

We condemn the act against humanity

London carnage outrageous beyond measure

NO sooner had we greeted the auspicious tiding of the British bid win to stage the 2012 Olympics and settled into the G-8 summit inaugural ambience came the paranoid attention-seekers' multi-explosion bombing massacre in London.

Transport system with many people aboard was a soft target for the cold blooded series of well-coordinated attacks perpetrated on Thursday morning. The intrinsic vulnerability of such public concentrations to bombing assaults, either detonated or suicidal-type, remains the biggest challenge for anti-terror surveillance and preemptive strategies for any police force in the world. London police had, however, successfully nipped some in the bud, but this time the evil operatives sneaked through the defences. Nevertheless, it must be said in all fairness to the police, fire services and hospital authorities of London that they have done an excellent job of the relief and rescue operations.

While expressing our profound condolences for the victims and their families, we stress the need for every individual to raise his or her personal security antenna anywhere they might be over and above the high security alert being mounted by the law enforcement agencies.

The recent experiences with the terror attacks in Madrid, Bali, Istanbul, Yemen and now London should wizen us about the ways of networked, or not-so-networked ideological terrorism. This is the first such attack on London aside from the IRA-related bombings of earlier times. But it is extremely saddening that a forward-looking, free-minded, liberal and cosmopolitan city like the British capital should have been a target of terrorist attack.

The perpetrators and their mentors must know what they have done in the name of ideological avenging and retribution; they have killed and maimed innocent people of differing colour, creed, faith, age and sex. They did not target any 'high and mighty' but the ordinary people who form the quintessential part of broad humanity. Every individual, every country today is a potential target of terrorism. The London massacre is not an act against Britain, nor the UK, nor the G-8, it's an act against the entire humanity. All such diabolic, yet cowardly actions must be severely condemned, censured and deterred with steely resolve and equally resolute counteraction.

They are out to breed mutual hatred and suspicion across societies and communities. And, if we fall into the trap of finger-pointing and profiling after the tragedy which they have deliberately laid to drive wedges in societies we shall be willy-nilly playing into the hands of the vicious perpetrators. Let's beware of what they would gleefully love us to do.

Manpower export declines

The government should have a clear strategy to streamline the sector

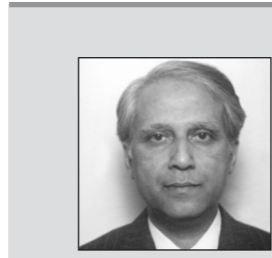
IT is worrying news that the country is losing some job markets abroad. The point will be made clear by the fact that manpower export has suffered a 12 per cent decline in the last five months, which means that is shrinking for us in many countries and new opportunities are also being lost.

The reasons behind the loss of ground in the international jobs market are not unknown. Before placing the blame on the host countries, let's have a look at our own faults and limitations. The relations with some of the host countries have not been that smooth in recent times, and there have been reports of Bangladeshi workers resorting to movements and demonstrations abroad which the countries concerned were not ready to accept. In such cases, the workers might have just been voicing their dissent over non-fulfillment of service conditions. But the point is that the recruiting agents could be the people responsible to a great extent for such problems. Then there are allegations that our workers are entering some countries illegally or overstaying there. So the sector, a major foreign exchange earner, is not performing to its potential.

Now, these are things that cannot coexist with a successful manpower export policy. Our missions abroad often shown a nonchalant attitude towards the workers when they look for help. The missions should have the details of all the expatriate workers so that they can address any problem or answer queries. The government certainly should not leave our workers exposed to the guile of the travel and recruiting agents or the whims of the employers in the host countries.

The ministry that was set up for the welfare of expatriate workers should formulate a strategy to solve the problems faced by them. The government should seriously consider opening a special cell at our missions for the expatriate workers, particularly in the countries with a heavy concentration of our workers. It should also try to establish more effective coordination and communication with the governments of the host countries on the issue of exporting manpower.

Combatting debt: Too little, too late?



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

A few days ago, an interesting news item caught my attention. The prestigious Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) indicated in their press release that global military spending had blasted past the trillion dollar mark in 2004, with the US alone accounting for nearly half of the total because of its "war on terror." In other words, it was about \$162 for every inhabitant of the Earth. It was also reported that there had been an increase of \$79 billion in expenditure in this regard from 2003. Another important aspect of this figure was that, in real terms, military spending was just marginally below what it was at the height of the Cold War in the late 1980s. What happened to the peace dividend?

These figures assume special significance given the recent declarations by certain developed countries to write off the debt owed to them by the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). British Chancellor Gordon Brown has made this his pet project since 2000. That year, he had proposed his "debt relief for peace" initiative and suggested that it should apply to 10 countries on the HIPC list involved in conflicts. This plan also offered "accelerated" debt relief if they threw down their arms before October. This plan was described by the Finance Ministers of the G-8 as a historic opportunity. It was also seen as a movement forward from the inadequate relief offered in the 1999 plan which had focused on a one-third reduction of debts for 40 countries -- far below what was needed to make a real

difference. The efforts of Brown however lost their way over the next few years.

Last year, writing on this issue, under the title "Reducing the cycle of debt" (Daily Star, November 27, 2004), after the unsuccessful G-7 Ministerial meeting in Washington, I observed: "What is vital is that the world's wealthiest countries continue to work on writing off 100 percent of the debt belonging to the world's poorest countries. The patience of the poor, specially the

were a diversionary tactic.

We are talking here of writing off about \$40 billion of debt, or about one and half days of world defence spending. That is the bottom line.

On June 11, as a follow-up of the Washington meeting between Bush and Blair, Finance Ministers of the G-8 expressed their agreement to wipe clean the debt of 18 extremely poor nations, mostly from Africa (owed to different countries, the World Bank, the IMF and the African Development Bank). This decision

ment rather than beg their way out of poverty. African ministers pointed out in this regard that if Africa gained 1 percent more of the world's share of exports, it would be worth five times the total amount of foreign aid that it receives.

The scenario is very complex and still not very clear. France, Japan and Germany have their own debt relief ideas and they feel that such a scheme of relief should be restricted to only five countries as starting points. The G-8 Finance Ministers

"a pitiful \$110 billion." Comparably, European generosity has been more impressive. One hopes that this time round, suitable implementation of the G-8 decision will not be caught up in red tape.

Paul Wolfowitz, the new head of the World Bank, has hailed this decision and repeatedly referred to it during his recent visit to different countries in Africa. The path forward is however not going to be easy. I believe that despite World Bank optimism, one has to be cautious.

rung in the ladder. Many more remain. Debt relief alone also cannot be the panacea.

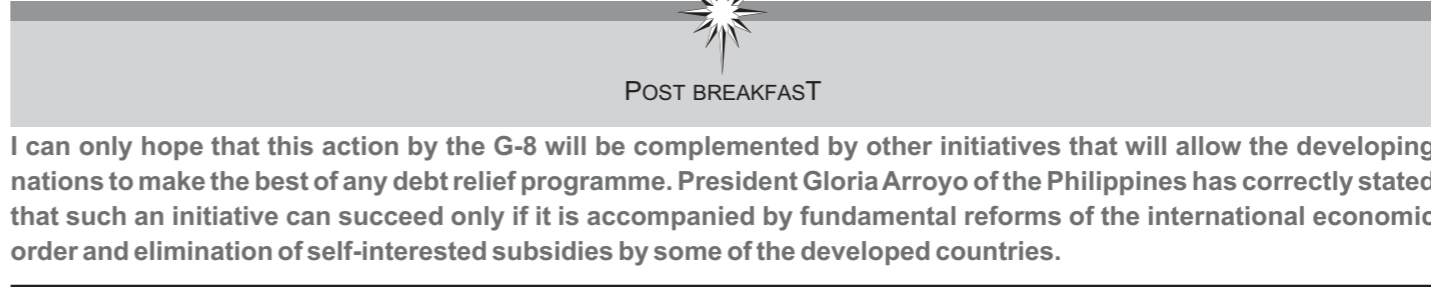
I can only hope that this action by the G-8 will be complemented by other initiatives that will allow the developing nations to make the best of any debt relief programme. President Gloria Arroyo of the Philippines has correctly stated that such an initiative can succeed only if it is accompanied by fundamental reforms of the international economic order and elimination of self-interested subsidies by some of the developed countries.

I look forward to general improvement under the new head of the WTO and the World Bank. Several important issues will have to be efficiently addressed -- access by developing countries to markets (without insisting on further trade liberalisation on their part), to reasonable financing, to development assistance, to technology and to medicines. All these factors are necessary to bring developing nations out of poverty and disease.

Russian President Putin, the next head of the G-8 after Britain's Blair has already hinted that the G-8 needs to focus its attention also on the relatively poor European countries like Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and Moldova, which he has classified as also being heavily indebted. Good idea, but please do not forget the many other heavily indebted countries in Asia.

International cooperation and constructive engagement will be required. This institutional commitment might mean a slightly leaner budget for defence expenditure and fighting "terror," but then, is there any other way out? We are talking here of assistance through debt write-off and less trade barriers. These will create wealth; generate employment and indirectly markets, for the products being produced by the developed countries. It will also greatly reduce the prospect of creating terrorists who breed in the ghettos of poverty and prejudice.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.



extreme poor in many countries, is wearing thin. This has to be understood. It is no longer enough to just convene grand meetings and adopt well-meaning resolutions. If poverty is not reduced, it will continue to be the breeding ground for terrorists and instability."

What I said then holds true today. On June 7 this year, US President George W Bush and British Prime Minister Tony Blair indicated in Washington that they were close to completing a proposal for an elimination of 100 percent of debt for the world's poorest countries. They however had a condition attached to it for Africa's leaders, namely, there had to be improvement in governance and that corruption is reduced. As Blair put it, the debt plan was not "a something-for-nothing deal." Such an approach was however criticised by Archbishop Desmond Tutu who stated that the West mustn't operate from a position of moral superiority" and also took the opportunity to remind US and Europe of its own failures in the form of scandals related to Enron, WorldCom and Parmalat. Rock stars like Bob Geldof and Bono also expressed views that calls to end corruption

to focus on poverty-stricken Africa was probably taken because of the existing plight in sub-Saharan Africa in particular. It may be mentioned here that recent figures from the World Bank indicate that this region has \$230 billion in external debt (a third of which is owed to multilateral lenders) and pays \$12 billion a year on servicing. This strategy is also consistent with Chancellor Brown's anxiety that without total multilateral debt relief, the poorest countries would pay up to \$27 billion in principal and interest payments to international organisations alone between now and 2015.

Since then, we have had, as expected, differing opinions as to this exercise. There has been acclamation from several quarters, but it has not been universal.

The G-77 meeting in Doha welcomed this step as "a very good move" but also underscored that this should have been done a long time ago. It was also reaffirmed that debt relief on its own was not enough to alleviate poverty in deeply indebted countries. It was also clarified that a more lasting solution would be for countries to trade their way towards develop-

ment rather than beg their way out of poverty. African ministers pointed out in this regard that if Africa gained 1 percent more of the world's share of exports, it would be worth five times the total amount of foreign aid that it receives.

The idea of the Bush Administration to set up the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) was creative. However, there is a great difference between intention and implementation. The MCA was meant to have a \$5 billion annual budget. Unfortunately, this has not taken place. To date, the administration has, according to Newsweek, dispersed

By international standards, the amount being written off is a drop in the bucket. What worries me however is that this drop or drops do not run-off into the sand as has happened in the past in Africa.

De Beers Chairman Nicky Oppenheimer has made an interesting and controversial observation. He has stated that in the decades since the colonial powers left Africa, the continent has received more than \$1 trillion in aid -- a figure much higher than the \$400 billion others estimate. He has gone on to state that such aid has in fact been less than useful and has contributed towards "a form of neo-colonialism." I do not know if his view is completely correct.

Nevertheless, it is true that Africa has, compared to Asia, received already the equivalent of five Marshall Plans in terms of aid and yet they continue to lag behind. It is most fortunate that despite repeated natural disasters, and being impoverished in natural resources, countries like Bangladesh have been able to move forward.

We have, with this latest decision of the G-8, climbed only the first

Why are we so poor?

DR. ABDULLAH A. DEWAN

THE question "why are we so poor?" is an intriguing one that invokes sour searching by politicians, bureaucrats, and citizens at large. Is the level of poverty somehow related to the types of governments that run a country? Although, there is no perfect government, examination of the data, however, reveal that poor countries, in general tend to have bad governments. This raises an interesting dilemma: "Are these countries poor because of bad governments, or is bad government a symptom, rather than a cause, of poverty?" Economic growth literature lists a set of factors which are associated with a bad government.

1. Lack of adherence to democratic principles of governance;
2. Weak enforcement of the rule of law;
3. Corrupt politicians and bureaucrats;
4. Absence accountability and transparency of governance; and
5. Lack of proper education among politicians and bureaucrats.

Not surprisingly, all five factors to a great degree are found to apply to the operations of the government in Bangladesh. Because of the image of poor governance major donors and international institutions including the US Millennium Challenge Account are setting preconditions for approving aid to Bangladesh.

A government is called bad, either because its actions are bad for growth or it does not do things that are good for growth. There are many tools available to a govern-

ment with which to influence the economy. These tools are: provision of the rule of law, regulations of how firms behave, planning (direction of resources to specific targeted industries), trade policies such as tariffs and quotas, and outright ownership of the factors of production. Government also influences the level of economic efficiency and performance by tax and spending policies. With the exception of the rule of law, which is unambiguously good for growth, there are no unique guidelines to determine which other policies are good for growth. The oddities of economies are such that outcome of these policies may vary from country to country over time.

A country where politicians and bureaucrats are exploiting their own citizens, rule of law is virtually capricious, legal profession is weak, voices of the oppositions are disparagingly ignored, and journalists are working under threats and intimidation is hardly a functioning democracy, it is more like a kleptocracy.

One unequivocal answer to why poor countries have bad governments refers to well established relationship between economic growth and democracy. Freedom House's (a non-profit organisation in the US) annual press freedom survey of 194 countries and territories rated Bangladesh "not free."

The survey questionnaires are designed to examine the legal environment for the media, political pressures that influence reporting, and economic factors that affect access to information. In the survey, Bangladesh scored 150 points, along with Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Maldives, and Russia. The bad

news is that there is a growing freedom gap between Islamic countries and the rest of the world. Of the world's 192 countries, 121 are electoral democracies. However, only 11 of the 47 nations with a Muslim majority have democratically elected governments. The report also manifests a link between freedom and economic progress. Countries rated "free" account for \$27.1 trillion of the world's annual GDP, and represent 87 percent of global economic activity. By contrast, countries rated "partly free" account for only \$2.0 trillion in output (6 percent), and those rated "not free" produce only \$2.2 trillion amounting to 7 percent.

Although democracy does not guarantee the rule of law, the later is even more important for growth. In economic literature, there exists a clear and unambiguous relationship between productivity and the rule of law which asserts: countries with better rule of law, enjoys higher productivity, and hence more growth. Freedom House's annual Legal System and Property Rights (LSPR) report shows that the rule of law in Bangladesh has been deteriorating over the last 10 years.

The other equally or more important factor that deters growth is certainly corruption, which is well known to all and sundry at every

nook and corner of Bangladesh. Corruption exists and proliferates because of the weak enforcement of the rule of law. When the policy makers and the policy implementers defy the rule of law, corruption becomes pervasive and blends with the official culture. "An empirical analysis of capital flows shows that a country with TIB's corruption perception index (CPI) of 7.0 is 10 times more likely to succeed in attracting a dollar of foreign direct investment (FDI) per capita than a country with a score of 6.0." For example, Malaysia with a CPI score of 5.0 is 36 times more likely than Bangladesh (CPI = 1.5) to attract a dollar of FDI per capita.

If the politicians who are elected to work for the people and lead them to prosperity engage in malfeasance themselves, to whom the citizens would look up to. Such politicians will bargain for payoffs from foreign businesses who will be willing partners to the despotic acts of corruption. Such politicians will not hesitate to collaborate in activities which will throw citizens into vulnerability to industrial wastes, pollution, and consumption of lower quality products. A burning example is the recent ouster of the state minister for energy and mineral resources who allegedly acted to serve foreign interest against his

people's interest.

A bad government is generally intolerant to the free media, and always attempts to harass and intimidate journalists at every opportunity when reporting is unfavourable to the ruling party. When politicians lose elections and take the seat of opposition benches, they clamour for all out freedom of the media, but when installed in power the same politicians stiffen their grip on state control over television and radio broadcasting media to funnel misinformation, and often outright lie about everything that matters. Most often, a bad government attempts to impose censorship to hide its misdeeds from the voters. One may convincingly argue that absence of freedom of press can be a factor for a country to have a bad government. Because a free and open media can expose bad governance by uncovering and shedding light on corruption, inefficiency, and abuses and thus can improve the quality of governance.

In transition economies in Eastern and Central Europe, the fall of communism brought with it openness which helped unearth a plethora of stories of fraud, corruption, and criminal activity, making the media perhaps the most effective institution in the fight against corruption. Journalists have paid dearly

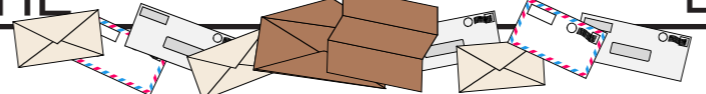
for this: in the territory of the former Soviet Union alone, more than 200 journalists have been killed in the line of work as they investigated stories on corrupt officials or criminal gangs. In Bangladesh, threats and intimidation by ruling party political functionaries, and even public servants have become common occurrences.

What journalists are subjected to in their line of work in Bangladesh was aptly expressed by the former US Ambassador Harry Thomas, who said: "It is not an easy place for journalists. I salute the journalists of this country for the way they are working under duress." Recalling the killing of journalists in Chittagong, Khulna, Rajshahi, and Jessore, he said: "We want to see the killers of journalists brought to justice." Economic literature is replete with evidence that suggest that democracy, and freedoms of the media are the twins which opens the gateway to transparency and accountability of government policies and performance.

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The author is Professor of Economics, Eastern Michigan University, and President, Bangladesh Professional and Academic Society of America (BPASA).

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



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

No thrust in insurance sector

There is a black out on news and stories on the successful implementation of novel local insurance schemes in our vast RNG and agricultural sectors (crops and marketing). The official indifference is suspected, as hinted in a review in the Daily Star of June 21 (Crop Insurance Experiences: Lessons from Bangladesh).

There is lack of R&D in our insurance business (as in many other sectors).

We have to develop the research and development culture at the national level, as it is a vital component for effective use of foreign and local aid projects. Even the UN agencies have a high rate of failure of their pet schemes as applied in the LDCs and DCs. We could do with some more innovations.

The insurance companies may be encouraged to establish localised research centres for more local application of insurance schemes in new fields (the economically handicapped need official protection packages). The HR (manpower,

and now females) 'exports' are not properly insured or monitored. Our fruits and vegetables perish due to non-availability of enough storage facilities for round the year marketing. How the insurance providers look at the large number of road and river accidents, as also insecurity situations faced by millions of individuals and families in these dangerous times? There is no publicity of attractive schemes for the students. How to protect the drivers and public vehicles?

Many more new areas of insurance marketing would emerge through seminars and talk shows. Is the government interested? Or is it the busy politicians who should goad the sleepy Ministries?

A Mawaz Dhaka

Reckless driving of motor cars, trucks and buses

Reckless driving of motor cars, trucks, and buses in the streets of Dhaka Chittagong Highway is not only nuisance, but also a public danger. One day a woman was

knocked down at the crossing near the shop. Luckily, she was saved as the accident was not so fatal. These kinds of accidents are daily occurrence in our daily life. The public being the sufferers should make the city authorities to stop these kind of dangerous accidents.

It is the high time for the Municipal authorities to take a very serious view of the matter and enforce their laws more strictly than ever before. Public safety demands greater attention of the city Fathers.

Moontaana Kishwar IIUC

Student and social service

Man has three duties, duty towards God, duty towards parents and duty towards mankind. So students have certain duties to the society in which they live in.

Students in our country can give free services in different spheres of our national life. Most of the people of our country are illiterate. Student can open night schools and teach the illiterate people. They can remove illiteracy from our country. During the vacation

they can go to villages and teach the village people. Student services are necessary in the field of our national health. Female students can teach the uneducated people mainly women, how to keep their houses neat and clean, how to bring up children and look after their health. The village people and the people living in the slums suffer from many diseases. They have no knowledge about health and environment. The students can teach them about the basic rules of health and environment. Bangladesh is an over populated country. Most of the village people of our country are illiterate. They are also superstitious. They have no knowledge about family planning. They are unwilling to accept family planning. They are hopeless. In this regard students can render a social service. They can explain to the illiterate village people the need for adopting family planning. Students are the servants of society. They are the makers of society. They are the soldiers of social peace. They should serve society without any selfish motive.

Syed Asmun Aktar Lisme ELL, IIUC Scholarship for

female students

The title of news attracted my intense attention. Do the females deserve honourable status like men, with equivalent qualification? Or simply those females, who lack backing of powerful authority supporters, like me! Most likely, lack of the later mentioned power has kept me disabled- worthless human being; though I am highly qualified!

I was a scholar student throughout my student life! I didn't know how much and who to pay monthly fees in my college life; rather received significant amount of scholarship money, every year. Though admitted after a lapse of one year; I'd qualified MBBS with positions in all 4 professional exams; under Rajshahi University! And after employment, Director General DGFP, as he visited my MCWC; being highly satisfied nominated me for a foreign scholarship, under ERD. I qualified a short course in Health Services Management in 1993. Later following excellence of my work, I have done an MSc Health Policy Planning & Financing course abroad, in 1996-97.

After all these qualifications and

light suggestion of the secretary MOHFW, to employ me in my area of qualification. But this powerful authority, Director General DGFP posted me in a rural THC as a Medical Officer. A mother whose only son, who was reading in English medium school and had studied for one year in London; (being accompanied with me) can take him in a rural Thana? Frequent journey between him and my working place resulted in a serious Road Traffic Accident. So, I'm leading a worthless life. My husband is leading a romantic life with his new wife. A global norm, for disabled women not to men!

What is the fate of being a female scholar? Allah should not give such a life to other women in this world, mostly in Bangladesh. So, I urge our powerful authority not to be so much cruel, unrealistic, irrational, losing good amount of Development Budget and finally enforcement of their power! I appraise the above title or step by our government, indeed! In fact, these are women or mothers who brought up our future generation: Teaching Social Customs, Interaction with Seniors & Juniors, Behav-

iour & Manner, Love Human Being and the Living Creature, Value of the Global Facts and so on! Therefore, it is vitally important to encourage teaching women! Scholarship is the best way to encourage them!

Dr. Lailun Nahar Dhaka

Juvenile delinquency

Juvenile delinquency means a young person who does the crime. There is a proverb that "Necessity knows no law." So, Juvenile delinquency is not a difficult task for our country as we live in a penury line. At present, many juveniles are aggravating day by day. But we never think why they have become a great felon?

According to me, want is a great problem for their life. As a result they live in a slum or beside the road. They are poor and illiterate also. They cannot get enough food. So, most of them suffer from malnutrition. They are not aware of health. Moreover, they live in unhygienic atmosphere and also unconscious about their health. On the contrary, various kinds of diseases attack them. Besides,

there is no law in their society and disorder creates everywhere. They easily engage themselves in crime such as drug abuse, child trafficking, smuggling, stealing, hijacking, robbery, murdered etc. Which mark them as felon in the society, in the country.

Juvenile age is important age of life. It is time to build a good life for oneself and for the sake of other. But, this age is a time when it becomes very difficult to control life. Most of the children when they grow up. They feel that their parents ask them to do things, which they do not like to do and ask them not to do thing, which they like. So it is the main problem of "Juvenile delinquency".

We can prevent "Juvenile delinquency" from our country, if the juvenile is taught the good and bad effect of peace and violence respectively, if they learn how to manage themselves in exciting situation after all. Government should take some steps for improving literacy rate and removing poverty.

Nahida Yesmin Chittagong