

# Disaster returns

ABU YUSUF ZOBAERULLAH

It is said that when we are at the helm of power or leading a movement, taking any lesson from history is sometimes difficult, especially when emotional involvement or philosophical bias is present. When a hostile intelligence service succeeds in conducting a well-timed tragic action like the BDR rebellion, it is usually not the end of their wicked design. Successful destruction of Twin Tower, Moscow bombing, Bali (night club) bombing, Islamabad/Mumbai hotel bombing and shooting spree are few recent examples. HIS utilized them only as a catalyst or as initiation of a well devised and elaborate objective.

Twin Tower has caused destruction of two Muslim countries. Moscow bombing provided legitimacy for the destruction of Chechnya's Muslims; Bali bombing separated East Timor from Indonesia. Mumbai bombing brought two neighbouring countries at the brink of war where Muslim Pakistan is critically positioned between global and regional threat with an apparently unsolvable problem of religious extremism, the Taliban movement. Taking a closer look at all these recent incidents, it is not very difficult to find a pattern. Hence, should we consider the BDR uprising as an isolated event and it ends here? As we have failed to detect and act properly before the incident, how can we be sure that we are capable of preventing the rest of the plan which for sure will have a greater impact on our national security?

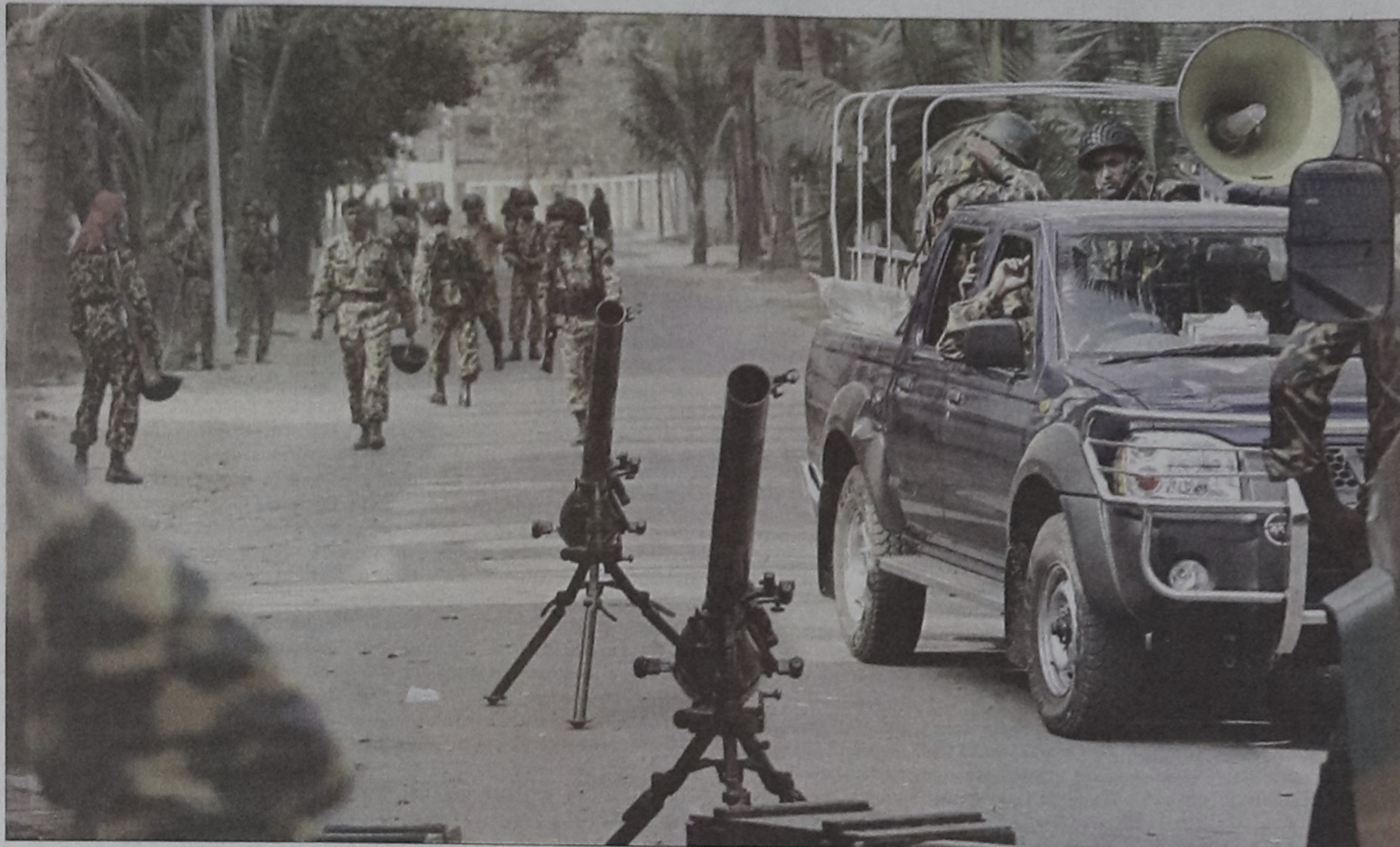
Did the brutal killings take place only for the flimsy demands as said in the media or, was it just a spur of the moment action? Within the next few days, after the initial investigations, it had become obvious that this had been the act of an ingeniously planned, timed and executed event which has the potential to serve the purpose of several groups in fulfilling their hidden agenda. Now to uncover the total plot will take some trained mind with meticulous eyes and ears to follow trails left by the event. The subsequent questioning of the suspects

will provide the missing pieces to complete the puzzle. This must be achieved before the trail gets cold and the evidence starts to decay or simply disappear. The assistance of FBI or Scotland Yard can be and should be used only in this area of the investigation.

Army officers along with their men are placed in charge of the crisis. Emotion is percolating fast; grief has set in which may hinder their effort in handling such a delicate and crucial task. Unfortunately, the situation failed to produce a common platform for our leaders to stand together and join hands before the bubbles of emotions burst to fulfill the subsequent agenda of the insurgents. No one is expected to deny the emotional outburst at the loss of the loved ones but we must accept that the country has been brought on the threshold of another Kansat, Fulbari coal mine upsurge, 68 districts bombing and such. It is rather pathetic that this poor country is at the mercy of such hostile forces which are able to stage a plot at any time and place of their choosing. By now they have achieved two tiers of successes: one, by killing a large number of senior officers and then infusing sufficient emotional hate in the mind of the loved ones, including rank and file of the armed forces. The intelligence organizations that have failed to detect it may not be able to prevent the next threat or the subsequent ones from happening.

We have failed repeatedly, as our human intelligence and technological intelligence is far inferior to the insurgents. It is evident from the fact that there wasn't any prior indication to the situation by our intelligence authority. Structurally we lack in human intelligence as in most cases the intelligence departments are run by loyalists with their own personal or political agenda, not by the professionals who dedicated their life to protect the nation and its people. During peace time we cannot fight the brutal war of intelligence with such professionally deaf and dumb organizations. Such incidents leave a far more brutal and devastating impact than a conventional war as we have witnessed last week.

When democratic environment is



affected by corruption, decision makers prefer to put their cronies in administrative echelon; true professionalism never gets a chance. It is virtually impossible for a general duty military or civil bureaucrat to run an intelligence organization efficiently. However, the idea of someone in uniform running such organizations is the biggest blunder that the Third World leaderships are committing recurrently, making them constantly vulnerable in the hands of hostile forces.

A politician is not expected to be a professional intelligence person; he or she only has to know how to select a professional for

the job. To be a professional one needs three distinct inputs: training, knowledge and experience. First world, other than some exceptions, follow it religiously; even our neighbor India is meticulous in this regard. The mindset of these selected people may vary from being level-headed to the very authoritative. But it is they who are responsible to create an environment that helps the national leaders to make the right decision. In today's highly contested global economic market, a visionary leader who can lay the foundation of such an idea can bolster the national interest to last forever. If these organizations are run by unskilled

persons, the country will suffer similar consequence over and over again.

Preparation for war of intelligence is protracted in nature but the final action is sudden and short in duration. Ultimate failure is not in the debatable pitfalls in managing the crisis; the failure is in sensing and monitoring the motivational condition of target audience that has been making a gradual shift from disciplined state of mind to a frustrated, hateful and explosive one. That is where we are failing constantly. After every incident we get bogged down in investigation or managing the hatred mongers. Solution of this national crisis lies not

in blame game or in expression of emotional venom; true solution is in unity not in disharmony, which the war mongers would try hard to achieve.

At the end the lesson is, a nuclear scientist cannot conduct a simple surgery and a professional surgeon cannot stitch a shirt. We need professionals to run the intelligence organizations. Our continuous failure in selecting the right man for the right job will provide opportunity for our enemies to strike us any time of his choosing over and over again.

The author is a freelancer.

## Tragedy strikes Bangladesh



BRIG GEN JAHANGIR KABIR, *ndc, psc (Retd)*

TRAGEDY has again struck Bangladesh at Pilkhana BDR Headquarters. The nation lost more than sixty brave sons. The people join in anger but with solemnity with the armed forces and the soldiers without uniform to pay homage to the departed souls and pray that the families have the strength to bear the irreparable loss. They died young and premature, leaving their families and relatives in utter pain. They were always ready to die for the nation but why at the BDR HQ? Who killed them and why? At this hour of grief, we can only ask questions. The answers must come from the inquiries. The nation wants everything on the table and exemplary punishment for the murderers.

Besides evidences and clues, some principles provide logic to proceed on such inquiries. Most obvious is the 'beneficiary' theory. Who could be the beneficiary of these murders—individually, collectively, politically or internationally? It could not happen without hidden motives. There may be more than one criminal motive. While there must be causes for such massacre the beneficiary theory can also be misleading. The murderers, specially the cold-blooded conspirators, always use the known discontentment to infuriate the simple-minded soldiers to accomplish the hidden motives.

It is difficult to accommodate the dimension and brutality of mass killings of leaders as an outburst of anger. Experience says there was always a false front for the troubles in Bangladesh. Red headbands and masks seen among the rebels do not appear instantly without planning.

The BDR men are educated and alert; knowl-

edge and logic is no longer confined to academic certificates. Every large organization has some demands all the time; the conspirators might have camouflaged the real intention under the grievance of the jawans. I did not serve in the BDR but had operational and training association with them. BDR was built in bits and pieces for decades to be a fine lot of soldiers to augment our defense needs at the time of crisis. A great national defense asset has destroyed by the conspirators.

We alarmingly hear some ammunition and equipment found in Peelkhana that do not match the government issued ones and some unidentified vehicle went in and out during the trouble. There are also talks of millions of taka and dollars distributed among the troublemakers. These clues must be dug into without preconceived ideas and wishful thinking.

Bangladesh has a free market of sophisticated arms and ammunitions in the underworld. Not long ago, ten truckloads of sophisticated arms and ammunition were captured at Chittagong port area from the wholesale merchants of death. When we fail, we fall back upon God to hide our failures; only He knows how many truckloads passed through the hands of the clandestine purveyors of illegal weapons. Manmade or natural, Bangladesh is developing a naïveté to sleep on live volcanoes only to be caught in a whirlwind of crisis. We must have all the facts now and corrective measures to stop such tragedies in the future.

Where are national intelligence agencies at this hour of tragedy? Why couldn't they alert about the conspiracy or mutiny in time? Why did they fail to cover, once the shooting started, live from inside Peelkhana? Several thousand people lived inside Peelkhana which included civil-

ians. Why were reliable agents not planted routinely in such a big-armed establishment in the heart of the metropolitan Dhaka, adequately reinforced when people coming from all over Bangladesh in connection with the BDR week?

One fails to accommodate such failure. If there were only one SOS message from a reliable agent about the gruesome killing of officers, the armed forces could have immediately interjected to save many valuable lives and apprehend the killers. They have been digging and dumping the dead bodies in mass graves, manholes and burning them while the nation remained helplessly ignorant for more than thirty hours. How the nation is going to take these thirty hours of inaction as a simple lapse? How the NDTV (India) by noon of the day-1 knew that the DG and the entire top leadership had been killed when our government and media channels remained mum.

Did the intelligence agencies have any input in the negotiations with the killers? How had DAD Tauhid, now flushed out by our brave boys in RAB, become acting DG of BDR? When the TV channels started breaking news about the self-appointment of Tauhid after meeting the PM, why the government did not deny it immediately. Why was not all the exits blocked to prevent the killers escaping? The nation must have answers to these mind-boggling questions.

When there is fire, the answer is the fire brigade, for the mutiny at Peelkhana army was the only answer and reportedly they were ready. Negotiations should be for saving lives.

Many may ask as to who is going to take the political responsibility of the gruesome killings in Peelkhana? If the politicians want to confine politics to fighting for position only, they may have the chair but cannot earn respect. Let the oldest political party convert the tragedy into strength following the parliamentary traditions.

The nation in utter shock cannot but resent the mud slinging in the parliament between government and the opposition. For the survival and growth of democracy, the occupant of the august house must go with the mood of the nation. The opposition is greatly weakened almost to the detriment of the parliamentary system and the government has a responsibility to be conciliatory the opposition, particularly at a time like this.

The government must reply to the allegations made by the opposition, but counterattack is not unnecessary it is also counterproductive. Look at President Obama, after barely two months people are almost forgetting that he is a Democrat. We can learn to be great by closely observing the contemporary greats in the profession of politics.

The author is a freelancer.

## Firm up crisis management mechanism

BRIG. GEN (RETD) MD. ABDUR RASHID

THE tragedy of February 25, 2009 left the government in complete disarray. A crisis of great magnitude was left to be handled by political soldiers. Crises management norms were shunned and a true live show of brinkmanship was put on live display for all to see. Governance was put to test in and around the Headquarters of BDR.

Unfortunately, February 25 has truly exposed the weaknesses in the crises management abilities of the newly elected Government of Bangladesh. It was a mistake of the government to think of only a political solution to a problem with military implications and the whole country ended up paying a heavy price for it. Whether it is the end of the crisis or is it just the beginning of something more sinister is for anybody to guess.

Militancy and terrorism has taken root in Bangladesh and everyone has a general idea how deep it is and who are its patron, both within and without Bangladesh. Politicians in Bangladesh have played the blame game well in the past and no unified attempt was made to devise a unified national policy to face the menace in the past. We think the present government has a decent mandate to draw up a national policy in this regard with the inclusion of its opponents both inside and outside the parliament.

The BDR mutiny has hit the government out of the blue. As per the crises managers of the government, initially they had underestimated the barbarity and severity of the mutiny and we feel that the government should be given the benefit of doubt in this regard. The crisis is ongoing and the government cannot sit by and get busy justifying its various acts both during and after the crises. It is important to gather the forces of democracy and sanity with wider participation from our development partners if necessary to combat this crisis both in short and long term.

One thing is stark and clear, nobody just wanted to kill so many of our Army Officers with such efficiency on a single day befouling all those who tried to solve the mutiny peacefully. The enemy, who wanted to wipe out the Army Officers, must be having some heinous plot with long term implications. It cannot under any circumstances

be considered a mutiny of the soldiers for petty matters. Everything failed that day. Intelligence failed, and the saddest thing is common sense failed also. Bangladesh will be toothless without a credible deterrent in the body of the Armed Forces of the country and the government must do everything possible to help the Armed Forces overcome its grief in the first place and then use them for tackling this serious conspiracy against the government and the people of Bangladesh.

BDR mutiny has rung alarm bells in different capitals of the world and all eyes are set on the Government of Bangladesh to see what action it takes. The government must not take it lightly and stop bickering about the righteousness of its actions and respond to the long term exigencies and implications of the mutiny. Time is not ripe to see the crises managers justifying their initial response to the crisis to gain political mileage. The people of the country and all concerned have already given the benefit of doubt to the government and are anxiously waiting for concerted and decisive action from the government to stop the aftermath and secondary attacks, if any, of the mutineers and their collaborators.

The government must not take the concerns of the world community lightly as they are seriously concerned and want the government to dig deeper into the conspiracy and go after the real planners and perpetrators of the heinous act. Western development partners of Bangladesh want to see Bangladesh emerge stronger and "in control" from these crises as it matters for the success of their longterm development and aid commitments to Bangladesh. Bangladesh stands to lose its credibility if it continues not to acknowledge the immediate strategic importance of unearthing the truth behind the mutiny.

In the times and aftermath of any crisis any elected government must have ample faith in itself and demonstrate it to the people and the world because crisis is known to have created opportunities and provided strength to democratically elected governments in different parts of the world. Our newly elected government must come out of its partisan cocoon and shed the inefficient appointees if it really wants to deliver on its promises.

The author is a freelancer.