

Life after Mahasen

Victims need swift rehabilitation

WE are rather fortunate in that cyclone Mahasen did not inflict on us the degree of damage we had feared it would. But that is again no reason to think that everything remains as it was before the cyclone passed over Bangladesh. The coastal districts tell the story of thousands of people whose lives have indeed been turned upside down by Mahasen. All of these people now live under the open sky. While their lives, except for seventeen people, have been spared, their homes have not. In terms of figures, no fewer than 3.82 lakh people are direct victims of the cyclone. As many as 15,000 homes have been destroyed and 44,000 thousand have been damaged.

The circumstances call for rapid rehabilitation of the distressed. The government certainly deserves appreciation for the quick and effective steps it took in the matter of shifting people to safer places as the cyclone approached the coastal areas. It was a sign of how preparedness and mobilization can deliver results. In much the same way, it now becomes the task of the authorities to ensure, through assistance of the material sort, that those whose homes have been destroyed or damaged are quickly and efficiently helped in a rebuilding of their homesteads. Moreover, public health needs serious looking into.

Conditions as they happen to be must not be prolonged. Alongside the government, there should also be space for NGOs and other welfare-oriented organisations to pitch in with help. There is hardly any room for delay.

Delay in responding to HC ruling

It's criminal neglect

IT would not be wrong to suggest that an undue delay, of eight years, in disposing off the High Court ruling on the Spectrum Garments, may have been responsible for the Rana Plaza tragedy and indeed all the other RMG factory disasters since it was delivered on May 24, 2005.

The said ruling, inter-alia, had asked the respondents why they would not be directed to inform whether the garment factories in Dhaka, Chittagong and Narayanganj were constructed observing all the legal formalities. And the fact, as reported in this paper yesterday, that the office of Chief Inspector of Factory and Establishment had issued licenses to four of the five factories in Rana Plaza without verification, puts the matter in perspective.

It is absolutely incomprehensible that none of the parties to the case has taken any step for the hearing of the matter; and none of the respondents except for the BGMEA, has bothered to answer the ruling as yet. And there were six parties and nine respondents in this case including six ministries.

Needless to say, had everyone concerned acted with promptness, the matter, given that it was related directly to the safety of the RMG workers, the HC could have directed the concerned agencies for specific actions to redress the situation.

We are assured by the Attorney General's comments that he will take measures for disposal of the matter, because, it is the nation in general and the RMG workers in particular that are counting the costs of government negligence.



INSTANT REACTION

Do we need TICFA?

ANU MUHAMMAD

MY first concern is that given our existence within a global setting, where we have global trading systems monitored by international organisations like WTO, why is it important to sign a bilateral treaty with the US.

Bangladesh tariff structure and trade relations with US should hardly be an issue for the latter because we export about 23% of our garment to them; yet the US is still not honouring the WTO principles on providing the standard tariff structures for Bangladeshi exports.

When other countries have a one percent tariff rate -- some even less -- as they enter the US market, Bangladesh garments sector faces 15%. This is a protectionist policy against Bangladesh. The US is also not providing any GSP facility to this sector. Bangladesh should ask them to remove this discrimination.

There is an additional danger for us in signing the TICFA. In terms of the intellectual property rights on new goods here, they will be in a position to impose restrictions on Bangladeshi products such as pharmaceuticals and the IT industry.

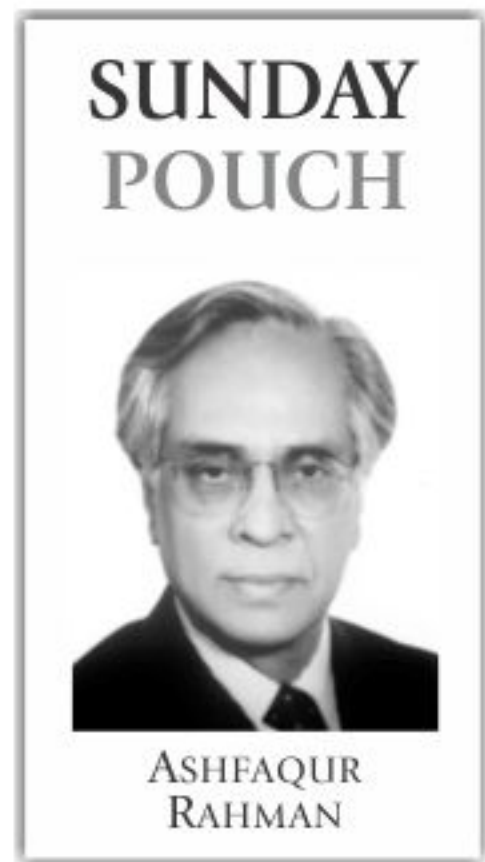
With regard to media reports showing TICFA's focus on Bangladesh labour standards, I think no one should use this issue as an instrument to create any imposition. Bangladesh has its own legal framework to work on and the government should strengthen it to improve our labour standards.

Countries like Sri Lanka had signed TICFA, with the promise of getting GSP facilities in its garment sector but till today they are faced with a 12% tariff rate, while others including France enjoy a tariff rate of one percent.

It is a myth that the US aids Bangladesh but in reality, we pay them six times more than the total loan and aid that flow in from them. Bangladesh has paid US\$750 million as tariff on its garments. So when US places drastic discrimination, Bangladesh should ask them to have this removed instead of finding another agreement that would create more impediments for Bangladesh.

The writer is Professor, Department of Economics, Jahangir Nagar University

Spying is still fashionable!



AN interesting bit of news was flashed around the world last week. A senior adviser to the Russian President Putin announced that the Kremlin was "surprised" by an "extremely crude and clumsy" attempt by a CIA spy to recruit a Russian security service officer. The US officer, Ryan Fogle, posted as a third secretary in the US Embassy in Moscow, had told his potential recruit that he could "earn up to one million dollars" if he supplied them with required information.

What was curious was that Fogle, to hide his identity, had worn a comical blonde wig and dark glasses. He was also carrying cash money and an unsigned typed letter soliciting the services of the Russian. Caught red-handed, he was ordered to be deported from Russia. Moscow, it turned out, had earlier advised the US not to "bother its citizens" after a similar attempt made this January by US agents had also failed.

The arrest of Ryan Fogle is just the latest twist in the long history of spying between the US and Russia.

Fogle's arrest comes at a sensitive time in US-Russia relations, which had chilled over the past year especially due to the passing of a US legislation called the Magnitsky Act. This imposes sanctions on a "list of alleged human rights abuses" in Russia. Moscow has retaliated with several actions, which includes banning US citizens from adopting Russian children.

There are other issues of major international import that the two countries have differences over. But there are other policies of both countries are close and they are supportive of each other.

Throughout history, spying was a critical tool of statecraft for kings,

potentates and states. About two thousand five hundred years back, Chinese scholar Sun Tzu, writing on the art of war, schooled his disciples about espionage. Marco Polo in his travels and Niccolo Machiavelli in his writings also made valuable contributions to the evolution of the art of spying. Secret societies such as the Ninjas of Japan and the Assassins of Syria added knowledge about practicing covert actions.

The Age of Discovery had led the West to scramble for secrets and information. Czar Ivan the Terrible of Russia and French Cardinal Richelieu had set up spy networks in countries that interested them. The two most versatile spies at that time were the libertine Casanova and the cross-dresser Chevalier d' Eon. Later, the American Revolution produced its own spy organisations like the Sons of Liberty and the Knowlton Rangers.

In the 19th century, Europe was kept under tight surveillance by spies and covert operators belonging to the great powers. The invention of railway and telegraph gave impetus to spying. At the same time, Europe was colonising the world. The British used spying extensively to gain foothold in India. So did the Spanish to carve Spanish-American territories.

The First World War opened up opportunities for females to be spies. Other secret operatives came in as code breakers. The Second World War brought new dimensions into the art of spying. Now each country took steps to defend itself against foreign spies. The fear of the US about spies from communist Russia led to the creation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Allied powers organised other spy organisations such as the British Special Operations and the American Office of Strategic

Service to carry on their trade.

The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union institutionalised spying and necessitated the rise of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in America. The KGB also worked itself into a frenzy on behalf of the Soviets. The 1962 drama of downing of the US spy plane U-2 by the Soviets and the infiltration of Kim Philby in the top echelons of power in the West virtually made spying a profession.

Yet espionage had failed miserably to inform relevant governments about the imminent collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990's. It also failed to inform about the 9/11 attack on the New York World Trade Centre by al-Qaeda. Why could they not foresee these earth shaking events? Spying seems to have its limitations.

Espionage is a dangerous, slow, painstaking process that can also prove to be of "questionable reliability." If a source is good it can provide insights that can be even better and more useful than intercepted communications or those culled from spy satellites. But human intelligence can also deceive. Take the case of Saddam Hossain of Iraq and his weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Informants told the US intelligence what they dearly wanted to hear. The US did not countercheck the information but attacked Iraq. Subsequent events bore out the fact that the information received was not correct.

Does espionage have a future in the 21st century? To answer this we must know that spying does not come cheap. Intelligence officers are always told in all countries, including those in our region, that money is tight. But there is no doubt that in the 21st century, first rate intelligence which can penetrate the new enemies like terrorism will be less costly than going to war. Intelligence received from satellites or drones can only supplement those received from human intelligence.

Perhaps keeping this in mind, the US must have sent Ryan Fogle to recruit Russian spies to work for his country. It was a crude and hilarious attempt. But thank goodness, spying remains fashionable!

THE WRITER IS A FORMER AMBASSADOR AND A COMMENTATOR ON CURRENT AFFAIRS.
E-MAIL: ASHFAQUE303@GMAIL.COM
KSA_GEO@YAHOO.COM

| The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

Don't expand the war on terror

JENNIFER DASKAL AND STEPHEN I. VLADECK

FOR years, many have erroneously claimed that the United States is embroiled in a "global war on terrorism." It is not, and thanks to Congress, never has been.

Even as ground zero burned in those first terrifying days after Sept. 11, Congressional leaders from both parties rejected a Bush administration proposal for an authorisation to go to war against all international terrorists. Instead, Congress passed a tailored resolution, the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, against "those who planned, authorised, committed or aided" the Sept. 11 attacks: al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

Twelve years later, the Taliban have been removed from power; the core of al-Qaeda has been decimated; and most United States combat troops are set to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of next year. Amid talk of an increasing mismatch between the law and the nature of the terrorist threat today, Congress appears poised to do exactly what it assiduously avoided in 2001: Authorise a broad, open-ended war against groups unconnected to those responsible for Sept. 11. The Senate Armed Services Committee is holding hearings on the issue on Thursday.

One leading proposal, put forward by the Hoover Institution, would have Congress delegate to the executive branch broad-based authority to create a list of terrorist groups against which the United States is at war. This designation process would supposedly be transparent and subject to the constraints of international law.

But it would essentially concentrate within the executive branch the power to both declare and wage war -- authorities that our founding fathers rightly separated. It would effectively allow the use of military force as a matter of first resort against members of any terrorist group that the president so designates. And it would eliminate the requirement that we could use force only against those who had some nexus to the groups that attacked us in 2001.

It's clear that this list would get only longer and longer. Even if a group no longer posed a meaningful

threat, there would be no incentive to de-list entities that might someday do us harm, and every incentive to keep them on. (The Hoover proposal recommends sunset provisions and a requirement that the executive review and renew the list every few years to prevent this mission creep, but based on past history we doubt this would be a sufficient fix.)

Congress should reject open-ended war and embrace a return to peace. Instead of expanding the Authorization for the Use of Military Force, Congress should consider repealing it once the withdrawal of our combat troops from Afghanistan has been completed. Law enforcement, intelligence gathering and other nonmilitary counterterrorism tools ought to be at the forefront of our fight against terrorism.

This is not to say that military force should never be employed. The president can -- and should -- use force in self-defense, if and when alternative means are unable to stop an impending attack. Such authority in no way depends upon advance approval from Congress.

For a more long-term threat, like al-Qaeda around 2001, Congress could enact a specific authorisation to use force against that group, but only after public deliberation, rather than unilateral executive decision making. It might be justifiable, for example, to enact a targeted authorisation focused on al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the only group currently described by the director of national intelligence as having both the intent and capacity to strike the United States homeland.

But this approach should be pursued with caution, and only if we can be sure that such force will not create more enemies than it kills.

To be sure, a law enforcement approach is not foolproof, as the Boston bombings revealed all too painfully. But the problem in Boston was not insufficient law enforcement capacity but insufficient intelligence -- a problem that hinders the military and law enforcement alike.

In fact, one of the most troubling consequences of an open-ended authorisation to use force is that it might actually undercut intelligence gathering. Already, key allies are ner-

vous about sharing intelligence with the United States because it might be used in drone strikes; Germany, in fact, restricted information sharing as a result. These concerns would most likely grow if the list of potential targets was expanded. Meanwhile, numerous experts, like the former director of national intelligence, Dennis Blair, warn of the world's increasing resentment of our use of force, especially targeted killings.

Driving much of this debate is the fear that the 2001 authorisation may soon be stretched in ways that cannot be justified. The Obama administration has interpreted the resolution as covering not just al-Qaeda and the Taliban, but also their so-called associated forces. There has never been any clarity as to which groups fit within this term.

There is no reason to believe that the administration is taking advantage of this uncertainty to attack groups far removed from al-Qaeda. But there is also no reason to open the door to that possibility -- and every reason to ensure that the American people know exactly who we're at war with. At a minimum, instead of authorising force against additional groups, Congress should demand that the president publicly identify which groups are already subject to the 2001 resolution and the basis for including them.

Advocates of an expansive new resolution refer in dire terms to the disconnect between the 2001 law and the nature of the contemporary terrorist threat. We agree; the threat from terrorism remains, but today it stems largely from self-radicalised individuals and groups that have nothing to do with the Sept. 11 attacks. As Congress understood even in those fearful first days after Sept. 11, this does not justify an open-ended declaration of armed conflict against all terrorist groups. Twelve years later, let us hope that it hasn't forgotten.

JENNIFER DASKAL, A FORMER DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE LAWYER, IS A PROFESSOR AT GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY'S CENTER ON NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE LAW. STEPHEN I. VLADECK IS A LAW PROFESSOR AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.
©NEW YORK TIMES. DISTRIBUTED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES SYNDICATE.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Use water cannons

Recently our law enforcers used rubber bullets and teargas shells to disperse the violent crowd. Tear gas can affect the lungs and is also bad for the heart. I remember during the L.A. riots and in London after a football match, aggressive crowds took to the streets to loot and vandalize properties. The law enforcers dispersed them by using water cannons. These looked like miniature tanks which held hundreds of gallons of water. When ejected at thousands of pounds of pressure, they were very effective in dispersing the crowds and most importantly, there were no serious injuries or fatalities. I feel the law enforcers in Bangladesh should also introduce such techniques for mob control.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali, Dhaka

Traffic pollution harms kidney!

It is already known that long-term exposure to exhaust fumes increases the risk of vascular diseases such as heart attack and stroke. But we have learned for the first time that defective kidneys may be a sign that traffic fumes are harming the arteries.

Scientists who tested 1100 stroke patients in a study found a link between reduced kidney function and living close to a major road. Half of the stroke patients in the study lived within 1 kilometre of a major road and the rest lived between 1 and 10 kilometres away. The patients who lived closest to a major road had the lowest GFR (glomerular filtration rate). GFR is an indicator of how well the kidneys are working and a low GFR suggests kidney problems.

Mobarak Ali
Gopibagh, Dhaka

Sports news

I am really disappointed to see the recent changes in The Daily Star. My favourite sports section has been reduced to only two pages instead of three. I wonder what compelled you to make these changes. I hope you would consider the sports lovers' dissatisfaction about this and give importance to sports news which we enjoy so much.

Dr. B. Sultan
Indira Road, Dhaka

Ensure workers' safety

Bangladesh earns a huge amount of foreign currency from RMG sector. It contributes around 76 percent to our export earnings and around 15 percent to the GDP. It is also playing an important role in eradicating poverty by employing around 6 million people. Some of the owners, who profit from the hard work of the poor workers, overlook the safety and security of the workers, ignoring the value of their life.

If the perpetrators like Sohul Rana get away with impunity, we will not be able to save this industry and we will have to count dead bodies over and over again. We request the government to ensure safety and security of the workers, so that such tragedy is not repeated and this industry can bounce back.

Md. Musfikur Rahman Jony
Dhaka

Electricity from cooking fire

Based on the outcome of Berkeley Lab's extensive research, the Point Source Power of USA has designed a device called VOTO fuel-cell charger which can be charged with any cooking fire by placing one end of the device in a cooking stove's fire. VOTO's battery can receive full charge roughly on two cooking sessions. In addition to phone charging, the device has also an LED light which receives power from the same source. When fully charged, the LED light is capable of providing light for 30 hours.

The creators of VOTO have two marketing targets. One, the campers in the developed world; and two, the developing world where electricity is not readily available but cooking fire is. In Bangladesh, VOTO can be used for charging cell phones as well as for lighting purpose in the remote villages and costal areas where electricity is not available.

Professor M Zahidul Haque
Dean, Faculty of Agriculture, SAU, Dhaka

Comments on news report, "80 Bangladeshis rescued in Brazil," published on May 18, 2013

Mofi

This report reveals the underlying reason behind the victims' desperate move, that the majority of population in Bangladesh is trapped in poverty. Political unrest and corruption are more acute here and these are valid reasons for many of us to get out of this land. Most of us are ready to live in poverty if only political unrest and corruption are stopped.

Vikram Khan

Nobody asked them to leave Bangladesh. They knew things could go wrong, but they took the risks and paid money to the corrupt people. If all had been well, we never would have known about it.

Ripon

The Bangladesh embassy in Brazil should provide them with all kind of assistance so that they do not land in jail in Brazil. The Bangladesh embassy can also help them in getting jobs in Brazil or make all the arrangements for their safe return home.