

Bangladesh: No more a safe haven for terrorists

The message from Bangladesh to Ulfa and other terrorist organisations of its ilk is loud and clear. There are no safe havens for them in Bangladesh anymore.

G.M. QUADER

RECENTLY, there have been reports of arrest of some important United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) leaders. There seems to be considerable speculation in the Indian and Bangladeshi media whether some leaders of the above-mentioned organisation were "handed over" to India or whether they were "picked up" by the Indian security agencies when they crossed over to India, or whether they "surrendered" in India.

This speculation has continued despite the clarification issued by Home Minister, Sahara Khatun, that the ULFA leaders in question were not arrested in

Bangladesh and the statement of her Indian counterpart, P. Chidambaram, in the Indian Parliament, is that, the arrests took place in the Indian state of Meghalaya.

Since coming to power, the government

headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has shown commendable determination and courage by taking firm action against all terrorist organisations, irrespective of whether they belong to Bangladesh or other countries of the region, operating from Bangladeshi soil. These organisations include Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Harkat-ul Jihad Islami (Huji), Lashkar-e-Tayyaba (LeT), ULFA and Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation (KLO).

By adopting this course of action, the present government is not only doing a great service to the people of Bangladesh, but is also demonstrating that this country is a responsible member of the comity of nations and is committed to fulfilling its international obligations.

Bangladesh is a signatory to several international conventions against terrorism. It has a solemn responsibility to take action against all terrorist organisations

operating from its soil in accordance with various resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council. Besides, Bangladesh is also a signatory to the Saarc Convention on Suppression of Terrorism.

Bangladesh is also a strong voice for effective regional action to eradicate the menace of terrorism. Foreign Minister, Dipu Moni, expressed this sentiment by stating in very clear terms that Bangladesh will not allow any terrorist organisation to operate from its soil.

Bangladesh is well within its sovereign right to take such action as it deems fit, in such manner as it deems appropriate, against all elements and organisations that seek to exploit its territory for nefarious purposes. As such, it does not really matter even if the recent arrests of some important ULFA leaders were made even in Bangladesh. And, if that was the case Bangladesh does not seem to have reason to deny the same.

Some concern has also been expressed recently in certain quarters about a threat from the arrested leaders of ULFA, who have alleged that they have been "betrayed" by Bangladesh. The question of betrayal comes in case there is understanding of any sort or any obligation from the part of

Bangladesh to that organisation.

Why should Bangladesh have any understanding with ULFA, and in what way do the people of Bangladesh have any obligations to support or provide protection to them? Why then, should ULFA and other terrorist organisations, take it as a right to exploit Bangladeshi soil for their activities, and feel betrayed if not allowed to do so? Threats are sometimes used for intimidation against the weak. Does Bangladesh look weak enough to be cowed down by such threats?

At times it is seen that people try to justify terrorist activities as part of a liberation war. It is also observed that the terrorist organisations, especially from the countries of this region, sometimes claim that they are fighting "liberation wars" similar to that fought by Bangladesh against Pakistan. The freedom fighters of Bangladesh, known as Mukti Bahini, fought against the Pakistani army during our War of Liberation, with the active support and cooperation of almost the entire population. There is not a single incident of indiscriminate attacks against children, women and other unarmed, defenseless civilians.

It is, therefore, an insult to our War of

Independence to compare it with the wanton attacks perpetrated by many of the terrorist groups of our region when innocent people, even women and children, fall prey.

On August 15, 2004, twenty persons, including seven innocent schoolchildren participating in a cultural function to mark India's Independence Day, were brutally massacred in an explosion in Dhemaji, Assam. On October 30, 2008, scores of civilians were killed in a series of blasts in Guwahati and Kokrajhar. On November 10, 2009, the hapless family members of a group of erstwhile outlaws who had decided to lay down their weapons were gunned down in a cowardly midnight raid in Pushparampara village in Kanchanpur sub-division of northern Tripura near the Bangladesh-India border.

These are but a few examples of the cold-blooded terrorist attacks perpetrated over the years by organisations such as ULFA, National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT).

Today, as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina prepares to undertake a historic visit to New Delhi, there is a growing desire in Bangladesh to take advantage of India's

strengths and its rising prosperity.

Bangladeshi businessmen want greater access to Indian markets and attract more Indian investment in our country. We want to take advantage of India's education system, particularly its renowned institutions of higher learning, its world-class medical facilities and so on. Can we do so by remaining insensitive to, and pointedly disregarding, India's security concerns?

We need to decide once and for all what is more beneficial for Bangladesh: succumbing to the machinations of terrorist organisations such as LeT and ULFA, which have spilled the blood of many innocent civilians, or living up to the expectations of a friendly neighbouring country and the larger international community.

A year ago, this very month, the patriotic and peace-loving people of Bangladesh voted overwhelmingly in favour of democracy, peace and development, the very ideals that are anathema to the forces of anarchy and terrorism. The message from Bangladesh to ULFA and other terrorist organisations of its ilk is, therefore, loud and clear. There are no safe havens for them in Bangladesh anymore.

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Implication of limiting global temperature rise

The heat island will be more intense with global warming, and we will have more severe floods and severe droughts alternately. This will result in severe loss of crops, not only in our country but in the region as a whole.

A.M. CHOWDHURY

THE recent Copenhagen Conference, known as COP-15, has recognised the need to keep the rise of global temperature due to greenhouse gases (GHG) to below 2°C, counting from the pre-industrial era, without making it binding on anybody. The conference was attended by some 45,000 delegates, 119 heads of states or governments, and 193 countries, which is unprecedented.

The Bangladeshi delegation was led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The hopes and aspirations regarding carbon cut, and for the compensation by carbon emitting countries for the damage caused by them to those countries that are not responsible for it, were very high. Initially, President Obama was responsive to the call for reducing carbon emission, though the US Senate had not approved it.

The conference came to an impasse because emerging countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa were not willing for such a cut on the plea that any carbon cut at this stage would hamper their development. President Obama brokered an agreement with them, reversed his position entirely and took resort to limiting the temperature increase.

This agreement, because it is not bind-

ing, gives a license to these countries and, as a matter of fact, to all countries to produce as much carbon dioxide as they like as long as the temperature does not rise beyond 2 degree Centigrade. One African delegate remarked that this agreement would condemn Africa to widespread deaths due to global warming. Let us examine what this means to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is a monsoon country, but it is not a part of any other monsoon. Its climate is unique. For example, this year there was drought at the beginning of the monsoon season but it was compensated later by abundant rain, and the climate this year as a whole has been almost normal, as far as rainfall is concerned. But in India, drought was more severe in some eight states and their crop production suffered very badly.

The Bangladesh monsoon is governed by the temperature of the Pacific Ocean, and the Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) gives an indication of the pattern of the weather we have. SOI is a measure of the pressure difference between the eastern Pacific Ocean and the western Pacific Ocean. Actually, the pressure difference between Tahiti Island in the eastern Pacific and Darwin in the western Pacific is taken for its actual measurement.

This is a sort of tele-connection in the

atmosphere. In the Pacific Ocean there is a high temperature region, a sort of heat island that shifts with SOI values. When the SOI value is very high (La Niña condition), the heat island stays close to the Asian continent and we have plenty of rain in our region, resulting in floods. On the other hand, when the SOI value is highly negative, the heat island shifts close to South America, and we have drought in our region.

What will be the behaviour of this heat island if we have a 2°C rise in temperature?

There is a need for a lot of research in this field. But my instinct suggests that the heat island will be more intense with global warming, and we will have more severe floods and severe droughts alternately. This will result in severe loss of crops, not only in our country but in the region as a whole.

What will happen even if we are flooded with money, which I think will be scarce? We will not have food available, resulting in starvation and famine. Whatever food will be available will be procured by China and India. Thus, have we agreed upon a death warrant in the COP-15 conference? The sooner we realise this the better.

We faced a similar situation in 2007 when we had Sidr and two floods. The price of rice soared to \$1000 per ton, India stopped the export of rice, we had difficulty in procuring rice, and the prices rose tremendously in the local market. In future we should raise our food storage capacity to something like five million tons, instead of the little more than a million tons at present, to avoid a famine. In the next COP, this should be rectified, and we should adopt an agreement similar to the Kyoto

Protocol where there was a provision for reducing the carbon dioxide level.

How long will it take to reach the 2°C rise in temperature? The IPCC in its fourth assessment report predicted that the average global surface temperature was projected to increase by 1.4 to 5.8 degree Centigrade between 1990-2100. Why is there such a wide range? Suppose it follows the lowest value. Then the COP agreement will allow the emitters to go on emitting carbon dioxide through this century, when perhaps all the fossil fuels will be finished.

There is reason to believe that the low value will prevail. The temperature increase in 2000 was 0.6°C from the pre-industrial value, and during the last decade it was not more than 0.1°C, which means that the 2° limit cannot be reached before 100 years. There is a reason for the slow rise of temperature.

There is a theory of the great freeze. As global temperature rises, the North Pole ice melts and the water becomes warmer. Just as air circulates, the ocean currents also circulate. Air circulation is governed by the wind whereas the ocean currents are governed by temperature and salinity.

The Gulf Stream passes along the American and European coasts and, being warm, keeps America and Europe somewhat warmer than they would have been otherwise. But when it reaches the North Pole, it remains warm due to global warming. Before global warming, it used to become cold and sink to the bottom of the ocean as colder water is heavier, completing the cycle known as thermohaline circulation or the ocean conveyor belt, and warm water would



Threatening rising seas and flooding.

again circulate near the coast.

But because of warming, the Gulf Stream water cannot sink at the North Pole, slowing the thermohaline circulation. If it stops completely, Europe and America will freeze. There are similar currents elsewhere, undergoing the same process and, as a result, civilisation will come to an end. Maybe the thermohaline circulation will not stop altogether so soon and, though we have been experiencing cold spells in Europe and America during the last few years, it may not teach a dead-end.

Is this the result of the weakening of the thermohaline circulation? We need to do extensive research in this area. There are many research institutions in the West on this subject, but my feeling is that they are

not charged with specific tasks which must be done without delay. Maybe the West is not giving enough priority to this area, but it must be done to save humanity.

Something like the Manhattan Project, which was set up for developing an atom bomb, should be undertaken. But this time it will be for peace. Research institutions should be established in third world countries to look into local problems. It looks like we have to live with both global warming and weakening of thermohaline circulation. But we have to face them with courage and sincerity so that human suffering can be minimised.

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Copenhagen: Yet another beginning with an uncertain end

The three pages of text that emerged after years of preparation and two weeks of intense negotiation in Copenhagen signally fail to address what the document correctly calls "one of the greatest challenges of our time" -- global climate change.

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THE three pages of text that emerged after years of preparation and two weeks of intense negotiation in Copenhagen signally fail to address what the document correctly calls "one of the greatest challenges of our time" -- global climate change. To many, the Copenhagen Accord will seem a setback; but, actually, it's a continuation of a long history of failure. The essential problem lies with the strategy of addressing this complex issue by means of a single agreement. Breaking this colossal problem up into smaller pieces would allow us to achieve more.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called the Copenhagen Accord "a beginning." A beginning? Wasn't the Framework Convention on Climate Change, negotiated in 1992, a beginning? Wasn't the Kyoto Protocol a beginning? Why, after two decades of negotiation are we still "beginning"?

To some, the failure in Copenhagen is due to the UN process. It's true that the process failed. But process is not the real problem. The real problem is the way we have conceptualised our response to this challenge.

In the run-up to Copenhagen, the UN process produced a draft text that ran over 180 pages, most of which identified areas of disagreement. This approach was

essentially abandoned in Copenhagen.

A select group of rich countries, including US and Britain, prepared their own draft text, as did a group of developing countries, including China and India. Both of these texts noted the need to limit temperature change to 2°C.

In other respects, however, they diverged.

The proposal by rich countries implicitly stated that the emissions of poor countries must decline. The proposal by fast-growing poor countries supported the Kyoto Protocol, which limits the emissions of rich countries only. The Copenhagen Accord reflects a lowest-common-denominator compromise between these two proposals.

Though accepted by the world's biggest powers and most other countries, the Accord was rejected by a small number of developing countries (including Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, and Venezuela), who insisted that the process that gave rise to it lacked legitimacy. However, agreement by these countries is not essential.

Copenhagen is a "political statement," not a "legally binding treaty." But the fact that the Kyoto Protocol is a legally binding treaty has made almost no difference. US did not participate. Some of the countries that did participate will not comply. Others will comply only by some clever accounting. The political nature of Copenhagen is a problem, but it is not the only or even the

most important problem. The bigger challenge is negotiating specific obligations, which can be enforced.

The Copenhagen Accord asks rich countries to specify quantitative economy-wide emissions targets for 2020 in January 2010, adding that the rich country parties to the Kyoto Protocol "will thereby further strengthen the emissions reductions initiated by the Kyoto Protocol." But countries have been declaring emission targets for more than two decades, with little if any effect. What is to be gained by doing this again?

Canada's emissions today exceed the level allowed by Kyoto by more than 30%, and Canada has no plans to comply, implying that Kyoto is already a dead agreement. By not even setting a date by which new targets and timetables might be agreed, Copenhagen further undermines Kyoto's authority.

One interesting change is that the Copenhagen Accord allows countries to specify their own base year. Kyoto established 1990 as the base year. This gave advantage to Europe and the countries of the former USSR. It was easier for these countries to meet a given target relative to this base year than it was for countries like Japan and US.

US legislation has used 2005 as the base year, which is surely a problem. Moreover, US Congress will not approve legislation without assurances that these countries are taking actions. However, there is nothing in the agreement to ensure that the pledges are truly meaningful. For example, China has already declared that it would seek to reduce its emissions per unit of economic output. But emissions intensity has been falling in China for years, even without a climate policy. And China's emissions would still increase if its rate of economic

growth outpaced its reduction in emissions intensity.

The agreement is more specific in one area. The rich countries make a collective commitment to finance \$10 billion per year from 2010-2012 for mitigation and adaptation in the poorest countries, increasing to \$100 billion per year by 2020.

However, the agreement does not state explicitly how much of this money should be contributed by individual countries. Nor does it specify rules for spending the money.

Failure by the US Congress to pass climate legislation hindered progress in Copenhagen. What effect will Copenhagen have on the US? It seems likely that the case for US action has been harmed. Congress will not want US to adopt controls that are out of sync with

those adopted by many other countries, especially China and India.

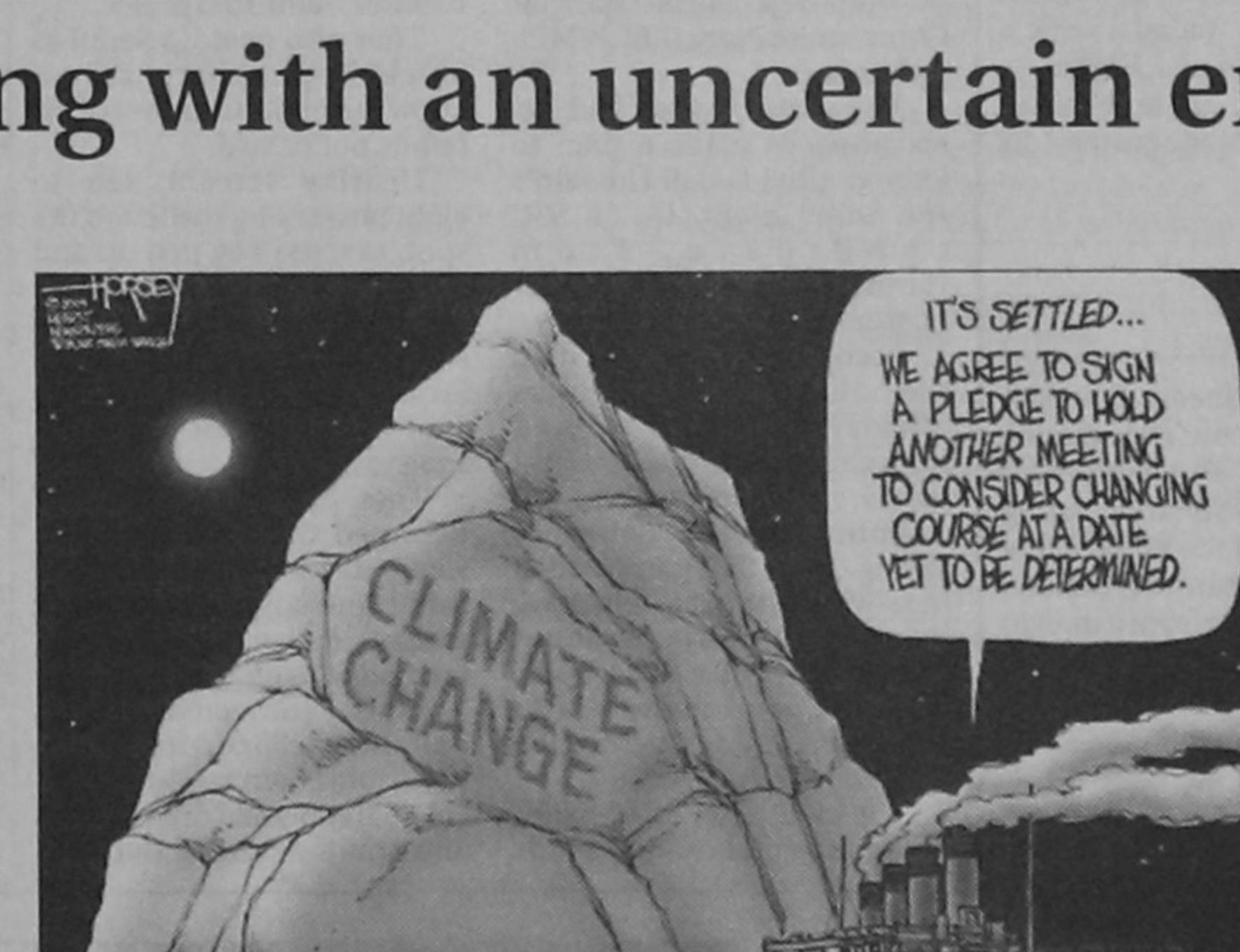
Climate change is the greatest collective action problem in human history, and we should not be surprised that it has been difficult to address. But our approach has made reaching agreement harder than necessary. For example, we could negotiate a separate agreement limiting the emissions of one of the gases controlled by the Kyoto Protocol -- hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs). This chemical is very similar to the chemicals already controlled by another treaty, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, which was signed in 1987 and ratified by the US Senate by a 83-0 majority. If we controlled HFCs under a treaty signed after Montreal, we could be confident that a phase-out of this chemical would succeed. This is because Montreal is enforced. In contrast to Kyoto, it has been very effective.

It should also be relatively easy to agree on a program for research, development, and demonstration of carbon capture and storage -- a key technology for reducing emissions substantially in the future.

There is no alternative to negotiating treaties to address climate change, but there is an alternative negotiating strategy. A better way to negotiate would be to break this colossal problem up into smaller pieces, addressing each piece using the best means appropriate.

Failure of an overall agreement in Copenhagen might possibly be an opportunity -- if only we dare to think differently about how to limit global greenhouse gas emissions.

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Under Copenhagen, the fast-growing