

8<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER: A NATION ON TRIAL

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**TERJUMAN-UL-QURAN**

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PROF. KHURSHID AHMAD



## **8<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER: A NATION ON TRIAL**

By Professor Khurshid Ahmad

At 0852 hrs in the morning of 8 October 2005, a vast area in Pakistan's North, extending from the Frontier Province to Azad Kashmir witnessed a deadly earthquake. Within seconds it pushed thousands of lives into the value of death. Over 100,000 men, women and children, young and old received grievous injuries, five million people were rendered homeless and dozens of towns and hundreds of villages bubbling with life were reduced to rubbles. The magnitude of this massive destruction was such that its tremors were felt at once around the globe and tears rolled down billions of cheeks not only within Pakistan and the Muslim Ummah, but throughout the world. — The question, however, is: can this killer quake that pushed those awake into the lap of an unending sleep do the miracle of arousing 150 million dreamers and their self-indulgent and short-sighted leadership from their sweet slumber?

In view of the International Donors Conference, scheduled for 19 November, the situation calls for an urgent review and stocktaking both at the government and national levels. The submissions that follow are an attempt to facilitate such a reappraisal.

The whole tragedy in itself is a bitter truth and the best that can be done to provide immediate relief the need of the hour and a national urgency. Undaunted efforts are needed for the rescue, relief and rehabilitation operation on a massive scale and even a little negligence on our behalf would be the worst example of our collective failure, and a social crime. Over and above everything else we must, however, remember that the glitter or gloom of our future would depend entirely on how far we have been able to draw proper lessons from this tragedy. Are we ready to come out of our present stupor? Has it been able to induce change in our outlook and attitudes as a nation?

Our real salvation and relief from the life's trials and tribulations lie in our self-introspection and sense of accountability, reappraisal of our individual and collective attitudes, review of our national and state policies, awareness of the acts and deeds that invite Allah's wrath, recourse to His Benevolence with all humility and sense of guilt and seeking His Pardon, rekindling within ourselves the spirit of brotherhood and the motivation for the correct observance of Huquq Allah and Huququl Ibad (Obligations towards Allah Subhanahu wa Taala and His subjects). The basic difference between an Islamic and a non-Islamic attitude in such emergencies is that while a non-Islamic approach lays full stress only on the physical and temporal aspects, like the rescue, relief and rehabilitation, the Islamic approach also takes in its stride the ultimate objective and the spiritual dimension of all our actions, i.e. the quest for Allah's Pleasure.

As Muslims, we need to draw sustenance from His Guidance and try to reform our situation in its light and take measures to establish the writ of justice and fairplay so that our society may become

an abode of goodness and virtue and merit the Blessings from Allah, pouring in from heavens and earth.

### 10/8: The Quranic Perspective:

The distinctive feature of the line of thought and action that the Holy Qur'an has inspired the humans to follow is that while taking cognizance of the physical aspects of life and the material side of the natural calamities, it does not ignore the moral, spiritual and ideological causes and factors behind these incidents and in fact highlights them in such a way as to attract our attention at once. To express it more aptly, it lets the natural phenomena serve as means to educate and train us in understanding the life's moral objectives and drawing lessons from them for our spiritual as well as material uplift. It thus makes the two lines of thought distinct from each other, the one Islamic and the other non-Islamic, each reflecting the two separate paradigms of life. There is on the one hand that attitude to life which restricts itself to the physical factors alone and on the other the one that also takes into consideration its moral, spiritual and ideological side, thereby linking every big or small incident with the life's basic paradigms, values and objectives and with the moral and eternal standards of success and failures:

“Blessed is He in Whose hands is the Dominion of the Universe and He over all things hath power. He who created Death and Life, that He may try which of you is best in deed: And He is the Exalted in Might, the Most Forgiving.”

**(S. LXVII: Al-Mulk, 1-2)**

Death is an undeniable reality that we witness day in and day out, often in the form of the departure of our near and dear ones and sometimes in the shape of major incidents and calamities that shake all and sundry without distinction. The accounts narrated by the Book of God of the nations destroyed in the past in different manners are not just tales of the peoples who met with their horrible fate. These are also a warning till eternity for the world, specially the Believers and those who are ready to take lesson from such eye-opening catastrophes of human history. In fact, the real objective behind these narratives is to reawaken the humans from their deep slumber and let them draw lessons from the scenarios of life and death, whether of the past, or those emerging around us from time to time and to which we are all a witness:

“Do the people of the towns feel secure against the coming of our wrath by night while they are asleep? Or, do they feel secure against its coming in broad daylight while they are at play? Do they feel secure against the Plan of God? But none can feel secure against the Plan of God except those (doomed) to ruin! Has it not, then, become plain to those who have inherited the earth in succession to its (previous) possessors, that had we so Willed, We could have punished them for their sins. ...”

**(S. VII: Al-A'raf, 97-100)**

By repeatedly narrating the past incidents of deviations from the Path of Truth and transgressions of the earlier generations in injustice and oppression and the fate they consequently met, the Book of God has opened up before us new vistas of thought and vision. We have been trained into developing a mindset through which we may discern the inter-relationship between the physical and the moral factors and try to reform ourselves in the light of the past experience of the generations gone by. It may be out of place here to dilate into the academic discussion to determine as to when do the natural calamities become a punishment from God and when these are a warning, and what are the different scales and categories of the Divine Punishment. What remains, however, undeniable is that the physical as well as moral factors go hand in hand. Just as there are natural causes for the quakes, tornadoes, floods and similar other calamities, these have behind them very strong and eye-opening moral factors as well. The short-sighted among us do not go beyond the physical phenomena, but a true Believer keeps his eyes focused also on their moral, spiritual, metaphysical and civilizational causes and their aftermath and he goes on to take lesson from them in order to set things right.

The Holy Qur'an trains us into evolving this line of thought and the Prophet of God, May Allah's Peace be upon him, has in an extremely loving and effective manner inspired the human mind to focus on this linkage and inter-relationship between the physical and moral factors. The most revealing of his Sayings in this regard is the one narrated by Imam Tirmizi on the authority of Imams Ali bin Abi Talib and Sayyidena Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with them):

“When public funds are taken as personal property and public trust as booty, when Zakah (Mandatory Charity) is deemed as penalty, when seeking knowledge is a means not to spiritual but only worldly gains, when the man is so subservient to his wife as to be disobedient to his mother, when he is closer to his friend than his father, when noises rise from the mosques (in utter disregard to their sanctity), when a Fasiq (disobedient to God and His Apostle) is chief of the tribe and the leader of the nation is from among their worst, when a man is respected due to the fear of his misconduct, when musical instruments spread everywhere, wine becomes the drink of the day and the new generation of the Ummah condemns the old, when such is the situation then wait for thunderbolts and storms, earthquakes and caving in of the land, disfiguring of the faces, and chastisements pouring down from heavens. And these signs would follow one after the other in succession the way the beads follow each other spilling around when the string is broken.”

**(Tirmizi, Kitab Al-Fitan, Hadith No.2136 & 2137)**

In addition to serving as a warning, these disasters are also meant as a test and trial. The real objective of this trial is the moral and spiritual purification and training. For some it becomes a cause of decline and decay and for some others a means of moral uplift, spiritual advancement, mutual support and solidarity and return to justice and fairplay. Just as the warning, admonition

and punishment are integral to the process of reform, similarly the trial and tribulations are inevitable aspects of this broad-based Divine system of check and balance:

“Do people think that they will be left alone on saying, ‘We believe’, and they will not be tested? We did test those before them, and God will certainly know those who are true and those who are false.” **(S.XXIX: Al-Ankabut, 2-3)**

“We shall certainly test you with something of fear and hunger, some loss in goods or lives or the fruits (of your toil), but give glad tidings to those who patiently persevere, who say, when affected by calamity: ‘To God we belong and to Him is our return; They are those on whom descend blessings from God and Mercy, and they are the ones that receive guidance.’” **(S.II: Al-Baqarah, 155-157)**

### Need for Self-Review and Reckoning:

At the time when the whole nation is severely traumatized by the grievous impact of the devastating quake and its aftermath, what is essentially required, side by side with the much-needed relief and rehabilitation work, is a return to Allah Subhahu wa Taala, the individual and collective self-introspection and reckoning, repentance and seeking the Lord’s Pardon and reaffirmation of our allegiance to Him, as also a fresh resolve to fulfill the objectives for the achievement of which the Islamic Republic of Pakistan was established and for which we had pledged to our Lord that we would always hold aloft the banner of our Faith and follow the path of His Apostle (PBUH).

Has the time not come for us to reflect and ponder what we have done with our individual and national commitment and pledge to Allah Subhanahu wa Taala? We were blessed with a free homeland, but practically speaking we stand today shackled by the servitude of non-Islamic political, economic and civilizational forces. God had installed us in an elevated position as the harbinger of the Muslim Ummah’s renaissance. But we aligned with the forces of evil that used our shoulders to launch aggression against a neighboring Muslim country. Consequently, the forces inimical to Islam have been emboldened in their sinister designs and are now engaged in a ruthless bloodbath in many Muslim countries. We have lost our own peace and security and are indirectly responsible for the loss of peace and security in the Muslim countries from West Asia to Middle East. Instead of being the pioneer of the Islamic social order, we are pleased to keep our economy interest-based, indulge in over-speculation, bribery, hoarding and all forms of corruption and exploitation. As a natural corollary to all this, 40% of our population is groveling in poverty, while just 2% are enjoying the luxuries of life. We have turned education into an instrument of intellectual and cultural slavery and are criminally negligent about the moral and ideological upbringing of our younger generation. Profligacy and promiscuous behavior are no more a taboo. The cases of gang-rapes are on the rise. The common man has no security of his live, honor and

property and those responsible to provide him with security and protection are themselves a threat to his life, property and honor. Those entrusted with the sacred duty of defending the country have turned from sentinels to its rulers.

With this backdrop, while our first and foremost priority should obviously be to accelerate efforts for the relief and rehabilitation of the affected population, reconstruction of the devastated towns and villages and to enable the once industrious people to rise once again on their own feet instead of living on alms and charity as destitute and paupers; at the same time we must also look into ourselves for an individual and collective self-introspection, self-reckoning, penitence and checking our steps for our onward march. If as a nation we succeed in our moral rejuvenation, then alone it would be possible for us to get out of the present morass and escape the natural consequences of disobedience to Allah Subhanahu wa Taala, disregard of our obligations towards Him and His subjects, our exploitative and repressive policies and actions, the loss of peace and security, conciliation and cordiality and our self-respect and self-reliance and the ignominy of others' subservience and servility. This is the message and the lesson that we must take from the catastrophe of the 8<sup>th</sup> October.

### Positive and Negative Aspects:

The instantaneous response that the great tragedy of 10/8 evoked has in itself some significant points to ponder. There were on the one side the frightened people who called the Lord in utter helplessness and humility and sought His Pardon. I am myself a witness to the scene when every big and small faced Qibla with trembling and folded hands praying for his safety as the earth shook and the high-rise buildings moved like pendulum. In the aftermath of the earthquake, the common man and specially our youth from the universities, colleges, schools and Deeni Madaris, rushed at once, individually and collectively, to help their quake-stricken brothers and sisters. From Khyber to Karachi, there was an upsurge of reawakening and the rich and the poor, the young and the old, all got restless to do something for their afflicted brothers and sisters. Donations started pouring in; the people began clearing the debris with their bare hands; and there was a beeline to rescue those under the fallen structures, donate blood for the injured and make arrangements for burying the dead. It was an inspiring spectacle of a heroic people. The whole nation rose like one body, reawakened with a new sense of purpose to boldly meet the challenge posed by the most horrific earthquake of Pakistan's history. That was a ray of hope in a stifling darkness and the sign of a new dawn.

Side by side with this soul-stirring response, there were those who held the rein of power in the land and were supposed to be the first to comprehend the enormity of this national calamity. It was rightly expected of them to rise up immediately without losing any time to properly tackle the situation and take the steps urgently needed for relief and rescue. Unfortunately, however, they lost full three days in a state of indecision and apathy. The Federal Minister for Information and his

media managers tried to depict things as normal and going on well 'as planned'. One of our Corps Commanders snubbed the hapless people not to raise 'unnecessary' hue and cry, as he claimed that the number of those who lost their lives was very small and hence 'insignificant'. The Prime Minister was similarly jittery against what he described as 'the media's negative attitude'. Even in the Federal Capital just one crane was available initially to remove the debris of the fallen blocks of the 'Margala Towers'. Within 24 hours the rapid emergency relief teams arrived from UK, Italy and Japan, but it took three days for our celebrated Frontier Works Organization to move and for the relief contingent from Gujranwala and Karachi to reach Islamabad. Similarly, the rescue team from Spain landed at Islamabad Airport within 24 hours, but they had to wait at the Airport for 48 hours waiting for the concerned authorities' signal for further move.

It was a dismal sight to see the criminal apathy, ineptitude and inaction of our authorities for 'Crisis Management'. It was difficult to believe that we did not have even the basic tools and machines ordinarily available to nations even poorer than us to meet such emergencies, such as cranes, concrete cutters and the instruments for detecting the survivors under the debris of fallen buildings. Even our Police and the Armed Forces were not trained and properly equipped to handle such natural emergencies. The Fire Brigade is expected everywhere in the world to have the necessary trained manpower and tools for emergency situations. Unfortunately, we had none! The Civil Defence Act of 1952 and the West Pakistan's National Calamities (Prevention and Relief) Act of 1958 remain part of our statute book. In the year 2000, a 'National Crisis Management Cell' was set up in the Federal Ministry of Interior, headed by a Retired Brigadier. There is then the project of the proposed National Defence Management Agency, which has been lying in the Govt files since last five years, and for which a sumptuous budget grant of Rs.155,000,000/- was allocated by the UNDP long time back. Unfortunately, however, when the actual time of trial came we were caught napping and had to depend on our bare hands, or beg for foreign assistance, to conduct even a normal rescue operation.

That is the state of our preparedness at the national level. As a nation, we are definitely on trial. Our political leadership stands exposed and our moth-eaten system has crumbled to dust. The tall claims of 'good governance' are a cruel joke. This national calamity has also laid bare the society's good and bad elements. On the one hand, there are those who are busy even today in exploiting the pathetic situation to their advantage, and on the other are the noble souls who emptied their pockets to help the needy. There was immediately a sharp rise in transportation charges and items of daily need. It was almost unbelievable to find the marauders gangs' engaged in looting valuables from the fallen structures and chopping the hands of females buried under the debris of their houses for the sake of securing a few gold bangles and rings. It was equally unimaginable to see some political notables of AJK hijacking trucks loaded with the relief material to sell it in the open market, while men from Police Department, though themselves adversely affected, also doing their bit in this spree of loot and plunder.



Those who responded almost instantaneously to help their grief-stricken brothers and sisters undoubtedly represent the glorious side of our society. Imbued with a sense of service above self, our common man has been in the forefront of the relief and rescue marathon. They rose like one body with an undaunted spirit to help those in need and soon relief caravans started moving from the length and breadth of the country, led by God-fearing men and women, to share with their afflicted brothers and sisters whatever they could by way of clothing, food, tidbits for the children, medicines, tents and hospitals. Side by side with these angels of mercy, stood those busy in photo sessions and media shows. The tragedy had a lesson for all of us. The good has been made distinct from the bad and it is now upto the society how best can it encourage and organize the good into a dominant force and check and reform the bad to help it play a more positive role in the society's moral and physical growth. The counterfeit and the real, the false and the true stand fully exposed today. The glaring contradictions of our civil society have been taken note of not only by our own people but by the outside world as well. The foreign media reports have exposed quite a few of our darker sides. The need of the hour, therefore, is that we should stand as a rock behind the forces of good to repulse forever the agents of evil in our society. If we succeed in doing that, the great calamity that has befallen our nation would eventually prove to be a precursor of goodness and glory.

After the initial spell of inertia, the government agencies and the military have at long last sprang into action. Whatever they are doing now by way of relief and rehabilitation, though much less than expected of them, must also be acknowledged, commended and further strengthened. A greater need is, however, there to urgently remove the bottlenecks in the way of a well-thought out and well-coordinated plan of action. The lack of essential tools and technology and the absence of any effective rapport and coordination among the military, the civilian authorities, the Provincial and the local governments and the NGOs, need to be redressed on an urgent basis and efforts must be made to avoid point-scoring at all cost.

The services rendered individually and collectively by private parties and organizations must also be acknowledged and lauded. Special thanks are due to the islamically oriented organizations for what they have done selflessly and under extremely trying conditions to provide relief and rescue to the affected people. They were there much before those in civvies or uniform could show up their presence. These religious organizations have set a glorious example of dedication and selfless service and proved once again that the segment the society can look up for its uplift and rejuvenation is that of the Islamic forces with their resolve to serve.

### 10/8 and the Western Media:

The tragedy was so colossal that it at once attracted the notice of the foreign media. Eminent Western reporters, correspondents and analysts came up with their eye-witness accounts and



reviews. The contradictions, mentioned above, were highlighted by them in greater detail. Some telling portions from their reports may be of interest:

“It was only October 11<sup>th</sup> that the Army had begun to fan out beyond the towns..... There was also anger with what was seen as the slowness of Government’s response to the disaster. In Balakot, to which road was opened only on October 10<sup>th</sup> residents complained that the Army spent the first day there building its own camp. In Muzaffarabad the owner of what was a five story hotel, now a crumbling ruin, said he saw no sign of the Army for three days. The wrecked hotel now buried 50 corpses. Looters had shifted their pockets. But it did look as though the Army was slow off the mark. Only on October 12<sup>th</sup> did two Divisions of fresh soldiers from Punjab Province start arriving in Kashmir and NWFP. Many also criticized the poor coordination between military and civilian authorities.”

**(Economist, October 15, London)**

“There is now widespread acceptance of the need to priorities and coordinate aid, avoid duplication, ensure sensitive cooperation with officials of the victim nation and stop shop looters steeling from warehouses and aid convoys. It is clear that disorder, theft, red-tape and official obstructionism severely hampered relief at this most critical phase”.

**(The Times London, October 15)**

“Peshawar: The Islamic organizations that had set up camps in Balakot were the Jamaat-i-Islami-run Al-Khidmat and its students wing Islami Jamiat-i-Tulaba (IJT), Maulana Fazlur Rahman’s JUI-F, Al-Rahmat Trust, Ummah Welfare Trust, Jamaat-ud-Daawa, Jamia Faridia, Lal Masjid Islamabad and Jehadi groups, Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-i-Mohammad. A few smaller Islamic organizations too had set up banners or were escorting vehicles loaded with relief goods sent by people from every nook and corner of Pakistan. Naveed Masood Hashmi, an organizer of Al Rahmat Trust’ told The News that ... the Islamic organizations were the most active and effective in helping the quake affectees. ‘Seeing believes and we invite reporters, politicians and lawyers to visit the quake-affected towns and find out as to who is serving the affectees and who is making noises. Members of Islamic organizations have already gone beyond Balakot to visit stranded mountain communities in their villages and provide them succor’.”

**(Report by Rahimullah Yousuzai, BBC/The News)**

“The Army was slow to respond, and international agencies are in some ways just getting strayed. But here amid the rubble and the rain at the heart of Pakistan’s earthquake zone, the zealous foot-soldiers of Jamaat ul-Dawa, one of the country’s most prominent Islamic extremist groups, are very much in evidence. On a sloping muddy field near the rushing Neelum River, the group has established a large field

hospital complete with X-ray equipment, dental department. Dispensaries are piled high with donated stocks of antibiotics, pain-killers and other medical supplies. Other groups with a visible presence on Saturday in Muzaffarabad, the largest town in the area, were the charitable wing of Jamaat-i-Islami, an Islamic political party with ideological links to the Palestinian militant group Hamas and the Al-Rashid Trust, a Karachi-based charity whose US assets were frozen by the Bush administration in 2003 on the ground that it channeled funds to Al-Qaeda. The group has denied the charge and says it is focused purely on the social welfare.”

**(Washington Post, John Lincester, Muzaffarabad, October 15)**

### The Future Scenario:

I would like now to suggest the steps that are needed to be taken in all earnestness to ensure a better future for the affected people in particular and the nation as a whole.

The Government’s initial apathy, negligence and partisan attitude notwithstanding, the relief and rehabilitation work, done by the country’s religious and political organizations in a spirit of national solidarity and dedication and keeping the community interests above narrow political and personal considerations, is extremely laudable and must be sustained. In order to help maintain its pace, the Government and specially General Pervez Musharraf need, however, to change their attitude. It is a pity that even at such a crucial moment of our national existence, the General’s endeavors revolved entirely round his own person and the Army. It appeared as though there were in the country no civil administration, no constitutional body and no Parliament. He is now openly saying that the Army alone is an institution that can take the country out of this crisis, while on the other hand the Army’s performance on the political and civilian side has been not only extremely disappointing but rather disastrous. Reconstruction is not the Army’s forte and the civil and constitutional apparatus must also play their due role. The viewpoint of the political parties in this regard is quite clear and fundamentally correct. How General Pervez and his position in the country are viewed by independent observers, especially from the West, is best illustrated by the following comments from Ian Bremmer in an article published in International Herald Tribune:

“Greece, Turkey and Indonesia have something very basic in common. They are democracies. Their leaders govern with the consent of the people. President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan enjoys no such popular legitimacy. He is an Army General with excessive power in a state ruled by the Military, whose mandate depends on an implied understanding with the Pakistani people.”

The earlier the General takes cognizance of the ground realities, the better it would be for him as a person, for the Military as a national institution and for the country as a whole and its constitutional structure. We would, therefore, strongly recommend the Military to do whatever

good work it can regard relief, rescue and rehabilitation, but the future programme of rehabilitation and reconstruction must be worked out in consultation with the Parliament. This programme needs to be implemented by the civil administration, which must forthwith take measures for the capacity building of the required manpower and improve the basic infrastructure needed to run the operation on a permanent footing. We would further recommend that in order to keep the entire operation above the local and national politics, there must be a proper coordination and cooperation among the Centre and the Provinces. An autonomous rehabilitation authority should be set up on permanent basis, one each for the affected areas of the NWFP and AJK, with the help of their Assemblies and the respective Governments. On the Federal level, a permanent body may be established composed of the representatives of the Federation, the four Provinces and the Parliament Members from all parties.

### Action Plan in a Nutshell:

In order to streamline efforts for a better future following points merit immediate consideration:

1. It is necessary to have supervision and overall control of the Parliament on the relief supplies received so far or which may be received in future. For this, Members of the ruling party, its allies, as well as all the Opposition parties should jointly be made responsible for the entire work concerning distribution of relief goods and the rescue operation.
2. There is an urgent need for proper interaction and coordination between the civilian administration and the NGOs engaged in the relief and rehabilitation efforts. A well-planned participation of all agencies, both government and private, and continued public association and their trust, are essential to effectively meet the immense challenge facing the nation.
3. A three-phase Plan of Action may be worked out as follows:
  - a) The first phase of immediate relief may be spread over 3-4 months. During this period the tasks to be carried out on an emergency basis should include well-planned and uninterrupted supply of the daily needs, water, power, Medicare, psycho-therapy, provision of shelter, and opening up of roads and tracks.
  - b) The reconstruction phase follows next. For this, immediate schemes will have to be prepared and necessary funds arranged to reconstruct towns and settlements on properly selected sites after necessary surveys and scientific analysis of the essential data. In an integrated manner the

project should cover all the basic facilities, like residence, education, health, employment, transport and conveyance, water and power.

- c) In the third phase, the loose ends would have to be tied up and snags, if any, removed in order to ensure normal living conditions to the rehabilitated people and proper functioning of the institutions set up at their townships and settlements. It would have to be ensured that the orphans are getting adequate care and their academic and maintenance needs are being fulfilled in a systematic and sustained manner; the widows have been rehabilitated economically and jobs provided to them in self-sustaining social welfare schemes, handicrafts centers and vocational training camps; and proper employment have been arranged to the youth and the able-bodied, for which a skill development programme would have to be devised and launched on an urgent basis in the affected areas.
4. One of the most serious problems facing the affected population is that of the injured. Thousands of people have lost their limbs and are now permanently disabled. A separate programme for their relief and rehabilitation will have to be launched forthwith to help them regain a semblance of normalcy in their lives and the self-confidence needed to start their life anew.
  5. The provision of proper care and rehabilitation of the orphans and the widows similarly merit urgent attention. According to the initial estimates, at least sixty to seventy thousand children have lost either both or one of their parents, while about the same number of women have lost their bread-earners. The problem, therefore, needs to be tackled as a national emergency with careful planning and meticulous execution.
  6. The killer quake has exposed, along with our other failures as a nation, our lack of planning and sub-standard construction of roads and buildings. The case of Margala Towers in Islamabad is in the news as a big scandal. Hundreds of Government Schools and about one thousand hospitals and clinics have been reduced to rubble in the NWFP. We will have to set up a review committee to scientifically re-examine our building construction rules and regulations and improve the present standards to conform to the universally accepted and scientifically approved norms.
  7. Our obsolete and ill-equipped emergency relief and rescue apparatus, like the Fire Brigade, Civil Defence, Scouts, etc., need to be overhauled and refurbished

with necessary training and tools. We have to make them worthy of their name by technically boosting their capability and strengthening them with the latest equipment to keep them in a state of perpetual alert for meeting national emergencies.

8. Our future planning for such disasters should also take into account the measures to prevent the spread of epidemics and the provision of emergency medical relief in affected areas.
9. Corruption and mismanagement is unfortunately the bleeding wound of our national existence. People have lost their trust in the government and its institutions. Seventy percent of the local government and fifty percent of the civilian administration are known to suffer from this malady. The Military, once known for its financial integrity, is now also badly affected by the disease, which appears incurable under the present dispensation. This is the biggest challenge facing the task of reconstruction and rehabilitation. If not properly and timely checked with a national will and a suitable system of accountability, all efforts, howsoever well-meaning and well-planned, are bound to be a dismal failure.

To conclude, I would like once again to invite the attention of all those concerned to the dire need for proper training in ethics and higher values of life. It is time we know the worth of honesty, integrity, an effective system of accountability and immaculate transparency. That is possible only when the material resources are used within the limits set by moral norms, and honesty becomes the basic prerequisite of our trained manpower along with academic qualifications and physical fitness. The Government, the civil society and the people should all be imbued with a sense of moral responsibility and accountability of the Day of Reckoning.

In order to achieve the desired goal, the national leadership would have to bring about a change in its perceptions and approach. The rule of the law would have to be translated from paper into practice; the dream of good governance would have to be turned into reality; every institution would have to be made fully capable of independently managing its own affairs within its well-defined spheres; and the folly of centralizing everything in one person or a single authority would have to be discarded once for all. The last but not the least, a system of public accountability should be so devised, side by side with the legal accountability, that no person in authority should feel unaccountable or above the law.

If the calamity of the 8<sup>th</sup> October serves to change our outlook, cleanse us from our past misdeeds and put us on the right track for our onward march, it would then prove to be a blessing in disguise for the entire nation. That is the change which alone can transform our present and ensure us a bright future in this world and in the Hereafter.

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