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FOUNDER EDITOR
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New study on earthquake

Take suitable measures to mitigate likely impact

A new study using ground and satellite GPS monitors have concluded that the north-eastern corner of the Indian subcontinent encompassing Bangladesh, eastern India and parts of Myanmar is at risk of a major earthquake, and the effect when it occurs would be on a massive scale (8.2 to 9 on the Richter scale). The study conducted at the Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory at Columbia University should be taken seriously, particularly by Bangladesh which has several issues going against it in the event of a major quake.

We have long been warned that Bangladesh is at high risk of getting hit by a major quake and over the last year, and the city has been experiencing minor quakes from time to time. Now that scientific data has been presented, we need to assess the impediments to the relief and rescue operations and adopt suitable measures to mitigate the likely impact.

Although no timeline can be predicted, Dhaka would be badly hit and we should remember that 17 million people call it their home. A big quake will result in the flattening of Dhaka's high rise skyline since most buildings fail to conform to standards set in the building code. Poor construction means lots of falling debris on to the extremely congested lanes and roads of Dhaka city. Getting relief to those trapped under buildings will be the single largest challenge for a post-quake event. These are challenges that need to be met headlong by policymakers.

The deadly highways

Road safety measures remain inadequate

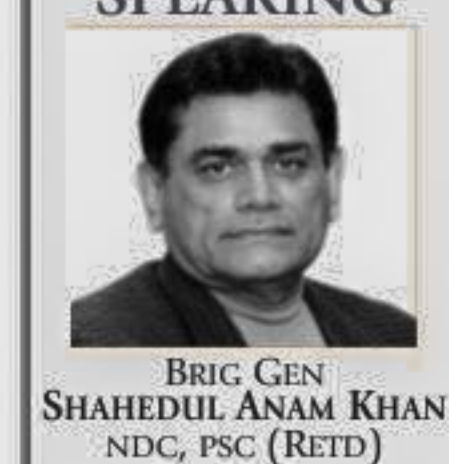
THE loss of valuable human lives in road crashes is not only tragic but also unacceptable. In this column we have written umpteen times on the alarming number of road accidents, particularly on highways, in the country. Still there is no significant improvement in this regard. Recently, eight people, including a five-year old girl, were killed and 35 others injured in road crashes in four separate incidents in one single day.

According to Bangladesh Passengers' Welfare Association, at least 8,642 people were killed and 21,855 injured in road accidents across Bangladesh last year. A WHO report identified road crash as the leading cause of death for people aged 15-29 in the country. Deaths of so many economically active people place a huge burden on the victims' families and the national economy as well.

Though road accidents are rampant in Bangladesh actions needed to make the roads safer do not seem to be adequate. On the infrastructural side, the maintenance, repair and expansion of roads coupled with setting up dividers on national highways, cautioning signals for hazardous locations are needed to be in place. The highway traffic system also needs to be strengthened. It has a crucial role to play in identifying and holding accountable reckless driving, speeding, overloaded and unfit vehicles. There should be exemplary punishment for violating traffic laws. Disseminating information on road safety to masses through media and training on safe driving are some other main areas that need to be worked on rigorously by the government to prevent road crashes.

Random ruminations

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

As one pores over the newspapers reading endlessly reports and commentaries and personal recollections of people who were associated one way or the other

with some of the unfortunate victims of the Holey Artisan massacre one is inundated by multiple thoughts agitated by comments of friends and family members living far away in body but enmeshed in spirit with this land and deeply distressed by what has been happening in their beloved country of late.

It is apparent that their mind is pervaded by rueful thoughts of what has come of a land that one took pride in for its pluralistic way of life; unfortunately it was perhaps only a phantom that vanished on the fateful night of July 1 2016. Can we tell people like them with any degree of conviction that we can and will indeed not only outlast the recent episode but also the embodiments of hate and violence that the perpetrators are; that it is only a miniscule of people with jagged minds for whom religion is nothing but an admixture of warped values where cruelty dominates all actions and who are preoccupied with the marketing of violence.

One's mind is also agitated by the fact that while there has been much expression of concern at the killings and the ominous signs of ISIS

footprints in Bangladesh, there has been a palpable lack of demonstration of sympathy for the dead like the kinds we witnessed for example after the Charlie Hebdo episode where 12 people were killed. There had been even more violent attacks in Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East following Hebdo, but there was no such outpouring of solidarity in the West. I ask this question in spite of

in this country to ameliorate their condition. Why indeed were the Japanese, or for that matter the Italians, targeted, or were they? Seeking to rationalise acts of terror is odious. But to me it seems that the terrorists were in a killing spree. They were after any foreigner, not just Japanese or Italians. It just so happened that the unfortunate victims were there on that fateful day. One's mind is also troubled by the

the recent Brussels attack. Does it alter the fact that all of us are faced with a real threat from a phenomenon that has emerged as a result of the faulty policy of the West, particularly the US with respect to Iraq, a phenomenon that President Obama had downplayed at one time when it first emerged by suggesting that al Baghdadi was a mere pretender to the empire of al Qaeda without the actual reach of bin Laden.

And in the midst of all this one is not a little bit amused by the news that the US has offered to help build up our counterterrorism capabilities. While any offer of help to combat extremism and violence is welcome, we must be cautious of the specifics. Helping us enhance the capability of the security forces and intelligence agencies is one thing but is there much we can learn in respect of fighting the menace from a country who has very little to show by way of success in its so called global war on terror. I wonder how much a country, whose policies have spawned the recent spate of terrorism, and who, despite the vast arsenal at its possession, is still struggling to successfully combat the phenomenon, can offer us by way of advice.

One's final thoughts are that we must take lessons from the recent killings in the country and then frame appropriate policies to combat the threat we are facing. The causative factors may be influenced by external compulsions but the actors are germane to the land, and so should the countermeasures be if we are to defeat the menace.

The writer is Associate Editor, The Daily Star.

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being fully certain that even in the matter of mourning for victims of terrorism and expressing our compassion there is still the 'we' versus 'they'.

One's thoughts are also troubled by commentaries in the Japanese electronic media on the killings of the seven Japanese in Holey Artisan. Why were they killed the speakers kept on asking; after all, they were in Bangladesh to help the people by participating in the development works

hair splitting on the issue of the presence of IS in Bangladesh. And in this context the expression 'home grown' has gained currency. If it is any comfort to our US and European friends let me put it to them that there is as much IS in Bangladesh as there was Al Qaeda in UK after the July 7, 2005 bombings in London, there is as much presence of IS in Bangladesh as there is in the US after the San Bernadine attack there, and there is as much presence of IS in this country as there is in Belgium after

The Rise of Theresa May

SHAKHAWAT LITON

THE fall of the first woman prime minister of UK, Margaret Thatcher, and the sudden emergence of its second woman premier, Theresa May, can be considered milestones of British history.

Being the first woman to head the Conservative Party, Thatcher had led the Tory to contest three consecutive general elections from 1979. She won all three elections and became the longest serving British PM since 1872. She became known as the "Iron Lady" for her ruthless handling of a mine workers' strike and other tough measures.

But she had to resign as PM in November 1990, before the completion of her third term, as she failed to receive a majority in the Conservative Party's annual vote for selection of a leader. It was a coup planned within her party to oust her. John Major, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was chosen as the Conservative leader, who became prime minister.

After two and a half decades since Thatcher's fall, Theresa May has been chosen as the Conservative Party leader and is the second woman PM of UK. She is replacing David Cameron who resigned in the wake of his defeat in UK's EU referendum on June 23.

David Cameron called for a referendum only a year after he returned to power for a second term, in efforts to further consolidate his position in the party and silence EU sceptics in his party by winning the referendum. He had planned to encash the popularity he had enjoyed in the 2015 elections to win the referendum.

In 2010, the Conservative Party, under the leadership of Cameron, won the polls, but failed to obtain enough seats in Parliament to form the government. This led him to form a coalition government with Liberal Democrats, something unprecedented in the last 70 years. But in 2015's election, his Conservative Party appeared as a single majority party, capable of forming the government alone. However, this strategy did not work for him in the June 23 referendum.

Taking into account the rise of May to 10 Downing Street, there have been 16 changes of prime ministers in mid-terms since 1902. And interestingly, most of the changes have taken place in the Conservative Party.

As the country's leader, May will be faced with many challenges and must carry out the prickly job of taking UK out of the EU, according to the referendum verdict, in face of strong reactions of other EU members, particularly Germany and France to UK's referendum results. She needs to unite her Conservative Party, which was split during the referendum, as well as unite the people of UK and prevent a deteriorating economic condition.

At home, her own political words on 'unelected prime minister' are going against her. When Gordon Brown, a Labour Party leader, became prime minister after the resignation of Tony Blair in 2007, Theresa May demanded a snap general election. In a blog for the

Conservative Party leadership contest on Monday, making it easier for May to become premier today. They have said the Conservative Party has now no mandate in May's words.

May has already dropped a strong hint against holding a snap election and is in favour of waiting for the election scheduled for 2020. The Fixed Term Parliament Act 2011, introduced by the Conservative Party government, may give her the legitimacy to remain in power until 2020.

Until the law was made, UK could go for a general election anytime by dissolving the Parliament. It has happened a few times in the past. Whenever a sitting prime minister felt confident about a sure election victory,

such a situation, the call for a snap election is facing opposition within the Labour camp, as some of their leaders think their party may not be able to do better if the polls are held now. The exit of Boris Johnson, Michael Gove - the two Conservative leaders known as anti-EU hardliners who campaigned for the leave campaign, from the leadership race has been a blessing for May. Another hardliner Nigel Farage, leader of the UK Independent Party, has also resigned from the party leadership post. Conservative MPs have already rallied behind May with their overwhelming support.

After the referendum, it was said that the UK was heading for disaster. But May's rise as prime minister generates



Theresa May

PHOTO: AFP

She needs to unite her Conservative Party which was split during the referendum, as well as unite the people of UK and prevent a deteriorating economic condition.

website Conservative Home, she wrote that Brown had "no democratic mandate" after taking over from Tony Blair.

In the run up to the 2010 parliamentary election, Conservative Party leader Cameron also campaigned for amending the law, introducing a provision to ensure that Parliament would be automatically dissolved six months after a change of prime minister for any other reason than a general election.

Opposition parties, including Labour and Liberal Democrats, seem to have forgotten what Cameron said in 2010. They rather started using May's comments proposing a snap election after Andrea Leadsom quit the

he called for a general election without completion of the parliamentary term.

But the provision of the Fixed Term Parliament Act makes it difficult for calling a snap election. Even if May agrees under pressure from the opposition camp to call for a snap election, she will bank on the MPs. If MPs do not agree to pass a resolution by a two-thirds majority to go for a snap election, May will not be required to go for a mid term election.

There is more good news for May. Her main opposition Labour camp is now in a state of disarray. The Labour Party is facing a leadership crisis with more than a dozen shadow ministers resigning, challenging the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn after the June referendum. In

hope for overcoming the political crisis and may help to unite the country. May is known for being a tough negotiator and one of the shrewdest politicians in the current political arena. The general feeling is that May will lead the UK in the right direction. Moreover, a mature democracy and healthy politics will keep contributing to her government's efforts to overcome the ongoing political and financial crisis.

The success of her government in the remaining four years will consolidate her position in British politics and open the door for her return to the power through the general election in 2020.

The writer is Senior Reporter, The Daily Star.

COMMENTS

"Mustafizur unfurled"

(July 13, 2016)

Moazzem Hossain

A truly gifted young man. Along with his talents, something this young man has acquired is humility.

"Rampal plant's wheels set in motion"

(July 13, 2016)

Orni

And that will have disastrous effects on the Sundarbans.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Sanctions on Russia

This refers to the report, "EU extends sanctions by 6 months" (July 2). It was surprising that the sanctions will be extended after the UK referendum to quit the EU. But nonetheless, sanctions on Russia have come. The falling oil prices have acted as a double whammy on Russian economy. But Russia has faced sanctions and has not

whittled under pressure. On the contrary, it has also imposed sanctions, banning import of dairy products from European nations. The EU has to bury the past and work together for a joint Europe, leaving behind the Ukraine controversy.

Deendayal M. Lulla
On e-mail

Install metal detectors and scanners

Though our government has categorically rejected the claim of IS' presence in Bangladesh, such a barbaric incident like the Gulshan attack occurred and according to SITE Intelligence, IS has claimed its responsibility. Few months ago, I was watching a programme on CNN about IS

where it showed that IS recruits people online via email, asks their new recruits to stay in their own countries and tells them to plan attacks locally.

There are many websites that the government needs to scrutinise and possibly filter out. I also suggest that metal

detectors and scanners be installed at all public places especially in the diplomatic zones. This may be very expensive to do but nothing can be more precious than our lives.

Aminur Rahim
New DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Govt.'s decision to take Peace TV off air

Recently our government has decided to stop the airing of Peace TV in Bangladesh. I am sure that most of our fellow countrymen will agree with me that the Indian TV channels have no less detrimental effects on us than the Peace TV. The government should ponder over this issue too.

Chandro
On e-mail