment of Pakistani troops. retired service personnel and agents in the theatres of operations in Afghanistan is certain to weigh with U.S. policy-makers. Then there is the episode of two leading Paki-

stani nuclear scientists, suspected to be involved in the planning of the anthrax bomb. They have been detained by the Pakistani authorities at the instance of the U.S. Islamabad denied that the scientists were linked to the Al-Qaeda network. But the report in the New York Times was categorical - that information about application of anthrax and other biological war material was found in the Kabul office of a humanitarian organisation set up by them. Public disavowals notwith-



standing, there is no mistaking a sense of discomfort in Islamabad. There are reasons to believe that

India would like the Kathmandu meeting to prepare a route-chart for engagement with Pakistan. But for that Gen.Musharraf would hold the key. If he could persuade himself to give up the unifocal approach, an advance will not be difficult. Unfortunately, he sought to use the Kashmir issue, especially in the context of a dialogue with India, as a means to establishing his legitimacy and credibility within the country. He felt amply rewarded by Agra. Now that this purpose has been served and the coup-related dissent has virtually died down and he has been lucky to earn respectability in the Western world, the need for political sloganeering may not be that pressing. This does not mean the ``core issue" would disappear from his

rhetoric, but he could afford to be flexible. Will he?

As for India, Mr. Vajpayee could approach the dialogue with a measure of confidence, which he, perhaps, could not muster in the immediate aftermath of September 11. That was the stage New Delhi felt uneasy because of the change in the South Asian balance. Now that the situation in and around Afghanistan has taken a helpful turn, from India's standpoint, there is no case for rigidity on its part

The U.S. and others in the West want India to take note of the recent positive signals from Pakistan and to shape a response accordingly. Special mention is made of Gen. Musharraf's statement describing the October 1 suicide bombing of the State Assembly building in Srinagar as a terrorist act, the changes made by him in the top echelons of the armed forces, action against leaders of the fundamentalist outfits and his disapproval of the activities of the religious organisations. New Delhi could not dispute the Western view of these steps. But there are two caveats. One, the General's actions were meant to please Washington and, two, there is no evidence of Pakistan giving up using terrorism as a tool to achieve its objective in Jammu and Kashmir. On the contrary, New Delhi finds it hard to dismiss the view that the setback to the Taliban and other outfits in Afghanistan may not necessarily help it, as the remnants of the vanquished forces may in desperation turn to Jammu and Kashmir and that Pakistan may act as a facilitator. The engagement of Islamabad could be of use to fore-

stall these possibilities. Given the peculiarities of their relationship, the top-level dialogue with Pakistan on the sidelines of a multilateral event is preferable to formal summits. It does not involve any hassles, political, diplomatic or political-related, some of which cast dark shadows at Agra.

By arrangement with The Hindu of India

## A state in dire straits This time it is nothing less than the future of our freedoms that is at stake

#### CK LAL writes from Kathmandu

FTER a four month lull, the country has once again been sucked into the vortex of violence. The Maoists' withdrawal from negotiations was so sudden, and resumption of attacks on clearly identified targets so swift, that it is now clear they were just buving time.

prices dipping for the third year in a row. But

that's another story. Sure, Maoists staged a tactical coup of sorts by hitting the government when it hurt the society most. The country could have done without a messy war at this point. It is clear the Maoists don't care much about what happens to the economy, so focussed are they on the revolutionary goal. Even then, it's

their figure-head leaders do not call all the

shots. Bigoted they may be, but it's unlikely that the Maoist leadership harbours any illusions about defeating the security forces of the government in the present geo-political situation. No insurgency ever succeeds without the intervention of outside forces, and recent events in Afghanistan will deter even the most determined sympathisers of Maoists from openly supporting them. The Maoist cause does not have a significant support base either inside the country or outside it. Or, is there more to the insurgency in Nepal than we know about? Bewildered by the enormity of the crisis and immobilised by the complexity of its causes, it's tempting to grab a theory of conspiracy and blame others for all our problems. A conspiracy theory may be a sign of intellectual laziness it requires neither explanatory paragraphs nor footnotes, and there is no need to enunciate nuances but it offers solace in the face of challenges too complex to comprehend. The problem with any conspiracy theory is that it's too deterministic even if you "know" about a "foreign hand" you can do little. On the other hand, rational analysis of socio-political events often fail to offer full explanation of the causes, but what it does is give us the options to deal with the effects that occur. While it would have been useful to know the reasons that made Maoists back out of the negotiation process, it's more important now to effectively deal with the crisis and free the country from a prolonged period of debilitating instability.

Declaring a state of emergency to deal with the problem of armed rebellion is seldom a matter of choice for any democratic government it's a compulsion created by circumstances that seems to go out of control and threaten the very integrity of the country. The choice then is not whether to be in a state of emergency or not. The challenge lies in keeping the response to violent rebellion

## SRI LANKA

# **Country above self and party** Editoral from The Islander on December 6, 2001

T the time of writing, reports reaching Colombo, particularly from the Kandy District, where the Commissioner of Elections closed down five polling stations, indicate that the new Šri Lankan political culture of barbarism and savagery has become endemic. This political violence now ranks as one of the biggest challenges to the people of this country along with terrorism and the crumbling economy. The only answer to this appears to be the enactment of a constitutional amendment where elections will be conducted under a no-party caretaker government as ha proved to be successful in Bangladesh. (See The Island

Midweek Review yesterday). We can only hope that the results of yesterday's elections will make it possible for such a constitutional amendment, along with similar amendments that have been already proposed, to be enacted

A basic flaw in our body politic that is contributory to the present state of affairs has been our inability to place the country or national interests above party interests. Some may say that self-interests precede even party interests.

A good example of placing national interests above party interests was seen after the American presidential elections this year. In a very rare instance this year's US presidential election did not proceed on predetermined lines and the decision whether George Bush or Al Gore was the winner could not be made It took weeks of legal wrangling in the US Federal Courts and the Supreme Court and ultimately it was decided that George Bush was the winner even though this decision could still have been contested.

After President Bush took office, a number of powerful media

# LTTE's postures on negotiations

DR. S. NARAPALASINGAM

HE inability of the Tamil political leaders to arrive at a sensible consensus contributed to the delay in constituting the Constitutional Council. The Tamil parties ACTC, EPDP, TELO, TULF and the single UNP MP from the north could not agree to nominate a Tamil representative to the Council. This is typical of their diverse interests, while all keep proclaiming that they are interested solely in the future of the Tamil community. The Sinhalese and the Muslims had selected their members as stipulated in the 17th Amendment. In the end, the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition decided to fix the members to the Constitutional Council after debating the No Confidence Motion. But this was forestalled by the dissolution of Parliament on October 10.

The draft of the "No Confidence Sarojini Yogeswaran who wanted to Motion" prepared by the UNP was serve the people in Jaffna who were experiencing difficulties as a result simple and straightforward. But the of the breakdown in the public TULF used the opportunity to convince the LTTE of its absolute services was also murdered for her support and introduced an amendhumanitarian concern. She was not ment to this motion. The leadership at all aspiring to become a promihad not considered the consenent political leader. Mr. R. Sampanthan, the General quences of this move to the UNP's Secretary of the TULF, the leading motion as well as to the objective of seeking a political solution to the party in TNA told the press conferproblems of the Tamils which ence convened to announce the TNA's election manifesto that the require the support of the two rival parties. The decision to contest the past should now be forgotten. He December 5 elections as a fourwas overlooking the past tragic events that included the assassinaparty Tamil alliance (TULF, ACTC, tion of his former colleagues for the TELO and EPRLF- Suresh faction) was brought about by the exigence sake of promoting direct talks to win more parliamentary seats. At between the LTTE and the new the last elections, the TULF contestgovernment. If the same attitude is ing separately won only 5 seats. taken towards the political parties responsible for the many blunders The pressures exerted by some Tamils in Colombo and abroad and made, including killing, destruction of property, harassments and the indirectly by the LTTE also comneglect of the rights and aspirations pelled the Tamil parties to agree to this arrangement. of minority groups, a major break-Interesting development here is through will occur loosening the the apparent change in LTTE's suspicions and anxiety that hinder a strategy allowing the four Tamil political settlement. parties to contest the elections as Tamil nationalism has sometimes exhibited racist overtones. an alliance (TNA) which has also One has to admit that there are placed the same demands laid down by the LTTE (pre-requisites) extremists among the Sinhalese as for resumption of fresh peace well as among the Tamils. The stark negotiations. The TNA in order to fact is that Sinhala extremism please the LTTE had to agree to its thrives on Tamil extremism and vice versa. Securing the legitimate rights claim as the sole representative of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. Despite this of the Tamils in Sri Lanka had been declaration, the LTTE leader did not made difficult by the arrogant and challenging approaches pursued by ask the Tamil people to vote for the some Tamil leaders in contrast to TNA in his annual Heroes' Day (27 records, this does not however show any sign the clever and subtle methods used November 2001) address. This reiterated the view that the election by the leaders of other minority communities. The latter avoided was unimportant for them as they functioned as an "extraany rhetoric that would appear antiparliamentary liberation organisa-Sinhalese and a threat to the future of the Sinhalese in Sri Lanka. tion." The blame for foregoing previous Although, the LTTE leadership opportunities to end the war must might have considered prudent to use the elections to convince the be assigned to both sides. Tamil world of the support of the Tamil leadership by dragging the war far people for their demands, attempts too long has put the community in to assassinate political leaders in the present predicament. The LTTE leader rejected scornfully in 1995 the south using suicide bombers have been counter-productive. The the devolution proposals drafted by attempt on the life of President a team that included the TULF parliamentarian, constitutional Chandrika Kumaratunga in the 1999 Presidential elections not only expert and human rights activist Dr. earned the wrath of the entire world Neelan Tiruchelvam, Neelan was but also helped her to win the close assassinated for his keen effort and contest. Many who would have the congenial way he tried to voted for the UNP leader, cast their achieve a bipartisan consensus on votes for her after the terrible act. substantial devolution of powers to Ignoring the attempt made to kill the regions. He was mindful of the need to her, many Tamils expected her to maintain cordial relations with all vield to the demands of the LTTE and accused her for having succommunities in the multi-ethnic cessfully uraed foreign governcountry particularly in the context of ments to ban it as a terrorist organithe varying ethnic composition in sation. the different regions. Although the The intended target of the suicide north and east are mainly inhabited bomber believed to be a LTTE by Tamils and Muslims, they also member who had to explode the live in other parts of the island

organisations launched a private the Twin Towers and the Pentagon probe to reinvestigate the final that resulted in a volte-face in result. And it was widely reported values preached by western unofficially that this probe showed liberals and academics Patriotism that Al Gore was the real winner. and nationalism which were not But those who had sponsored the only old fashioned to them but also probe did not release the findings dirty words when used by Third because by that time America had World countries like us, suddenly declared its War on Terrorism. To came alive although under other have questioned or challenged euphemisms such as 'American President Bush holding office interests' and 'civilisational valcould have resulted in bitter acriues'. The once stout defenders of mony and the division of the counhuman rights are now debating on the question of setting up secret try and a definite setback to its efforts in fighting global terrorism. military tribunals to try terrorists It was a clear case of placing the suspects and recently American country before the party. journalists were engaged in a The inability of Sri Lankans to debate on whether use of 'torture'

place the country's interests or national interests over all other interests could be the result of the racism that divides the country the 'two nation one country' contention being pursued by terrorists and their fellow travellers. To them Sri Lankan nationalism is tanta-mount to Sinhala racism. But even among the Sinhalese, party inter ests precede communal or racial interests. Unity among the majority community will not only be in the interests of the community but also to all communities of the country because as has been admitted - even by foreign powers - consensus among the two main political parties that are representative of the Sinhalese is essential to deal with the problems of the Tamils. But what was witnessed yesterday, as before, was the carnage among the UNPers and PA supporters, who are all Sinhalese. Thus, party loyalties

bomb prematurely in Narahenpita where the majority of the citizens are Sinhalese. The killings of Neelan and others who were inclined towards a political arrangement "short of separation" have not helped to improve the prospects for achieving LTTE's goal or win inter-

national support for the "liberation struggle' In his speech, the LTTE leader has also exhorted the Sinhalese voters to reject "racist forces committed to militarism and war" at the December 5 parliamentary elections. He said the vote was crucial to bring about peace, ethnic reconciliation and economic prosperity. Paradoxically, LTTE's infuriating attacks on non-military targets and violent opposition to moderate Tamil politics had hindered the realisation of these goals. Neelan and other TULF leaders were considered "traitors" to the Tamil cause and liquidated. The Mayoress Mrs.

on October 29 is not certain. But the claim by the media that it was Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremanavake could not have been intended to help the UNP to win the December 5 elections. As in previous instances, the decision to kill political leaders is certainly not to influence the outcome of any general elections in which the rebels have little faith. With these unhelpful developments, it is not surprising that this time Tamil politics and the LTTE in particular have been made important issues in the south which are exploited by various parties to win the support of Sinhalese voters.

The various pronouncements of Tamil leaders anxious to win Tamil votes have contributed immensely to this unwanted confrontation. The TULF leaders considered that the omission of the ethnic problem in the PA-JVP MOU has retarded the just resolution of the ethnic conflict. Do they consider their public pro-

patriotism and make patriotic even transcend communal or sacrifices to place the country racial interests. The tragi- comedy proceeds further. Self- interests of candidates overtake party interests when the 'manape' or preferential votes come into play. Thus, selfinterest precedes party interests and national interests. Of relevance are the attacks on

above self and party. It is time we get rid of leaders who permit and even promote bloody mayhem and murder to go on for their

political gains.

They used the truce for open extortion. clandestine recruitment and training of fresh recruits. The government, meanwhile, carried on with no fall back options. It slumbered through Dasain and Tihar while the Maoists were busy filling up their pressure cookers. In retrospect, it appears that the government, civil society and, yes, the media, were all taken for a ride by these cunning strategists.

However, the government's complacency may not be as disastrous as it looks during this week of gloom and doom. By their stubbornness and by retreating from talks without explanation, the Maoists have shown that they are not dependable players in national politics

That's for the long term. But in the short term, the dramatic escalation of violence couldn't have occurred at a more inopportune moment. In addition to social unrest, the country is in the grips of an economic crisis. Revenue collection is at an all time low, the fate of the automatic renewal of the trade treaty with India hangs in balance, tourism is in shambles, and all other industries are apprehensive about what is going to happen next. The only saving grace appears to be agriculture, where, ironically, we have another year of bumper rice harvests. This is sure to create problems of plenty, with rice

baffling why the Maoists have chosen this particular moment to take on the Royal Nepal Army head-on. Not expecting a frontal attack, soldiers in Gorahi barracks were taken unaware. In Salleri, they were better prepared and inflicted heavy losses on the guerrillas. But it is extremely unlikely that the insurgents can prevail over the security forces in the conflict that has ensued

Despite all its shortcomings, our democracy hasn't lost its legitimacy. Everyone may not respect the government, but very few aside from the Maoist cadre, question its authority. The interests of a very large number of people including almost all of the middle-classare tied with the present system. When push comes to shove, they will defend it. Now that the interest of the army and the political class has come to coalesce, the Maoists may find that they shall have to deal with more than they had bargained for.

On the face of it. Maoists' misadventures look nothing less than suicidal. The question that remains then: why did they decide to take this risk? Answer: they had no choice. Hardline Maoist rank-and-file have begun to feel threatened by the politicians among their ranks. So they killed two birds with one stone challenged the government, and showed that carefully calibrated, and avoid "collatera damage" that inevitably result in any counterinsurgency operation

State of emergency is an extreme step, and the only thing that justifies it is the result that it is supposed to deliver. In military jargon, it's called SHARP (Search operations to identify rebel hideouts. Hot pursuit to nab terrorists. Annihilation of terror network Rehabilitation of victims of insurgency, and Propaganda to isolate insurgents). The quicker an emergency runs its course and achieves its objectives, sooner the normalcy returns.

The press, the political parties. and the army of urban intelligentsia besieged by the political correctness of opposing every move of government as a matter of faith will do well to remember that this time it's nothing less than the very future of the freedom they cherish so much that is at stake. It's important that the fashionable 'left' and closet 'right more often than not, they are one and the same hold their fire for the moment. To paraphrase Marx, if bourgeois democracy can hold its internal contradiction, nothing else can ever defeat it.

By arrangement with Nepali Times. C K Lal is a senior journalist in Nepal

nouncements intended to win votes would accelerate the just resolution of the ethnic issue?

The United National Front election manifesto states that any amendments to the constitution for a political settlement must wait until agreement is reached with all parties but the peace process will be put on track with the involvement of the LTTE. This implies that the antagonists can talk but no action will be taken until a broad consensus is reached "with all political parties, religious leaders and civil society." This is without any doubt a difficult affair, given their present conflicting and rigid positions vis-avis the ethnic problem. There are even some hallucinators who imagine that there is no ethnic but only a terrorist problem!

Nevertheless, LTTE will be repeating the earlier mistakes if its leadership either refuses to negotiate before the ban is lifted or abandon the talks unilaterally after joining the process. A poll of 3,173 adults from all over the island. including the war-torn north and east, conducted by the Department of Sociology at the University of Colombo on the eve of the general elections, shows that 77.4 percent "believe that the best way to end the conflict is through negotiations between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)." Another poll of 1,200 adults conducted in September also showed that 77 percent of all Sri Lankans approved of peace talks with the LTTE. The LTTE leadership should consider this endorsement of the people as recognition of the organisation's strength. At the same time the people expect the LTTE to play a constructive role in the negotiations and end the bloody conflict

sooner than later. Without trust, patience, perseverance and some flexibility to accommodate the concerns of other groups, it will be difficult to reach an early agreement for resolving the conflict. Not only the majority of Sri Lankans but also all the donor countries want a negotiated settlement and they too will be disappointed if the process ends in a deadlock because of intransigence or the reluctance to take risks and make sacrifices for achieving lasting peace which is indispensable for political, social, cultural and economic development of the country.

Courtesy: The Islander.

## BANGLADESH

# The monster is back with fury

#### M ABDUL HAFIZ

HE ubiquitous monster of terrorism did not totally disappear even during the tenure of caretaker government in Bangladesh. It took the advantage of the authority, then in place. But for a full blast of their activities the terrorists did wait to be on the side of the winners in the election. As soon as the election was over they came out from hibernation to align themselves with the winning party activists and reasserted in the garb of BNP or BCD cadres.

In their effort to reoccupy the institutions of social and political control the winning party also willy-nilly welcomed them. By now, by changing their alleging to the new century of political power they seem to be establishing their bona-fide in the country's internal power play thus making the prime minister's pre- and post-election pledges to crush terrorism a joke. Indeed, our present politics bereft of any moral substance is prone to the inevitable infiltration of these parasites in the country's body politik.

Whatever may, however be their true identity, they rule the roost whether it is the students' hall in the educational campuses or the employees' unions in the government and government offices or bus, rail and launch terminals where illegal money can be minted

through extortion, coercion and various other quises. The terrorists now do not spare even places like public toilets and even grave-vard which they turn into their source of earnings! They have imposed an extra price tag on anything everywhere. They have again swooped down on their preys with impunity while the BNP men squabbles over ministerial berths perk and privileges and their protocols. Neither the law and order, nor the curbing of terrorism is their priority.

The nation was aghast at the perpetuity of terror during the last regime and hungered for a respite from the ordeal. The BNP's electoral promise to gift the nation a terror-free Bangladesh came as a godsend assurance to the people who desperately pinned their hope on BNP to eradicate terrorism from the society. But so far, the BNP action on terrorism is confined only to cautioning the terrorists who do not give a damn to such warnings.

The AL also employed such contrivance and the then prime minister said on many occasions that an act of terrorism would not be tolerated even if it was committed by her party men. It only proved to be a ploy to save face and at the same time to protect the terrorists.

As evident from the BNP's action programme during last two months, its government is moving fast on many fronts to regain its lost ground. It is doing so, both in the civil and

military bureaucracy, higher seats of education, corporate bodies, diplomatic services and intelligence organisations.

It is always customary to bring about changes in the government's key positions whenever there is a transfer of power. But the BNP seems to be bent upon replacing even the nuts and both of the establishment shaking the confidence of its permanent staffs.

The government is busy undoing things done by the previous government on a priority they do not deserve and in the process fostering a culture of revenge that does not do any good to the nation. It is hankering after material gains and exploring new areas of benefits brazenly sought by its lawmakers.

The prime minister callously presides over a jumbo cabinet -- the biggest in the history of Bangladesh - plus many more enjoying the status and privilege of cabinet members in their appointments.

Amidst the prevailing mood, the pledges on terrorism do not figure much in the government's new scheme of things. The occurrences of terror do not touch those in power and they are not pushed on this score the way the hapless common people are. As a result we witness across the country a new spate of violence, murder, rape and extortion which are all essentially the product of terrorists activities. Even if they have not surpassed the past

of abatement. The political killings and revenge murders are rampant well after the national election. The killings due to infighting the worst motivated crime which centre round crude self interest --Êare on increase. The terror goes on as it was before only with change of political masters.

The business community is worst hit and increasingly find themselves unable to face the menace. Obviously the spectacle dampens the spirit of the people who long suffered from the menace without a redress.

It can however be argued that the government is left with enough time to fulfil its election pledge on terrorism: but if the government does not do it when everything is in its favour, it will become a lot more difficult task later. When the vested interest in terrorism will be well entrenched with a nexus established between the terrorists and their political patron its eradication can be far from easy, once a guid pro quo between the terrorists and the political godfathers are there if will simply spiral out of control. Unfortunately the very first step to curb it is yet to be taken while the government is going to be overly preoccupied with many other thinas.

MAbdul Hafiz is former DG of BIISS