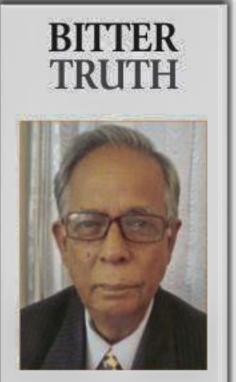
TACKLING TERRORISM The first priority



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

GNORING the call of ___ the teachers and guardians, and most importantly, fervent appeal of the millions of young kids who will be appearing at the first public examination in their lives, BNP and its allies have given a

fresh call for hartal that coincides with the SSC exam schedule. Students are not attending schools for fear of bomb attack on public and private vehicles. Did the sponsors of blockade and hartal ever think what enormous damage will be inflicted

on our children by keeping them away

from school for months?

The question that comes up uppermost in public mind is that if all their programmes and struggles are oriented to serve the masses, then why should they be killing daily wage earners, trans-

port workers, and innocent poor people having no link with politics? Even the most pathetic sight of buses in flames and people being burnt alive does not arouse any human feeling in those issuing blockade and hartal call. The government has been assuring the

citizens that law enforcers will eliminate the criminals and terrorists from every nook and corner of the country in a few days, but the dastardly actions go unabated jeopardising the lives of innocent poor people. How could one find solace and comfort in a society with cocktails and petrol bombs in clandestine hands? From the beginning, the government failed to comprehend the strength of the criminals, their innovations and skillful application of technology.

Now, when they have jumped on the nation with their evil strength, skillfully organised and meticulously monitored, the whole administration is running helter-skelter for clues as well as identification of the evil gangs. The sinister move did more than demonstrate that we are hostage to an organised radical group that has the skill and training to carry out orchestrated attacks across the whole country. Unhappily, these deviant groups are now being guided by the

BNP in their quest for power.

Appallingly true, we are now living in an era of new terrorism. And the audacity of the planners befooling all intelligence agencies has stunned the nation. It is now clear that the merchants of death have the capacity to launch such dramatic and dastardly attacks on passenger buses, trains and trucks laden with foodstuff and goods for export. Their intention is to cripple the economy in a way that will shake the foundations of society and undermine the confidence of the people. People are now convinced that in their apparent bid to unseat or destabilise the government, opposition BNP and its allies --Jamaat-Shibir cadres -- have chosen poor and innocent people as their adversaries. The people do not know how many poor people will have to pay with their lives to help them succeed in their power struggle.

How can people believe that these horrendous groups are their liberators when they themselves are the targets of their violence? It is now apparent that some ultra-militant groups think that Bangladesh may be a fertile ground for planting seeds of terror. The ideology of terror on innocent people is being disseminated and their agenda are being implemented at the most opportune moment, when the ruling party and BNP are at loggerheads over polls related issues. The rule of reason and consensus

seems to be an illusion. The people and the government are being swept by events that are uncontrollable. With evidence coming to the fore, these bomb attacks have certainly convinced the citizenry that Jamaat-Shibir cadres are involved in terrorism. Fear has staged a comeback. Even though the government claims that it will succeed in combating terrorism and bring back normalcy in no time, that assurance has to be taken with a grain of salt. After the bomb attack on a passenger bus at Chouddagram killed 7 people on the spot, the belief that police alone are capable of combating the terrorists has proved chillingly wrong. These radical groups who have been operating covertly in some particular areas for the last 9 years, without the knowledge of the administration, law enforcers, and intelligence networks who always miscalculated or underestimated their striking capability, have gone from strength to strength.

Even in a country inured to selective killings, disappearances, and death by alleged crossfire, the mayhem, arson attack and terrorism that have gone unabated for the last one month have caused severe shock, panic and anxiety for the future in the public mind. It was the first time that innocent poor people and daily wage earners who are in no way linked to politics had to pay with their lives while performing their daily chores.

The threatening discordant notes, the behind the scene activities of some party or parties inspired by a hate ideology that clouds the mind and sensibilities, have placed the country at a crossroads. From here deterioration could accelerate, plunging the whole country into bloody violence, disrupting business, education, farm production, transportation, and tourism. It seems that the BNP chairperson and her advisers do not realise that the baton is slipping away from their hands.

Complacency is the enemy of security. Even if these small groups are a tiny minority, and do not have a big cache of arms other than explosives like cocktails and petrol bombs, they don't need large number of recruits to cause enormous damage. A big obstacle in the fight against terrorism in our country is that you will be branded anti-Islam if you take it on. It is worth recalling that some of the insiders in the cabinet in the BNP-led alliance government in the past days backed radicals like Bangla Bhai, Mufti Abdur Rahman and Mufti Hannan covertly, not out of shared beliefs but out of realisation that they needed the support of such groups if they were to make further gains in power.

Other than modernising madrassa education, and banning foreign funds for charitable causes of Muslim organisations in the country, the government has to keep a close vigil over the activities inside the madrassas. Our past experience suggests that such funds may have promoted a kind of fundamentalism and terrorism. The other groups engaged in this sinister violence are unemployed youths within the agerange 15-35 and they have to be rehabilitated by offering cash money to start small business, if we fail to give them employment.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star. E-mail: aukhandk@gmail.com

Bangladesh 65th country to host Street View

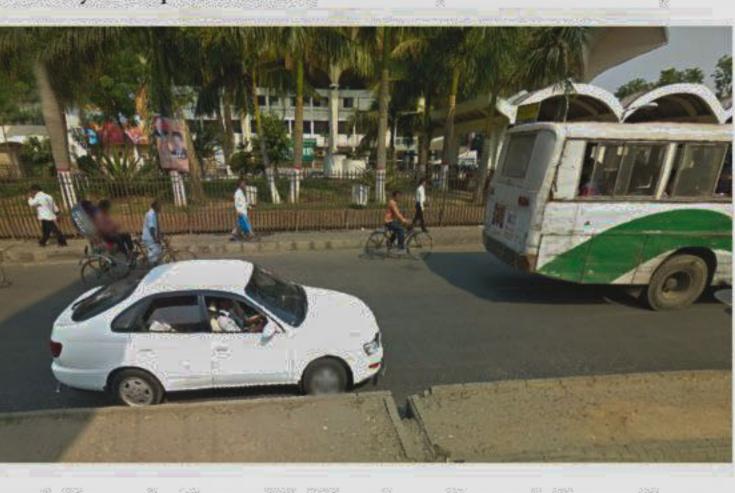
ANIR CHOWDHURY

T its birth in 1971, Bangladesh was given the Little 'bottomless basket' by scholars in the developed world because it was considered to be a country with no hope. Some forty years later, it is still a poor nation with low literacy and an international image featuring all forms of disasters, natural and man-made. It is certainly not considered to be a country to have the insight, infrastructural and human capacity, and the wherewithal to utilise information and communication technologies (ICT) for anything, let alone improving governance and service delivery. But then again, Bangladesh is

a country of 'impossible attain-

electronically, the country is on the fast lane towards massive digitisation. The government service delivery mechanism is reinventing itself to becoming more citizen-centric and responsive to citizens' needs.

In its latest string of achievements comes the honour of joining Google's Street View as the 65th country. This was a result of collaboration between Google and the Access to Information Programme at the Prime Minister's Office in Bangladesh. The high-quality 360-degree imagery of the coun try's capital city Dhaka and the port city Chittagong brings to reality some unique sights and sounds for the visitors of the world. Never before has such a vivid picture of the country's



ments,' becoming the world's 5th fastest growing economy with a consistent GDP growth rate of around 6% for the last few years in a world which has seen nearzero or negative growth, and becoming the 45th largest economy with GDP size of \$286 billion. With the capital Dhaka ranking third in freelance IT and IT-enabled services outsourcing globally, with over 120 million mobile phone users, 43 million internet users, 8 million Facebook users (one new Facebook user being added every twenty seconds), 99% geographical coverage in voice and data connectivity (mostly through wireless networks), and over 5,000 service access points where the citizens receive a multitude of government and private services

dynamism and vibrancy been accessible to so many people. Soon after the launch in February 5, 2015, 3D images of all seven divisional headquarter of the country along with top hundred tourist spots will be unveiled. The 'virtual walkthroughs' enabled by these 3D images will feature the splendours of Bangladesh to international tourists who are on the lookout for new destinations to experience. At the same time, these will be useful for the burgeoning domestic tourism created by a growing middle class. The walkthroughs will take the visitors not only along the streets in an almost life-like interactive walking experience but will also take them inside points of interest. Visitors can use

their computers, tables and phones to move around these places and look at details as if they were physically present in the spots. World's longest beach in Cox's Bazar, breathtaking tea gardens in Sylhet's lush green hills, world's largest mangrove forest, the Sundarbans, with its majestic Royal Bengal Tiger and diverse wildlife, unique experience of both the sunrise and sunset in the ocean from the same location in Kuakata, and many of the marvels of Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian architecture spread out all around the country will come alive in StreetView. Initiatives like this are part

and parcel of the country's Vision 2021: Digital Bangladesh. By introducing Google Maps with StreetView in Bangladesh, we are expecting to create new opportunities for Bangladesh in terms of boosting tourism and attracting foreign investment, thereby further enhancing our economy as a whole and local businesses in particular. Google Maps and StreetView will play a key role as our country's small and medium businesses go online and improve their web presence. A shop-owner in Old Dhaka, for instance, could link to StreetView images from his/her website and social media to help customers locate the shop.

In addition, StreetView supports our plans to use technology to improve education. Teachers in Bangladesh and around the world could use the imagery in lessons about culture, history, geography, architecture and local businesses. Students can see parts of the country which they may not have the chance to experience in person otherwise. StreetView technology could also play a key role in innovating Bangladesh's crisis response strategy by assessing locations where natural disasters have taken place.

Google StreetView was formally launched by the Hon'ble Minister for Road Transport and Bridges Obaidul Quader on February 5, 2015.

The writer is the Policy Advisor, Access to Information Programme, Prime Minister's Office, Bangladesh

