

Mounting violence in Iraq

Will the war guarantee end of terrorism?

WE have written on Iraq on a number of occasions in this column, but every time we wrote we hoped to write something better, something positive next time that would come as a breath of fresh air. We have been waiting to hear the news of the end of the war, end of all sorts of sectarian violence and withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq.

But, it seems, we have to wait even longer because far from peace finding hold in Iraq, common people including children continue to die everyday in large numbers in the country. Body count has become an impossible task by now, and to some extent it has been rendered insignificant in Iraq. Since the beginning of the war countless numbers of Iraqis have died, some of them in most ignoble ways. The 'collateral damage' on the part of the allied troops has also been beyond their expectation.

We have observed with much concern that various strategies have been tried by the US, UK and the Iraqi government in the last two years to end the strife between the Shia and Sunni communities and implement a roadmap of peace and progress. But nothing seems to have succeeded so far. All the factions are not ready yet to see eye to eye on the question of their sectarian interests. The withdrawal of all foreign troops is one major issue that needs to be resolved before many factions would even agree to join the government for talks. But the Bush administration remains steadfast on the question of remaining in Iraq until peace finds root there. This it does despite mounting criticism in the USA itself against the unjust war. To his opponents he said recently that 'leaving Iraq at this stage would damage the credibility of his country.' He further stressed at a political fundraising meeting at Nashville, "If we leave Iraq before the job is done this will be a major defeat for the United States of America in the global war on terror."

The war on terror is an issue that is well understood in Bangladesh. But, whether the prolonged engagement in Iraq has contributed to the annihilation of the major players, or whether it has been successful in plugging all the holes, remains an unanswered question.

A public interest ruling

Kudos to the HC

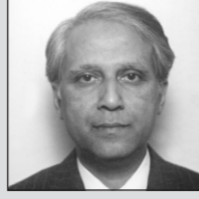
TAKING cognisance of a *Janakantha* report under the title "no whereabouts of the youth for four days after arrest ...", a High Court Division bench issued the first ever *suo moto* rule on Tuesday against any Rab action. The law enforcers have been directed to follow the provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) in case of arrest of citizens.

The CrPC requires producing a citizen before a court within 24 hours of an arrest. But this provision is mostly followed in its breach. There is also a court directive against abuse of Section 54 asserting that in case of arrest thereunder the relatives of the detainee will have to be informed of the whereabouts. This too is seldom, if ever, adhered to.

The case in point is interesting. The Bangla daily report said, Kishore Kumar, 32, was arrested by Rab and taken away from his house on July 19 and since then his whereabouts were not known to his nearest relations. When his relative went to Rab office on July 20 and 21 Rab personnel reportedly denied arresting anyone named Kishore. The Attorney General told the court that Kishore was arrested on July 23, the FIR was lodged the same day, and he was sent to the court the following day. On hearing the submissions of both sides, the HC directed that CrPC provisions in case of arrest must be followed by the law enforcers.

This is an important ruling that upholds both public interest and human rights principles. Safety of people in the law enforcers' custody is the latter's obligation. It is also a dictate of the rule of law that nobody suddenly disappears or his or her whereabouts remain unknown for any length of time.

Is Britain tired of its multiculturalist mantra?



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

RECENT events in Britain have pushed questions on increased immigration and multiculturalism to the forefront. Factors like clash of cultures and its effect on homogeneity within the British population have resulted in serious debates both in the media as well as within the broad stage of politics.

The domestic British population were rudely awakened in August (their usual summer holiday season) with reports that home-grown terrorists were planning to blow-up planes over the Atlantic. Quite understandably, there was alarm and anger with the consequential additional security steps. Millions from the general public were upset with the disruption of their holiday schedule and cheap airlines like Ryan Air were disappointed with the drastic fall in their passengers. In fact, on a television interview, the CEO of Ryan Air threatened to sue the British Airport Authority for damages worth Pound Sterling one billion.

The British public in general have been shocked that younger people born in Britain and supposedly raised on British values should have perpetrated the earlier bombings and were now involved in planning more atrocities. I was in London when the conspiratorial plots were discovered. I watched the chaos in several airport terminals -- the uncertainty, the anxiety and the reprimands that followed. The situation slowly evolved into a political and social debate that examined and scrutinised the current Labour Government's policies -- both foreign and domes-

POST BREAKFAST
Time has come for the British government to restore confidence within the different communities. It might be useful to focus on faith not having boundaries and the presence of certain universal values in all religions, including Islam. This should start from primary school. Some of this is already being practiced but it probably needs to be reinforced even more strongly given the current situation. This can also be reiterated through open discussion and public debate within the communities.

tic. As expected the principal Opposition parties -- the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats -- hastened to discover flaws in governance. Matters were also not helped by many from the Muslim community pointing out that they were being unnecessarily harassed and profiled by law-enforcing agencies.

To this brew was added statistics that pointed out Britain's population having passed 60 million for the first time, pushed up by record levels of immigration. Official figures also suggested that there were at least a million more men, women and children living in Britain compared to five years ago. It was also underlined that two-thirds of this increase was due to migration and the remainder due to natural factors such as birth and death rates. Apparently, this rate of population expansion has been faster than at any time since the early 1960s, when the post-Second World War baby boom was at its height. Subsequent analytical surveys also indicated that more than half a million foreign citizens came to live in Britain in 2004-05.

The evidence of this added scale of immigration surfaced in the midst of the latest terrorist threat and only added fresh fuel to the existing controversy with regard to multiculturalism and its role in Britain. It also deepened concern over the tension between ethnic and cultural groups and the impact of migrant workers on wages and unemployment. It was interesting to see in this context, the concern of the former controversial Labour Minister Frank Field and his comment that 'next

month, the million unemployed mark will be crossed for the first time under this Labour government.

As a result of these factors, a national debate as surfaced in Britain over consequences of immigration, multiculturalism and multi-ethnicity. Media opposed to the Labour Party and those happy with Prime Minister Blair's decline in popularity were quick to recall in cynical terms the Prime Minister's confidence in Britain's diversity of backgrounds and the strengths and benefits it generates. They also ridiculed by pointing out that a British were no longer a race, but a gathering of different races, each living in isolation of each other.

Matters were also not really helped when Ruth Kelly, the government's Communities Secretary, openly broke with decades of Labour support for multiculturalism. She admitted that the British government's attempts to avoid imposing a single British identity and culture could have led to communities living in 'isolation' from each other. This made her the first Cabinet Minister to question the idea that different faiths and races should not be forced to integrate but be allowed to maintain their own cultures. For obvious reasons such a view has not been welcomed by the different communities living in Britain. It has also been interpreted as Miss Kelly doing a volte face and adopting former Tory leader Michael Howard's slogan (from last year's election campaign) which insisted that it was 'not racist' to voice concerns about immigration and asylum.

This latest approach in reassessing the multiculturalist mantra has also received indirect support from Trevor Phillips, head of the Commission for Racial Equality, Dr. John Sentamu, the Archbishop of York, and most recently, from George Alagiah, the well-known BBC newscaster.

I had the opportunity during my visit to discuss the current state of affairs with some British community leaders of South Asian and Afro-Caribbean origin. It was interesting to see people of the Afro-Caribbean background, generally agreeable, about the decision to set up a Commission on Integration and Cohesion to investigate racial integration. Community leaders belonging to the South Asian origin groups were however not quite sure about what was happening or how things might develop over the next few years. They also refused to accept Kelly's observation that 'new migrants feel the fierce loyalties developed in war-torn parts' and that 'Muslims feel the reverberations from the Middle East'. Instead, they pointed out that though they were from migrant communities, they were as British as any one else and had the right 'to be critical of British foreign policy, be it over Iraq, Lebanon or Palestine'. This also 'did not mean that they supported terrorists'. In other words they were upset over the persistent 'profiling' that they were facing in public places.

It is true that the question of community relations has become more complex in Britain due to the gradual increase in the patterns of immigration. I had to wait in a queue for nearly four hours in Terminal Four at

Heathrow Airport (on my way back to Dhaka) and took that opportunity to talk to fellow travelers of white British origin and seek their opinion about the current crisis facing multiculturalism.

It was clear that many white Britons 'do not feel quite comfortable' with changes that they see in their neighbourhoods'. Like in any other country, facing massive immigration, they are also worried that Britain is gradually losing its unique cultural ethos. There was also some anger about 'ethnic minorities getting special treatment'. It would probably be more correct to characterise this as a sense of grievance. However, I found no evidence that remotely suggested segregation. Nevertheless, there was a refrain that something had gone wrong in the equation and this needed to be addressed with urgency.

Multiculturalism is a way of life in Britain. It has benefited millions who have gone to that country and have settled down as immigrants. It has also enormously helped Britain in terms of expanding its potential and enriching itself through diversity. This contribution is particularly evident in British cuisine, sports, public health as provided by GPs and also in trade and industry.

Today however, the subjects of integration and the desired blend within the national ethos are at stake in Britain. Questions are also being raised not only about the values of unfettered immigration from East European countries but also about managed integration between communities.

These elements have assumed greater importance given the additional factor of religious affiliation. Having preachers from backward, feudal backgrounds, with insufficient command over English has also most certainly not helped. I personally believe that English language is a way of life that has unfortunately been lost in this process.

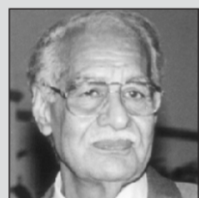
I think that time has come for the British government to restore confidence within the different communities. It might be useful to focus on faith not having boundaries and the presence of certain universal values in all religions, including Islam. This should start from primary school. Some of this is already being practiced but it probably needs to be reinforced even more strongly given the current situation.

This can also be reiterated through open discussion and public debate within the communities. The participants, should also naturally include, if possible, sociologists, psychologists, cultural, religious and media personalities from areas of origin (of these different communities). It might also be useful to request that different diplomatic missions resident in Britain (from where immigrants have arrived in Britain) help out by sending their representatives to such meetings and debates. This will facilitate breaking down of psychological, cultural and religious barriers.

We have already seen multiculturalism seriously affected in different parts of Europe. Anxiety over possible terrorist acts must not impair the glorious tradition of multiculturalism in Britain. The existing least common denominators have to be nurtured and growing misunderstanding contained.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador who can be reached at mzamir@dhaka.net

Only through dialogue



KULDEEP NAYYAR
writes from New Delhi

IHAD the privilege of meeting Akbar Khan Bugti, the slain Baloch leader, after the birth of Bangladesh and before the Shimla conference. My main purpose of visit to Pakistan was to interview Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then the country's President. I flew from Islamabad to Quetta at the request of Ghouse Bux Bazejo, then a prominent Baloch leader, to meet Bugti at tea. He had so much to say that the tea appointment stretched to coffee after dinner. I was with him for nearly five hours.

What he said then -- I have consulted my notes -- was not substantively different from what was his current demand for autonomy. The only difference is that then he repeatedly gave me the example of Bangladesh. Some provinces, he said, could go the same way if Islamabad did not realise that they had their own identity and aspirations which could not be suppressed either by using force or invoking the name of Islam. He wanted more powers and more royalty for the natural gas in Balochistan. But he never used the word "separation." Bugti said that India should learn a

BETWEEN THE LINES
Still, most important is Pakistan's unity and integrity. This cannot be protected by guns, something which has to be driven home in all the countries in South Asia. They have to realise that force does not solve any problem. There is no option to a dialogue or "an argument" as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen puts in his book, 'The Argumentative India.' The adverse fallout of happenings in Balochistan is the heightening of rhetoric between Delhi and Islamabad. I cannot understand how the sophisticated foreign office on both sides can use the type of language they are doing to express their indignation.

lesson from Pakistan and analyse why Bangladesh became an independent country. Unless New Delhi gave full autonomy to the states, he said, it might endanger its integrity. He suggested that the centre should have only foreign affairs, defence and communications and transfer all other subjects to the states.

I found Bugti a proud Pakistani and at the same time a proud Balochi. There was no contradiction between the two. He was a less hardliner than Khan Bux Marri and Abdullah Mengel. I was sorry to read words like "miscreant" used by some Pakistani newspapers for Bugti. But then we in the subcontinent use the worst type of language for our opponents. "Miscreant" is comparatively mild.

Bugti expected India to be generous in the post-Bangladesh agreement. He criticised Bhutto for not letting others have their say. When I told Bhutto what Bugti had said, his remark was: "Bugti could have no complaint because he talked to you for nearly five hours, mostly against me, and all that is on tape." I believe the misgivings expressed by Bugti and some

others made Bhutto incorporate the concept of provincial autonomy in Pakistan's 1973 constitution.

However, the late Wali Khan of the NWFP told me a few years ago that Bhutto did not implement the undertakings he gave. In this respect, the record of New Delhi is also not too happy. It is yet to implement the main recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission on centre-state relations. The centre has, in fact, become stronger after the recent Supreme Court judgment that the Rajya Sabha (council of states) does not have to have a member residing in the state whose assembly elects him.

Coming back to Bugti's killing, Islamabad has not handled the situation properly. Much of Pakistan's neighbouring country is not facing an insurgency? India has been in the midst of military operation in the northeast for several decades. It too has tried to sort out political questions with the military action but has failed miserably. After burning its fingers, New Delhi has initiated talks with the ULFA in Assam. It has been negotiating with the Nagas for some years now. Unlike Bugti's Jamhoori Watan

party which wants autonomy within Pakistan, the demand of ULFA and the Nagas is for an independent state.

Take Sri Lanka. It has been facing the LTTE's rebellion for many years. Despite the military action against the LTTE, Colombo has approached New Delhi to put pressure on the LTTE to return to the negotiating table. Nepal, even after suffering at the hands of the monarch, is divided over continuing monarchy and converting the country into a republic. Talks are going on.

Pakistan itself did not reject the option for talks with Sheikh Mujib-ur Rahman, Bangladesh, father of the nation Islamabad held parleys with him for months and even when he was arrested before the military operation he was imprisoned, not killed. (General Yahya Khan, then the martial law administrator, sentenced the Sheikh to death but Bhutto, who took over the reins from Yahya Khan, did not allow the sentence to be carried out.) The common factor in all the situations is a dialogue. Why was Bugti refused talks when he pleaded that Islamabad could converse with the

Al-Qaida but not with him? Former Pakistan chief justice Sujat Ali Shah warned the rulers of Pakistan a few days before the killing of Bugti that the situation in Balochistan was "getting out of hand and needs a political, not a military solution."

Maybe, a military-led government hates a dialogue with its dissidents. It is afraid of sliding into a situation where the give-and-take becomes necessary and a political solution inevitable. Islamabad must realise that about five million people of Baloch ethnic origin are located at three places, primarily in Balochistan in southwestern Pakistan, and in southeastern Iran and in the southern tip of Afghanistan. They are generally too disturbed at present.

Whether sardari system which Bugti was following is anachronistic is not the point at issue. If feudalism and landlordism can stay as an integral part of the Pakistan society, so can the sardari system. The country's first priority should be how to return to democracy. The abolition of sardari system and feudalism can follow. Still, most important is Pakistan's unity and integrity. This cannot be

protected by guns, something which has to be driven home in all the countries in South Asia. They have to realise that force does not solve any problem. There is no option to a dialogue or "an argument" as Nobel laureate Amartya Sen puts in his book, 'The Argumentative India.'

The adverse fallout of happenings in Balochistan is the heightening of rhetoric between Delhi and Islamabad. I cannot understand how the sophisticated foreign office on both sides can use the type of language they are doing to express their indignation. This is an expression of frustration in reaching nowhere during the unending talks.

True, it is none of India's business to interfere in the internal matters of Pakistan. Still the outrage against human rights violations cannot be confined to the borders of the country which commits them. In this case, it is the killing of a leader who was known even during the freedom struggle against the British.

Indian foreign office's statement condemning Bugti's killing is in order. But I have not been able to understand what point it was trying to score by making Balochistan and Pakistan as two separate entities. Both Delhi and Islamabad can abuse each other to their hearts' content as long as they allow people on both sides to meet freely. If ever the two countries bury the hatchet, it would be through people-to-people contact.

Kuldeep Nayyar is an eminent Indian columnist.

A policy for foreign investment should be in force

ALI IDRIS

WHEN investors from abroad come to invest in a foreign country, obviously their goal is to make profit and repatriate it. The investors do not come to do any favour to the country receiving foreign investment. Hence wherever the environment and conditions are favourable the investors would rush with their capital. In Bangladesh there are some favourable environment and easy conditions which attract foreign investment. That is why some remarkable investors including TATA group of India have shown interest in investment here recently. Whereas simply due to lack of existing set policies of investment, TATA's proposal has been postponed. An economic matter has been blanketed with political colour. Hence it is imperative that a policy for foreign investment must be

formulated, revised and approved from time to time and applied whenever investment proposals are submitted so that the proposers have not to wait for long to know the result.

Position of investments in Bangladesh

According to a report published by UNCTAD in 2006, the picture of foreign investments in ten least developed countries of the world during 2004 is as the following:

Country	Total invest-ment in US\$ investment(\$)	Per capita investment in US\$ investment(\$)
Angola	204.7 crore	132.10
Equatorial Guinea	166.4 "	3328.0
Sudan	151.1 "	42.6
Congo	90.0 "	16.10
Myanmar	55.6 "	11.10
Ethiopia	54.5 "	7.20
Saad	47.8 "	50.90
Tanzania	47.0 "	12.50
Bangladesh	46.0 "3.30	
Zambia	23.4 "	20.30

It appears from the above table

that during 2004 though Bangladesh occupied 9th position in terms of total investment, its ranking was the last according to per capita investment. This position seems not very encouraging. Hence it is essential that our country should have more and more foreign investment currently and in the coming years. The proposal of TATA group has been under scrutiny for almost a year. Political interference has most probably caused its postponement. But only political consideration can't run a country. Economic matters should not be engulfed with political views, rather it should be considered with professional expertise and financial analysis. When proposals for foreign investment flow in, it is better to get them examined by expert committees rather than keeping them pending. Arriving at decisions become easy if refer-

ence can be made to approved policy in force. It is therefore essential to have an approved policy or to compile one for this purpose. It is also necessary to revise the policy in pursuance to the need of the day.

Necessary features of policy

Limit of repatriation of profit and participation of Bangladeshis in equity: It is learnt from a news item that during 2001 to 2005 foreign investors have repatriated their profit amounting to US\$ 218 crore against investment of US\$ 274.4 crore. In the same news it is stated that from 1996 to 2005 profit of US\$ 362.6 crore (81%) has been repatriated against investment of US\$ 445.7 crore. Breakdown of repatriated profit is 36 percent in telecommunication, 18 percent in textile industries, 7 percent in chemical industries, 18 percent in energy companies, 10 percent in banks,

and 2 percent in electricity generating companies (The Daily Star 19-7-06). From the above data, it may be opined that the foreign investors can take out their total investment approximately in six years. In that case what monetary benefit the country gain through employment of people and collection of taxes, duty, VAT etc. seem not enough.

In order to have more financial gain it is necessary that Bangladesh government or Bangladeshis are allowed to participate in equity. It would be easier for the general public to participate in equity through IPO and such participation would be allowed according to the percentage of profit earned in the industry ranging from 10 percent to 49 percent. If so done, a portion of profit will always remain inside the country instead of being repatriated, both foreign and local investment will grow and the country's industrialisation will accel-

erate. Even in the event of loopholes existing in the policy, the portion of local equity profit will remain within the country. In many of the Asian countries such participation of the locals in equity of foreign industries is in practice.

Foreign investors should not be allowed to borrow from the local banking system: The main objective behind inviting foreign investment is to earn foreign exchange, profit and encourage industrialisation. If foreign investors are allowed to borrow from local banks in local currency, then foreign exchange will not be earned and local entrepreneurs will be deprived of local bank loans. Hence foreign investors should not be allowed to borrow in local currency, rather they may raise working capitals much as necessary through issue of shares to the local public.

Repatriation of capital gain

not before five years: Capital gain which is a non-business income should not be allowed to be repatriated before lapse of five years from the date of earning. This gain should be reinvested in business so as to ensure growth and development, but it may be repatriated at the end of 5th year or close of business whichever is earlier. Currently in Bangladesh this gain can be repatriated any time.

Pricing of gas, coal, electricity for foreign investors: Usually all foreign investors are given land by the government on lease at easy terms. Rebate, exemption, holidays are also allowed to them in respect of taxes, duty and VAT. So the foreign investors enjoy special privileges. Furthermore if they are allowed concession in utilities like gas, coal, electricity etc. then it discourages the local industrialists due to the disparity created. But if gas or coal is used as raw material,

then the price should be fixed at international rate or at the same rate as being in existing similar industries or sector. If a policy exists in this respect then it becomes easy for both the government and the investor.

Recently in the case of the proposal of TATA group of India, probably the pricing of gas has been a major obstacle for arriving at the decision. Even after long negotiation and deliberation both parties could not reach a consensus. A committee which was constituted for study and giving its recommendation could not even come up with a report. Had there been a comprehensive policy in force, decision could be arrived in time. So a policy for foreign investments should always be in force.

Ali Idris is a finance executive.