

## Terror investigation

*This will show whether will to combat militants exists*

**N**OW that JMB chief Shaekh Abdur Rahman and operations commander Siddiquil Islam are behind bars and can be interrogated, the nation is in a position to determine the government's true commitment to getting to the bottom of the terrorist threat that has defaced the country. In many ways it will be the thoroughness of the investigations and the eagerness with which the government pursues its inquiries, wherever they might lead, that will reassure the public that it is serious about terrorism.

The public, in its wisdom, has not pre-judged anything. It has applauded the capture of the top two wanted terrorists, but neither does it think that the captures prove the government is necessarily serious about getting to the bottom of the terror threat, not does it assume the government carries no conviction. The public is waiting to see what transpires before making a determination. The government should welcome this maturity and use the opportunity to establish its counter-terrorism bona fides.

It is imperative that the investigation be neutral and far-reaching and that no stone be left unturned in reaching substantive conclusions. In the past, this government, as have the others before it, maintained secrecy about investigations and nothing much has come to light. This will not be acceptable to the public in this case. The public will demand to know what the investigations bring to light. Sweeping the relevant facts under the carpet will seriously damage the government's reputation and be bad for the country.

Already there are reports suggesting that investigations do not seem geared to looking into the identity of those who sponsored, supported, and sheltered the terrorists. No such impression should gain ground, at this crucial stage of shaping the direction of investigations, that the government is steering these away from the all important question of who in the administration or in positions of power might have aided and abetted the extremists.

This approach will do immense damage, both to the investigation, the government's credibility, and the stability of the country. For the sake of the nation's security, we must root out those in power who have links with the militants, and if the government does not pursue this avenue of inquiry, it could further polarise the country when the need of the hour is unity in the face of the terrorists.

The entire nation, if not the world, is watching, and if the government is seen to be dragging its feet on getting to the bottom of terrorism despite having the kingpins in its hands then the negative consequences, both for the nation as a whole, and the government itself, will be immeasurable.

## The spewing toxins

*Somebody should be held to account*

**D**UMPING of toxic wastes by industrial units into the habitat has become a major environmental hazard. A photograph published in this newspaper yesterday showed how wastes from a dyeing factory badly dirtied a canal in Gazipur with putrid water which in turn polluted nearby farmland.

It is easy to imagine that crops produced in polluted soil are bound to have harmful ingredients that can have both short and long term ill effects on the consumers' health.

A dyeing factory is an ancillary industry to the thriving textiles sector; so their numbers are likely to increase day by day. So what we needed was a plan of action in place to make them abide by environmental laws. Similarly, we have tanneries and other industries that are a source of pollution in the absence of scientific effluent treatment and dumping systems. Their relocation away from the city limits remains a far cry.

Academics and experts have also been warning us of the dire consequences of unplanned and indiscriminate dumping of toxic wastes. The sources of pollution have been identified and highlighted by the media through detailed reports and articles.

What people would like to know is: when will the ministry and department concerned attend to this environmental challenge? The government must set about the task of fighting environmental pollution by concentrating on the issues raised and the areas of pollution identified by the media and the environmental activists groups.

It is a matter of great worry that despite what has been said and written about the detrimental effects of unplanned effluent discharge, most factories still dump their wastes in gross violation of the law. This is an area where the authorities concerned must enforce the rules strictly in order to stop environmental degradation.

# Are we out of the woods yet?

In fine, our law enforcement authorities deserve the nation's deepest appreciation for capturing some of the vilest human beings who in the name of Islam had been terrorizing the nation with impunity. This, however, is only the beginning of our war on terror. The authorities would be well advised to wage this war in the full glare of public scrutiny, both national and international, to reestablish Bangladesh as a truly sovereign state whose citizens live as free human beings and are not merely inhabitants of a juridically independent state.

**KAZI ANWARUL MASUD**

**F**INALLY, Shaikh Abdur Rahman, chief of Jamaatul Mujahadeen Bangladesh, and his second in command Siddiquil Islam aka Bangla Bhai have been captured. Their capture hailed by many at home and abroad has been described by the 14-party opposition combine as a "staged drama" to shift the focus of attention of the people from pressing the politico-economic issues facing the country.

The opposition parties may have some logic behind their allegation. Even a most third rate detective thriller would not portray a man on the run to be accompanied by an entourage consisting of his wife, daughter, grandchildren and unnamed associates.

Given our penchant for knowledge about everything from birth to marriage to children to profession of our next seat passenger in bus, train, plane or steamer, the nature of Shaikh Abdur Rahman's "underground" stay has raised many eyebrows. What is surprising is not that he has been finally captured but that a person who so openly stays "underground" was not captured earlier.

Our poverty aside, sheer greed for five million taka reward should have put a large number of bounty hunters on his trail. If the opposition parties' accusation of the government providing covert support to the militants is to be controverted, then the remaining possibilities of an existential large following of the militants in Bangladesh making possible not only JMB's devastating and unhindered operations for the last few years possible and evasion of arrest of the militants, but also the inefficiency of the authorities in their apprehension and/or collusion by the authorities, become matters of greater concern.

Playing close to the chest is the second nature of the authorities in many fragile democracies still unable to free themselves from the ghost of authoritarianism. They

almost invariably consider bi-partisan independent enquiry as infringement upon their exclusive power to play the roles of both the judge and the jury in prosecuting criminals accused even of the crime of waging war against the state.

This instinctive tendency to exclude not only the opposition members of parliament, but also ruling party members, and of course the people at large, reflects the psychotic lack of confidence the authorities have in anyone outside the exclusive circle of the Praetorian Guards. Why is it so difficult to accept that the public at large, who has borne the brunt of militant Islam and who have most to lose unlike the people in power who are believed to have made alternative arrangements to enjoy the sun and the sand should they be given eviction notice, has all the rights to know the full facts?

One must, however, congratulate our electronic and print media for hounding the authorities for information on militants from the initial days of militancy (when the government accused the media of creating Bangla Bhai and tarnishing the image of the country by publishing reports on the rise of Islamic militancy in Bangladesh) till today.

Denial of information culled from interrogation can only help fuel rumours that the capture of Shaikh Abdur Rahman and Bangla Bhai was a drama staged to shift people's attention from the combined opposition parties' campaign for reform in the Caretaker Government (CTG) and Election Commission as well as the government's failure to control spiraling price increase of essentials and to solve fuel, fertilizer, electricity, and water crises.

The way the Prime Minister responded to the Leader of the Opposition's reform proposals, by suggesting formation of a committee on the last day of the parliament session, does not reflect seriousness on the part of the government to discuss the vital issues. While the government

considers the opposition initiative as a gambit and a conspiracy to capture power, the opposition insists that the suggested reforms are necessary for holding of a free and fair election.

Opposition fear is based on the unilateral appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner, his frequent hospitalization coinciding with the dates of suggested meetings with foreigners wanting to see him, his reluctance to hold meetings with the two Election Commissioners till two new Election Commissioners, allegedly loyal to the CEC and the government, were appointed giving the CEC majority in the Election Commission, his unilateral decision to prepare a fresh voter list in the face of the High Court's observation that the existing list may be updated (the Election Commission has appealed to the Supreme Court against the High Court judgment), and appointment of a large number of upazilla election officers allegedly having links with the ruling parties.

The combined opposition parties' reluctance to participate in any elections without reforms in the CTG is based on their suspicion that the appointment of the next CTG head has already been manipulated and that the previous CTG did not take enough care to stop manipulation of voting done through money and muscle power in the last elections, and that CTG system itself, pushed through a constitutional amendment in a hurry, needs further reforms.

In the absence of credible popularity polls in countries like Bangladesh, a question arises whether a government, even if elected by popular vote, but not securing more than fifty percent of the votes cast, can legitimately and morally hold on to power when it has failed to deliver the political goods for which the government was elected in the first place.

For French philosopher, Michel Foucault governmentalality as a conception of governance goes beyond the state's function to

regulate the behaviour of its citizens which can pose a threat to good societal order. Foucault sees government as guiding conduct in active and positive sense throughout the whole fabric of society, beyond its formal face and delving into the inner most recess of society. When a government fails to do so, opposition parties notwithstanding, question may arise whether the government retains the legitimate basis to govern in Weberian sense. Max Weber felt legitimacy of authority may be drawn from three factors: (a) traditional, where authority is accepted on what had happened in the past, (b) charismatic authority flowing from the sheer force of personality of the leader e.g. Bahabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's unquestioned domination over the hearts and minds of the Bengali nation prior to the Liberation War and thereafter, and, (c) legal-rational authority where legitimacy is based on rationally constituted rules. One is, therefore, beset with the question whether the rise of Islamic extremism exemplified by JMB is due to the inability/unwillingness of the authorities to recognize the geometric progression of this Frankenstein and to take corrective measures to eradicate this menace.

Undeniable governmental patronization of Islam through transformational politics since the 1975 brutal murder of the Father of the Nation to fill up the need for an ideological platform to justify its opposition to Awami League has contributed to the consolidation of Islamist movement in Bangladesh. It remained largely unnoticed by the deeply religious minded Bangladeshis till the West began its crackdown on Islamic extremism after 9/11.

In the interregnum, the carefully camouflaged movement financed by external sources spread its tentacles throughout the country under the very nose of successive governments. Though foreign funding has been reduced due to

strict monitoring of money transactions by foreign and domestic agencies, the study by an eminent Bangladeshi economist that corporations run by religious fundamentalists make an annual net profit of twelve billion takas, ten percent of which is spent by the fundamentalists for organizational purposes including paying half a million party cadres and running armed training camps, puts cold water on the reported remarks by Shaikh Abdur Rahman to his interrogators that the bombing spree had to be stopped due to lack of funds. Such discrepancies strengthens the case for a totally transparent and open process, from arrest to interrogation to trial, if necessary by co-opting international agencies.

Though the ruling parties claim to disavow Islamic fundamentalism, the composition of the 4-party alliance and 14-party opposition clearly delineate two separate strands in Bangladeshi politics. The ruling alliance believes in narrow nationalism, defining national interests as being confined within the boundaries of the state, a not uncommon constipated thought process found in many insecure countries suffering from perennial fear of foreign domination, excluding the possibility of international connectivity and in total opposition to generally accepted concept of mutual dependence of states and national interests being largely governed by international collaboration.

Besides, Islamization plays a significant role in the ruling alliance's political agenda as evidenced by large scale persecution of the minority community immediately after the 2001 elections and equation of madrassa education with secular education. The very fact that Jamaat-e-Islami, a party initially opposed to the formation of Bangladesh and that remains dedicated to the establishment of an Islamic state in Bangladesh, is a constituent element of the ruling coalition, testifies to the present government's inflexible attitude on the question of Islamization.

Reputed reporter Bertil Lintner (Religious Extremism and Nationalism in Bangladesh) notes that the growth of Jamaat can be linked with the growth of Deobandi madrassas which numbered more than fifty thousand at the last count. Lintner alleges that Jamaat's youth

wing -- Islami Chatra Shibir -- has close contacts with other radical Muslim groups in Pakistan, the Middle East, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Besides, the recently banned Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HUJI) also draws most of its members from Deobandi madrassas. It is intriguing that many of the detainees have confessed to their earlier links with Jamaat and/or Islami Chatra Shibir.

The 14-party combine, on the other hand, believes in a non-communal, progressive, and democratic system dedicated to close the gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots." Indeed the parting of ways between the Muslim League and Awami League began almost immediately after 1947, first on language issue, then on the question of autonomy of then East Pakistan, and finally on the question of the independence of Bangladesh.

Awami League had and still has a left-of-centre platform dedicated to an egalitarian economic system in which prosperity is more evenly distributed among the people with the spirit of the liberation war as a political backdrop. While under the present government, the rich have become richer and the poor have become poorer.

In fine, our law enforcement authorities deserve the nation's deepest appreciation for capturing some of the vilest human beings who in the name of Islam had been terrorizing the nation with impunity. This, however, is only the beginning of our war on terror. The authorities would be well advised to wage this war in the full glare of public scrutiny, both national and international, to reestablish Bangladesh as a truly sovereign state whose citizens live as free human beings and are not merely inhabitants of a juridically independent state.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

# One equation can lead to another



**KULDIP NAYYAR**  
writes from New Delhi

**U**NFORTUNATELY, both China and Pakistan have reacted adversely to the President Bush-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh nuclear agreement. There is nothing against them except their own anti-India perception. China has said that New Delhi should have been a signatory to the non-proliferation treaty (NPT) which Beijing itself has not signed. Pakistan wants the same type of nuclear deal which America has rejected firmly.

The first remark that President General Pervez Musharraf made after the agreement announcement from New Delhi was that China was Pakistan's "strategical partner." Probably, it is. But such phrases bring back the memories of the cold war. It would be dangerous to revive the same type of attitudes because they have cost the humanity more than 50 years of sterile policies, mistrust and fear, apart from several bush wars and the colossal wasteful armament race.

Musharaff's irritation is not understandable because Pakistan continues to be America's ally, the point which Bush underlined while in India. He applauded Pakistan's role in fighting terrorists although he wanted it to do more. Some 120

terrorists were killed on the Waziristan-Afghanistan border within a few hours as if Bush had only to order and Islamabad was ready to deliver.

Musharraf has himself said in a television interview that he was "satisfied" with the outcome of Bush's visit and that Pakistan's needs were different from India's. Manmohan Singh's statement before parliament should have allayed any fears. This being the case, why can't Delhi, Islamabad and, for that matter, Beijing develop a common understanding independent of Washington? All the three countries have the growth rate of more than eight per cent. All the three have millions of poor who are getting poorer day by day. All the three are natural partners because they have suffered at the hands of imperialism and have been able to free themselves on their own.

Words like the "strategical alliance" suggest some sort of confrontation. Alliance against whom? All the three have already waged wars against one another. India and China fought in 1962 and India and Pakistan in 1948, 1965 and 1971. What did they gain

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Both New Delhi and Islamabad after years of talks, open and secret, have found no meeting point. People-to-people contact has helped and there are now more channels to meet than before. However, Pakistan is not willing to have free trade before Kashmir is settled. This is a wrong approach because economic ties would have forged closer relations and created better atmosphere. Pakistan will be amazed to know how the opinion in India is veering round to a sort of autonomy provided the problem is settled once and for all. Since America has said "no" to mediation again, Islamabad should come out of the box and present a solution which does not give the impression of Kashmir seceding from India.

through hostilities? They had to sit across the table to sort out the same problems which had provoked them to go to war. They can decimate one another if anyone of them opts for war to settle the problems they face. There is no alternative to peace. They should have learnt the lesson by now.

Proximity between New Delhi and Washington does not mean alienation with Islamabad or Beijing. India and China are getting closer to each other and may well be signing an agreement on the border before long. Trade between the two countries is galloping and economic ties becoming stronger. New Delhi and Islamabad are processing confidence-building measures even though haltingly.

On China, I know we are discussing "substantial" points on how to draw a permanent border. India seems to be willing to accept China's claim over the Aksai Chin which New Delhi did not concede when Beijing vainly argued that the Aksai Chin was its only the link between Sinkiang and the rest of China. What is stalling the agreement, I am told, is Beijing's insistence to have a foothold in

Arunachal (Its assembly speaker was never given a visa by China.) I only hope that the Indo-US nuclear deal does not cast its shadow on further talks between New Delhi and Beijing. Defence Minister Pranab Mukerjee has already postponed his visit to China. Probably, Beijing wants to know how far New Delhi has bought America's thesis that India can be a counterweight to China. This is the thesis which the US administration proposes to sell to its Congress to get approval for the nuclear deal.

The counterweight theory is, however, far from the minds of India's policy makers. But, ideologically, both are so apart that their interests may collide in South Asia some day. And the two "giants," as Jawaharlal Nehru predicted, were bound to clash. America's reading too is on these lines. But that clash has already taken place. Whether it can recur or not depends both on New Delhi and Beijing. I am worried about the fallout on the India-Pakistan relations. The two are scheduled to meet later this month for talks. However, India's equation with America will be at the back of Pakistan's mind. Islamabad

has been Washington's close ally since the cold war days. There was a cooling off period but since the 9/11, Pakistan has been America's dependable friend. Washington has been able to reach many Islamic countries through Islamabad. Why should it worry about America?

Pakistan is sure that it did not get the same nuclear status as India has. But Islamabad knew beforehand that Washington was only using the deal to reach New Delhi. American economic interests coincide with India's needs. It is a big market, opening up. New Delhi may want to go slow but Washington's pressure will be relentless, particularly when both reactors and fuel for civil nuclear energy are going to come from America.

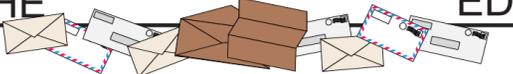
Many years ago a Pakistan foreign secretary told me that the way to reach Beijing was through Islamabad. Pakistan would do better if it were to go to New York through New Delhi. But India would first need to see that the training camps for the jihadis are dismantled and the ISI plan on infiltration is jettisoned as an option. Cross-border terrorism, even Bush was convinced at Delhi,

remained one of the planks of Pakistan's policy towards India. Pakistan's main concern must be Kashmir. America did not mention it even in the joint statement from Islamabad. Bush referred to it while replying to a question by a Pakistani journalist. Bush repeated the earlier stand that it was for the two countries to sort out the Kashmir problem, with America's assistance, if required. For the religious parties the reply was a deep disappointment that President Qazi Hussain of Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal said Musharraf's request to Bush to help resolve the Kashmir issue was "a mistake" because America would never play a neutral role. If so, where does Islamabad go?

Both New Delhi and Islamabad after years of talks, open and secret, have found no meeting point. People-to-people contact has helped and there are now more channels to meet than before. However, Pakistan is not willing to have free trade before Kashmir is settled. This is a wrong approach because economic ties would have forged closer relations and created better atmosphere. Pakistan will be amazed to know how the opinion in India is veering round to a sort of autonomy provided the problem is settled once and for all. Since America has said "no" to mediation again, Islamabad should come out of the box and present a solution which does not give the impression of Kashmir seceding from India.

Kuldip Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

# 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.

## Happy the nation

We may have many problems, but we have a positive attitude towards life. We know how to be happy with the bare minimum. So we are a happy nation. What's wrong with that?  
**Shajib Mahmud**  
Amtoli, Mohakhali, Dhaka

of press freedom. What about press responsibility, though?

Considering the anti-Muslim sentiments that permeate modern Europe, it should have been obvious, if not predicted, that many Muslims would react with fervour to what the UN condemned as a slight against basic Muslim sensibilities.

The Danish and Norwegian newspapers that initially printed the cartoons must have been able to predict the backlash that they would invite. And so were the other newspapers in Europe that reprinted the cartoons. Indeed, what those newspapers

called a show of solidarity seemed much closer to the same sort of ideological pride that Muslims felt had been trampled upon.

Certainly, the cartoons violated a basic Islamic tenet and thus would naturally beget outrage. Either the European editors were uneducated in what should today be basic knowledge, or the move was a calculated one. It's tempting, though, to consider similarly blatant provocations being leveled against Jews or blacks.

Would they demand the sort of apology being denied to Muslims

or would they be satisfied with the chest pounding of European journalists?

**M N Miraly**  
One-mail

## GP service

At first I want to thank GP for setting up the eye-catching customers service centre in Rajshahi city. But do customers get satisfactory service inside the centres? Customers go there for solving their problems. Can GP give them a perfect solution?

The GP authorities should look into the matter.

**Shohon Shih**  
Rajshahi

## Darkness in education?

The day by day increase in the number of unfit persons in Bangladesh is helping spread of corruption in our society, education sector, politics, business and finally it polluted our environment.

Recently, a teacher of RU (Dr. Taher) was killed. It is alleged that one of his colleagues was involved in this murder. This is bad news for all of us.

It is evident that most of the teachers in our universalities do not bother about humanity,

proper education and human psychology. Their teaching capabilities are also not up to the mark.

A Shibir cadre was also said to be involved (reported by media) in Dr. Taher murder. Police have not arrested him yet. Was it because of political interference?

**S.S.Zaman**  
Islamic University, Kushtia

## Dhirendranath Datta

Every year on Ekushey February our national heartbeat stops as we pay homage to our glorious

sons Salam, Barkat, Rafiq and Jabbar.

Let us also ensure that we pay due tribute to another key figure in the language movement that gave birth to our freedom struggle. Shahid Dhirendranath Datta was the first East Pakistani to formally raise the demand for Bangla as an official language of the new country as early as 1948. How ironic a twist of fate, that he moved this resolution in the Pakistan National Assembly on 23rd February 1948, just two days after the calendar date that has become immortalised in our

collective consciousness.

Unfortunately, when he did this, he was branded a traitor and enemy of a certain religion by the central Pakistani leaders, and the establishment never forgot his audacity; he was singled out and dragged away from his home along with his son in 1971 and brutally tortured to death. So, he too was a martyr for our cultural identity and freedom.

Let us make a special effort to remember Shahid Dhirendranath Datta on Ekushey February.  
**Sanjoy Kumar Nath**  
Chittagong