

## AL opts for status quo

*Retaining old guards in the leadership is wrong*

THE opposition Awami League has again been more conservative than dynamic. We are talking about reinstatement of old guards in the party's top ranks of Dhaka city unit, dashing all hopes of young leaders and enthusiasts. Least to say that it wasn't even done in a democratic process. Party chief Sheikh Hasina chose the old faces instead of the young hopefuls with special power vested on her by the councillors. We have always been in favour of fresh blood in the political leadership who would be elected through a proper election. Since losing the general election in 2001, the party needed to purge itself of the discredited elements, especially those with criminal links. And that's why we strongly felt that the party needed a fresh leadership who would invigorate the activists with a new spirit. But it was not meant to be.

Let's explain why we felt that the decision to reinstate both Mohammed Hanif and Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya as the president and general secretary of Dhaka city office, respectively, was wrong. There is no doubt that Mr. Hanif has been a complete failure as the Mayor of Dhaka City Corporation. In fact, his unpopularity among the voters in the capital is believed to be the reason behind Awami League's dismal performance in the seats of Dhaka area. On the other hand, Mr. Chowdhury, popularly known by nickname Maya, has been a disaster for the party all along. His alleged links with the underworld, the track record of misdeeds of his son -- all have been nothing but disastrous for the party's fortunes.

Therefore retaining both of them in the top rungs of leadership in the party's Dhaka office would further damage its reputation. All the recent rumours that the party had been making efforts to drive out those with bad reputation in order to make way for fresh blood turned out to be just that -- rumours. We think that the failure of AL to bring about a leadership change will not augur well for the party. Most importantly, it shows that however badly one performs, his or her future is safe as long as the 'leader' is happy. This is greatly demoralising for the sincere, honest and devoted workers that AL still has such a large number of.

## Iran and the US

*Are we about to witness another regime change?*

BEFORE the dust of its Iraq offensive could settle, the US seems poised to embark upon yet another mission to change the regime in neighbouring Iran. The scary spectacle surrounding the latest US-Iran diplomatic dichotomy unraveled with the anti-regime protests in Tehran on the one hand, and the tightening of the noose by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) against the Iranian regime on the other. President Bush's persistent and overt expression of support for the Iranian anti-regime protesters did indeed raise questions as to whether US' sleuth are at work to bring about a quick change in the Iranian political regime sooner rather than later. Iran has already made a formal diplomatic protest against what it calls the 'US' interference in its internal affairs.

As the plot of the crisis thickens, one ought to juxtapose the grand US vision with its observed geo strategic proclivity -- maintenance of Israeli military preeminence vis a vis other regional actors -- to gauge the US' real intent. The fact that Iran has never wavered in its strategic stand to granting such an Israeli preeminence since the fall of the Shah in 1979 remained stuck in the US' mind-set as a major cause for concern over the preceding decades. And, coupled lately with the Iranian opposition to the presence of US forces in neighbouring Iraq, the current Iranian regime is being deemed by the Bush administration as a major threat to the fulfilment of the US' short and long term geopolitical objectives in the Mid East.

The most disconcerting aspect of this ominous spin of events is the Bush administration's cavalier disrespect of the letter and spirit of Article 2(7) of the UN Charter that precludes any UN member state from intervening in matters which are within the domestic jurisdiction of another sovereign state. The IAEA too, on the other hand, must not equate the North Korea's nuclear quest with that of Iran as the latter has always pursued a declared policy of peaceful nuclear usage.

Given the prevalent situation in the Mid East, both the Bush administration and the IAEA are hence reminded to abide by Article 2(7) of the UN Charter, as well as another major legal inhibition that, too, emphatically proscribes any interference in the domestic affairs of a sovereign state pursuant to a General Assembly Resolution passed on December 20, 1965. The quest for peace demands that the laws among nations must not be brushed aside to accrue 'untenable' geopolitical dividends by any nation.

# Powell's Dhaka visit: Significance and scenario

M. SHAHIDUL ISLAM

THE US-Bangladesh relationship comes into renewed focus due to Colin Powell's brief but eventful visit to Dhaka on June 19. Mr. Powell's arrival in Dhaka coincided with the nation's preoccupation with the visiting Indonesian President Megawati Soekarnoputri. That coincidental curiosity notwithstanding, Mr. Powell's Dhaka stopover was, evidently, a well calibrated part of his Asia and Mid East whirlwind.

In Asia, Mr. Powell's prime focus centered on defusing the nuclear stalemate with North Korea and in combating the Islamic insurgency in the Philippines. He also strove to convince his South East Asian colleagues to tighten their diplomatic nooses against the military junta of Myanmar. On the surface however talks of trade seemed to have dominated Mr. Powell's agenda in all his destinations, although his entourage did not include anyone from the US's departments of Commerce or the Treasury.

Due to this curious backdrop, the Dhaka stop-over of Mr. Powell augurs both significance and suspicion in the same breath. First, the US's anti-terror military campaign is likely to choose the region of South East Asia as its next major theatre. This has been necessitated by the classified information that the US is reported to have received from the suspects hauled from the region in a myriad of post-Bali operations conducted in collusion with forces comprised of regional nation-states. The US's concern over the Myanmar junta's human rights abuses also adds some extra importance to the Bangladesh's anticipated cooperation with the US in this particular regard. Above all, the US wants to ensure that none of the Al Qaeda members -- driven out of Afghanistan, the Philippines and the other hideouts in the Far East -- do sneak into Bangladesh to look for a safe haven and a sympathetic ear.

However grandiose they may seem, make no mistake that these are indeed the most realistic (and the minimalist) geo-political objectives of the US in the post 9/11 global order. Given that many of the small nations are already dead scared of the US unfettered wielding of military prowess in recent years, commitment of enhanced economic interactions does indeed come as a convenient foil while cementing relationship with nations like Ban-

gladesh. After all, the US is already knee-deep committed in the defence and economic spheres of Bangladesh; the US investment in Bangladesh's hydrocarbon sector alone topping well over the mark of US\$1.2bn by now.

The two nations have come a long way ever since the US administration, but not the people, stood opposed to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Yet, while such collaborations multiply, the scenario -- quite paradoxically -- gets more confusing and incomprehensible due to the US insistence on following a policy of national security that seems so dangerous and irresponsible to the rest of the world.

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That Bangladesh's global stature as a moderate Muslim country is much appreciated by the US can also be discerned from the pattern of mutual trade that the two nations conduct. Bangladesh currently earns over US\$2b from its export to the US, shipping out almost 45 per cent of its total exportables to destinations in the US, while the US's own export to Bangladesh is yet to cross the threshold of US\$300m. Mr. Powell has brought this issue to the attention of his Bangladeshi counterpart and expected that Bangladesh would buy more from the US to redress this trade imbalance. Bangladesh, on the other hand, expects that barring an immediate increase in the volume of Bangladesh's import from the US, further US investment might get counted as Bangladesh's purchase of goods and services from the US and help redress this yawning trade imbalance in coming years.

Mr. Powell's entourage has also

reiterated that Dhaka ought to consent to the signing of a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), the initial proposal for which was made by Washington in February this year. In South Asia, only Sri Lanka signed such an agreement with the US. The urgency of the TIFA's existence and implementation has arisen due to the US's concern over the crucial capital repatriation issue, echoed forcefully by over 200 US compa-

some 'chosen' Muslim nations) for a new free trade regime will include the name of Bangladesh, observers however believe that the inclusion of Bangladesh's name in this new trading block will be contingent upon her willingness to recognise Israel. This will be a political hot potato for the government of the day, for the enforcement of it is likely to be deemed as economically expedient while its political fall-out and diplomatic ramifications might prove

difficult. Little however spewed out of the government's mouth about the military aspect of Mr. Powell's sudden stopover in Dhaka. This discreetness did not preclude the fact that the Powell entourage included a high ranking military official, Vice Admiral James Metzger, who is also a special assistant to the US forces' Joint

Afghanistan are facing increasing threats of terrorism and resistance, the Saint Martin does seem to fit the US's strategic need as it straddles the waters between the Gulf of Thailand to the east, and the Arabian Sea to the west.

The most potent aspect of the Bangla-US discussion on defence stemmed from the US desire to induct Bangladeshi combatants into the US's ongoing war in Iraq. This discussion took place on the heel of the Indian polite refusal to send its troops to Iraq, and the Pakistani decision to defer such a request to the cabinet and to the parliament for debate and approval. Bangladesh thus became an obvious choice to meet the US's immediate need to hiring of troops to surmount the exacerbated security situations in Iraq. Despite foreign minister Morshed Khan's insistence that Bangladesh is willing to contribute troops for Iraq 'only' if the UN mandates to do so, Bangladesh might succumb to the US's pressures eventually.

At the US behest, Bangladesh decided to send troops to Haiti in September 1994 following the US invasion of that country in 1994. The decision lacked any mandate from

the UN, hence was challenged in a domestic court (*Dhaka Law Report 47/1995*). Similarly, the government's decision on September 19, 2001 to grant air and sea ports facilities to US forces during the US Afghan war faced a similarly protracted litigation in a local court, resulting in the issuance of a show cause to the government by the country's judiciary.

Over the past decades, Bangla-US bilateral military cooperation witnessed a gradual ascendency to the level of mutual interdependence. A major milestone in such a cooperation was erected in 1986 when the US Senate debated Bangladesh's security needs in a Senate hearing and recommended that 'Bangladesh's genuine security concerns must receive sympathetic hearing in the US'. The context has changed since, the Cold War era threat perceptions having been supplanted by Bangladesh's brilliant performances in the countless peace keeping missions around the world. However, amidst this, another major watershed event in the litany of such collaboration was marked by a major joint exercise between the two forces (operation *Shantidool*) in 2002 in the vicinity of Bangladesh's Rajendrapur garrison.

The two nations have come a long way ever since the US administration, but not the people, stood opposed to the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Yet, while such collaborations multiply, the scenario -- quite paradoxically -- gets more confusing and incomprehensible due to the US insistence on following a policy of national security that seems so dangerous and irresponsible to the rest of the world.

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# Gregory Peck, an actor in the classical mould: A tribute

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED

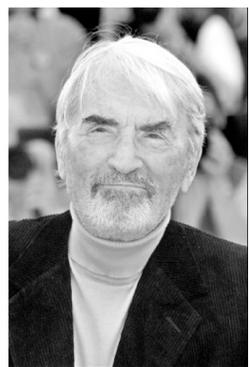
*writes from Princeton*

NINE years ago, the writer took a tour of the city of San Diego, California, in an open-air trolley. As the guide was describing the historical landmarks of this quaint border town, he pointed to a corner building on a busy street and said matter of factly: "This is the house where the city's famous pharmacist Mr. Peck lived. Unfortunately, his son did not follow his line of work. The son became an actor. Quite a good one, actually. His name is Gregory!" I swear that the busload of tourists, including the one from Bangladesh, gasped! Gregory Peck passed away early last week at the age of 87, of old age. In his tribute actor Kirk Douglas said: "Gregory Peck represents integrity, compassion and honesty. His star shone brightly for a long time, and now it will continue to shine in heaven." Added director/producer Steven Spielberg: "Gregory Peck's legacy not only lies in his films, but in the dignified, decent and moral way in which he worked and lived. He was the reigning father of the actor."

Bangladeshis became familiar with the lanky Gregory Peck's devilishly handsome looks through the much acclaimed 1953 romantic comedy, "Roman Holiday," in which Peck played a chivalrous American journalist based in Rome to the introducing Audrey Hepburn's princess. (Hepburn won the Best Actress Oscar for her performance.) The film was screened in Dhaka's air-conditioned Naz cinema hall, which in those days screened only English movies. As young boys growing up in the sixties, we liked the 1961 WWII thriller in which Peck played the role of an idealistic officer, "The Guns of Navarone," even better. To forestall a possible teenage revolt, in the autumn of 1963, our Principal at Fajudhar Cadet College, Lt. Col. Maurice Brown, arranged a special screening of "The Guns of Navarone" for the students of the school at a

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

No one was more professional, more precise, more charming, and no one more than met his obligations to entertain an adoring worldwide audience of billions than Gregory Peck!



Chittagong cinema hall!

Of course, Gregory Peck's great role was as that of the gentle, doting father of two small children, Atticus Finch, in Harper Lee's 1962 racial drama, "To Kill a Mockingbird," in which Peck played a small town white Southern lawyer who incurred the wrath of the townspeople by defending a black man wrongly accused of raping a white woman. Nominated for the Best Actor Oscar five times, Peck won the Oscar for his role in this film. Peck said in a 1989 interview: "I put everything into it -- all my feelings and everything I'd learned in 46 years of living, about family life and fathers and children. And my feelings about racial justice and inequality and opportunity." How appropriate that just one week before Gregory Peck died, American Film Institute ranked Gregory Peck's Atticus Finch as Number One, among the top heroes in the history of American cinema! "I think

Gregory Peck's whole career was defined by that film, because he was the classic, quintessential American hero -- a fellow who puts to hazard his whole future in order to do something he believes is right to do," said Jack Valenti, president and chief executive officer of the Motion Pictures Association of America.

The fictional Atticus Finch and the real life Gregory Peck was a perfect match. A Roosevelt New Dealer, (he campaigned for Harry Truman in 1948 when nobody thought Truman had a chance to win) throughout his adult life, Gregory Peck was an activist for liberal social causes. An advocate of nuclear disarmament, Peck once said that he would give up everything he had if the nuclear race could be reversed. "Gentlemen's Agreement," (1947) in which Peck played a magazine writer who poses as a Jew to expose anti-Semitism was considered risky at that time. Peck's agent cautioned him: "You're just establishing yourself, and a lot of people will resent the picture. Anti-Semitism runs very deep in the country." Peck ignored the agent's advice, the film made money, and won the Best Picture Award. In 1972 Peck produced the anti-Vietnam War film, "The Trial of Catonsville Nine." In 1987, Gregory Peck earned the ire of the Republican conservatives when he lent his voice for a 60-second television ad opposing President Ronald Reagan's nomination of the rightwing judge, Robert H. Bork, to the Supreme Court. Judge Bork's nomination failed.

Born on April 5, 1916 in La Jolla, California, to an Irish immigrant father and a Missourian mother (they divorced when he was 3) Eldred Gregory Peck was primarily

brought up by his grandmother. He attended the Roman Catholic St. John's Military Academy in Los Angeles, where he was "indoctrinated by tough Irish nuns and square-jawed ROTC officers," and the very prestigious University of California at Berkeley, where he majored in English and drama and paid his way as a janitor, waiter and dishwasher. It was while performing in "Anna Christie" and other productions at the university's Little Theater that Peck decided to become an actor. Peck graduated from Berkeley in 1939, the year "Gone with the Wind," and "The Wizard of Oz" was released. The same year Peck moved to New York City, won a scholarship to the Neighborhood Playhouse, where he studied Method acting under Sanford Meisner. A back injury exempted him from military service during World War II. Although his Broadway debut, "Morning Star" flopped, Peck's performance drew the attention of such Hollywood moguls as Darryl Zanuck. Since all the eligible leading men had gone to war, Peck's stock soared from the start. Hollywood's top box-office draw for several years, by 1962 Peck was earning at least a million dollars per movie, a huge sum in those days. Peck was the governor of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for 15 years, the Academy President from 1967 to 1970, and the founding Chairman of the American Film Institute (1967-69). In 1989 Peck received American Film Institute's Life Achievement Award. Gregory Peck was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian award in the United States. Peck trained thoroughbred racehorses in his spare time.

With a "chiseled, slightly melancholy good looks, resonant baritone and quiet strength," Gregory Peck was made in the classical British mould of acting. He is more reminiscent of Sir Laurence Olivier or Sir Alec Guinness than of the American contemporaries of his earlier days, such as Clark Gable and Humphrey Bogart. In his stage, film and television roles, Peck projected the image of wholesomeness and vulnerability, and "morally anguished heroes who displayed grace under fire." And for over fifty years, he starred in an astonishingly varied array of roles. Whether playing a maverick priest in "Keys of the Kingdom" (1944), an amnesiac in Alfred Hitchcock's thriller "Spellbound" (1945), combat heroes in "Twelve O'clock High" (1949) and "Pork Chop Hill" (1959), westerners in "Yellow Sky" and "The Gun Fighter" (1950), a romantic in "Roman Holiday," harried advertising executive in "The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit" (1956). Peck's quiet dignity came through, as it also did when he played legendary characters such as King David in "David and Bathsheba" (1951), "obsessed sea captains in "Moby Dick" (1956), and "Captain Horatio Hornblower," F. Scott Fitzgerald in "Beloved Infidel," war hero "MacArthur" (1977) and Abraham Lincoln in the 1982 TV miniseries "The Blue and the Grey." Gregory Peck's rare forays into the role of villains, such as a renegade son in the western "Duel in the Sun" (1946), and the notorious Nazi doctor Josef Mengele in "The Boys from Brazil," (1978) failed. Notable among his other films are: "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" (1952), "On the Beach" (1959), and "The Omen" (1976). Peck's last two film roles were as maverick author Ambrose

Bierce in "Old Gringo" (1989) and as the humane company owner victimised by a hostile takeover in "Other People's Money" (1991). Gregory Peck listed "Gentleman's Agreement," "Captain Horatio Hornblower," "Roman Holiday," "The Guns of Navarone," and "To Kill a Mockingbird," ("a picture closest to my heart") among his favourite movies. Commented the late Anthony Quinn, Peck's costar in "The Guns of Navarone": "He (Peck) has what Lincoln had, Retiree Majesty."

Gregory Peck married his first wife, Greta Rice in 1942. They had three sons, Jonathan, Stephen and Carey. Jonathan, a TV reporter, committed suicide at the age of 30. After an amicable divorce in 1954, Peck married Veronique Passani, a Paris reporter. They had two children, Anthony and Cecilia, both actors. Six grand children also survive Peck. From time to time in interviews, and during his one-man, audience-participation talk shows in theaters in his later years, "A conversation with Gregory Peck," Peck would admit to being a scandal-free ladies' man. The names he discreetly dropped included Ava Gardner ("a woman so beautiful that MGM crew members would stop dead in their tracks to stare as she walked by"), Sophia Loren, Greer Garson, Ingrid Bergman and Audrey Hepburn.

Asked why he was unsuccessful portraying villain, Peck replied: "I don't think I could stay interested for a couple of months in a character of mean motivation." Gregory Peck summed up his trade thus: "overacting is self-indulgence, while under-acting comes either through a lack of talent or a lack of courage. An actor's obligation is to entertain, never to bore, and to perform with precision, professionalism and charm." No one was more professional, more precise, more charming, and no one more than met his obligations to entertain an adoring worldwide audience of billions than Gregory Peck!

## TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

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.

### No tails and no flies...

It sounded like the old donkey (forgot his name) from the Animal Farm, saying I'd rather have no flies and no tails... when The Supreme Court Bar Association says, "The Daily Star quote, "The association said that the proposal came at a time when the ministers, MPs are busy raising their tax-free salaries and other fringe benefits "totally unjustified, immoral, inconsiderable measure and fraud on the public..."

There are two issues associated with mandatory tax filling for the legal professionals, tax file and licensing fee. While licensing fee is a totally separate issue, and the issue of large fee needs to be addressed separately from the tax.

It is not appreciable when literate citizens undermine the importance of tax collection for government to

operate, and to reduce dependency of foreign loans and aid. If the higher income group, and educated people decline to pay tax, and appeal for withdrawal of governments ruling for mandatory tax filling, uneducated people will continue to believe in the proverb "Sarkar Ka Mal Dariya Me Dhal" is OK, and people's money and government's money is separate.

Mandatory tax filling is important for citizens to be aware of government's accountability, citizens' rights and duties. The mass population needs to realise that government does not create money, they take money from the citizens to serve them, not to misappropriate or abuse.

Please pay the due tax and hold the MPs accountable why they raise their tax-free salaries.

**Nazmul Hasan**  
Wilmington, DE, USA

### Tourist attraction and alcohol

Sundarban the largest mangrove forest in the world, world's largest natural sea beach at Cox's Bazaar, Patenga sea beach, Kuakata, St. Martin's Island, Nijhul Dwip, Himchhari, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Teknaf, Jafflong, Sonargaon, Mainamati, Paharpur, Mahasthangarh and Shat Gombuj Masjid at Bagerhat are some of the tourist and archaeological spots of Bangladesh.

If the government in general and the Ministries of Tourism and Civil Aviation and Environment and Forest in particular develop,

beautifully, protect and preserve these places in order to attract the tourist and foreigners then the country will earn huge amounts of money each year through tourism.

It is interesting to note that instead of going for the development and beautifying of those tourist and archaeological places of the country, the Ministry of Tourism and Civil Aviation asked the Ministry of Finance to reduce duties of various types of alcohol drinks; as if the tourist and the foreigners will visit Bangladesh only to drink alcohol and nothing else. We are eager to know from whom or where the Ministry has got this funny idea!

But at last good sense prevailed on the government. I thank the Prime Minister for giving order to withdraw the reduction of duties on

alcohol proposed in the 2003-2004 budget by the Ministry of Finance.

**Iqbal Ahmed**  
Dhaka

### Expiry date of medicine

I would like to attract the attention of the authorities concerned to the fact that a number of medicine strips do not have expiry date clearly embossed on it. This causes a lot of confusion for the consumers and this also may create serious health hazard at any time.

**SMS Zaman**  
Bar Association, Dhaka

### "Indian troop deployment in Iraq"

I fully endorse the views of Sadia Moyeen expressed in the letter

"Indian troop deployment in Iraq" (June 19).

As USA has created this mess, they are the one who should come out of this hole. Why should someone else clean their dirty linen? As India has been opposing the occupancy and we expect them to do so then why this sudden change of heart?

**Mona Jamil (Indian living in Dhaka)**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### The Letters Page

The editors of The Daily Star must have a difficult job in trying to provide a balanced coverage for the Letters Page. I appreciate their enthusiasm, but newspapers in other countries operate on the basis of representing the interests of its own ruling elite and its masses,

before fairness or objectivity. Our voice as migrant community in the West is hardly represented and it would be unthinkable for the likes of me to get regular letters printed in any of the national newspapers. Whilst those advocating a pro-war stance seem to have the luxury of getting their letters printed regularly but yet mean about the fairness of this newspapers coverage. I think any national newspaper has the primary duty to uphold its national interest, which includes representing the views of the majority of its own citizens.

These Pro-US letter writers seems to exhibit a great deal of blind patriotism towards Mr. Bush, that is not even found in the ordinary native Americans. Some of them behave as though they are members of the extreme neo-con fascists, or the right wing Republican Party or a

member of the Israeli Knesset. What are the reasons for such blind patriotism emanating from these "intellectual migrants", as described by Samuel Huntington? Is it because they have yet to receive their Green Cards? Is it because life is so cosy in the West and hence they must be defended at all costs? Is it because these are the modern day coolies, remnants of the British colonialism? According to the justification provided by these pro-US writers they would have very little trouble in supporting the US, if she decided to widen its war on "terror" to include Bangladesh! Would The Daily Star then continue to provide its precious letter section to these "intellectual migrants" repeating the same tirades?  
**Yamin Zakaria**  
UK, London