

# Kofi Annan's reform strategy for the UN

## What are the options for Bangladesh?

SYED MUAZZEM ALI

JUST six months before the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, Secretary General Kofi Annan has thrown a new challenge to world leaders: accept his major reform plans with a view to bringing the global body "fully in line with today's realities." In a major speech before a special session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on 22 March in New York, Annan introduced his sixty-three-page report, which inter-alia, calls for expansion of the Security Council, adoption of guidelines to determine when military action can be authorised, radical changes in the existing mechanism for stricter observance of human rights, boosting of global trade and development, and the much-needed sweeping overhaul of the UN bureaucracy. He also announced that his plan, which he called a "comprehensive strategy", should be agreed upon at the anniversary summit of world leaders in New York next September.

Some reforms of the United Nations were long overdue. The world body, created in 1945 "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war", has grown from 51 to an astounding 191 members. Simultaneously, the global power structure has changed drastically, and so have the threats and challenges. It may be recalled that, in view of widespread demand for reform of the UN, Kofi Annan had constituted a 16-member high-level panel of independent experts under the chairmanship of the former Thai Premier Anand Panyarachun in 2003. The group, which included eminent persons from different regions of the world, submitted an exhaustive report in last November. After months of careful consideration of that report, Kofi Annan formulated his reform plan and presented it on Tuesday.

Recent sharp and bitter divisions over the Iraq war, charges of corruption and mismanagement in the oil for food programme, human rights violations in Sudan and elsewhere, and revelations of sexual exploitations by some UN peace keepers in Congo, also created new imperatives for the restoration of UN's credibility.

On the sensitive issue of expansion of the Security Council, Annan announced his desire to raise the Council membership to 24 from the existing 15. However, he left it to the world leaders to decide between the two options recommended by the panel: (a) to add 6 new permanent members as well as 3 new two-year term members, or (b) to create a new tier of 8 semi-permanent members

chosen for renewable four-year terms and 1 additional two-year term seat added to the existing ten. Importantly, the right to cast vetoes under both the options has been kept restricted to the original five Permanent Members, that is, United States, Britain, France, Russia and China. The last expansion of the Council, incidentally, had taken place in 1965, when the size of the council had been raised from 10 to 15.

The prime contenders for the Permanent membership – Brazil, Germany, India, and Japan (commonly known as big 4) – as well as other aspirants like Egypt, and Nigeria / South Africa would obviously prefer the first option and if possible, with veto powers like the original five. In the past their bid for permanent membership,

support terrorism" are made aware that such a policy is neither acceptable nor an effective way to advance their cause.

He emphasised the divergent perceptions about common threats to security in different parts of the world. At the same time, he noted that a nuclear terrorist attack on the United States or Europe would have devastating effects on the whole world, but so would the appearance of a new virulent pandemic disease in a poor country with no effective controlling mechanism. He stressed that the world must respond as vigorously and collectively to HIV/AIDS and poverty as it does to terrorism and proliferation of weapons.

Turning to development issues, he

How far they can be persuaded to go along with this radical reform will be seen in the coming months.

The panel had also outlined a policy for severely dealing with any "sexual exploitation" by the UN peacekeepers. Annan has been concerned about this recent development in Congo, and he had urged the member countries contributing troops to prosecute wrong doers in the absence of any UN authority to do so.

He mentioned that the mandates of the UN personnel had become outdated, and asked the UNGA to authorise him to conduct a one-time buyout authority "so as to refresh and realign the staff to meet the current needs".

How will the global community react to Kofi Annan's comprehensive reform

which primarily views the Council reform process as a composite package encompassing both expanded membership and democratisation of the decision-making process. The mainstream NAM members are, reportedly, leaning towards the second option of semi-permanent members in order to maintain some degree of leverage on the newly inducted permanent members. If that is true, then Bangladesh should have no difficulty in joining this group.

As the largest Least Developed Country, Bangladesh should give priority attention to Annan's comments on the development issues. It should be self-evident by now that international peace and security are no longer threatened by political issues alone but also by economic issues, rooted in underdevelopment, economic deprivation, social exclusion and entrenched poverty. In recent years, the entire global attention on the poverty question has been focused on Africa. The African countries, largely due to their numerical strength and collective bargaining, have successfully projected their desperate plight. The reality is that more people under the poverty line live in South Asia than in any other region in the world. Bangladesh has to highlight the existence of widespread poverty in South Asia with a view to getting donors' support for the SAARC poverty-alleviation programme. The Millennium Development Goals of the last decade have largely remained unfulfilled, and we should strongly endorse the Secretary General's call to developed countries to increase development assistance and debt relief, grant of immediate duty-free and quota-free market access to all LDC exports, and raising their ODA.

On human rights, terrorism and other sensitive issues, Bangladesh would be well advised to consult and cooperate with other countries in the region as well as with other like-minded NAM and OIC countries. On the question of renewal of mandate of UN personnel, we should play a more pro-active role highlighting that competence and efficiency should be the principal criteria for selection of officials. The anniversary summit is only six months away, and there would be lots of tough bargaining and horse-trading at the UN during the upcoming summer months.

It is absolutely essential that Bangladesh should be viewed as an active participant in these deliberations and negotiations. As we embark on this arduous task to protect our national interest, we should remember the age-old adage, "When the going gets tough, the tough gets going".

Syed Muazem Ali is a former Foreign Secretary.

# Word of the Cross

## 'It is finished'. Is it?

REVEREND MARTIN ADHIKARY

THE sixth Word uttered by Jesus Christ from the Cross is: "It is finished." The original first century Greek word for it is this one single word: "Tetelestai". Only one word, but speaks volumes! This word means what sinless Christ in his innocent, yet violent death, for sinful Man is full, free and final. The Gospel according to St John, the most spiritual Gospel as it is popularly known among Christians, records this utterance at John 19:30. According to God's eternal plan Christ came to this world to lay down his sinless life on the cross as a ransom for the redemption of sinners. He gave his life and shared the fate of a slave-criminal. The greatest love and gift that one can show for others is by giving up one's life for them. At the time of his death Jesus said that he completed and finished the work for which he came into this world. His God-ordained mission was fulfilled. Now that all the excruciating physical pain, mental agony and the spiritual desertion is over Jesus could say with satisfaction that he accomplished his divine mission by fulfilling the demand of the Old Testament law and of sin.

According to the Old Testament the propitiation for sin was wrought by a sacrificial system where innocent animals were killed. But God intended that man should not only kill innocent animals for his sin but should also kill all sinful thoughts and designs in his heart and mind, which alienate Man from God, from his fellow-beings and also from everything in creation. God does not require us just to slay animals for the righting of our relationship with Him and with others. What He wants us to do is to love Him, to be humble and to live justly in our relationship with other people. Like the other prophets the 8th century B.C. prophet Micah urged his nation with the admonition: "The LORD has told us what is good. What He requires of us is this: to do what is just, to show constant love, and to live in humble fellowship with our God." But man failed in this. He gave primacy to external righteousness and sacrifices devoid of true spirituality. So in God's appointed time Jesus Christ came to fulfil God's law and he paid the penalty for sin. God is love, but He is just and holy. In the crucifixion of His sinless son God showed both his grace for mankind and His justice demanding punishment for sin. Hence is the Cross of Christ.

While talking about the death of Christ on the cross we must take a note of the fact that being crucified was a curse from God according to Mosaic law. "Cursed is the one who hangs on the tree (cross)". Jesus' own disciples even could not think that their master would be crucified. Crucifixion was incomparable to any other form of execution in so far as physical pain and mental anguish is concerned. Cicero wrote, "The idea of the cross should never come near

the bodies of the Roman citizens, it should never pass through their thought, eyes or ears." On the other side Plautus (c. 250 to 184 BC), the poet to give first evidence of Roman crucifixions in his writings said that slaves had been executed on the cross 'from time immemorial.' The very idea that God's Messiah should have such a violent and ignominious death was foolish to the Greek mind. They were lovers and seekers after the light of knowledge for the salvation of souls. The Jews hoped that the Messiah would be an earthly ruler possessing unimaginable amount of ability and authority who would bring under his dominion all mankind. He would be a super and



extraordinary human person, one with whom the association of the cross was a terrible blasphemy and abomination.

But God's mind is so different from the human mind. Rightly prophet Isaiah wrote about God declaring: "My thoughts are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours." (Isaiah 55:8-9). God chose that very cursed death for His son as the way for His salvation plan for man. Paul, the greatest interpreter of Christianity wrote: "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles" (1 Corinthians 1:18). On the third day after his crucifixion God raised Jesus from the grave. Those who crucified him thought that they had finished him. But God in His spiritual power, love and justice vindicated His son. God's holy power works when man's worldly power and pride climbs up its peak. Jesus died as a human person, but God raised him as His divine son. His ways are different to that of man. As He let His son die the vicarious death for sinful man, so He vindicated him and got his justice taken care of by resurrecting him from death, which act also serves as the seal and supreme mark of God's power over death and the devil.

As the sinless Son of God Jesus paid the penalty that was due for us. God in His mercy and grace withdrew the punishment that was due for us on the one hand, and in His mercy He allowed his Son to die on the Cross. Therefore, the Cross of Jesus is the universal Christian symbol. The fact of Christ's death has altogether changed the meaning of the cross.

The Cross is one of the visible reminders for Christians that Christ, as the Lamb of God, paid the ransom-price for their redemption from sin's demand, which is eternal death and separation from God. In the Cross of Jesus we see him, not only as our Savior, but also as the Supreme Model of self-giving love and forgiveness. He is our Substitute and Vicar. He is also Reconciler as he has reconciled us to God from Whom we got alienated because of our greed and pride. In as much as he paid the price for our redemption he also represented us in our penitence and confession for our sin. He bore our sorrows and also our iniquities. He perfectly identified with us in our human predicament. Christ is also our Pioneer in innocent suffering by exhibiting God's glory and power over all that threaten life. Christ is our supreme example for any suffering that we may be enduring for truth and justice in our society, in our family, the wider world at large, in every aspect of our human relationships right here on earth. He himself is the good news of freedom from any kind of bondage and oppression, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

The fact of Christ's accomplishing mission follows his commission to his followers not only to believe in him but also to follow his commandment: to love God and to love others. The Cross of Christ speaks to us. Unless the meaning and motive of the sacrificial death of Christ is personally internalised the word of our mere faith in him is a mockery. Jesus has called his disciples to bear their own crosses. This is his call to each one of us. We continue the work that he started in faith and trust in God so that our innocent suffering will bear fruit in transforming lives.

Reflecting on the Cross someone has said, "Because we children of Adam want to become great

He became small.

Because we will not stoop,

He humbled Himself.

Because we want to rule,

He came to serve."

This is a world to which Jesus came and gave his holy life for the salvation of mankind from the bondage of sin. But the world has not changed much since then. Christianity talks of changed people changing others. Jesus has accomplished our freedom from the eternal punishment for sin and reconciled to God. But he has also commissioned us to be witness to his work and thereby continue the work that he began. He finished his work only to commission us to do ours. May the cross and the resurrection of Christ challenge us to do our bit; for freedom's sake Christ has freed us.

# All set for Expo 2005

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

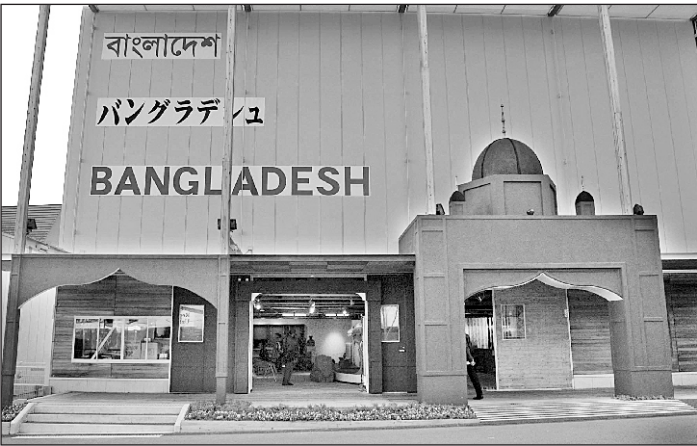
THE first world exposition of the twenty-first century gets a fitting start today as the unique combination of wonders of our natural surroundings and the attractive display of modern technology is set to attract millions of visitors during the six-month period. The formal opening on Thursday is to be followed today by the opening of Expo gates to visitors from Japan and around the world. All is now set in two Expo sites in the Nagoya Eastern Hills, where 121 countries including the host and 4 international organisations have their respective pavilions that would allow them to display various aspects ranging from simple food culture to complicated nature preservation measures that need a balanced combination of innovative ideas and human wisdom.

The World exposition is back to Japan after a gap of 35 years. A little more than a decade after Expo 70 in Osaka, Japan achieved the desired goal of catching up with the advanced nations and ranked among the world's leaders in terms of living standards. Much of humanity's achievement during the second half of the last century was based on tremendous success in the field of science and technology. But the progress, however, gave rise to new concern that our endless desire to reach development goals might be taking our surrounding environment over the brink. Moreover, as the world continued to face problems related to shortage of energy and hunger, a new approach to development became essential. As a result, for the first time in the history of world exposition, Expo 2005 is attaching special attention to the importance of preservation of our natural surroundings, as the main



## CLOSEUP JAPAN

Bangladesh pavilion at Global Common 1 is now set to invite visitors, who will be able to see some of our products made of environment friendly methods and techniques. The pavilion also houses a food stall to sell Bangladeshi food to visitors.



Bangladesh pavilion

theme for the event, "Nature's Wisdom," stresses on the need for building a new civilisation in harmony with the mechanism of nature.

World exposition's journey to Japan's Aichi prefecture took more than 15 years from the first announcement the local authorities made in 1988 of their intention to host the event. In February 1990, Aichi selected hilly area in Seto City as perspective site for Expo and started lobbying the government for official backing. It was only in December 1995 that the Japanese cabinet approved Aichi's application for hosting of the exposition. It was a

period of anxiety for Japanese economy as a prolonged recession loomed and rocked the achievements of the past. The anxiety of the government over country's economic health no doubt found its reflection in the relatively longer period that it needed to approve Aichi's application. In June 1997 Aichi was selected over Canada as host of 2005 Expo at the general assembly of International Bureau of Expositions in Monaco. Japan Association for the 2005 World Exposition, the main body to supervise the building of facilities and infrastructure as well as running the whole show, was established in October the same year. The association modified the initial plan to use Aichi Youth Park in Nagakute Town as the main venue and in December 2001 announced the master plan for Expo.

Construction works for Expo started only in October 2002 and a year later the organisers started selling advance tickets. The total cost for construction has been estimated at 135 billion yen, which is being provided by the central and prefecture governments and the city administration of Nagoya. The figure does not include the cost for the construction of a new international airport in Nagoya, a motorway linking the venue with existing national highways, and a brand new liner train line using Maglev trains. In addition to construction cost, the organisers also budgeted 55 billion yen as operational expenditure for the exposition. They are hoping that approximately 15 million people will visit the Expo in its duration, which would allow them to make a relatively modest recovery of the investment. A ten percent of visitors are

expected to be from overseas, a predominant number from South Korea, China and Taiwan.

The venue for Expo 2005, comprising Seto and Nagakute area, embodies the theme of "Nature's Wisdom." A global loop runs through the heart of the Nagakute site linking main pavilions of various participants. The loop is an elevated corridor that eliminates the need to alter the venue's rolling terrain. It links the six Global Commons that host the pavilions of participating countries, corporate pavilion zone, and the interactive fun zone. The central zone that accommodates the symbol of Expo 2005, the Global House, is situated inside the loop. Adjacent to the Global Loop is the forest experience zone, where visitors will be able to enjoy the natural state of



Toyota pavilion

the forest and experience the harmony of nature's wisdom.

The Seto area, on the other hand, keeps the natural environment in its original state as much as possible. Giving full consideration to the preservation of the natural environment, it provides visitors with a unique opportunity to touch and feel the nature. It also consists of a second Japan and a second Aichi pavilion, as well as an attractive circular three-storied building with an open-air plaza composed of four uneven areas that will hold events and exhibitions and serve as a venue for citizens' participation.

Bangladesh was relatively late to join the group of participating nations. Our decision makers back at home could not decide for very long whose jurisdiction country's participation

should come under. The main theme of Expo related closely to environment created the initial confusion, which was compounded later when the cost of participation looked to be a greater stumbling block. A Tokyo based Japanese company, Kasho Ltd., came to our rescue as it expressed willing-ness to represent Bangladesh at Expo. As a result, our participation in this prestigious event has been made possible by the physical and financial involvement of a Japanese company.

Bangladesh pavilion at Global Common 1 is now set to invite visitors, who will be able to see some of our products made of environment friendly methods and techniques. The pavilion also houses a food stall to sell Bangladeshi food to visitors. The management company of the pavilion has already brought two expert cooks from Bangladesh, who will be busy preparing some of our authentic dishes at the Expo venue.

Expo 2005 also includes a cultural part, which too is considered important for participating nations, as it would provide them with the rare opportunity of displaying cultural aspects of their respective countries.

Throughout the duration of Expo, each participating country and international organisation has been allocated a specific day for their cultural events. According to the Expo calendar, June 9 will be the national day for Bangladesh, when a special cultural event will be held at the main stage of Expo with the participation of artists and performers from our country. Taking into consideration the burden of expenses for the developing countries to ensure their participation in such events, the organisers of Expo has allocated fund for travel and accommodation for up to ten participants from each developing country. Visitors to the Expo as well as expatriate Bangladeshis in Japan are now eagerly waiting to see who will be the lucky ten to carry the message of our culture to such a prestigious gathering.

9X3