## Our lessons from mumbai carnage

one at Mumbai? Is it not time that we ask

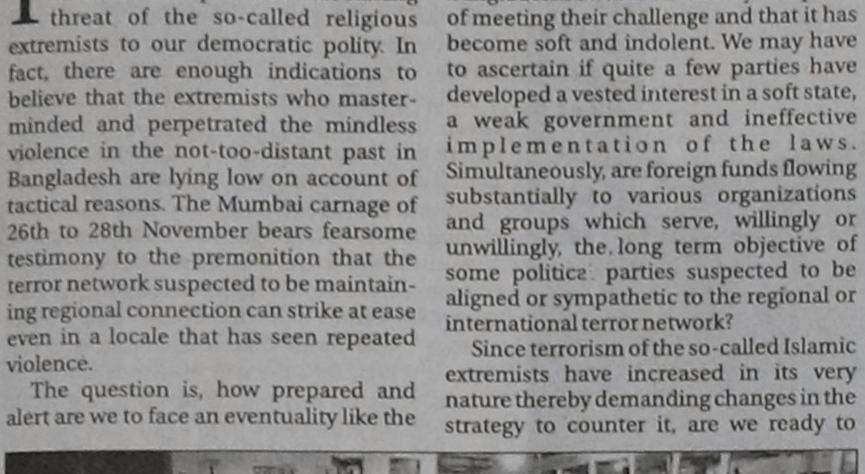
ourselves if a perception has developed

among the terrorist group that the

Bangladeshi State is inherently incapable

MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

T was only on 24th November last that this writer pointed to the lurking L threat of the so-called religious extremists to our democratic polity. In fact, there are enough indications to believe that the extremists who masterminded and perpetrated the mindless violence in the not-too-distant past in Bangladesh are lying low on account of tactical reasons. The Mumbai carnage of 26th to 28th November bears fearsome testimony to the premonition that the terror network suspected to be maintaining regional connection can strike at ease even in a locale that has seen repeated violence.



Since terrorism of the so-called Islamic extremists have increased in its very nature thereby demanding changes in the



Carnage at Chhatrapati Shivajee railway station in Mumbai.

#### STRAIGHT LINE

The objective should be to sap the extremist organization of its material base, stopping routes of material replenishment and seizing its existing assets. In other words, the proscription could be a central feature in our attempt at fighting the socalled religious militancy.

seriously study the problem, one may ponder. This is natural because we do not witness sufficient attempts being made to examine links between terrorist groups, the conditions in which they had spawned, the politician-militant nexus and other forms of patronage these groups receive, the proliferation of small arms leading to the growth of private armies etc. The question is, are we trying to appreciate all the factors that contribsecurity threats? Another specific question could be whether our failure to deal with the terrorist crimes is largely attributable to the inefficiency and corruption of the law enforcing machinery.

We have to know if in recent years the establishment had shown a great degree any covert sympathy had allowed the terrorists to cloak their methods in a garb of "Jehad".

fighting or controlling or even containing the so-called religious extremism, the first step is to understand and appreciate the very prevalence of such elements in a given society and its pernicious effects on the way of life of the citizens.

Unfortunately, in Bangladesh, we had been perilously late in awakening to the realities on ground. This is not to discredit anybody or apportion blame to any particular political party because the growth and muscle flexing of the obscurantist elements has not been limited to the tenure of one regime. Cumulative inaction of the regulatory authority resulting from a lack of appreciation by policymakers about the mindset and modusute to the 'quality and extent' of internal operandi of the extremists has brought us to the present state of affairs.

We need to be clear and definite about the threat perception. This is crucial because one cannot possibly treat a disease by denying its very existence. So from vague generalities if one has to venture into meaningful specifics, one of indulgence to terrorist groups and if has to make a pointed reference to our constitution. This is obvious because our constitution is still the way of life the citizens of Bangladesh have chosen for It needs to be borne in mind that in themselves; the constitution remains the solemn expression of the will of the people and the supreme law of the Republic. Article 11 of the said constitution says "The Republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of

the human person shall be guaranteed."

The above constitutional position pitted against the program of the extremists leave no room for any ambiguity. While at the macro-level, it may be a matter of political direction to sort out disagreements through dialogue and persuasion, the field-level operatives, both in uniform and plainclothes must have clear directives and plan of action for preventing violent subversive actions.

As part of strategy, the enforcement apparatus should succeed in separating an act of violence from its so-called politico-social context and thus criminalize a certain mode of political expression. In Bangladesh's context this line of action would be very appropriate because there is a greater need to reject the religious extremists' right to legitimize violence as part of a larger social movement.

The so-called Jihadists must not be bracketed with political dissenters, although such differentiation becomes difficult from an enforcement point of view. Laws for dealing with religious extremists should be such as to distinguish them from constitutionally oriented political elements.

In order to apprehend and to effectively punish the extremists, the definition of extremism or terrorism should be expanded to an act of association with an extremist group. The objective should be to include patrons and harbourers of the extremists and fringe supporters within the ambit of the law. The regulatory authorities should be quickly able to draw up a list of 'proscribed organizations' to which membership, funding or open support within the territory of Bangladesh shall be banned. This list should be periodically reviewed with an intention of making the fight against extremism in Daily Star.

line with threats to internal security.

The concept of the above noted proscription should be such as to make it applicable across the broadest spectrum. It should be precise and unambiguous. In addition, there must be clear measurement and list of acts that would constitute support to a 'banned organization'. The effort should be to broaden the applicability but narrow down the definition of extremism or terrorism itself.

The process of identifying an extremist should be discreet and transparent and enforcement efforts should be geared towards that. However, the extremists who use violence and the threat of violence as an instrument to propagate its view and ideology cannot be treated as political dissidents even though the roots are socio-political and governed by distinct and conflicting ideologies.

The government should attach greater importance to proscription and should be empowered to designate the extremist organization. The objective should be to sap the extremist organization of its material base, stopping routes of material replenishment and seizing its existing assets. In other words, the proscription could be a central feature in our attempt at fighting the so-called religious mili-

There is a challenge to our way of life. This must be realized by the mainstream political parties who are pledge-bound to uphold, protect and preserve our constitution. Therefore, the enemy must be caught by the forelock and be dealt with under the law. A sovereign Republic born out of a historic struggle entailing epic human sacrifices demand that. We must not fail.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a columnist contributor to The

## Hajj: One of the five pillars of Islam

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

OR all Muslims of the world Hajj is a pilgrimage to Holy Ka'ba. Situated in the holy city of Mecca the Ka'ba is the greatest place of worship for all Muslims. Hajj is one of the five strong pillars on which the grand edifice of Islam stands. Other four pillars are (1) "Iman" (Faith), (2) "Salat" (Daily 5-time prayers), (3) "Siam" (Fasting) and (4) "Zakat" (Poor's due). It is obligatory on the part of every able camel", coming after a fatiguing journey bodied, resourceful and adult Muslim to perform Hajj at least once in his life the difficulties of travel which pilgrims time.

Aliah), and his son Hazrat Ismail (A), and subsequently Hazrat Ibrahim's proclamation of pilgrimage asking people around him to visit Holy Ka'ba. In this connection I may refer to Ayats (Verses) 26 and 27 of Sura (Chapter) Hajj (the Pilgrimage) of the Holy Qur-an in which Allah Rabbul Alameen says:

Ayat 26: "Behold! We gave the site to Ibrahim, the (Sacred House) (saying): Associate not anything (in worship) with Me, and sanctify the House for those who compass it round, or stand up or bow, or

prayers," Ayat 27: "And proclaim the pilgrimage among men. They will come to Thee on foot, and (mounted) on every kind of camel lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain

As indicated in the aforesaid Ayat 27, as and when the Pilgrimage was proclaimed people came to it (the Sacred Hazrat Hazra's (consort of Hazrat person. House of Allah) from every quarter, near and far, on foot and mounted on "lean through distant mountain roads typifies disregard on account of temporal and One may be interested to know the spiritual benefits. It may not be irrelebackground of selection of the site of Holy vant to state the valuable commentation Ka'ba (the sacred house of Almighty of the world renouned commentator Allah), and its construction by Prophet and translator of the Holy Qur-an Allama Hazrat Ibrahim Khalilullah (friend of Abdullah Yusuf Ali on Pilgrimage or Hajj.

"Purity, Prayers, Honesty and Faith are implied in pilgrimage; in solemn sacrifice we express our gratitude and reverence to God, and our desire to share food with our poorer brethren: Striving and flighting in defence of truth when attacked are necessary as tests of self sacrifice."

A pilgrim has to pass through a number of stages right from his departure from his country till the time of coming back to his country. At the beginning of the first stage when he leaves his home

prostrate themselves (therein) in country for Mecca he has to put on an unsewed loose dress called "Ehram" after shaving his head. After his arrival in the city of Mecca he has to circumambulate seven times the Holy Ka'ba. This is called "Tawaf." From the city of Mecca the pilgrims go near two hills known as Safa and Marwa. Here they run between the two hills in commemoration of Ibrahim Khalilullah) search of water to quench the thirst of her infant son Hazrat Ismail (A).

Here the pilgrims also take and drink the water gushing out of the famous and miraculous Zam Zam well. From this place they go to the historical Plain of Arafah, a plain encircled by hills and situated at a distance of 7/8 miles from the city of Mecca, and the pilgrims reach here on the 9th day of the month of Zilhajj. Before noon pilgrims offer their "Zohar" (mid-day) and "Asar" (afternoon) prayers together in this large field of Arafah, and while praying they beseech Merciful Allah to forgive their sins.

The Plain of Arafah has a special significance for here the holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammed (peace be upon him), after realizing that he would not live longer, said interalia, in his famous and historic Farewell Pilgrimage Address in clear and unambiguous terms to a vast concourse

(i) Do not join any partner with Almighty Allah.

(ii) Do not steal other person's money and wealth.

(iii) From now on father will not be punished for the offence of the son, nor the son will be punished for the offence of his father. In the same way no person will be punished for the offence of another

(iv) Adultery is a heinous crime. (v) If a slave is capable and is of better calibre then he can he selected as the leader of the society.

(vi) Give the same food to your slave the food you take yourself, and give him the same dress the dress you put on yourself.

(vii) Remember, as you have your full rights over your wives, your wives have also similar rights over you.

(viii) I leave behind two very important things for your guidance, one is Al-Quran and the other is my Sunnah (sayings of the holy Prophet), and if you stick to them then you will not be in difficulty.

From the Plain of Arafah the pilgrims leave for Miria the same day, and on the following day, that is, on the 10th day of the month of Zul-hajj they sacrifice animals like camel, goat, ram, sheep etc in the name of Almighty Allah. The 10th day is considered as the great day of sacrifice in the name of Lord Creator Allah in commemoration of the supreme

tic work or begging

household

paid work

household.

· Less than 10 decimals of land

· No male active member in the

been created, programme organiz-

ers (PO) go on to the third phase of

the selection process. This entails a

thorough process of selecting the

type of asset a member would

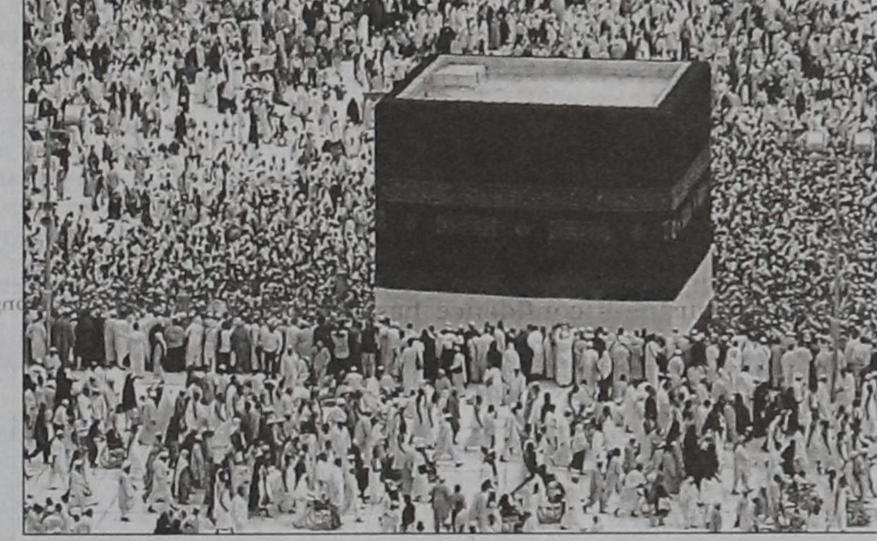
receive such as cows, goats, sheep,

chickens or vegetation. The BRAC

Staff determines whether the mem-

ber would be able to properly take

care of the cow in terms of whether



sacrifice made by Prophet Hazrat Prophet). Ibrahim Khalilullah by sacrificing his son Hazral Imail (A) at the behest of Merciful Allah.

After this the pilgrims return to Mecca and compass the Holy Ka'ba once again. Before all "Hajis" (pilgrims) leave Mecca for their respective countries they enviably go to the holy city of Medina and visit the holy Grave of the Prophet (pbuh) and the Masjid-e-Nabobi (the Mosque of the

There is another very important aspect of the institution of Hajj. Muslims from all over the world assemble in the holy city of Mecca and it gives them a great opportunity every year to exchange their views, discuss their problems and find solution of the problems. It also increases brotherly feelings among the Muslims.

The writer is a retired govt high official.

#### Feeling ripples of volunteerism

NGOZI OTTI

ESTERDAY, December 5, was the International Day of Volunteers. Volunteerism is an important indicator of trust and solidarity within and between communities. The ripples of volunteerism can trickle down to foster the empowerment of marginalized groups. It can engage local people in their own development. Volunteerism has remained a source of community strength, resilience, solidarity and social cohesion. The collective ripples of volunteerism can also provide inspiration to government and vice-versa.

Nations have been built through acts of volunteerism and volunteers continue to make huge contributions to peace and national develop-

nooks and crannies of the society. Acts of helping one another city is very common. Being susceptible to natural disasters like floods, crops failure, famines, epidemic, persistent river bank erosion, devastating cyclones tornados and endemic poverty clans and families had to depend on volunteers for assistance and support. Volunteerism provided the courage to our ancestors to continue with their settlements in one of the most uninviting deltas of the world. With the ability to adapt to diverse conditions volunteer forefathers of Bangladesh through thick and thin withstood challenging situations in the spirit of volunteerism and today we have a

coherent country called Bangladesh. The world community is here to be with Bangladesh in the spirit of volunteerism. Countries like Japan, Canada, USA, Korea, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria and scores of voluntary organizations and the United Nations through the United Nations Volunteer Program (UNV) are here. Noozi Officis UNV program Officer Bandadesh

with wealth of technical expertise and skilled volunteers to work to work together so that Bangladesh can reap the fruits from the ripples and trickles of volunteerism.

However volunteers need to work in an enabling environment where volunteerism can thrive and make sustainable impacts. We owe it to our volunteer forefathers to reignite and sustain the candle of volunteerism they lighted decades ago. There is need to review and update national policies on volunteerism in Bangladesh. Also corporate involvement in volunteerism is a huge area | of abject poverty compared to the that can be explored especially in the fight against poverty. However, few businesses undertake charitable activities.

The International Day of Volunteers is a day for groups, organizations, communities and coun-In Bangladesh, expressions of tries to recognize individuals that volunteerism can be felt in all the volunteer their time and the contributions that volunteers make in the society. It is a day dedicated to generating awareness and interest in volunteers who work towards making life better for others and to inspire others to get involved to do their parts to make the world a safer and healthier place.

It is a day to bring the attention of the government to the huge potentials embedded into volunteerism as a tool for national development.

It is a day to reflect on ways to integrate volunteerism into development programs at all levels of the society.

There is a volunteer in each and every one of us and as volunteers alike we advocate for policies that will promote volunteerism at the national level.

Together we can ignite the volunteer spirit again. Let us expand and add value to the ripple effects of volunteerism that our fore fathers left behind.

# Challenging the frontiers of poverty reduction

WAMEQ AZFAR RAZA

HERE is always a group of people who slip through the cracks of every form of poverty alleviation strategy tried and tested until now. Be it the manual labourers living daily from hand to mouth or the women and children who work in our houses in exchange of meagre sums of money, different circumstances always prevent them from participating in the elaborate development panaceas that are implemented. They generally tend to fall into the last quintile of the income distribution and therefore are sucked into a poverty trap and it takes a lot more effort to get them out run-of-the-mill strategies such as this problem, BRAC implemented a programme that has not been used anywhere in the world before, aptly named Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction: The Specially Targeted Ultra Poor (STUP).

visit one such phase of the STUP programme in Gangachara, Rangpur and was astounded by the degree of improvements in the overall level of prosperity in the notoriously impoverished area. There were cows, goats and chick-

Khaleda's pride possession

ens everywhere. This was fascinating especially considering the fact that this was the monga capital of Bangladesh and the livestock to

human ratio was the lowest compared to all others. The STUP programme identifies . No productive assets in the target groups in an interesting manner. The programme is initially kept a secret when a three member group of officials approach a target village for the first time. A staff draws a rudimentary outline of the village's important landmarks such as the main roads, ponds, trees, schools etc. on the sand and the villagers are actively encouraged to provide more input as to hone in on more details. Over the next couple of hours, a pretty accurate map is drawn on the sand that includes not microfinance. In an effort to counter only all the landmarks, but also detailed indications of where each villager's houses lay. The focus of the discussion is then steered towards relative wealth quintiles of

each household. ensure their eligibility in the programme. The STUP programme has five criteria of which at least three need to be met to qualify for inclusion:



· Dependent upon female domes-

she will have access to grazing grounds or will have access to enough room and facilities to house the asset. After the selection process has been completed, approximately 18 to 20 members are grouped for their initial training. Following the initial training Each of the members of the period comes the exciting part of I recently had the opportunity to lowest quintile is then thoroughly the process for the members as this interviewed in their homes to is when they finally receive their assets along with corrugated roofs to house their cows and or goats and a free cage for the birds. A purchasing committee is created by the local BRAC office in each area consisting of the branch manager, an accountant and another who holds

expertise in both the local prices and the quality of the assets being

purchased. There is a continuous training and support services which is most crucial for success. As a part of the comprehensive package being provided to the STUP members, regular health services are provided, especially to those who are pregnant. Basic medications are provided free of charge to the members. As part of the hands on training scheme, vaccinations and veterinary care for the livestock are provided free to the STUP members during the two year programme. Another notable part of the

programme that I was extremely impressed with is the Gram Daridro Bimochon Committee (GDBC).

the simple ingenuity of the concept. It is essentially a committee consisting of eleven members. The way GDBC works is by creating a socially Children of school going age take cumulative pressure on those who may be in a position to help the ultrapoor. One example would be that if a member could not afford to buy After the final selection list has bamboos to patch up her broken wall, the GDBC will create social pressure on those with ample resources to provide the bamboos at

a discounted price or free if possible.

Fund raising also is one of the

GDBC's great advantages. In Gangachara, the GDBC was able to convince some teachers to provide scholarships to the children of the less-fortunate without having to study with them privately, which was quite a strong tradition in that area. As part of the package, BRAC also provides free legal services to the STUP members.

At the 18th month mark, as the members are getting ready to graduate, as a part of the ongoing training processes, they go through a confidence building course. A more advanced course is again attended by the members just before the 24th month mark. These confidence building courses are designed to instil confidence and self assurance within the members so that when they go out in to the world on their own again, they will be able to hold

their own. Of course even after the programme officially ends, the members still continue to enjoy a number of benefits such as the health programme, education for their children and lastly enjoy the feeling of knowing that there is a safety net for them at the BRAC office in the case of an emergency as the BRAC staff are unofficially on call 24 hours a day.

Aside from the aforementioned, the members now have the option of joining the BRAC Village Organization (VO) where they will be able to reap further benefits from the field staff such as participating microfinance programme; enrolling into the savings scheme and receiving free life insurance. In a william in Cananchara an

eighteen strong group of women belonging to a BRAC-VO were already sitting down in the predetermined space, ready with their loan books, activity logs and STUP membership cards. The first in their list of activities are reciting the vows they take every morning that go along the lines of sending their children to school, washing up before eating and washing up after using sanitary latrines, preventing spousal abuse and child marriages. The smiles on their faces are signs of modest prosperity with even better days ahead. The visible disparity between the graduates and those just starting the programme are so stark that it made me smile with optimism thinking that the new group would reach this epitome of achievement and self confidence in just a matter of months if they work with diligence and perseverance.

Less than two years ago, each of these women was suffering from abject poverty with no end in sight to the suffering. Where the next meal will come from was the only question in mind. Khaleda mentioned that at one point before joining the program, she often had to beg for food for herself and her three children as finding work was next to impossible in most instances.

During the selection process, the village members identified her as one of the destitute and she received a cow and two goats. Along with the assets and the STUP membership card, she received a weekly stipend of Tk. 70, 400 gm of rice and 400 gm of lentils and weekly detailed hands-on and classroom training sessions for two years on the practical aspects of taking care of her newly acquired livestock. Within the year of her starting date, her cow had a calf and her goats had a calf, improving her life quite dramatically by providing her with multiple sources of income.

After graduation, she now had enough financial stability to join the BRAC micro finance programme, taking on a loan to further her financial security.