

LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY APRIL 19, 2003

Suicide by a helpless girl

Some one must take responsibility for her death

T E are simply lost for words in reacting to the sad and unnecessary death of young college student Farzana Afreen Rumi in Khulna. It would be impossible for all of us to understand her state of mind when she hanged herself in her own home and at a moment when a group of local 'mastans' were trying to break the door with a 'mission to kidnap her' in broad daylight! And the reason? One of them wanted to marry her at any cost! What a sad state of society that we are living in. According to reports, Rumi's parents had shifted residence in the past after Rony, a local mastan, began eve-teasing her on her way to school everyday. In fact Rumi even began to wear burkha to avoid Rony and his gang's nuisance.

What is so worrying and disturbing at the same time is the attitude of the neighbours toward the whole incident. Rumi's father had approached the elders of the area for help, but none made any efforts. Not only that, no one came forward to help when Rony and his gang barged into his house threatening to kidnap Rumi! Probably they were scared and worried about their own safety since the kidnappers had a criminal background. We can't imagine how helpless Rumi's parents must have felt.

And the less said about the police, the better. If newspaper reports are to be believed, then they did their jobs alright. When the local police was informed about an earlier threat made by Rony, reportedly they asked Rumi's parents to file a false robbery case against him. Since they didn't, police most conveniently did not take any action against him. So we ask -who should take the responsibility for such an untimely death? This whole incident reminds us of another similar death of a talented young painter, Simi, who also committed suicide after getting fed up with eve teasing and seeing the police as being mere spectators. Sadly but guite expectedly, those who compelled her to take such a step were sentenced only for a year since the court was not convinced that they had actually instigated her to end her life. We simply hope Rumi's death would not go in vain either.

Digging of roads

It cannot be an unending process

ITY dwellers, steeped in a host of civic problems as they are, seldom hear anything being done to mitigate their sufferings. So the Dhaka City Corporation's bid to put a brake on round-the-year road digging may bring some relief to them.

The DCC has decided that the utility service providers will have to seek its permission before digging roads. Strange though it may sound, road digging is no longer a minor problem for the huge number of vehicles and pedestrians moving on the city thoroughfares.

The utility service providers appear to be totally oblivious of the inconvenience that they cause to people by digging, and most often leaving the mutilated roads not sufficiently repaired once their job is done. Big holes or furrows in the middle of the busy thoroughfares are a common sight in the city. The holes are veritable death traps to an unsuspecting driver or pedestrian.

The biggest problem is that the badly ruptured roads add to the seemingly insoluble traffic tangles in the city. The decision-makers are apparently worried about jams, and so are the road users. But the factors responsible for such jams have not been eliminated in a planned way. Only that can explain why citizens' needs are not taken into consideration when roads are fully or partially blocked for undertaking development works. Reports also say that as per the existing rules the utility service providers have to take prior approval of the DCC before digging a road, but there is no provision for penalising the violators of the rules. However, the DCC's plan of seeking compensation from the utility service providers, when they fail to complete their work within the stipulated period of time, should be executed in right earnest. It must not be allowed to degenerate into another good rule with little practical implications. The DCC has rightly felt that road digging is going on indiscriminately and something has to be done to make the lives of road users less miserable. We believe that lack of coordination among the agencies concerned is a major problem, which must be resolved before the situation can improve. The government should look into the matter and improve the coordination and understanding among its agencies and departments so that all development and maintenance works can be done smoothly.

US-Europe relations after Iraq war

call common threat assessment. The fifteen nations of the EU today are unable to agree on the nature of their shared security or on the geographical limits of their 'security neighbourhood.' They are also unable to agree on whether they should seek or accept global defence and security responsibilities Nearer to home they are at odds

MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

N history, each situation is differ-

ent and has to be judged on its

own merit. Important events

provide us with a roadmap, and help us

to prognosticate as to how the present

might affect the future. I believe that

what we are witnessing today is an

international occurrence that will not

only cast its own shadow on future

strategy and planning in the Middle

East and Asia but will also affect the

evolution of future events in Europe

and its relations with the US. It is in this

context that I have made some suppo-

It would appear from reports

coming out of different European

shocked not only by the scale of their

what they are going to do about it.

Balkans policy, but that's about all.

sitions.

over the balance between European countries' sovereign powers and the sharing of their defence capabilities, and consequently also their financial commitments. The latest round of the ministerial meeting in the NATO headquarters also demonstrated that

tion of their security aims 18 years after the alliance's launch in 1949, and it laid the groundwork for detente and the eventual end of the Cold War. Giles Merritt, the eminent Secretary-General of Friends of Europe has recently pointed out that, 36 years after the Harmel Report, Europe probably urgently requires after Iraq a fresh

security doctrine. In this context, it has also been stressed that Washington probably needs to re-define its security policy criteria. Attention is drawn to the fact that international opinion through mass protests have clearly indicated that the Bush Administration's doc

better pool their military resources, so that their political leaders can have improved levels of military clout. It is in this regard that I anticipate a new trans-Atlantic doctrine after Iraq. One would be even tempted to call it 'Harmel-II,' consistent with Hollywood.

The new cooperation will probably stress more on the industrial component. Whatever the differences of opinion today between the USA and certain countries in Europe, it cannot be in the long-term interests of the United States for Europe's military capabilities to lag too far behind. The only solution will be to strengthen the

POST BREAKFAST

Much will depend on what Washington does once the fighting ends, as well as the degree to which European coalition partners follow America's lead. It will however be the common and shared interests, i.e., oil and gas, terrorism, drugs and illegal immigration...Russia and China because of their own geo-political interests, trade and investment requirements might try at times to register their views tangentially, but will desist from overexposing themselves, individually or together as rivals to the only superpower.

discussion of military burden-sharing countries that Europeans were across the Atlantic and within Europe own disarray over the Iraq crisis but is dominated more by airy platitudes than agreed, hard facts also by the depth of the rifts that this

conflict has opened up inside the It would be worthwhile to note here European Union. It has led many to ask that the 105-member Convention on the Future of Europe (an advisory The splitting of NATO, when body), will be issuing their mid-year France, Germany and Belgium recommendations in the near future baulked at committing themselves to on how to streamline and reform the aiding Turkey in the event of an Iraqi EU. It is expected that they will touch on defence and security. Critics are attack, was symptomatic of a more serious malaise. It revealed that the waiting to see how the current Iraq European Union's vaunted common war, its progress and its attendant political crisis will affect the convenforeign and security policy was hollow and non-existent. It also proved that tion's future reform package. Their years of diplomacy have given the EU a opinions might vary with regard to infrastructure and dynamics, but they all agree that Iraq will leave an indeli-This disarray appears to be based ble print on future recommendations.

on much more than what is happening in Iraq. The issue of whether it has Difficulties in unity and the identity been right or even useful to attack Iraq crisis that are being witnessed today on has been a catalyst that has brought to the European scene are however not unprecedented. They have been in this the surface long dormant divisions position before. One can recall that in over the nature of European security. mid-1960s sparks had flown in Europe The European media might have focussed attention on disagreements and across the Atlantic when France withdrew from NATO's military strucbetween governments, but more ture and the alliance was forced to alarming has been the policymaker's sense of bewilderment over what the decamp from Paris to Brussels. Most agree that one important

challenges to peace really were. One would tend to think that the result of that crisis was the security missing cornerstone of European strategy set out in a report master Union's common foreign and security minded by the Belgian Foreign Minister of that time, Pierre Harmel, It policy has been what military planners updated the NATO countries' definitrine of making pre-emptive strikes against perceived threats is neither sophisticated nor constructive. It would probably be true to state

here that post Iraq-war scenario will lead to deep introspection among the European leadership. They will take one step back and carefully analyse how their strategic planning should respond to evolving needs.

I believe that European countries will take a closer look at their military capabilities and try to ascertain what steps need to be taken to suitably implement an agreed, new security and defence doctrine. The other evening, a commentator

made an interesting observation on television. He pointed out that on paper the European members of NATO have two million troops in uniform. In practice, the experts believe that less than five percent of them could ever be mobilised as fighting units of a NATO response force.

The problem appears to be overlapping. Each European country has its own military structure, from fighting troops to the cook and bookkeepers who keep them fed and paid. Weaponry duplications abound.

One of the important fall-outs of the Iraq crisis will be a European initiative to find out how they can

European defence industries. It will consequently target greater defence spending and more burden sharing by Europe against a much more open approach by the Pentagon and the US Congress to defence equipment sales by non-US suppliers.

The next question that arises is. what might be the future strategic basis for the US forces in Europe? This aspect is important because today, according to Hans Binnendijk, a Professor in the Centre for Technology and National Security Policy, there are 109,000 US troops in Europe, including 65,000 ground, 34,000 air and 10,000 naval personnel. More than half of that number is currently stationed in Germany

Important changes have taken place in the recent past and these factors might influence future US strategy. Today, the US no longer needs to hedge against a resurgent Russia, so remnants of the Cold War posture (despite the recent spat over Iraq) could be withdrawn. Consequently, the US Army's V Corps and its armoured and mechanised divisions, designed for territorial defence, now deployed in the Gulf may not return to Germany. The US planners might now think that the threat was more in the Gulf region rather than in Europe and as such it will be better to be closer to the scene of a possible future conflict.

would then circumvent the present reliance factor over Turkey. This strategic element would then allow US units to also serve as part of the primarily European response force, initially providing capabilities such as lift, refuelling, command and control, and precision strike facility.

Consequently, existing heavy forces

might be replaced in Europe by more

regard that the US Army will probably

soon move their new hi-tech Stryker

brigades to Europe. Military analysts

are also predicting that other highly

ready and deployable units might be

moved to Europe, possibly on a rota-

tional basis rather than permanent

stationing. It is also being pointed out

in this context that some of these

expeditionary forces could be posi-

tioned in South-eastern Europe, in

places like Romania and Bulgaria, for

easier transit to troubled areas. This

It is already being suggested in this

rapidly deployable troops

It is anticipated that the post Iraq war scenario will see the US trying to implement their new 'deter-forward policy.' The USA, in its own interest, after ironing out the ruffled feathers in Europe, is also expected to propose a combined joint training centre for US-European forces. It might be similar to the US National Training Centre. Analysts have already pointed out that Centres of Excellence' will probably also emerge in places like the Czech Republic (to develop new war fighting concepts) or Poland (to train the rapid response force). It tends to make sense that having such a capability in Europe could become a major focal point for future trans-Atlantic military coopera-

As a new fabric of cooperation is woven across the Atlantic, efforts will presumably also be initiated to foster common elements among the differing groups within Europe. Britain, Spain and Italy know that they need to work with France and Germany in order to advance their interests in Europe. Given the state of public

opinion, it is unlikely that any of these three will follow the United States into future military adventures, should the Washington hawks turn their attention to other "rogue" states. Similarly, it is improbable that the East Europeans who backed the United States over Iraq will want to choose between the Americans and the Franco-German duo. Being emerging democracies, they would naturally want to be friends with both and will obviously worry about a divided EU.

The Europeans have shared interests on most areas of foreign policy. Nevertheless, in a post-war Iraq frame work, several important issues will still have to be faced.

There is the prickly question of reconstruction of Iraq. The insistence that 'a central role' be played by the United Nations as opposed to a 'vital role' is expected to cause disharmony. Similarly, the concept of a US dominated administration is going to be difficult. It might initially cause another fracture between the Old and New Europeans. However, in all probability, a consensus will eventually emerge, given the vital economic nterests for all

The Europeans and the US will also have to come to a broad agreement with regard to the 'road map' for the establishment of the Palestinian state and the future Middle-East peace process. This is a factor that can only be ermed as crucial.

Lastly, the EU will have to sort out differences of opinion between itself and the US over EU's efforts to engage Iran, with which it is negotiating a new trade agreement, much to the dislike of the Bush Administration.

Much will depend on what Washngton does once the fighting ends, as well as the degree to which European coalition partners follow America's

It will however be the common and shared interests, i.e., oil and gas terrorism, drugs and illegal immigration, that will in the long run paper over, I believe, the cracks that have appeared today within Europe and between certain countries of Europe and the USA.

Russia and China because of their own geo-political interests, trade and investment requirements might try at times to register their views tangentially, but will desist from overexposing themselves, individually or together as rivals to the only superpower.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and

Jingoism and journalism

arrogance and boorishness with similar pangs of conscience. By then, the Bush Administration would be history. And the feeling of unlimited power would be tinged with some humility.

The same society, which has failed to realise that it imposed an unjust and illegal war against Iraq, would introspect and admit that it was wrong in doing so. Wreaking vengeance for the World Trade Centre's destruction on

power. The real America has been pushed to the background by a new breed of power-crazy men at the White House, the Pentagon and the State Department. The world should be patient till the old America, which liberated itself from Britain and founded a pluralistic society, asserts itself again. The concept of individual freedom and independence are too

deeply rooted in the land to be ended by Bush who, in any case, is an

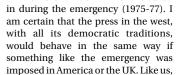
tion that brought the young and the old together in a series of protests against the WTO is surfacing again. As days go by, the opinion against America's unilateralism will become more vocal. I only hope that the protest does not become parochial -- that of the Arabs and Muslims. It is a worldwide anger. Let it stay that way.

The problem is to push the governments of our region to take a stand against America's might which has

was the installation of a democratic America seny. Since the Anglo-American media is controlled by the set-up by the Iraqis. Woefully, the military during the war, the distortion, the misinformation and the psychological warfare in which they indulge UK. creep into our media.

Nobody is pleading for Saddam Hussein and his dictatorial behaviour. Nor does anyone doubt the victory of Anglo-American forces. The criticism is against the manner in which America, supported by Great Britain, went they would also crawl. All the Pulitzer

western media has become a willing tool in the hands of America and the We were run down when we caved am certain that the press in the west, with all its democratic traditions,



Prize winners would have a question

mark against their credibility. Writing

well is not enough, writing the truth is

more important. For the sake of "na-

tional interest" the media should not

swerve from its path. Journalists have

to be objective. In a democracy, the

media cannot afford to have even an

iota of doubt raised about what it says

What holds good for India is true of

both Pakistan and Bangladesh or, for

that matter, most countries in the third

world. There too, the media uses the



KULDIP NAYAR

writes from New Delhi

WAS studying at the Northwestern University in America in the early fifties when McCarthyism was at its height. Individuals or groups were publicly accused of political disloyalty without proof. Every liberal was dubbed a communist.

It turned neighbour against neighbour. Idealism touched its nadir. Few people thought that the US would be able to get over those dark days. Still it turned the corner in the beginning of the sixties. Old values of liberty and democracy returned with a vengeance. Must we conform? The people asked. It

was their right to rebel. People felt generally ashamed of that phase of bigotry. But the suffering, which the period of McCarthyism brought on people, can never be forgotten. It was a lawless rule. Some lost key positions; some got their unblemished reputation soiled. Some of the best brains left the fields of art and science. Even today most Americans recall that period with horror and hate.

I have no doubt that a decade or so later, the same thing will happen: the US will remember the current time of

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the civil population, including women appointee of the US Supreme Court. Already exposed the UN. The western ahead with the attack without getting

BETWEEN THE LINES

The criticism is against the manner in which America, supported by Great Britain, went ahead with the attack without getting the sanction of the UN. It would have come if the two had only waited a bit longer...Our media's complaint is that western news agencies did not cover the fierce resistance the Iragis put up at Basra and other places. As someone rightly said, the foreign TV networks tried to sell the world "an antiseptic war, one in which there were no torn and bleeding victims."

and children, in Iraq would be considered an act of inhuman cruelty.

The vision and the message of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln. Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy would be refurbished. President Bush would be relegated to an insignificant footnote in the history of America. The problem is how long this period of non-accountability would continue. Even if Bush is defeated in 2004, the feeling of being the most powerful country in the world --America has 43 per cent of the world's wealth -- can tempt the likes of Rumsfelds and Powells to arbitrarily change the world order.

It is not oil alone. It is the hubris of

A US Supreme Court justice, Robert media dominates the world. Even L Jackson, chief US prosecutor at the Nuremburg trials, said on August 12, 1945: "We must make clear to the Germans that the wrong for which their fallen leaders are on trial is not that they lost the war, but that they started it. And we must not allow ourselves to be drawn into a trial of causes of the war, for our position is get. that no grievances or policies justify resort to aggressive war. It is utterly

renounced and condemned instrument of policy. But the world cannot sit absolutely idle till the old concept of "we, the

people" re-emerges in America. The anger generated against the Iraq war is too wide and too deep. The indignapeople in countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, who have come on the streets to protest against the war on Iraq, depend on western news agencies for information. The prejudice of the agencies gets reflected in our newspapers and most of the electronic media. And we disseminate what we

But this is not the first time it has happened. The Indian media has always been found wanting in the coverage of war or peace outside its shores. Our dependence on western news agencies is pathetic. Our two main news agencies -- PTI and UNI -have disseminated whatever Reuters of the UK or the Associated Press of

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

the sanction of the UN. It would have come if the two had only waited a bit longer.

> Our media's complaint is that western news agencies did not cover the fierce resistance the Iraqis put up at Basra and other places. As someone rightly said, the foreign TV networks tried to sell the world "an antiseptic war, one in which there were no torn and bleeding victims." No weapon of mass destruction has been found in Iraq. Still the information the western media put across from day one was nothing but that. First the emphasis has the authentic flavour of the region was on the removal of Saddam and his and truth. two sons, the demand made by Bush.

copy from the western agency. And it did so to cover the Iraq war. It is strange that India should see Pakistan and Bangladesh through Reuters or AP and vice-versa. Of course, during even a small conflict, as was seen at Kargil, the truth becomes a casualty because of the jingoism that takes over. But an exchange of even a tainted report by Indians and Pakistanis may be better than what is available now. The problem with India and Pakistan is that their minds are so prejudiced against each other that they would rather depend on the western news agencies than something that

As he changed, the western media too Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist. asked for a new regime. In the end, it

TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

"ZIA neon sign flashes in Arabic"

This is to all the people 'for' the ZIA neon sign in Arabic. Right now, it's not about whether Arabic is an important language or not. It's not about whether our constitution says we are an Islamic state or not. Nor is it about whether Bangladesh is a secular state or not.

What is important, however, is the timing. At a time when the world is divided over the war in Iraq, I think it is a good idea for Bangladesh to maintain a low profile, which it has been doing. I don't think we really want to broadcast anything that makes us appear remotely fundamentalist. Bangladeshi foreign policy has always been about taking a neutral, objective standpoint. Now, when we have a new

Arabic signboard at the airport, it is

front

Wisconsin, USA

NM

bound to create some controversy, In response to M.A. Bashar's letter given the state of current world affairs. (April 16) I ask what does Arabic being It seems as though Bangladesh is the common language of Muslims trying to make a statement to the have to do with the newly placed sign world about world politics. at the airport? Bangladesh is a secular There's nothing wrong in making country and a multi-religious society. statements, true, but this particular Our cultural identity and language is statement is telling people that we are Bengali, regardless of our faiths. taking a side, and not remaining Bengali is our mother tongue and neutral. It is not surprising, then, that English is the dominant language used people would react the way they have in international interaction. Thereto the sign. If the neon sign had been fore, it is logical to have signs in Ben-

gali and English throughout Banglathere for the last ten years, people wouldn't have said anything. The desh. For the writers who have mentioned a main problem is, why now? We can do closer relationship with our Arab without the extra publicity on this brothers as a justification for the Arabic sign, do you know what our Muslim Arab brothers think of us?

They think we are poor and backward people meant to be their drivers, cooks, and domestic help. Do you still want a closer brotherhood? **Rashid Chowdhury**

George Mason University, USA

Yet another Bush bluff from Belfast

Recently Hans Blix said that the Iraq aggression by Bush was predetermined. Earlier the international community noted that the purpose of the swung constantly. For example, initially it was to disarm Saddam Hussein. Then it was WMD recovery, a regime change and so forth. Finally it was settled out to be freedom of Iraq. Mr. Blix noted that the WMD issue was relegated to fourth place. Even in the fourth week of Iraq invasion and deployment of 'favourable' arms inspectors no trace of WMD was found let alone huge lot.

Blix is waiting with interest for the finishing chapter of 'WMD episode'. Now it appears that arms inspection was a bluff by Bush to the international community

Now just a week back in Belfast, Bush said regarding UN involvement in reconstruction of Iraq that," We are committed to international community". God forbid! M.U.Chowdhury

Mindless protest!

On e-mail

What do those people who burn British and American flags think they achieve by their childish acts? If anything, they are helping American aggressions by doing that. Don't they realise that, when they burn American flags, it will be shown on CNN/BBC all day, but when their children and women are burnt by American smart bombs, it will not even be mentioned? Let's be honest here, if someone burns the flag of your homeland -for whatever reason- wouldn't you get upset? So when some Muslims burn American flags, they are only reinforcing American public in their misguided belief that all the Muslims just hate America! You are not going to change Bush and Blair's mind by burning their effigies. That only makes their aggression stronger. It is important for the Muslims to grow up a little bit and stop these mindless and completely point

less acts.

To win a war, you have to destroy your enemy's warships, jet fighters, satellites, tanks, infrastructures and so on. You need to have public support and good planning. And you don't get any of that by hijacking planes, blowing up embassies or chanting death. The people working in embassies are only doing what they have been told by their boss. They are not to be blamed or bombed. Therefore, it is very important that we stop these mindless acts immediately. Azad Miah Oldham, UK

Marketing of social concept

Human rights and humanity are the most forgettable two concepts lacking On e-mail

of which is the main reason for this peace less earth. The world is now submerging under discrimination. hatred, war, conflict and so on.

These worldwide dispute and clash can be reduced by successful utilisation by marketing of social concept We can communicate some massage over the world that will help people to remind the universal truth like "All are equal in the world", "One creator but different concepts", "Global state", "Love can establish a peaceful earth, not war" etc. The peace-loving people, celebrity, media, organisation and the state can take the initiative to spread concepts throughout the world and help restore peace and sanity in the world

Towhid Hossain Mazumder