

South Asia quake

A learning lesson

DR. AFTAB ALAM KHAN

OCTOBER 8, 2005 is marked with even another great natural catastrophic event-day in less than a year after devastating merciless Asian tsunami. Asian tsunami taken more than four hundred thousand lives ruining billions of dollars invested developments distributed over wide regions of several countries. South Asia quake, on the other hand, claimed more than seventy thousand lives ruining billions of dollars invested development in a small region of single country. President Parvez Musarrif of Pakistan had rightly confessed that many villages in the rugged inaccessible mountainous region are yet to reach for assessing what happened there. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has feared that the second wave of merciless deaths will likely to emerge especially for the children if immediate relief influx and distribution of shelter relief is not greatly enhanced.

What has gone wrong with the nature? Why the people of Asian countries from Turkey to Japan down to Indonesia are being tested, punished and filled with miseries very frequently? Is it due to ignored humanity, or distressed humanity or deprived humanity by the anthropogenic system of the society? If the human beings are part of the natural system then for obvious reasons and logic it is to be believed that the acts, the views, and the attitudes of the human beings should have impact on the nature. We never know. But time has evolved to think and act to save and serve mankind. Nature does not care for human muscle or thumb. The ignorance and non-caring attitude about the nature's behaviour and the processes seem to be the major disastrous effects for the Asian countries and people.

We all knew that Java trench along the coast of Sumatra is one of the most active trenches in the world but we failed to know that along the trench there could be violent up-thrust crustal movement that could create devastating earthquake and for obvious reason of its location in the ocean bed, a tsunami. In turn, we have failed to educate people of the region how to cope with and be prepared for such disastrous event if occurred. This is ignorance or we did not simply care to learn or study natural processes or the crustal movement's behaviour along such active

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earth segment.

Similarly, we all knew that Hazra-Kashmir Crushed Zone of Pakistan is seismically very active where MMT (main mantle thrust) and MBT (main boundary thrust) have converged in such a fashion that has created one of the most complex and major crushed and sheared zones of the entire Himalayan belt. This zone is markedly characterised by the most active fault known as Jhelam fault. This crushed zone is extended from Udhampur in the southeast to Kalam in the northwest across Muzaffarabad and Balakot. The loss of lives and property assessment seem to be confined around Muzaffarabad-Balakot region.

Until today a total number of 83 aftershocks of which 36 aftershocks of magnitudes between 5.3 and 6.2 all are located mostly in the Balakot-Mirabat

transect and we are unknown as to what happened there. The seismicity record for 1973-1976 of this region unveiled major earthquake risk vulnerability and the areas of potential seismic gap for impending major earthquake. The record also shows that the devastating 1905 Kangra earthquake killing more than 19,000 people is located on this zone. The 1974 Pattan earthquake killing more than 5,000 people is also located on this crushed zone. A 5.2 magnitude earthquake that occurred near Rawalpindi in 1977 causing severe damage and some loss of lives was also located near South Asia Quake zone.

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itation in a major earthquake. With all these known facts we have completely failed to aware people how much potentially dangerous region they are living in, and failed to educate and prepare them how to face such catastrophic natural event. We have totally failed to have for the people a proper pre-disaster physical planning, and post-disaster relief and rescue management and action.

The pertinent question: are the people of Hazra-Kashmir region free and safe from any other near future major earthquake? No, they are not! They must be cautious very seriously because of the fact that a major seismic gap has been observed in the crescent shaped region mostly covering an area from Abbotabad, Murree, Rawalpindi upto Srinagar and Udhampur, Kashmir. It is further even alarming because not a single aftershock out of 83, of October 8, 2005 earthquake has occurred in this crescent shaped zone. Death is inevitable but painful death is not desirable. Should we not innovate mechanism to combat such natural disasters for the benefit of the humanity?

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Mind the scale of devastation!

VIKAS SWARUP'S Q&A

Trying too hard with multi-faith many-cultured ambience

BY YASMEEN MURSHED

NOW that KBC Dwitiya has once again become a thrice weekly visitor to our homes my thoughts turned to that much hyped book Q&A by the Indian diplomat Vikas Swarup published by Doubleday last year. It was much hyped because of the rather large advance of twelve thousand pounds given by the publisher for a first novel and has already been, I understand, translated into 15 languages making it yet another literary sensation from South Asia.

Being an aficionado of riddles, puzzles, trivia and quiz shows I watch KBC regularly so I was intrigued because a novel based on a popular game show seemed to be both topical and imaginative. The plot is simple enough—the hero, abandoned as a child and given the unusual name Ram Mohammed Thomas by a Catholic priest, when Hindu priests and Muslim mullahs argued that he could be of either or any faith, grows up to be one of the legion of urban uneducated youth of the city and wins a billion rupees on a television quiz show very similar to KBC.

The producers of the show have him arrested on charges of fraud and try to prove that Thomas cheated to win the jackpot but the young man in a night long confessional, carries us through each answer which came to him as a part of his journey through life. Since the questions are apparently selected randomly from a bank fed into the computer so it just happens that Ram Mohammad Thomas gets the twelve or is it thirteen answers right. He explains how he knew the answers to all the questions and we learn how a boy born on Christmas Day, becomes Mohammed to his friend Salim, Thomas to an Australian diplomat and Ram to the aging actress Neelima as each story gives Thomas reprieve from the case. It is an interesting premise because it illustrates the inherent element of chance, fortune or life experience that determines how one will perform in any given situation.

Swarup's narrative takes us on an expedition through the gritty reality and sordid netherworld of Indian cities. It is in the chawls and mohallas of these cities that we are introduced to the many colorful characters which are a part of the collective South Asian lexicon and to the modern Indian panorama. From

TALKING BOOKS

My main interest in the book is its relevance to contemporary taste--particularly the effect that television in the form of a personality and a programme have on the popular imagination. The unpalatable diet of repetitious situations on the family soaps as well as the gratuitous violence and sex not only on the programmes but on the news actually make a general knowledge game show appear enticing.

slums to the Taj Mahal it is bleak and grand by turns. As street children influenced by the all pervasive movie culture of Bollywood, Thomas and his friend Salim dream of becoming film stars and fantasize about the heroines. It is a world that they finally break into and as the twin strands of a TV quiz show and a biography merge, Q&A ends in-- what else-- a perfect Sholay moment.

The characters who feature in Thomas' life, though sometimes sketchily penned, are evocative of the whole South Asian experience--the aging actress Neelima evoked memories of stories read and heard about Meena Kumari; the diplomat who trades state secrets; the betting syndicate where Ahmed Khan puts money on Sachin Malvankar's 37th Test century and the beggars' conglomerate which sends children to the streets are familiar to us all if not at first hand then through newspapers and the television.

In a recent interview Swarup said "I did not want to write about the privileged class, I wanted to explore

the core of contentment in the under class. It is something that you have seen in Mira Nair's *Salaam Bombay!* The challenge was not to adopt a patronising tone nor a syrupy style." He succeeds to the extent that it is a racy read; in fact a friend of mine read the first half in the backseat of a car going from Gulshan to Motijheel during rush hour which can be construed to be as much a comment on the readability of the book as on the problems of Dhaka traffic!

However my main criticism is that Swarup tries too hard with the multi-faith many-cultured ambience so that while some of the episodes ring true others do not. It might just be a matter of personal taste but I find the effort to be all-accepting to all men a mite tiresome. Also the language does not sustain the narrative as it promised to do. A Seth or a Roy he is not, but Swarup is charming and beguiling in a manner entertaining enough to provide one evening's amusement.

In fact the novel reads more like a screenplay of the *Amar Akbar*



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Anthony variety so it was not surprising when Swarup confessed that "Hindi films have been a great influence." Indeed a Gurinder Chadda or Mira Nair version on the big screen in the very near future is not just a possibility but a probability.

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Apparently there have been fifty million phone calls to the show from people eager to take up the challenge. It just goes to show that clean family oriented programmes have an appeal--a programme that one can watch without blushing in the company of the elders of a family or with children has become rare indeed and lifelines, confident, sure, lock the answer appear to have become part of the contemporary vocabulary.

The added attraction and a lot of the success of the show is created by the mellifluous voice and glamorous personality of Amitabh Bachchan as he conducts the show with a rare aplomb. With his flawless Hindi and impeccable English Mr. Bachchan is almost never at a loss for words. I say "almost" because proposals of marriage tend to make him speechless with shock as does the unabashed adoration of his legions of followers. Yet even as he blushes slightly and looks down in embarrassment he is ready to take the show forward and on to the next question on the computer screen.

Which brings me to my question: Isn't it time we had a Bangladesh version of KBC with perhaps the inimitable, multi-talented Aly Zaker as the host? Television programme producers are you reading this?

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Sino-Bangladesh aid profile: Promoting economic development

ABDUL KHALEQUE

FOURTEEN hundred years ago, the Prophet of Islam (pbuh) advised people to go to China in search of education. Some Arab traders carried this mission to China and established settlement over there. China is, indeed, a great seat of civilisation the light of which spread across the world. It was not startling that in the 14th century also, Chinese technology was the most modern in the contemporary world. In the subsequent phase, China failed to make further head-way; Chinese economy lost a good deal of its dynamism because of the suppression of its foreign trade and development of intellectual introspection and also because the Chinese became opium addicts and victims of economic exploitation by native feudals and foreign adventurers who controlled major parts of the country. Inadequate capital, restricted market, bureaucratic constraints on economic growth, small-scale firm, subverted Chinese commercial enterprise.

China, however, emerged out of foreign occupation and exploitation, and years of massive internal strife and class-war as a people's republic in 1949 but was denied a seat in the United Nations Organisation for more than two decades. But this land of sorrows, sufferings, famines and floods with the world's largest population steeped in poverty and illiteracy made its entry into the field of international aid in 1954, and gradually widened its sphere and extent in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

After the Bandung Conference of 1955 in which China supported the anti-imperialist united front of Afro-Asian states, it looked for progressive forces in the ruling national bourgeoisie to whom economic aid could be extended; and it became clear that Chinese aid might go to non-capitalist sympathetic developing countries. Egypt became the first recipient of \$4 million as donation, following the Anglo-French attack on the Suez in 1956. Between 1956-60, Myanmar, Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Algeria and Yemen received Chinese assistance.

During 1960's China continued its policy of selectively extending aid to sympathetic governments when they came to power, and cutting it off when such governments toppled, and this policy continued. Project loans to Ghana extended in 1961 were terminated in 1966 when Nkrumah fell from power. In Indonesia, all projects were halted after the military coup of 1965. A similar pattern was evident in Uganda, Mali, Congo and Chile. It was claimed in anti-Chinese forum that this aid was directed primarily toward the development of the revolutionary potentials of the recipients. In reply, Chinese press said that aid from USA and other sources were "tricks and plunder and sugar-coated poisonous pills". (Cohen, Alan, ed. "The Dynamics of Foreign relations," p.6).

In the 1970's, Chinese aid spread to a large number of countries including the sub-Sahara region. And of the total Chinese aid, 48 per cent went to Africa, 32 per cent to Asia, 13.2 per cent to the Middle East, and 4.8 per cent to Latin Amer-

ica. Chinese aid reached Iraq, Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia and a lot of African countries. Between 1963-74, Pakistan got disbursement of \$350 million.

The Chinese foreign-aid policy document was released to the world press by Chou-en-Lai in a speech in Mali in 1964, laying down the principles on economic and technical assistance which have still continued as the cornerstone of its aid policy.

Most of the aid is project-oriented, and repayable in local

light industrial projects, the main advantage of which was that they could be put into operation quickly and their immediate effect could be seen.

It was in 1958 that Mao stressed that steel and machinery constituted the foundation of Chinese industrialisation, the material basis for agricultural modernisation, the basis for technological transformation of the economy. He clearly visualised the role of machine-building in the development of the country's underdeveloped economy

Very recently the Prime Minister of Bangladesh and the Prime Minister of China entered upon several bilateral agreements of co-operative development assistance, e.g. in respect of peaceful use of nuclear energy for medicine, electricity generation etc, in sewerage, tourism, water treatment and a few other projects. It is heartening that China agreed to give duty-free excess for many more Bangladeshi items, and also to extend assistance for our export capacity building.

currency or in commodities and closely related to trade. From the balance of payment position, this aspect is highly attractive to both parties. Since 1960, China gradually adopted a policy of low interest-free loans with 10 years grace period, repayable in 10 years which was undoubtedly more development-conducive.

Besides, Chinese specialists working in the recipient countries are markedly less expensive than others. To buy an expert out of a grant from China is decidedly a less costly deal. By mid 1960's, Chinese aid totalled over one billion US dollar, 87 per cent of which went to non-socialist countries mostly in Asia. China concentrated in small

in providing capital goods for other industries and as a major factor in productivity. Under Mao's direction, the Chinese focussed certain elements such as demand and supply, import and export, growth rate in gross and net-output value, input output relationship, changes in output composition, limitation of capital resources and technology, sources of constraints, ratio of domestic production to total demand, resource allocation, growth of output compared with inputs in labour and capital, growth of technical manpower etc.

The ministry of machine building set up in 1959 had a lot of functional departments. There were the Production Control Bureaus each

having major areas of production supervision. In China, basic industrial trades have been grouped into 254 sections which are then assigned to 21 broad industrial departments. The statistical and planning systems were mostly imported from Russia. It is worthwhile to note that in China there are eight ministries in charge of machine building, each having distinct responsibility. A lot of products are undertaken by the non-machinery ministries also.

China joined UNESCO in 1974 and contributed small amounts to

- Consistently abides by the principle of equality and mutual benefit;

- Strictly respects sovereignty of recipient countries, and attaches no condition or asks for any privilege;

- Provides economic assistance by giving interest-free or low-interest loans, and extends the limit for repayment to avoid burden of the recipient countries;

- Provides the best-quality equipment and material of its own manufacture at international market-price, and undertakes to replace

these if found qualitatively inferior to agreed specification;

- The project selected are such that the recipient country gets quick results and income;

- In the case of technical assistance, the principle is to ensure that the recipient country gets the fullest measure of the intended benefit;

- Chinese experts for construction have the same standard of living as that of the recipient countries.

These remarkable principles apart, Chinese aid has been used to help trade. Loans can be repaid by host-country products or currency. China is not technologically very advanced and as such the wide range of Chinese goods are not competitive with the products of LDCs. As

Larkin puts it, "In large measure China's aims appear to be simply those of normal commerce."

(Larkin, Bruce, A, China and Africa 1949-1970, p.106). China emphasises self-reliance, agricultural and industrial balance and infrastructure model from its own experience, and allows concessional terms of loan (interest free or low-interest, repayable in 10-30 years, grant element about 85%, grace period 5-15 years) especially attuned to the needs of the recipient. It is apparent, within its own limited technological and resources capability, China has done the best in the economic aid and is particularly interested in bilateral aid based on its aid principles.

The Chinese economy as it stands in the 2004 edition of the Economist Pocket World in figures is as under: population 1285m, GDP \$1159bn, average annual growth in real GDP 1991-2001 9.8%, adult literacy 84.7%, urban population 36.7%. Such an economy can now afford a far higher quantum of economic aid than that of the 1970's and there after. China is no longer holding on to its tough-line initial approach which created division in the party high-up. Among communist countries there is a wide variety of foreign and domestic policy-approaches, indicating the non-monolithic character of their doctrine.

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generation etc, in sewerage, tourism, water treatment and a few other projects. It is heartening that China agreed to give duty-free excess for many more Bangladeshi items, and also to extend assistance for our export capacity building. It was very nice of China to grant scholarships and core assistance for our human development. In a gesture of courtesy, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh offered to China an exclusive export-processing zone.

We may mention a strategic policy followed by China in international affairs. China sends a huge lot of technical and technological experts and scientists to such fairs. They very closely observe the machinery and tools etc. presented in the fair and take necessary notes thereof. When the fair starts winding up, China buys machineries and technological gadgets and instruments at a very low price for use in China. This strategy has helped China imitate a lot of advances made and presented by participating countries in international fairs. We may emulate the same strategy.

Viewed in light of what we have said regarding our bilateral relationship with China and the strategy of Chinese industrial and economic aid policy we are confident that China will do its best to fulfil all commitments, and promote our economic development with utmost expedition and thereby strengthen the tie of fraternity between the two peoples.

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