

## Crisis in Sri Lanka

*It's not over unless it is*

THE crisis in Sri Lanka has entered a new phase following the return of Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe to a hero's welcome in Colombo. The emergency has been rescinded and the suspended parliament is scheduled to resume its session on November 19. President Chandrika Kumaratunaga's statement that the decree to withdraw the emergency was not signed by her speaks volume about the bickering that's still on between the president and the premier.

The president has been under pressure from the US, China, India, UK and Japan since her November 4 decision to declare emergency and sack three key ministers to apply restraint. She seems to have responded to international concerns to some extent but not before empowering the military to conduct nationwide searches. This leaves one with an apprehension that she might exercise her constitutional power to dismiss the entire cabinet if a deal is not struck soon to smooth over differences that had bedeviled relations between herself and the prime minister.

Since the signing of a ceasefire in February 2002, international mediators have laboured hard to help resolve the conflict and to infuse some life into the devastated economy of the nation. The premier and his coalition government do enjoy a comfortable majority in the parliament, but the president is empowered by the constitution to sack the entire cabinet, if needed. The executive power of the president seems to have pushed the premier into the defensive although his popular standing and support from without remain pretty strong.

Of the predictable scenarios, a compromise might be struck after the parliament reconvenes on November 19. Another probability is the president's further desperation coming into play if she finds herself pushed to the brink. She might resort to sacking the entire cabinet, call for a snap election and govern the nation with military's help during the interregnum. A third scenario might compress the president into consenting to the peace accord, but leave the military unhappy. Our best hope, however, lies in an expedited compromise between the estranged president and the premier. The crisis is not over until it is.

## Child addicts

*Take them under the wings*

IT is extremely disturbing to know that the number of children among drug addicts is increasing rapidly in the city. The development suggests that the problem of drug addiction is more deep-seated than is generally believed.

Addiction is a highly potent destructive force that ruins the vitality of youth. And when children become addicts, the danger is even greater.

Some other conclusions may also be drawn from the news. First, even the poor children have access to drugs sold at different points in the city. The supply lines of the drugs are very much open. Second, the law enforcers are either overlooking the drug trade or are prey to the unholy influence of the traders thriving on the miseries of youths and children.

Many of the young drug addicts have a wrecked family or social background which prevented them from growing up normally. Such cases are an example of how the breaking down of family values is creating a new problem -- uncared for and deprived children. Most of these children did not have anybody to guide them through their formative years. A sense of deprivation coupled with the emptiness of a life devoid of promise pushed them towards the self-destructive habit.

Regrettably, the rehabilitation scheme that is in place does not yet cover any large number of addicts. The issue deserves immediate attention as it has a direct bearing on the lives of the addicts.

The menacing proliferation of drug abuse has to be addressed with a sense of urgency. The number of drug addicts, and those in the highly vulnerable group, must be ascertained and rehabilitation facilities installed to minimise the damage caused by the malady. It is a question of saving a whole generation of juveniles, not capable of disentangling themselves from the lethal habit on their own. They must feel cared for, in the first place, to come out of the suicidal stranglehold. Restoration of parental authority can do a world of good to them.

# Israel poses greatest threat to world peace

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

UNUSUALLY Europeans have expressed their belief that Israel poses the greatest danger to world peace. But surprisingly the US has been bracketed along with North Korea and Iran as the second biggest threat. The third, fourth and fifth places go to Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Predictably the Israeli government has urged the European Union "to stop the rampant brainwashing against and demonising of Israel before Europe deteriorates once again to dark sections of its past". Emotional blackmail has always been the hallmark of the Zionist propaganda machinery. If one were to recall the famous movie Ben-Hur (of Charlton Heston fame) one would remember that Ben-Hur defeated the dreaded Messala by riding a chariot provided by an Arab Sheikh in the chariot race and that the Arab Sheikh was castigated by the Romans for helping a Jew. Perhaps the Jews have reason to be sensitive because Adolph Hitler believed that "by warding off the Jews I am fighting for the Lord's work" or that Romans considered them as Secta Nefaria (inferior sect) and that Martin Luther branded the Jews and the Papists as "ungodly wretches" and Pope Innocent III wrote in 1200 A.D. "The Jews like Cain are doomed to wander the earth as fugitives and vagabonds, and their faces are covered with shame". But then one must also not forget Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus Christ to be sacrificed at the Cross which brought upon the Jews thousand years of persecution mainly at the hands of the Christians.

But the recent Eurobarometer poll describing Israel as the biggest threat to global peace has nothing to do with anti-Semitism which the Zionists are ever willing to hurl upon any one slightly critical of Israel. The latest victim of Zionist propaganda has been Mahathir Mohamad for his description of the Jews as ruling the world by proxy and for criticising the Europeans for excising "Muslim land to create the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole but the further development of the existing Jewish community".

Forgotten are the assurances given by the colonial masters of the day without realising that for decades they are getting inextricably linked with a problem pregnant with apocalyptic potentials of incessant violence. Little did the British had realised then that one of their breakaway colonies would acquire such pre-eminence that not since the Roman Empire any nation has as much economic, cultural and military power as the United States has today. The Economist described the American colossus dominating global business, commerce and communications with a military might second to none. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin found American progress as having gone beyond super-power status while triumphant Robert Kagan felt present day international system was being built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony. Prefacing his book *The American Paradox* Professor Joseph Nye (of Harvard) emphasised that US military

role was essential to global stability and as a part of US response to terrorism. But he warned that suppressing terrorism would take years of patient, unspectacular work, including close civilian cooperation with other countries. But US policy of total support to Israel and its penchant to interpret any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism continue to widen the gulf with Europe and produce frustration in the Muslim world.

Professor Pnina Werbner of Keele University who closely studied Muslim Diaspora in Britain found the

Islamic juridical position that since western democracies allow freedom of worship, Muslims can owe complete allegiance to the State, defined as "Land of Treaty". Only a small minority may feel discomfort because of their belief that permanent settlement in the "Land of the Unbelief" is forbidden in Islam. (*The predicament of Diaspora and millennial Islam: Reflections in the aftermath of September 11* -- Pnina Werbner, Professor of Anthropology, Keele University).

Eurobarometer poll on Israel as the

and 1998 US has given Israel \$84 billion as aid which is more than the amount given by the US to sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean countries combined. It has been argued that US support to Israel was conditioned by the surrounding of Turkey, a NATO ally, by Syria and Iraq, then Soviet allies as well as Israeli proximity to the Suez Canal which provided some measure of security to American shipping through the canal.

Such logic notwithstanding one must recognise the failure of the Muslim Diaspora in influencing US

policy despite the fact that the number of Muslims in the US approximates the number of Jews in that country. It is believed that in the last Presidential elections 70 per cent of the Muslims had voted for President George W Bush. This demonstrates the failure of the Muslims to act as a bloc as opposed to the vibrant World Jewish Congress whose political clout is universally recognised.

The failure of the Muslims to excite in the west support for their cause has fuelled state terrorism by Israel against unarmed Arabs. With ferocious intensity Israeli armed machinery is brutalising the people forcibly occupied by them. The brutality perpetrated under the pretext of providing security to its own people had reached genocidal proportion long time ago. UN Secretary General had characterised Israeli muscularity as a "bankrupt" policy which can breed only hate and desire for revenge by the wronged. David Held (of London School of Economics) found the intensity of the range of responses to the atrocities of nine-eleven under-

standable. Shock, revulsion, horror, anger, and desire for vengeance was perfectly natural, David Held felt, within the context of the immediate events. Yet he counseled for defensible, justifiable, and sustainable response consistent with the principles and aspirations of the international society for security, law and impartial administration of justice. In the case of unceasing Israeli brutality inflicted upon the Palestinians every day, notwithstanding many censures by the UNGA and UNSC, it is surprising that the world community is yet to see the direct relevance of the principle laid down by the Nuremberg Tribunal that when international rules that protect basic humanitarian values are in conflict with state laws, then every individual must transgress state laws in favour of humanitarian values.

Since people no longer live in discrete national communities but in Held's terminology in "overlapping communities of fate" the state of Israel and its supporters must be held accountable for their actions. If sovereignty can become divisible, limitable, non-exclusive and of reduced significance in cases like Kosovo, Rwanda, Panama, Chile and others, why should it not be so in the case of Israel, an implanted state whose security and territorial integrity are being repeatedly assured by her Arab neighbours?

European people, if not their governments, deserve appreciation for their astuteness in finding out that Israel is indeed the greatest threat to world peace and security. European youth no longer wants to beholden to a dark past but desires the ushering in of a millennium, described by Norman Cohn as implying the end of suffering, an apocalyptic, redemptive moment, the final destructive struggle in which tyranny is overcome and history is brought to consummation.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador

In the case of unceasing Israeli brutality inflicted upon the Palestinians every day, notwithstanding many censures by the UNGA and UNSC, it is surprising that the world community is yet to see the direct relevance of the principle laid down by the Nuremberg Tribunal that when international rules that protect basic humanitarian values are in conflict with state laws, then every individual must transgress state laws in favour of humanitarian values.

the inhabitants of Palestine as a whole but the further development of the existing Jewish community".

Forgotten are the assurances given by the colonial masters of the day without realising that for decades they are getting inextricably linked with a problem pregnant with apocalyptic potentials of incessant violence. Little did the British had realised then that one of their breakaway colonies would acquire such pre-eminence that not since the Roman Empire any nation has as much economic, cultural and military power as the United States has today. The Economist described the American colossus dominating global business, commerce and communications with a military might second to none. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin found American progress as having gone beyond super-power status while triumphant Robert Kagan felt present day international system was being built not around a balance of power but around American hegemony. Prefacing his book *The American Paradox* Professor Joseph Nye (of Harvard) emphasised that US military

role was essential to global stability and as a part of US response to terrorism. But he warned that suppressing terrorism would take years of patient, unspectacular work, including close civilian cooperation with other countries. But US policy of total support to Israel and its penchant to interpret any criticism of Israel as anti-Semitism continue to widen the gulf with Europe and produce frustration in the Muslim world.

Professor Pnina Werbner of Keele University who closely studied Muslim Diaspora in Britain found the Islamic juridical position that since western democracies allow freedom of worship, Muslims can owe complete allegiance to the State, defined as "Land of Treaty". Only a small minority may feel discomfort because of their belief that permanent settlement in the "Land of the Unbelief" is forbidden in Islam. (*The predicament of Diaspora and millennial Islam: Reflections in the aftermath of September 11* -- Pnina Werbner, Professor of Anthropology, Keele University).

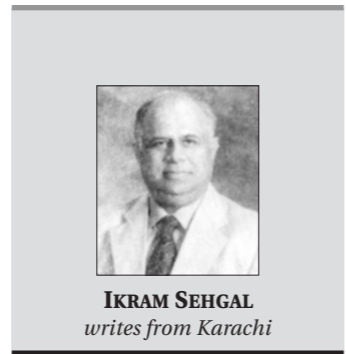
Eurobarometer poll on Israel as the and 1998 US has given Israel \$84 billion as aid which is more than the amount given by the US to sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean countries combined. It has been argued that US support to Israel was conditioned by the surrounding of Turkey, a NATO ally, by Syria and Iraq, then Soviet allies as well as Israeli proximity to the Suez Canal which provided some measure of security to American shipping through the canal.

Such logic notwithstanding one must recognise the failure of the Muslim Diaspora in influencing US policy despite the fact that the number of Muslims in the US approximates the number of Jews in that country. It is believed that in the last Presidential elections 70 per cent of the Muslims had voted for President George W Bush. This demonstrates the failure of the Muslims to act as a bloc as opposed to the vibrant World Jewish Congress whose political clout is universally recognised.

The failure of the Muslims to excite in the west support for their cause has fuelled state terrorism by Israel against unarmed Arabs. With ferocious intensity Israeli armed machinery is brutalising the people forcibly occupied by them. The brutality perpetrated under the pretext of providing security to its own people had reached genocidal proportion long time ago. UN Secretary General had characterised Israeli muscularity as a "bankrupt" policy which can breed only hate and desire for revenge by the wronged. David Held (of London School of Economics) found the intensity of the range of responses to the atrocities of nine-eleven under-

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador

# Quest for absolute power



IKRAM SEHGAL writes from Karachi

PRESIDENT Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka first suspended Parliament for two weeks and sacked three ministers, that of Defence, Interior and the Media, from the Cabinet. For good measure she declared emergency a day later, giving herself wide powers to deal with the expected reaction from the PM Ranil Wickramasinghe, who was away on an official visit to the US. Just before he met the US President, the Sri Lankan PM said her extreme actions would lead to chaos and anarchy. Initially ambivalent, the US thereafter leaned for the PM and democracy. Kumaratunga was elected President in 1999, within two years the opposition had routed her party in Parliamentary elections, the President has been at odds with the PM since. The reason for the present crisis stems from the President's belief that the government has given too many concessions during Norwegian-sponsored negotiations with the LTTE (Tamil Tigers). Very importantly, the Sri Lankan Armed Forces seem to share this perception, for good measure they got sweeping draconian powers under the emergency. Does it sound familiar?

Before the Pakistani PM's official visit to the US in late September, there were strong rumours that he was going

to be replaced, a couple of paid lobbyists worked overtime suggesting that in fact the whole democratic system would be sent packing and a Presidential system would be put in place along with a favoured technocrat as PM. As Mark Twain would say, "the rumours of the PM's political demise were greatly exaggerated", not to say that it might not still happen. There are similarities between Pakistan and Sri Lanka about the sharing of powers between the Head of State and Head of Government and the sequence of consequences thereof. Parliament has frequently been dissolved and Pakistan PM's shown the door. A stability of sorts existed till Mian Nawaz Sharif took away the all-important escape clause of article 58 (2b) in a bid to cover all loopholes to his possible ouster, it backfired! There does seem to be an

intentions notwithstanding, the professionals are slowly and reluctantly pushed into an alliance with those bureaucrats who are opposed to the government in power. This is compounded because every government brings with itself political aides that fan out to occupy various sinecures, their performance directly proportional to their own honesty and capability. For the most part, they are in "business" on a very personal agenda.

The recalcitrant bureaucracy

became uneasy bedfellows tending to gravitate towards the real power centre in the country, the President. The situation is now ripe for trouble, despite the most sincere and best intentions of the President he is fed on a daily diet of the misdemeanors of those forming the government, their inadequacies are laid bare ad nostrum. The bureaucrats allied to the President's camp proceed to make the PM's men (and women) accountable on every issue under the sun while interfering with the process of governance, life become difficult for many ways. The men in power can only retaliate in similar bureaucratic ways known to them, in short order personal conflicts of no consequence at the lower level that gain momentum and are magnified into real and/or imagined differences between the

tenure. This has resulted in creation of another divide, that between the bureaucrats and the army-men-turned-bureaucrats. There is a strong resentment among the civilian bureaucracy against their presence in the sacred corridors of actual power, this is another area of conflict muddying the process of governance. Any President with an Army background will favour his fellow khakis, Ghulam Ishaq Khan as President tilted strongly towards his fellow civilian bureaucrats. Tussles for power between different players within the government process remains a fact of life in all countries, this needs to be minimised because it cuts into the services that the office-holders are meant to provide to the stakeholders of the nation, the common man suffering from this

the rank and file, from the Inspector General (IG) of Police to the lowest constable. Within the police there remains a resentment against army-inductees especially if they enter on a lateral basis and are not competitively recruited. Whenever a military regime is in place there is a simmering resentment in the police, it shows its ugly face from time to time. In the case of any army-civil disagreement, and it is usually at a level lower than that of officers, it becomes a proper confrontation. As the Army releases their grip on the controls of the country, the police tend to take out their resentment and frustrations built up during their long period in the cold playing second fiddle in preserving law and order. This is particularly true wherever the police are sensitive to areas they regard as their sacred reserve.

In a quest for power there are many different players pursuing separate agenda, all this cuts into the process of good governance. Each of these conflicts is potentially dangerous but when the forces of law and order themselves come into confrontation with each other, if not physically at least psychologically, it can only be at the expense of peace and tranquillity for the common man. In our search for a secure and better place under the sun, one needs a systematic and dispassionate evaluation of the potential conflicts within the Establishment, the dangers thereof and the need to explain to the protagonists what havoc such confrontation can play on the economic and social fabric of the nation as well as the well-being of its populace.

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.

## AS I SEE IT

In our search for a secure and better place under the sun, one needs a systematic and dispassionate evaluation of the potential conflicts within the Establishment, the dangers thereof and the need to explain to the protagonists what havoc such confrontation can play on the economic and social fabric of the nation as well as the well-being of its populace.

intermediate ground in Sri Lanka which allows for limited and specific action against recalcitrants. Our legal minds need to study the Sri Lanka system and modify the relevant clauses in the Constitution so that the Army is not force-marched in by blunders of the Mian Nawaz Sharif-kind. A balance of power is necessary, time to set aside our petty domestic squabbles and cope with the many more important issues that the country is saddled with.

One prime issue is how to get the Establishment to work with the

President and the PM; this eventually leads to the sacking of the PM. No one can really suggest that this is the only reason, or even the major one in the normal President-PM fallouts, this infighting aggravates all other problems, acting as a catalyst for any crisis.

To add to this cauldron of problems is induction of serving and retired military men to take up bureaucratic appointments. More than in any other military regime, this has been more widespread during Pervez Musharraf's

diversion of time and effort. Another tussle develops when the army fades away from total control of the reins of government. During any military regime the regular police functions as the prime arbiter of law and order, assiduously following the dictates of the army. The Army almost never uses the available police powers itself except during the strictest of martial laws. This limited ceding of authority by the police is done very grudgingly despite the fact that there are many ex-servicemen in

school. I want to say something about the school timing during the Ramadan. Ramadan is a holy month for Muslims. As a student, in this month, I have lot of pressure. I fast, go to school, attend classes and appear in tests. When I return home totally exhausted, I pray, read the holy Quran and prepare for next day's study before Iftar as well as after Iftar. I understand and respect school authority but I hope they will think about this matter and do something about it.

Mohammed Fahim Hara  
BLAM Laboratory School  
Eskatan Road, Dhaka

**Exorbitant fees of British Council**  
The British Council of Bangladesh is indeed a premier institute in the country in terms of the courses they offer and the quality they maintain.

The teaching staff as well as the course materials are good enough to learn English. They offer lots of English courses but the fees they charge are too high for the pupils from Bangladesh lower middle class families. The Business English course costs Taka 15,000 and the IELTS preparation course costs Taka 12,500. In the context of Bangladesh these fees are too much. Anyone running a programme in a third world country like Bangladesh must also know the income of the common people. Or, are these courses only meant for rich people?

Many good and meritorious students just cannot afford learning English from the British Council. As an English teacher, I would like to request the authority concerned to reduce the fees of the courses that are being offered, which eventually will be a blessing for

those keen learners who, despite their wishes cannot make it. To some people this amount is their whole year's educational expense.

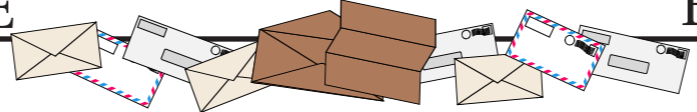
Badal Hasib  
Asad Avenue, Mohammadpur, Dhaka

**Mahathir, an example**  
Hats off to Dr Mahathir Mohammad who ruled Malaysia for 22 long years as the prime minister.

When it has become a normal practice among the Muslim leaders to remain in power even by force, Dr Mahathir Mohammad has set a golden example by voluntarily relinquishing power.

It will be better for the Muslim world in general, and for Bangladesh in particular, if the leaders follow this noble example.  
Iqbal Ahmed  
One-mail

# TO THE EDITOR 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.

### Sheraton's new look

The Sheraton (previously Intercontinental) hotel Building, built in the 60's, is a landmark of Dhaka. Built in the modernist architectural style prevalent at that period it was a building of elegant proportions and character. It has now sprouted an extension which has disfigured it for life. This extension is not only insensitive, it is cruel. It seems that the designer approached this work with a vengeance as if he or she had a grudge against the original building.

Sensible societies have educated bodies who decide if important buildings or buildings (or modifications to them) in important locations are suitable from the aesthetic and environmental point of view even after the design has been granted planning permission. For example, the UK has the Royal Fine Arts Commission, New Delhi has the Urban

Arts Commission. These are to protect the visual and environmental quality of the city. Such bodies are composed of architects, engineers, artists, poets etc. Dhaka should have had one long time ago and there is still time.  
Fuad Mallick  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Mobile companies join the queue

We can draw a perfect example of the extent to which the profiteering attitude of the mobile phone companies in our country has reached. This is evident from the fact that they are charging even for their service of a special number/call to listen to Sehri/Iftar timings.

Now, people will not be calling this number for the "fun" of it! So, why couldn't the mobile service providers make this facility absolutely free of

cost? Do they really need to earn money even from such a service which is only valid for the Holy month of Ramadan?  
CNR  
Chittagong

### Time for truth

Your staff reporter wrote (National revolution day today, Nov 7): "On this day in 1975, soldiers and civilians unitedly foiled a conspiracy against independence and sovereignty of the nascent nation and freed the then army Chief Gen Ziaur Rahman from captivity in Dhaka Cantonment."

Twenty-eight years have passed since those bloody murders and mayhems all results bitter of power struggle among the various factions of Bangladesh army.

Will the staff reporter of The Daily Star enlighten the nation about the details of this 'conspiracy' against the

independence and sovereignty -- and name the conspirators? Were Brig Khalid Musharraf, Col Huda and Col Haider the conspirators -- as the first phase of so-called revolution ended when these war heroes were brutally murdered? Gen Zia, Gen Khalid Musharraf and Col Taher were all heroes of the Liberation War.

It is time that people of Bangladesh face the truth and end this charade (of a revolution).  
Dr Bilayet Hossain  
Norman, Oklahoma, USA

### An insightful analysis

Thanks to Ghalib Chowdhury for the insightful analysis of the current state of affairs in Singapore and its economic outlook. Although it seems that the country's commitment to knowledge-based economy is getting noticed only now, the real thrust towards the understanding of new economic reality and

preparing for it started about a decade ago, in the mid-nineties.

At that time Singaporean managers and planners could clearly see what was coming. The government started to pour money into education (the education budget ballooned in the late nineties), began to encourage diversity and creativity in educational and research set-ups, and everybody, at least in the education, management and planning sectors, began thinking about the shifting reality. Some of us, foreign educators and educational planners who were in the country at the time, fondly remember the excitement.  
Dr Shaif Ahmad  
University of Ottawa  
Ottawa, Canada

### School timing in Ramadan

I am an eleven year old boy and I study in a reputed English medium