

## From debris to development

*A daunting task we must fulfil*

AGRICULTURE and environment adviser CS Karim in an exchange of views session with The Daily Star unveiled a recovery plan and an adaptation vision against the backdrop of cyclone Sidr. The catastrophe following two successive floods forebode more of climatic change-induced disruptions which call for an adaptation strategy. That's why the adviser's exchange of views yielded two sets of recommendations: one for a short and medium term recovery, and another for long term adaptation and preparedness to meet the challenges thrown up by climatic changes.

Among the short term measures is a government decision to plant high-yield hybrid Boro over 10 lakh hectares instead of 2.5 lakh hectares. The government is to work with the NGOs this time to checkmate corruption in disbursement of agri-loans and distribution of implements, seeds and fertiliser. In the medium term, better housing and improved livelihood options will have to be utilised like for example stronger building material on elevated plots and more durable fishing trawlers. In this category falls the task of investing in agriculture research to secure increased crop yields in lesser land area.

Bangladesh is among the frontline countries at the receiving end of climatic changes: droughts, excessive rains and floods, cyclones and sea surges with salinity intrusions into the interior. We are a populated deltaic country that has for centuries shaped our lifestyle and culture but now it seems we are in for harder life to cope with changing pattern of climate. Since we face new challenges a massive national awareness building exercise will have to be undertaken to instill a sense of adaptation in the people's mind.

Not only that, they need to know in what areas they have to adapt themselves and what techniques they have got to use for the purpose. Internationally, we must play a hands-on role in projecting the survival context we are being catapulted into -- thanks to continuing indifference to the urgent need for cuts in emission of green house gases by the worst polluters of the environment, their financing in adaptation strategies and research work for alternative technologies for the benefit of the developing countries. If the planet survives, we all survive.

## Renovate Ctg court building

*It poses risk to users*

THE more than century-old court building at Chittagong continues to be in a dilapidated condition despite the fact that renovation works began a year ago. Nothing has also been done to construct another building planned for the premises. Apparently, the authorities have already cancelled the concerned contractor's work orders on the ground that the scheduled one year period as stipulated in the contract had expired in 2005. As a result, the half-demolished building has become prone to accident.

The structure built at hill top as early as in 1892 is used by as many as 5000 judges, magistrates, lawyers court officials, let alone 10,000 litigants. It is important to remember that judges do require court premises that are safe and secure, structurally, in order to be able to give their fullest in dispensation of justice rather than be distracted by fault-lines.

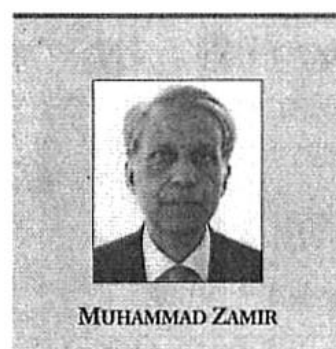
Chittagong is our second most important metropolitan city besides being our major port city. The importance of befitting court premises here is indisputable.

A court building as old as that is also a symbol of a nation's heritage and legacy. This building in particular bears a special significance as part of our architectural heritage. In a survey conducted by BUET as early as in 2002 there was a recommendation for conservation of the old building. What steps have since been taken to do up the building is a question that begs an answer.

We urge the government and its related agencies to resume work on the building in real earnest. Let us cut back on bureaucratic red tape and save the Chittagong court building expeditiously.

In the meantime, we also recommend that those found negligent in attending to this vital task be held to account. In one word, we seek an adviser-level intervention to get things moving.

# Bangladesh and counter-terrorism in South Asia



**MUHAMMAD ZAMIR**

ERRORISM and terrorists have their own concept of grammar. They define their ideas, objectives and behaviour on the basis of denotations and connotations that are totally different from the generally accepted norms of civilized society. For them, ends justify means. Their continued action and response are not always logical or rational. However, within this complex scenario, lies a method in their madness.

The biggest strength the terrorists have is unpredictability and their single-minded devotion towards the creation of fear and indiscriminate terror within the body politic of a country. They have two other significant advantages. They do not follow established law or constitutional provisions. This automatically reduces the prospect of accountability within their system. The other aspect relates to raising of funds required for carrying on their campaign of asymmetrical warfare. In most cases, as in Colombia and Myanmar, this has been facilitated through a nexus with criminal elements.

Terrorists usually also have another thing in common. They are basically disciplined and are conditioned to being secretive in their decision making process. Ethnic and religious divides also, most often, emerge as crucial elements. This ensures loyalty within their system and total obedience.

The above elements have found expression, in the contemporary scene, in various areas of the world - the Middle East, Latin America, Europe, Africa and also in South Asia. In the process, terrorist groups have morphed and evolved over

time. Their objectives have also changed. Some have sought cover for their activities under the cloak of religion, patriotism and liberation. Others have branded themselves as fighters associated in the quest of eradicating poverty, mis-governance or economic disparities.

We have had our homegrown terrorists in South Asia for quite some time. Areas affected include the northeastern and northwestern parts of India, Nepal, several provinces in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and also

hesitate to be the first among equals in this regard. This will also be a good confidence-building measure for South Asia and the SAARC process, which now also encompasses the troubled country of Afghanistan.

It would be useful in this context to analyse how counter-terrorism and police cooperation is being pursued as a policy by the European Union. South Asia may like to emulate some of the steps taken there.

Since the attacks in New York, London and Madrid, the EU's coun-

Nevertheless, the above-mentioned elements of EU's counter-terrorism now play a central role in the European Security and Defence Policy.

The EU has also created the post of EU Personal Representative for Counter Terrorism and has adopted more than 160 horizontal measures. This includes encouraging exchanges between Europol and the Joint Situation Center (SitCen) and extending cooperation beyond EU borders. Priority is also being accorded towards establishing of

cross-border crime and illegal migration. In this context, it has also been suggested that there could be enhanced exchange of information through cross-border sharing of DNA databases and fingerprinting.

Nevertheless despite all the teething difficulties, the EU is steadily moving forward in finding least common denominators in their common effort to counter terrorism and terrorist acts. We have to do the same within South Asia.

It was therefore heartening to know that the recently concluded

through public debate and democratic scrutiny. Proposals and ideas have however to be tested in the field before they can become part of domestic legislation in all the SAARC countries. The SAARC Secretariat will also have to be dovetailed in this ambitious journey.

Our efforts till now appear to have been restricted more to rhetoric than action. What we need is a conscious decision on the part of all members of SAARC to fully commit themselves into this exercise. This needs to include expeditious extradition arrangement of terrorists and criminals. They should not be allowed to feel safe in another State's territory or jail. We have to rise over narrow national and parochial interests. India, as the current Chairperson should play a defining role in this regard. It needs to be noted here that India has in the recent past handed over to us certain notorious Bangladeshi criminals who had illegally entered India for sanctuary. This has been an encouraging first step that needs to be replicated by the others.

We have to remember that future foreign investment, economic development, poverty reduction and good governance in this region will depend on true and meaningful cooperation and coordination between the States. We will have questions but answers will also have to be found.

Terrorist groups have their own individual agenda and their priorities are not always consistent with national or regional goals. In Bangladesh, we have taken on the task of counter-terrorism through sincere measures against some terrorist groups like the JMB. Nevertheless, more needs to be done. We have to work together to stifle the supply of oxygen that helps to keep such misdirected groups alive. Through practical cooperation, we have to prioritise the areas of desired action, and then, after necessary public debate and scrutiny, initiate domestic and regional legislation and the supporting framework for this purpose.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador who can be reached at [mzamir@dhaka.net](mailto:mzamir@dhaka.net)

**POST BREAKFAST**

**We have to remember that future foreign investment, economic development, poverty reduction and good governance in this region will depend on true and meaningful cooperation and coordination between the States. Terrorist groups have their own individual agenda and their priorities are not always consistent with national or regional goals. In Bangladesh, we have taken on the task of counter-terrorism through sincere measures against some terrorist groups like the JMB. Nevertheless, more needs to be done.**

Bangladesh. The authorities in these countries have sometimes claimed that terrorist activities taking place in their respective territories have been made possible through active support and planning originating in another neighbouring country. Such suggestions have, however, been denied on every occasion. This has obviously been done to refute any suggestion of extra-territorial state sponsored terrorism or failure of a state to contain extra-territorial activities of a terrorist group situated within its borders.

Time has now come for all of us in South Asia to understand that terrorism as a factor works against the interests of the region. Pious declarations in summit conferences are not enough. Hands-on cooperation, sharing of intelligence and other information are required to ensure effective counter-terrorism initiatives. Mutual suspicion must be replaced by coordination in terms of policy. This will be the only way to protect the rights of citizens.

Bangladesh has always been firm in its stated principles about combating terrorism. We should not

ter-terrorism strategy has become a crosscutting policy in all the EU's institutions. The objective of EU's counter-terrorism policy could generally be described as confronting the network of terror with networks against terror. They are attempting to achieve this through prevention, protection, pursuit and response measures. Before 9/11, counter-terrorism had been included in the EU's judicial and domestic policy, but following that date, it has now been re-classified as a decisive crosscutting task of security policy to be included in all EU policy strands.

The EU's activities in this field include the European Arrest Warrant, the introduction of joint investigation teams and the compilation of a list of people, groups or entities considered as possible terrorist threats. As expected, such a policy has not been totally criticism free. Some activists have pointed out that there is a likelihood of human rights violations within such a counter-terrorism matrix, particularly with regard to freedom of movement, speech, demonstrations and securing of justice.

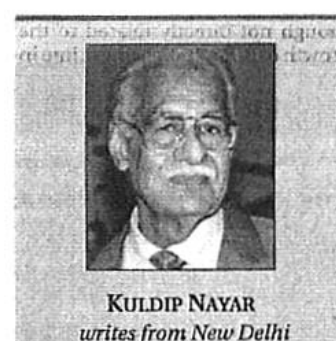
flexible intelligence cooperation between the EU-G6 (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Poland and the UK) and the adoption of the Prum Treaty to prevent cross-border terrorism.

The process that is underway in Europe has still not been successfully completed. This has been partially due to member states shying away from integrating policies into their own structures and legislation, particularly when they are seen as being counter to their national policies. The 27-Member EU has also run into another difficulty in their counter-terrorism effort viewed against the backdrop of established democratic traditions. Some states have openly expressed fears about anti-terrorist networks because they feel that this might eventually lead to loss of sovereignty, lack of accountability and disregard for personal rights. They think that the main EU actors in coordination with the principal EU institutions should, as a first step, set up trust building exercises through regular political dialogue. This, they believe, would be the best way forward to combat terrorism,

SAARC Ministerial Conference convened in New Delhi touched on an important issue -- that of bilateral agreements on mutual assistance in criminal matters. It is understood that this was done as a follow-up to the last Home Secretaries' Conference held earlier this year. A SAARC Convention on this subject, if approved, will establish a legal basis for regional cooperation with regard to uprooting the causes of crimes. It will then make available suspects for investigation, interrogation, enable the restraint and seizure of the proceeds and instruments of crime and facilitate the locating, freezing and confiscation of funds meant for acts of terrorism in the territory of either party or within the region of SAARC.

In South Asia, we should consider counter-terrorism, as a process that will require political will. I have mentioned in the previous paras that even a more advanced society like Europe is finding the way forward difficult. We, in South Asia in general, and in Bangladesh in particular, also have a tough task ahead. There are many ramifications that have to be addressed with vigour

## Kashmir pines for dignity



**KULDEEP NAYAR**  
*writes from New Delhi*

I know the accession of Kashmir to India is a sensitive point with us. Anybody questioning it is criticized in the worst language possible. I am, however, surprised to find lack of furore over a remark by Farooq Abdullah, former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir. He has said repeatedly that the killing of innocent people by the army "forces us to think whether signing of the Instrument of Accession by my father, Sheikh Abdullah and Maharaja Hari Singh, was fair, straight or not."

Coming as it does from a person like Farooq Abdullah the remark is a point to ponder over. It is no use feeling horrified. He does not become "anti-Indian" because he has said that the guilty in the security forces should not be spared. It can well be argued that the odd killings should not lead to the questioning of basics which even the constitution assembly of Jammu and Kashmir had endorsed and which had said that the accession could not be reopened. Yet, the fact of accession does not condone violation of human rights.

One, the number of those killed is

not negligible. It runs into thousands. Two, in the situation that prevails in the Kashmir valley, it is but natural for the people to look back and wonder whether their forefathers were right in opting for India. This does not mean that they want to join Pakistan. The question they ask after every human rights violation - this time the killing of a youthful baker at Damhal Hanjipur, south Kashmir in the "cross firing" - is how will all this end.

When Prime Minister

ble if he had condemned the killing of an army major the other day. Individual terrorism is as bad as state terrorism. Kashmiri leaders attack the latter, not he former. Moreover, individual terrorism has come to be associated with fundamentalism all over the world and condemned unequivocally. Kashmiri leaders would get heard if they were to denounce it.

A popular leader, Yasin Malik, has taken to the Gandhian way to draw attention to human rights viola-

unheard. Most of them have been living in camps for years. They should be rehabilitated in the valley. If the Kashmiri leaders were to take the initiative, the misgivings about them would disappear. Some Kashmiri leaders had once said that the future of pundits would be decided with the future of Kashmir. I hope they have changed their mind as they have hinted here and there.

Human rights violations have a lot to do with uncertain future of Kashmir. Talks are taking place

border.

Unstable domestic situation in Pakistan had stalled the talks. I am told that slowing down of the process was at the request of Islamabad. The outcome of elections in Pakistan will have to be awaited now. Some may argue that the solution should have been concretized when President Pervez Mushraff was at the helm of affairs. He had proposed a settlement which would make borders in Kashmir irrelevant and rule out any

people of Jammu and Kashmir have to be associated so that the settlement, if and when reached, has their endorsement. Any settlement without their involvement will be like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. New Delhi has held one meeting with the Hurriyat leaders and some others. Islamabad has not yet talked to the people in Azad Kashmir and in the upper regions.

Public in the two countries is yet to be told what the governments have been cooking. Even if the common man on both sides is sick and tired of the Kashmir problem, the elite, parochial and prejudiced, would like to have its pound of flesh. The solution which has evaded both countries for 60 years will not be easy to reach.

It would have been better if New Delhi had unilaterally reverted to the 1951 status when Kashmir enjoyed autonomy. It had all the subjects except three - external affairs, defence and communications. Some parties like the BJP will oppose going back to that status. Yet they have to be brought round. I see no better solution than the two countries giving to their side of Kashmir the type of autonomy which the Indian side of Kashmir enjoyed till 1952 when Sheikh Abdullah was arrested for asking India to make its promise on autonomy good.

Yet whatever the solution and how much time it takes, human rights violations cannot be tolerated. People feel helpless and shorn of dignity.

Kuldeep Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.

**BETWEEN THE LINES**

**At some stage the people of Jammu and Kashmir have to be associated so that the settlement, if and when reached, has their endorsement. Any settlement without their involvement will be like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. New Delhi has held one meeting with the Hurriyat leaders and some others. Islamabad has not yet talked to the people in Azad Kashmir and in the upper regions. Public in the two countries is yet to be told what the governments have been cooking.**

Manmohan Singh promises that the tolerance over the violation of human rights will be zero, it should have been so. True, a case has been booked against some army men and an investigation has been ordered. Yet, the Kashmiris shrug their shoulders and say that this is a familiar exercise which they have gone over earlier.

Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has not touched the question of accession but has said that "they (security forces) kill with impunity and the law of jungle prevails." These were strong words but he would have been more credi-

tions. He has undertaken a two-day fast. He was the first militant who has turned Gandhian now. Official denial of violations will not do for him or other Kashmiri leaders. The inquiry ordered by the government may not carry weight. New Delhi should request South Asian Human Rights (SAHR), headed by former Prime Minister Inder Gujral, to look into the killings and other allegations. Hundreds of people are said to be missing. SAHR should go into them as well. Whatever the inquiry and at whatever level, it will remain one-sided if the grievances of some 50,000 Kashmiri pundits remain

between India and Pakistan. But I do not know how far the back channel has helped the two sides find an amicable solution. I was told by a high-up a few weeks ago that "80 per cent of distance had been covered." Whatever that means, it indicates substantial progress. One salient feature of the understanding reached is that the Line of Control (LoC) will become the border and it would be softened. When Sardar Abdul Quyum, former Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir, was in Delhi last, he said he would not oppose if the settlement was reached on converting the LoC into

division on the basis of religion.

Yet, the arrangement like this without the involvement of political leaders in Pakistan would not have lasted. The thread can be picked up after elections there. I hope that political conditions in Pakistan would settle down by February-March because India may be in for mid-term polls if the Left withdraws support to the Manmohan Singh government as it has threatened to wind up the talks on the Indo-US nuclear deal by December 31. In such a scenario, any dialogue on Kashmir will have to wait for the election in India. At some stage the

## Sidr affected humanity and NGOs

HABIBUR RAHMAN

RECENTLY cyclone 'Sidr', the fiercest in known memory, has ravaged life in quite a number of southern districts of Bangladesh. About 4000 men-women-children were killed and innumerable got injured, many very seriously. Lakhs of houses and more than that number of cattle as well as thousands of acres of standing crops were destroyed. And also destroyed was 30 per cent of the world heritage Sundarbans with its exclusive fauna. Losing everything to the fury of cyclone 'Sidr' lakhs of people are inhumanly living under open sky in this winter. However, besides the government, NGOs and foreign donor agencies, various countries and people in general have come in a big way to help and rehabilitate the distressed. The local NGOs are perhaps trying their best to stand by the affected alongside the government. They have joined the reha-

bilitation effort exempting loan of cyclone affected members, suspending installment collection for certain period, providing interest-free loan as well as essential medicines and other necessities.

Immediately after the cyclone, the microcredit providing large NGOs like Grameen, ASA, BRAC suspended their installment collection, sent special team to affected areas to assess the loss and damage. On the basis of their report, the NGOs took up various programmes including exemption of loan and suspension of installment collection in comparatively less affected areas. They also took up programmes of providing interest-free loan for house construction and rehabilitation of affected members as well as new credit programmes. Besides, they donated cash to the relief fund of district administration and joint forces. One of the large NGOs of the country, ASA, like others such, announced suspension of installment collection on all kinds of

loans and took up the undermentioned programmes in aid of the cyclone affected members.

**Exemption of loan:** Loans of most affected 50 thousand members have been 100 per cent exempted amounting to about 25 crore taka. Loans of medium affected members have been 50 per cent exempted amounting to another 25 crore taka and the remaining 50 per cent has been rescheduled.

**Interest free loan:** One and half lakh affected members have been given interest-free loan of Taka 2000 each, amounting to Taka 30 crore. Repayment opportunity has been provided in installments spread over two years with six-month grace period. 100 per cent of members' savings deposit and insured amount, about Taka 30 crore, has been refunded.

**Suspension of installment:** In the four districts -- Barguna, Patuakhali, Bagerhat and Pirojpur -- most affected by cyclone, collection of installments has been

suspended for indefinite period. In affected other districts, all installment collection has been suspended till January 2008. In the cyclone affected areas Tk 16 lakh in cash and essential medicines worth Tk. 12 lakh have been distributed through district administration and joint forces. Soon the credit programme shall be started anew so that the distressed humanity can quickly resume activities to return to normal life.

Besides, construction of office-cum-cyclone centres is being contemplated in coastal districts. These offices will serve as shelters at the time of need. ASA is also contemplating sinking of deep tubewells in the coastal zone to alleviate drinking water crisis.

Grameen Bank is running various programmes in aid of cyclone affected people including agriculture rehabilitation, emergency food supply, medical and healthcare, education assistance in affected areas. Besides, it has suspended installment collection

from Sidr affected members till 30th June 2008. BRAC has also taken various programmes in aid of Sidr affected people. Other NGOs too have taken such programme according to their respective ability.

Partial reflection of NGO programmes in media

Majority of the reports that have come and are coming in newspapers and TV channels of the country on NGO activities in post cyclone period are unfortunately negative. Reading and seeing these, many may think that somehow collecting installment is the only objective of NGOs. That they don't have any programme or role in development of country and welfare of people. But it is otherwise in reality. Immediately after cyclone many NGOs have suspended realisation of installment for indefinite period. Asked their workers to assess the damage of members in their respective areas and stand by them. Engaged in relief and rehabilitation works

with cash money, food stuff, clothes and essential medicines.

Microcredit operating NGOs took steps to quickly refund hundred percent deposit and savings amount of members. And also took up many programmes including interest-free loan in aid of the distressed humanity. News of these programmes have not received proper importance in media. News of NGOs' positive activities gets dumped under negative news. As a result, the activities of NGOs are reflected in the media often wrongly and often partially which is certainly not desirable.

True, some incidents of installment collection have occurred due to misunderstanding and communication gap. Some workers did so as they didn't receive instruction from centre in time and as they didn't know. But these are only a few incidents. Collection of installments worth crores of taka due with lakhs of members in Sidr affected areas

has been kept suspended. A few incidents otherwise getting prominent media coverage may give such impression in many minds that NGOs only care about their own interest. It is unfortunate that for a few sparse incidents the whole NGO community stands accused. Presentation of news from negative angle may jeopardise the whole NGO programmes which may obstruct over all development efforts of the country. So it's an appeal to the media to give importance also to the NGOs constructive efforts in human welfare and development of the country while projecting their faults.

Many apprehend microcredit programme in respective areas may be threatened due to the cyclone. Credit worth hundreds of crores of taka of the NGOs shall lie in default. How much of such credit can be recovered is just uncertain. Specially, the small NGOs may be in real crisis. This may ultimately hamper the pov-

erty alleviation effort in the respective areas. Government cooperation is solicited to face this challenge.

Coordination in relief and rehabilitation programmes is a must to bring back the distressed humanity to normal life. Quick accomplishment of rehabilitation programme can be possible by involving government, NGOs, local people's representatives and general public together. The people of the affected area are trying to turn up again with enormous resilience. They are erecting houses, weaving fishing nets, constructing boats to start life anew. Just a small assistance can make their struggle for life much easy. Let us stand by them -- the Sidr affected humanity. We believe coordinated effort can make it possible to overcome this great disaster.

Habibur Rahman is Public Relations Officer of ASA.