

## Cooperative action to combat terrorism

Part of the discussion focused on the ways in which a counter-terrorism approach based on sound legal procedures and respect for the rule of law can strengthen international cooperation, making it more likely that terrorists will be properly brought to justice.

MIKE SMITH

SOUTH Asia has probably suffered more than any other region in the world from the dreadful scourge of terrorism. People, whose lives and those of their friends and relatives, are irrevocably changed in an instant when a suicide bomber blows up a vehicle in a crowded market place or bus station, struggle to understand why there are groups that want to bring so much pain to innocent civilians. There are too many examples to recall them all.

A year ago, the world witnessed the horrific attacks in Mumbai, watching helplessly as gunmen rampaged through hotels and the city's train station. Sri Lanka has suffered for decades from acts of terrorism, and time will tell if the government's military response and its implementation of necessary confidence-building measures will be adequate to finally put an end to the violence.

And the international community living in the region is not immune to terror either. Just last month, the offices of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Islamabad were hit by a suicide bomber while in Afghanistan five UN staffers were killed in a guesthouse, and again we in the UN family were forced to mourn colleagues who were simply in these places to do their job.

These are just the spectacular examples of the violence that permeates the region. And yet, law enforcement personnel in South Asia, who serve on the frontlines in implementing counter-terrorism measures, have very limited opportunities to interact at an operational level with their counterparts in the region when this is essential in the fight against terrorism. Funding, explosives and technical know-how, all critical elements of a terrorist attack, flow too easily across borders. Those who fight terrorism in the region need to be able to collaborate with their counterparts in other countries if they are to have any hope of disrupting an attack and capturing those who are planning it.

There is also a lack of a common vision in the region for confronting terrorism in a manner that fully incorporates respect for the rule of law, human rights and human dignity, thereby increasing the chance for success over the long term.

In an effort to remedy these shortfalls, the United Nations, in association with the government of Bangladesh and the Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI), this week organised a meeting that brought together working-level law enforcement experts of the region.

Police officers and prosecutors from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka --

along with observers from the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) -- met for three days in Dhaka, sharing their experiences and the lessons they learnt in fighting the very real threat of terrorism.

The regional workshop gave them an opportunity to enhance their counter-terrorism capacities by discussing the role of the police and prosecution services in combating terrorism and the challenges they face in leading effective investigations and prosecutions. Part of the discussion focused on the ways in which a counter-terrorism approach based on sound legal procedures and respect for the rule of law can strengthen international cooperation, making it more likely that terrorists will be properly brought to justice.

The meeting also provided a forum for raising their awareness of the latest available investigation and forensic technologies and techniques. Discussions between participants were facilitated by technical experts from Interpol, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Jakarta Centre for Law Enforcement Cooperation (JCLEC), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the government of Australia. Resources to enable the meeting to be held were provided by the Australian and Danish governments.

Of course one meeting, even a successful one like this, achieves little on its own. What will truly drive progress in combating terrorism is a sustained commitment on the part of governments to enact legislation, to build the institutional structures and operational mechanisms that can make frontline law enforcement officers and prosecutors effective. What is also critical is an effort by all governments to overcome mutual distrust and political difference sufficiently to allow their agen-



Unity is key in the fight against them.

cies to cooperate so they can all better address the common enemy -- the terrorist groups.

The United Nations recognises that not all countries can do this on their own -- in most cases there exists the political will but not necessarily the practical expertise. The office that I head, the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), in partnership with other departments and organisations in

the UN family, has been assisting countries with building their ability to effectively combat terrorism through a number of measures.

This workshop is, however, a milestone. It is our hope that greater interaction among working-level law enforcement experts in the region will not only enhance technical expertise in countering terrorism, but will also serve as a confidence-building measure which could help promote greater

regional cooperation among frontline officials involved in combating terrorism and other forms of serious crime. It is the first step of many necessary to give countries a fighting chance to prevent terrorist attacks before they happen and to bring the perpetrators to justice.

Mike Smith is Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Director of the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED).

## The shadow of November 7, 1975

Bangladesh is still wrestling with the shadow of the momentous events of November 1975, which marked the beginning of a dark chapter of Bangladesh history under prolonged military rule with brief interludes of quasi-democratic dispensations.

ABDUL HANNAN

THE previous army-backed caretaker government struck off November 7, observed as revolution and national solidarity day by BNP, from the calendar of government holidays, but it is not understood how BNP can claim the glory, if any, of the occasion.

Many questions regarding the concatenation of unfurling bizarre events -- from the assassination of President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on August 15, 1975, to assumption of presidency by Khandaker Mushtaq, the replacement of Major General Shafiqullah as army chief by Ziaur Rahman on August 23, the counter-coup by Brig. Khaled Musharraf on November 2 by taking over as army

chief, the jail killing of 4 Awami league leaders on midnight November 3, hours prior to the safe passage out of the country of the majors and captains involved in the coup of August 15, the soldier-people uprising masterminded and led by Col. Taher on November 7, followed by the killing of Khaled Musharraf, release of Ziaur Rahman from house detention by Col. Taher and finally the resumption of the post of chief of army staff by Ziaur Rahman on November 7, Col. Taher's arrest and execution one year later on charge of causing instability and disaffection in the army -- are shrouded in mystery. It remains for future historians to unravel the truth.

One thing, however, is certain to those of us who were distant witnesses to

those events. Ziaur Rahman was no author of the so-called revolution and national solidarity day, but he seems to have reaped the harvest of those momentous events of August 15 to November 7. Ziaur Rahman seems to have taken the leadership on November 7 by taking the wind out of the sails of Col. Taher, out maneuvering him. Khaled Musharraf got eliminated in a classic ruthless drama of power struggle.

BNP, in essence, has been celebrating November 7 as the day of the ascendancy to power by Ziaur Rahman by masquerading under the so-called sepo-people revolution and national solidarity day.

Khaled Musharraf, may be out of ambition for power, tried to end the grave danger and deep uncertainty of the long nightmare of siege and stand-off from August 15 to November 2 by the coup of the majors and captains, safely anchored in Banga Bhaban and defended by armoured tanks, by bargaining their safe dispatch out of the country without risking a bloody military confrontation.

The chief of the army, Ziaur Rahman, remained a mute spectator, without the

least resistance and reprisal against the criminal indiscipline and unlawful authority of those few recalcitrant army officers during those dire and dreadful days.

Bangladesh is still wrestling with the shadow of the momentous events of November 1975, which marked the beginning of a dark chapter of Bangladesh history under prolonged military rule with brief interludes of quasi-democratic dispensations. There was a distinct shift of emphasis in its domestic and foreign policy.

Democracy, secularism and regulated command economy gave way to authoritarian rule, political Islam, laissez faire liberalised free-market economy glorifying the virtues of globalisation without the least concern for equitable social justice, insatiable greed and unbridled corruption of the entrenched rich and powerful business and bureaucratic vested interests.

There was significant cooling of relations with the Soviet Union and India, warmer relations with Pakistan and increasing bonhomie with the West, particularly America. Clearly the casualty was the spirit and inspiration

of the liberation war.

Ziaur Rahman, as president, passed an ordinance granting indemnity to the killers. Not only that, he also rewarded the self-confessed killers by appointing them as diplomats in our foreign missions. It is intriguing how, despite being a valiant freedom fighter and incorruptible in personal life, he compromised with principles and forged his new political party, BNP, with people of questionable background and disparate political affiliations and sympathies.

He assembled a cabinet comprising some persons known for their anti-liberation credentials and pro-Pakistan sympathies, only to be able to whet his vaulting political ambition and consolidate his unchallenged authority.

As a measure of political expediency to pander to the Islamic constituency, he struck off secularism as one of state principles in the constitution. He sent shock waves across the nation when he exonerated Jamaat-e-Islam leader Gulam Azam, accused of collaborating with the Pakistan occupation army in their campaign of ethnic cleansing, extermination and genocide of Bengalis,

and allowed his return home from his safe haven in Pakistan.

He was instrumental in annulling the Collaborators Act in 1975, and 11 thousand detained prisoners of war accused of collaborating with the Pakistan army's atrocities went scot-free.

He rehabilitated and legitimised the Jamaat-e-Islam party by amending Article 38 of the Constitution, which disallowed political parties based on religion. That step was a precursor to the emergence of religious fundamentalism in the country, which gradually gained ground and later gathered full steam as a threat of militant Islamic terrorists during Khaleda Zia's coalition rule with the Islamic parties, including Jamaat-e-Islam.

His successor, General Ershad, who was more catholic than the Pope, established Islam as the state religion by amending the constitution.

Is this a case of a once feted liberator turning oppressor? Or a case of a revolution devouring its own children? Politics, indeed, is a combustible substance.

Abdul Hannan is a former Press Counsellor, Bangladesh Mission to the UN, New York.

## An extraordinary life

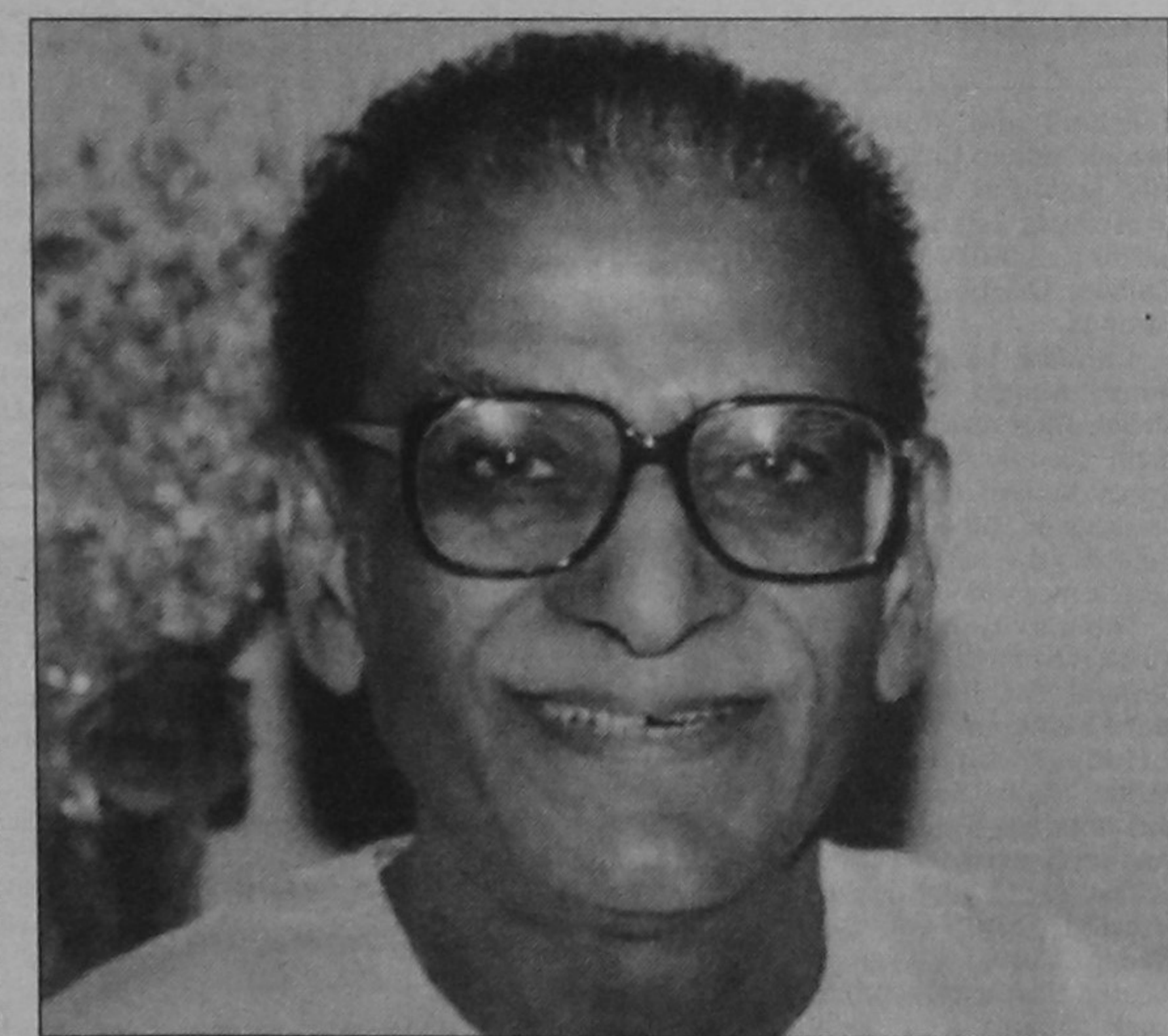
S. ABDUL HAMID

GREATNESS tends to be measured more by worldly accomplishments than by character. On both counts my late father, Mr. Abdul Hannan, stands tall. His long life was a sharp contrast to the excesses and wastage that we see. He was born on October 5, 1926 in Burdwan, West Bengal. He died on October 2, 2009.

Two factors made it highly improbable that he would one day rise to high office. When he was seven, his father died. In the neighbourhood where he grew up, a young boy was more likely to get attracted to gambling than to books. *Abba* steered clear of the distractions around him. He always topped his class in a place where Muslim students were a small minority. Before the matriculation examination, his teachers believed he would be the first Muslim student to top the overall merit list under Calcutta University and receive the Haji Mohammad Mohsin Award.

He narrowly missed the award but stood 4th in the overall merit list, and first in the Presidency Division. In intermediate examination he stood 5th in the merit list of Calcutta University. The improbable journey of his life took him in 1946 to Bengal Engineering College near Calcutta. In 1950 he received B.Sc. degree in civil engineering. In 1951 he joined PWD in Dhaka.

In 1952 he was one of the first Bengali recipients of Ford Foundation and Fulbright Scholarships, under which he obtained M.S. in civil engineering from Purdue University, US. Rather than pursue Ph. D. degree he returned home to serve a new nation. As an assistant engineer he served in Siddhirganj Power Station and



Mr. Abdul Hannan

then Dhaka Municipality. After a 2-year stint in Pakistan he joined EPWAPDA in 1959. In 1968 he was awarded gold medal for meritorious service. In 1970 he was a chief engineer. In 1977 he was deputed to the Planning Commission as division chief of Water Resources Division. He was often in charge of multiple divisions until his retirement in 1983.

*Abba* was involved with the design, planning, or execution of some landmark civil engineering projects: Kaptai Dam, Muhuri Project, DND Project, GK Project, Teesta Project, etc. He worked in all phases

of civil engineering: planning, design, and construction. Mr. Abul Hayat -- 1961 graduate of BUET -- remarked: "I do not know of any other engineer with expertise in all phases of civil engineering. He was a complete engineer." He further remarked: "Planning Commission offered him the opportunity to serve the nation at a macro level. He has the unique distinction of working not only in all aspects of engineering but also in policy making at the macro level for seven years."

The striking aspects of his life are many: his amazing memory and mental

faculty, his discipline and punctuality, his sense of justice and equity, his care and compassion for people, his honesty and sincerity, his Spartan and austere life.

One statement captures the strength of his mental acumen. About forty years back when I was in Class X at Rajshahi Cadet College our Vice-Principal Dr. Abdus Salam remarked in our class: "Hamid's father was one year senior to us. He could not only solve all problems in Chakravarty's arithmetic textbook, he also had all the answers in his memory."

His whole life was governed by clockwork precision. By looking at his daily activities we had a rough sense of the time of the day. To him time was a blessing not to be wasted.

His sense of justice and equity is reflected in the fact that none of his five sons and one daughter can say he preferred one to the others. The same goes for his 18 grandchildren. Engr. Abul Hayat commented: "As director, planning for three years he was responsible for selecting consultants for Wapda. He treated them with such impartiality that none felt he preferred any firm unduly. He treated his subordinates with fairness. These traits are a reflection of his intellectual honesty, something very rare in today's society." Former foreign secretary and ambassador Moflehur Rahman Osmany worked under *abba* for about three years in Wapda. He told his friend Mr. Hayat: "Mr. Hannan was the best boss I have worked for."

Information Minister Mr. Abul Kalam Azad was *abba's* colleague from 1963 to 1969. He said: "Mr. Hannan was a brilliant person and an epitome of honesty and sincerity. At the same time he was an outspoken person and fearless in his

speech." Throughout his life he would call a spade a spade.

His care and compassion for people made him embrace charitable service throughout life. Many near and distant relatives got long-term refuge in his home as they struggled to get established in life. Through his devotion to humanitarian activities thousands of individuals received help from charitable contributions that were channeled for many years through him -- many in far-flung villages. His many relatives and friends received regular visits and inquiries about their wellbeing.

It was possibly easy for him to lead an honest life because he led a highly austere life, and could rein in his unbridled ambition. Early in life he learnt the difference between needs and wants. He shunned wants and strove to meet basic necessities in an austere way. He lived in a modest 45-year old one-story house -- the only one he built with loan from Wapda. He made no modification to it. He did not eat fish and meat at the same meal. He used inexpensive personal effects. He would not dispose off an item as long as it served the purpose.

He would say: "A wasteful person is a friend of *shaitan*." But he was not a penny pincher. His children had their needs reasonably well met. His austerity mostly revolved around himself. The intense urge to lead an honest life may have forced him to lead an austere life. But when his income increased few times, his lifestyle did not change a bit.

His pride was the worldly successes of his five sons and one daughter. They were influenced by his exemplary life. Two of his sons are professors in the US, one is the Chief of General Staff, Bangladesh

Army, one is a businessman, and one is a professor at DMC. His daughter, settled in Canada, is a former teacher of Viharunnessa School.

Former MP Professor A.N.M. Nazrul Islam reflected on his three-decade relationship with *abba*: "In my life I have not seen so many qualities blossom in one person as I saw in your father. He possessed the best of human qualities." Professor Dr. Abu Ahmed Chowdhury, the renowned surgeon and a neighbour for 35 years asserted: "He was a man of perfect purity."

Neither capable of self-promotion nor of flattery, his rise to high office was by sheer dint of his extraordinary professionalism and efficiency. He was so incapable of self-promotion that he hardly ever spoke to his children about his extraordinary past.

He was blessed in death as he was in life. He received and continues to receive the respect and reverence of countless well-wishers, not because he had power or riches but because he was upright, forthright, honest, caring, trustworthy, and led an austere life. He was blessed to die on a Friday. A couple of thousand devotees attended his *janaza* prayer after Jumma. An unprecedented number attended his burial. Nearly a thousand came to his *doa mahfil* on a rainy evening.

His extraordinary lifestyle, character, and conduct seek to admonish global society steeped in senseless excesses. It is to our collective benefit that we shun wastage and excess so we have to rely less on the world's limited supply of energy and resources, and so that we may retard the looming danger of global warming.

S. Abdul Hamid, PhD is a Professor of Finance/Economics. E-mail: sahamid@gmail.com