

Keeping off from extremists

ZAKI ANWARUL MASUD

PREDICTABLY Bangladesh authorities have dismissed Eliza Griswold's report in New York Times (January 23, 2005) raising the possibility of Bangladesh giving birth to the next Islamist revolution.

Bangladesh authorities found the report "baseless, partial and misleading" and reiterated the government's commitment to democracy. The dismissal of Griswold's report notwithstanding Bangladesh media continues reporting on the defiance and violence perpetrated by Bangla Bhai and his cohorts of Jagra Muslim Janata Banglaesh (JMB) under the nose of the governmental authorities and of the government's inability to arrest Bangla Bhai despite the orders of the Prime Minister that he be arrested.

religious intolerance and for its increase in recent days. Eliza Griswold hazards a guess that it could be because the government is "in any case divided on precisely the question on how much Islam and politics should mix".

Thou the literal meaning of madrasa is "school" it is generally used for offering instructions on Islamic subjects including the Holy Quran, the Hadith, Islamic jurisprudence and law.

report by the Congressional Research Service (International Terrorism in South Asia) states that among the approximately ten thousand madrasas in Pakistan some have been implicated in teaching militant anti-western, anti-American and anti-Hindu values.

Asia Ambassador Cofer Black, State Department coordinator for counter terrorism spoke of Indian allegations relating to terrorist camps in Bangladesh (denied by Bangladesh authorities) and of the "need to determine exactly the threat not only to Bangladesh but also the potential utilisation of Bangladesh as a platform to project terrorism internationally".

Christianity and Islam is no less than a clash of civilizations -- the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the world wide expansion of both".

Globalization is no longer a choice; it is a reality that all countries have to deal with. In this game the West has a decided advantage over the Muslim world, particularly the least developed among them.

It would be prudent to remind ourselves of the remarkable observation by James Freeman Clark the difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician thinks of the next election and a statesman thinks of the next generation.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador

Hartal into the second day  
Focus must be on effective investigation

As a shell-shocked Awami League and its allies observe the 60-hour non-stop hartal across the country, tension is running high over the volatile political situation following the brutal murders of SAMS Kibria and four others.

There has been an avalanche of condemnation, mostly laced with an outright rejection of the government's position on the investigations carried out into the series of bomb blasts in recent times.

We believe that the focus should be on the demand for a time-bound, result-oriented, impartial and transparent investigation into the Habiganj grenade attack. The opposition has to retain the full measure of public sympathy to pressurize the government into conducting effective investigation into the attacks.

On the other hand, it is highly imperative for the government to ensure that police brutalisation and ham-handed treatment of opposition activists are scrupulously avoided.

EU's helping hand  
Ashot in the arm of RMG sector

THE post-MFA challenge facing Bangladesh's garments sector has triggered mixed reflexive responses from industry leaders and trade scenario watchers with optimism generally outstripping skepticism.

At a time like this, it's music to our ears that the European Union (EU) has decided to accord duty-free access to the Saarc LDCs in order that they are able to face the post-MFA challenges.

This is a booster dose of support from the EU that we very much appreciate, and would at the same time urge the US to extend in the near future.

The best practical approach of enduring quality for our garments manufacturers and exporters, however, would be to enhance local value addition to the manufacturing processes by setting up strings of backward linkage industries.

Competitiveness of our garments products is as much a function of cost efficiency as it is that of gaining lead-time through port efficiency ensured by speeded up clearance formalities.

These days, it has become fashionable for the Western media to make a mountain out of a mole, especially if it concerns Islam. They simply would not let go off this subject.

Disaster issue must be high in SAARC summit



ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

IT is a matter of common knowledge that South Asia along with its adjacent region like the South East Asia is a disaster-prone area and countries here have had enough of the onslaughts of natural disasters of severe proportion in recent history.

of anxiety and concern as well as talks of probable steps to mitigate the causes and consequences.

The tsunami tragedy has brought to the fore once again the dire need of anti-disaster measures on a regional plane. This has received particular attention since the occurrence of unimaginable magnitude taking lives of a quarter million hapless people in South and South East Asia took place just before the earlier scheduled early January 13 summit of the leaders of seven South Asian countries.

of enthusiasm and preparedness and it is more so when the coming summit is expected to take up a number of matters crucially important to the welfare and benefit of the 1.4 billion people living in the region.

However, there was another line of thinking on the issue of postponing the event. Some quarters felt that the issue relating to natural calamities in South Asia would

Hopefully, something concrete will come out on the subject, which, however, is daunting in nature.

Bangladesh is vulnerable to natural disasters and we terribly experienced these happenings highlighted by the catastrophes of 1970, 1988, 1998 and other occasions. Ours is country often described as calamity prone by the international world.

individual nations as well as collectively.

It goes without saying that a venture like disaster prevention in South Asia needs collective endeavour, and larger international support and assistance are also required for the purpose.

large did not play the kind of role expected in such a situation in encouraging the people of all spheres of life to mingle with this great human tragedy although some scattered initiatives by organisations like NGOs or others and some leading persons of different professions were certainly commendable.

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury is a senior journalist.

MATTERS AROUND US

We ourselves are a disaster prone nation and the tsunami definitely narrowly spared this country. Had it been hit, the destruction could be of unimaginable proportions. Our response to the situation needs introspection and soul-searching.

South East Asian nations on December 26 leaving a trail of devastation postponed the summit which is now rescheduled to be held early February.

have received highest priority had the summit taken place on the scheduled dates close on the heels of the tsunami tragedy without disputing the fact that for the affected nations the time might not have been convenient for the event.

tion, flood and disaster management minister Chowdhury Kamal Ibne Yusuf, had the rare honour of presenting one of two keynote papers in the large and important gathering participated by world's most countries and opened by no less a person than the Emperor of Japan in a rare gesture.

the dead and affected in the South and South East Asia. Some leaders of powerful nations were criticised by their people and the press for either not acting immediately or acting inadequately for the calamity hit countries.

The Kobe conference has thrown up several effective ideas for disaster prevention and mitigating consequences including effective early warning system. The SAARC summit coming within weeks of this event and against the fresh tsunami background must devote itself concretely on the disaster issue which is inextricably linked with the fate of the region where countless perish and huge properties get destroyed at regular intervals by whims of nature.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Bangla Bhai and revolution

I refer to the article published in the New York Times Magazine in its issue of January 23, 2005. The gist of the article is that initiatives such as Bangla Bhai's that propagate Islamic Fundamentalism is on the rise and moving fast to sponsor "The Next Islamist Revolution" in Bangladesh.

make a mountain out of a mole, especially if it concerns Islam. They simply would not let go off this subject. Perhaps it makes fine journalistic sense and more importantly, sounds a right chord with the western image of an ideological enemy -- presence of an ideological enemy, real or imaginary, is crucial for pursuing the capitalistic goals of the imperialists both at home as well as abroad.

the nexus of vested interest that existed and continue to exist, between the Administration and the manufacturers of defense equipment.

ideology of terror and justify the war followed by, among others, the push for building up of a modern Iraqi army! The Iraqi oil money will now end up in the same very country from where the main investment in the Iraq war came, the US.

government, to say that the ruling BNP and its coalition partner Jamaat-e-Islami directly or indirectly supported BB to advance an Islamic Fundamentalist movement in the country is, to my mind, stretching the imagination too far.

game, heroes of a bygone era may look like a devil today. As far as the Western mind is concerned, there is nothing hypocritical about it.

and those of the rest of the world to bolster support to advance its hegemonic ambitions!

.....One can no longer call these criminals humans, when they are devoid of the slightest humane feelings.....HYENAS are what they have become!