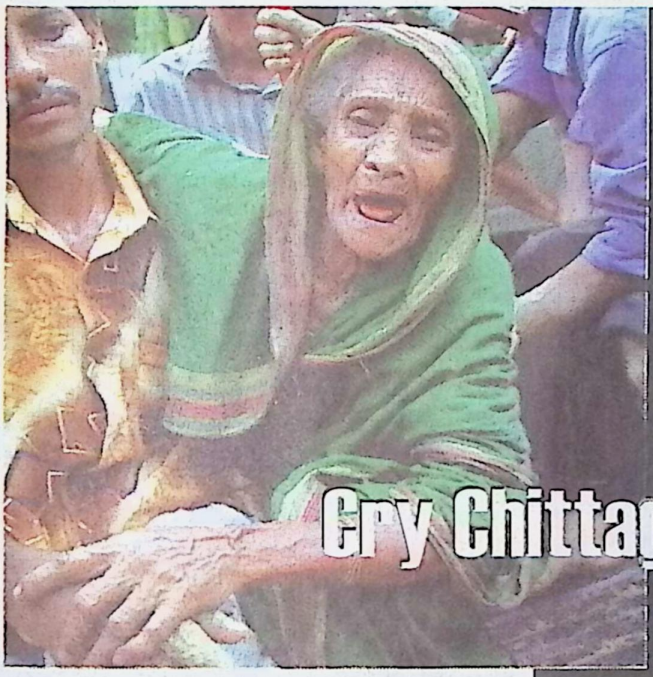




Cry Chittagong Cry

Professor Abdul Mannan

FINALLY God has spoken. The angel of death has suddenly paid a visit to Chittagong and a total of 126 people lost their life in a span of few hours. This all happened on Monday, June 11, 2007 when hills came crushing because of incessant rainfall on residential quarters of mainly low income people living dangerously in the slope of cut down hills in the second largest city of the country. One would like to believe it is a natural disaster though in reality it is not. It is man made and can be termed as the cost of living in affluence and relative comfort of some people that the general people are paying with their life and property. It is also the colossal failure of the administration that contributed to the angel of death making the visit to this beloved city of mine. Two thirds of the city was under water and the people are still struggling in search of basic necessities like water and shelter in many places.

My association with this historic city (a busy town even in those days) is more than half a century. I am a witness to a city under seize by land grabbers, unscrupulous businessmen, politicians and totally incompetent district administration and other government agencies. Chittagong in the fifties when we were growing up was a much better place to live than Chittagong now. In a span of fifty odd years the city has taken a look of an Aids' patient waiting for its destined death.





Chittagong is a unique city in the region. It is the only city in the country with hills, sea and plain land. Many Arab traders of ninth and tenth century found the city too good to leave and made it their home. Even my mom claims her ancestors came from Arabia. Chittagong, though a port city for hundreds of years, was hardly more than sixteen square miles till the late fifties. On the north you had the Sholashahar railgate, to the south you could only go up to the banks of the river Karnafully. The city completed its limit with Dewanhat in the West and Chowkbazar in the East. The total number of people living within the city limit would not cross one hundred thousand. The municipality had only four wards. Now it has forty-one with a population of five million. No other city was so picturesque, clean and friendly. Chittagonians would feel proud of their shutki (dried fish), beef, bela biscuit and the sampan. The legendary Chaktai Khal (Chaktai canal) was the life-line of the city as it was the main drainage for all the rain water of the city along with the usual sewage outlet. The khal starting from the Chaktai would go up to Muradpur.