

## Killing of BCL leader

Little is being done to counter such violence

**P**OLITICS becomes a morally and legally untenable proposition, or a much-despised calling, when violence is resorted to, as a possible way of dominating the scene, by the parties in the fray. Regrettably, we have watched politics being derailed from its normal course by the forces of intolerance over the last few years.

A Bangladesh Chhatra League leader (BCL) is the latest victim of violence. His killing follows a series of attacks on political activists and workers, on either side of the divide, in the past few weeks.

The attacks on political activists continue despite the proposal for an understanding by two secretary-generals of the BNP and the Awami League—that criminals should have no place in politics—at a recent meeting organised jointly by the Centre for Policy Dialogue, the Prothom Alo and The Daily Star. The leaders admitted that criminals were a liability; they also reached a broad consensus on ridding their parties of such undesirable elements. But there has apparently been no follow-up to the position taken by the two leaders.

The situation in the political arena is worsening. And political leaders are confusing matters by mindless trading of accusations. They take virtually no time to identify the criminals as having been deployed by their political rivals whenever a ghastly incident takes place. At best, it might serve their purpose of creating an embarrassing situation for their opponents. At worst, it could help the real culprits to take advantage of the murky situation created by irresponsible utterances. Those on the sidelines might even get the impression that political leaders are more interested in defaming their rivals, than bringing the killers to justice. That is unfortunate, to say the least.

The strangely negative attitude of the major political parties to each other also impedes the growth of a tolerant political culture. It breeds mistrust and misunderstanding on a scale that makes it difficult for democracy to function smoothly.

The political parties must not only feel the need for but also insist on creating the conditions in which politics does not lose its sense of direction. For that to happen, they have to go beyond rendering lip service to law and order—a real commitment to ousting killers and looters from the parties is needed.

## Government advertisement

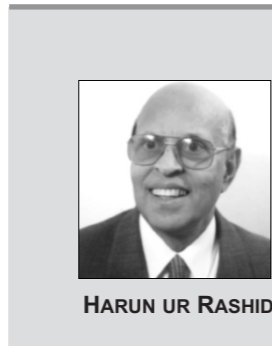
The distribution process should be decentralised

**T**HE report on two daily newspapers getting the highest government advertisements during the current fiscal year caught our attention quite naturally. Not so because the said newspapers are owned by supporters of the ruling coalition, but more so because we had noticed an almost familiar scene in the past. During the regime of Awami League, newspapers who were supporters of the then government were rewarded similarly. What is so disconcerting is the fact that all democratically elected governments had professed to uphold the freedom of press, they had promised that there would be no manipulation in distributing government advertisements. But as the saying goes, promises are meant to be broken.

We think that the pattern of seeking media support with money is solely responsible for the disruption in promoting business in a fair way. It now seems that politicisation of advertisement distribution is dominating the fundamental aspect of the print media. May be an example would make it easier to understand. It is not just the national dailies who have been enjoying favouritism, there are many newspapers at district levels, which brings out daily editions and survives solely on government advertisements thus becoming a mouthpiece of the government. This kind of practice distorts the position of the press as an institution.

However, politicians may come and go, but one thing is likely to remain the same. The Daily Star has always remained in the lowest rung among the recipients of government advertisements, irrespective of which party is in power. Even the latest estimation disclosed by the Information Minister in the parliament shows that The Daily Star is among those newspapers who received the lowest amount in advertisement. This fact only vindicates that we have been neutral all along.

# Colin Powell's visit : Dimensions of significance



**HARUN UR RASHID**

**O**N 19 June, the US Secretary of State General Colin Powell visits Bangladesh, although for a few hours, on his way to Jordan from Cambodia. His stop over in Dhaka to meet with Bangladesh political leaders is important and signals that Bangladesh is a country, which has attained reputable status in international relations and is not considered only as an "aid recipient". It demonstrates the importance the US attaches to Bangladesh in the current environment of changes in world affairs, in particular the sweeping transformation of geopolitical landscape in the Middle East involving Muslim people.

Bangladesh plays an interactive role in four inter-governmental organisations — the UN, Islamic Conference, Commonwealth and Non-Aligned Nations (only a few countries have been able to be party to all the four institutions). This unique position gives Bangladesh a privy to views of four organisations and helps it to interact effectively in international relations. Consolidation and promotion of cooperation with all the organisations has been a source of strength to Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is the third largest Muslim populated country after Indonesia and Pakistan. Because of its standing as a moderate and democratic country, Bangladesh since 1974 has maintained excellent relations with all Islamic countries and occupied an important place within the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC).

Bangladesh is totally committed to peace and its commitment has been demonstrated by its contribu-

tion to peacekeeping operations of the UN. The fact that Bangladesh is a regular contributor to UN peacekeeping force and its willingness to quickly respond has been a testimony to the discharge of this responsibility and the role has been lauded by the UN Secretary General.

The US has been involved in South Asian affairs since the early 50s. During the Cold War its main objective was to contain the Soviet Union's influence in South Asia. At

testimony to the close co-operation between the two nations. In 2002 a multinational military exercise (code named *Shantidoot* — messenger of peace) in cooperation with the US armed forces took place at Rajendrapur (near Dhaka) with a view to enhancing the capability of Bangladesh army personnel in peacekeeping operations. This was another instance of co-operation between the two countries.

The high water mark of bilateral relations was the visit of President

Clinton in March 2000. Regarding the state of bilateral relations President Clinton said in Dhaka: "Tomorrow the sun will rise on a deeper friendship between America and Bangladesh.....I am proud of the kind of partnership we are forging." Later former Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid an official visit to the US in October 2000.

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has been painted by some Western journalists as "safe haven" for fundamentalist forces. Furthermore the coalition of Jamaat-e-Islami and Islamic Oikya Jote with Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) in forming the government has rung alarm bells in certain quarters. This has raised concern in many countries including the US that has classified Bangladesh into category IV list of countries for special immigration purposes. Bangladesh vehemently

semi-skilled manpower. The visit may explore the issues that concern both nations. Countries surrounding Bangladesh have been passing through difficult times. Myanmar is in deep political crisis involving its opposition leader Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi who has again been under "protective custody" of the military government. India and Pakistan maintain an uneasy peace on the Kashmir dispute. Nepal has remained politically unstable and has been con-

than discuss, deride rather than debate any views opposed to US policy. Its policy towards Palestinians appears to be disproportionately influenced by the Jewish lobbies in the US in support of Israel.

Another concern appears to be that the US does not complete a job it undertakes. Before it has finished its task in Afghanistan, it waged war on Iraq. The US has been involved militarily in both countries to secure law and order. Now it is threatening North Korea. Iran accuses US of fostering unrest in the country. These are not comfortable scenarios in Asia. For all these reasons it would not be incorrect to say that the image of the US among many people in Asia including those in Bangladesh has suffered.

History, physical location, population and natural resources are among the prime factors that influence foreign and strategic policy of a nation. Bangladesh is not economically or militarily strong but it plays its role in world affairs above its weight. It strongly believes that for the region and in global context, economic development is more important than building military strength and that security is best guaranteed by working in cooperation than by building armours.

It is acknowledged that the interests of the US and Bangladesh are diverse in many ways. The two countries continue to have honest difference of views on many issues. It must be stressed that Bangladesh does not need to fall in line with US policy for maintenance of good bilateral relations. There are certain basic principles to which Bangladesh has stood and will stand firm. The differences must not be allowed to fester or erode mutually beneficial relations. In that context the visit of the Secretary of State Colin Powell is significant and adds depth and dimension to bilateral relations of the two countries.

For Bangladesh, the visit of the Secretary of State will afford an opportunity of a first hand account of US policy in combating global terrorism, post-war development in Iraq and Afghanistan, Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the recently much publicised "road map" to peace, and security of the Korean peninsula. It may also provide its views on its approach to other global issues.

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## BOTTOM LINE

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present the interest of the US in South Asia has been woven around in promoting certain objectives, such as democracy, economic reforms (free market economy), social development and combating global terrorism. The US wants stable democratic governments in South Asia, where terrorism cannot take its root. Freedom of expression, tolerance and respect for human rights are hallmarks of democratic governments. Democratic governments are accountable and transparent in their decisions and actions and in such setting ordinary extremism or fundamentalism does not grow among people.

Bangladesh-US relations have grown considerably and have been on a firm footing since the US recognised Bangladesh on 4 April, 1972. The bilateral relationship is based on understanding of each other's interest and benefit. Bangladesh's exports to the US market constitute about 45 per cent of its total exports. About 200 US companies are now engaged in commercial business in the country. The US foreign assistance during the three years reportedly amounted to nearly US\$ 1 billion.

In July 1998 the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding with regard to the activities of US Peace Corps in Bangladesh is a

Clinton in March 2000. Regarding the state of bilateral relations President Clinton said in Dhaka:

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opposes terrorism in any shape and form and has given its fullest support in combating it. Bangladesh believes that the present protracting violent conflict between Israel and Palestinians that has impact on Muslim countries needs to be resolved with strong involvement of the US. Bangladesh is sympathetic to Iraq and agreeable to play its part in re-construction of the war ravaged country with its skilled and

fronting insurgency of Maoist rebels. Sri Lanka's peace talks with the Tamil rebels have stalled. The simmering discontent may threaten national security and serious armed conflicts may not be unlikely in South Asia.

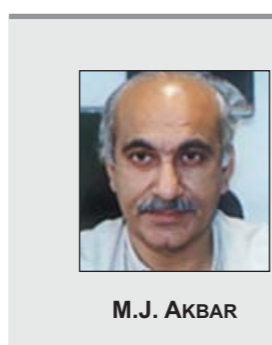
For the US, the Secretary of State will have a frank assessment from Bangladeshi leaders on regional issues that are potentially responsible in destabilising security and the possible threat of terrorist forces around the country. Aerial Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia have been rattled by such militant forces.

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# How may we put it down?



**M.J. AKBAR**

**B**Y the turn of the nineteenth century, the poet-imperialist Rudyard Kipling's faith in his own country's will to conquer the world (for its own good, of course) had begun to weaken. He turned towards the fresh shoulder of the United States and urged President Theodore Roosevelt to pick up at least some of the white man's burden. Teddy Roosevelt went ahead and liberated Cuba, although he had to free it from some other white men. When America defeated Spain in 1898 the Philippines came as a bonus. But the latter did not seem that eager to be liberated, and at least some of them waged a bitter guerrilla war against American troops. When the casualties began to rise, the New York World published a ditty:

We've taken up the white man's burden  
Of ebony and brown;  
Now will you tell us, Rudyard  
How we may put it down?

That's always the difficult part:  
How we may put it down. More than a hundred years later, America still does not have the answer. There is of course the romantic answer, shaped by the extraordinary success that the Americans had in reshaping the fortunes of their principal enemies in the Second World War. Germany and Japan were recreated in the democratic-capitalist mode and became exceptional success stories. But there is a very basic difference between the

Second World War and subsequent hot wars that America has either started or become involved in. The Second World War was fought between two alliances that were battling to control the world. It was a war between imperialists. Japan wanted to rule the whole of Asia, and its military effort to do so began much before war broke out in the European theatre. You could date this to as far back as 1905 when Japan stopped a European thrust towards the Pacific with a dramatic naval victory over Russia. But even if we do not link this with later events, then Japanese imperialism

was not a war between democracies. It was a war between imperialists. If that promise was genuine, then it was overtaken by a second conflict for the world, the 45-year cold war between America and the Soviet Union. The ideological overtones of this conflict were different, but neo-colonialism was not the monopoly of either side. The Americans were happier with democracy among their friends; the Soviets

this bloody struggle for the world, changed the ideological dimensions of a war that it was forced to enter after Japan attacked Pearl Harbour when Roosevelt promised freedom to all the nations of the post-war world.

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one? Suddenly American troops are discovering an army, or organised armed resistance, that they say they had decimated in April. One hundred days after Saddam's statue fell in Baghdad, Iraq seems to be swarming with what the Americans call his supporters. Whether the armed resistance comes from Saddam supporters or not, there are real battle conditions in cities like Balad and Fallujah to the north and west of Baghdad. At least two hundred Iraqis have been killed within 48 hours as I write this, and the real figure could be much higher as the

sends one division of insurrection-hardened Rashtriya Rifles some endless treasure from Aladdin's Cave (which was once located in Iraq, but has now been transferred to Wall Street) will start flowing into Delhi and Mumbai. This is nonsense. The real consideration is different. Whether the White House has taken this into account or not is immaterial. India must ask itself a question to which there may be no easy answer: has the war against Saddam given way to a war against Iraqi nationalism? Has the Anglo-American invasion rekindled memories of colonisation and 37 years of

old king, Faisal II: his body was given a secret burial. Why? Not because of him but because his father, Ghazi, king between 1933 and 1939, was the only monarch to challenge the British. The British had him assassinated in 1939.

The tyranny of Saddam should not obscure us to Iraq's past, and its history of anger against colonialism. Iraq has seen more than one *infitada* and its streets have heard gunfire before. Iraqis know that this war is for control of oil. Oil and nationalism are synonymous in the Arab world. Saddam Hussein usurped that nationalist platform for over two decades, and his absence may have created space for a more genuine and therefore more powerful nationalist movement. It will not have the structure of a regular army, or an organised political force. But, as in Afghanistan, anger against the enemy and a dream of independence will sustain the challenge through every frustration. America's allies on that field will not be excused from battle in what will inevitably be called a jihad. The Pentagon is already reporting that many of the fighters in Balad and Fallujah are not local Iraqis but Arabs who have come from elsewhere. Shades of Afghanistan are already on the horizon. It stands to reason. If Arabs could come all the way to Afghanistan to fight a jihad, there is no reason why they should not fight one in their own land.

The letter allegedly written by Saddam Hussein demanding that American troops leave by June may or may not be a fake, but that does not matter. It expresses a sentiment that is strong on the ground, and gets stronger with each battle against the occupying forces. Should our Rashtriya Rifles get caught in such a crossfire?... America has consciously picked up a burden. It must learn how to lay it down.

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MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

## BYLINE

The letter allegedly written by Saddam Hussein demanding that American troops leave by June may or may not be a fake, but that does not matter. It expresses a sentiment that is strong on the ground, and gets stronger with each battle against the occupying forces. Should our Rashtriya Rifles get caught in such a crossfire?... America has consciously picked up a burden. It must learn how to lay it down.

certainly takes on a military, and brutal, dimension with its invasion of China.

Similarly, Adolf Hitler was carving out an empire for Germany that included Europe of course but also stretched far beyond, towards the natural resources that were critical to the economic success of any empire that promised prosperity to the conquering race. When Hitler publicly offered to sign a peace treaty with Britain after the fall of France, he had only one condition. Britain could retain her empire, he said in a speech, but she must hand over Iraq and Egypt to the Germans. He wanted control over the Red Sea and Suez Canal; and he wanted the oil of Iraq. Germany wanted the best parts of what the British already possessed. France too was an imperial power and showed no desire to release either Africa or Vietnam from its tentacles. In a sense, America, which kept out of

preferred dictatorship. But the existence of two superpowers ensured a balance that permitted space for degrees of neutrality, as evident in the non-aligned movement. It is no accident that the non-aligned movement has fallen into disuse after the collapse of the Soviet empire. It is axiomatic that the United States and Britain would not have invaded Iraq if the Soviet Union were still in business. The risk of response would have been too high.

America is too powerful to be denied victory; and the American defence secretary Donald Rumsfeld is too trash to be denied his wars. But you must understand the nature of the war you are engaged in if you want to declare happy closure. There is no evidence that either George Bush or Donald Rumsfeld have fully understood what they are up against in Iraq. Saddam Hussein was toppled on 8 April, but that was the end of war or the beginning of

American forces are moving into civilian areas. Inevitably, Iraqis believe that most of those killed are innocent, and the resentment bubbles even higher. There are enough complaints about homes being ransacked and property looted. The Pentagon accepts that 49 US soldiers have been killed since 1 May, and if you include the casualties since 9 April you reach the startling conclusion that almost as many Americans have died in the war improper as died in the war proper. One war has merged into another, even as in nearby Afghanistan the Taliban resurfaces to harass and battle the Americans. The body count is hurting.

Bush knows that he cannot carry this burden into an election campaign, and has therefore come up with the bright idea of leasing out his war to countries like ours. Before some bright sparks convince the government of India that the world runs on arithmetic, and that if India

rule by a three generation Hashemite monarchy that was more loyal to Britain and America than it was to the people of Iraq? Memories are fashionably short, but when the British conquered Iraq (using the Indian Army) during the First World War, they thrust a monarchy on the country. Winston Churchill, then minister for colonies, picked up Faisal, son of Sherif Husein and handed over the throne of Baghdad to him. The only trouble was that Faisal had never seen Iraq before.

On 14 July 1958 when a group of Army officers overthrew the dynasty, they massacred every single royal in the palace: the wife of the regent Abdullah survived only because the rebels left her for dead amid the pile of corpses. Abdullah's body was put on public display, while parts of the prime minister Nuri Said's corpse were distributed as trophies by the mobs. The only bit of respect was shown to the 23-year-

# Iraq invasion, democracy and the UN

KHANDAKAR ELAHI

**T**HE Iraq invasion has jeopardised two most important political institutions of our time—democracy and the UN. The first one is a national political institution, while the second one is an international political institution.

Democracy as system of governance is founded upon a number of key ideas. Two of these ideas are that people are the sovereign authority of the state and the government is the political institution, which exercises this sovereign power. Since people are sovereign, they choose deputies to exercise their supreme power. The whole idea of democracy is that elected deputies are accountable to the people and therefore, they must rule according to the principle which Abraham Lincoln described as "by the people, for the people and of the people."

Iraq was invaded defying overwhelming anti-war public opinions in the concerned countries. In Britain, 80 per cent people were against the war. Public opinions in Spain and Australia, which supported the war, were overwhelmingly against their governments' decision. When Turkey's parliament refused to allow a war front from their land, the US administration was very disappointed. US now seems to be only country in the world where public opinion concerning foreign policy generally favours the administration. These points are very important in analysing the effects of Iraq invasion, because it tests

the principles practised in countries which are generally known as most democratic.

Democracy does not mean just changing the political component of government. Democracy is considered the most desirable form of governance because of the reasons mentioned above.

Yet, in the developing and former Eastern block countries, democracy generally means changing government through elections. After the Iraq invasion, the concerned minds also question whether the principles of democracy are really practised in the West. This is one of the most ominous implications of Iraq invasion. For, democracy is increasingly running the risk of becoming a political technology from a political ideology.

The UN was established after WWII with the main purpose of preserving and promoting peace among member nations. The fundamental principle, which forms the foundation of this magnificent international institution, is that it recognises the sovereign status of each member state. However, the UN Charter sanctions declaring war under two circumstances — if threatened by another nation or is authorised by the UN Security Council.

Iraq was invaded without fulfilling any of these UN requirements. Since this act was perpetuated by the world's most powerful nation with the active support from another powerful nation, this war legitimises the "might is right policy". The world is full of territorial and other disputes. If the mightier conflicting countries choose to settle these

disputes by the use of force, this global village will be very chaotic.

It appears that neither the current system of democracy nor the UN is fulfilling its objective. If the national government is not pro-people, then it becomes either exploitative or imperialist, depending upon its position in the global hegemonic politics. In the UN, each nation's role is precisely determined by her economic and military power. If national governments are not pro-people, then the UN cannot pursue pro-people policies, because the mightier members will create their own international agenda, dominate the UN debate and impose their own will. And there is very little that can be done about it, because the power base of these nations does not depend upon their activities in the UN; it depends upon their own people whose opinion they care little in international issues.

Thus, the question that comes for serious thinking is how to make the current system of democracy more pro-people so that both national and international political institutions can serve their purpose. The theory of the current system of democracy was developed to rule an independent nation. Therefore, this theory is not quite appropriate for administering the global village that we have today.

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# Zoo tiger in the wild: A utopian story

MD. MOFIZUR RAHMAN

In reference to Dr. Reza Khan's write-up "Zoo tiger in the wild" published in The Daily Star on 11<sup>th</sup> June, 2003, I strongly protest against the fictitious and twisted information. We have already sent a rejoinder to the Bureau Chief of AP (Associated Press) Dhaka that in their circulated news item (22/5/03) the Curator's (Dhaka Zoo) speech was not stated properly and some salient points were omitted.

The fact is that Dhaka Zoo has successfully propagated two extinct local species like common peafowl and Nilgai and a good number of critically endangered species like Bengal Tiger, Rock Python, Sambar and also some exotic species. Dhaka Zoo acts as a nucleus of all other zoos of Bangladesh. It gives all sorts of technical advice in the field of veterinary care and zoo management. Dhaka Zoo has good record of donating animals to its sister zoological gardens in the country. Moreover, Dhaka Zoo also donated a good number of animals to friendly countries like U.A.E., Bahrain, Iraq and K.S.A.

At present Dhaka Zoo has some valuable species in excess in its stock.

To mitigate/solve this problem, the high powered Advisory Committee of Dhaka Zoo has formed an Inter-Ministerial Committee with the representatives of Dept. of Livestock Services, Dept. of Forest and IUCN. This Committee in its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting mentioned that Dhaka Zoo authority will take a strong initiative to exchange/donate these excess animals with/to the zoos at home and abroad. They further mentioned about reintroduction of zoo animals in the wild. They strictly pointed out that the committee members from Dept. of Livestock Services, Dept. of Forest and IUCN will verify and justify this matter within the provision of the relevant guideline, issued by the Survival Specialist group of the World Conservation Union and also the Quarantine and Health Screening Protocol for wildlife prior to translocation and release in the wild. The matter was also raised when Dulahazara Safari Park under Dept. of Forest requested Dhaka Zoo for lions and tigers. Now this reintroduction matter is absolutely in a discussion stage.

According to the booklet "Quarantine and Health Screening Protocol for Wildlife Prior to Translocation and Release into the Wild" published by

O.I.E, IUCN, EAZWV and Care for the Wild International (Z.O.O.Z.E.N., October, 2002) we know that "the release of animals, whether for translocation from one wild population to another, the introduction of captive-bred animals into a natural wild population, or the return of rehabilitated animals into the wild after varying periods of time in captivity, has become commonplace in recent years. The success of potentially expensive, high profile translocation projects depends to a large extent on the care with which the wildlife ecologist and their veterinary advisors evaluate the suitability of the chosen release sites and the ability of the translocated animals to colonize the area."

The World Zoo Conservation Strategy has expressed in an executive summary (Species and Habitat Conservation: Direct Zoo Contribution-Section 3) that, "In accordance with the IUCN position statement on translocations of living organism issued in 1987 — such reintroduction and restocking project, when properly applied, can bring great benefit to natural biological systems. Reintroduction and restocking projects have been undertaken with more than 120 spe-

cies." So, it is not a new theme.

Further, the World Zoo Conservation Strategy emphasized that—"Well prepared and managed reintroduction and restocking projects are of crucial importance to gather knowledge and experience of future efforts. Scientifically based projects therefore deserve full support of zoo community, IUCN/SSC specialist groups and conservation authorities. Such projects are not likely to be successful within only a few years, rather than require long-term commitment of all parties involved." So, Dr. Reza's reintroduction phobia is not based on scientific belief. Rather we say it is utopian.

It was expected to verify the truth whether we have expressed the message in that way or not. He is not an unknown person to us because we are in touch with him in various ways. In his write-up he puts some comments regarding the role of veterinarian which is very objectionable. It seems that he is trying to embarrass Dhaka Zoo authority.

Md. Mozibur Rahman is Curator of Dhaka Zoo.