on his hands. His difficulty stems

from reasons we have been talking

about for weeks. But there is also

the opportunity which has now

come to him, one that can truly turn

the moment into one of historical

permanence. Muhammad Yunus

strikes a chord when he asks

lajuddin Ahmed to listen to all and

some and yet not be soft on others.

has something more to tell him.

which is that he needs to go after

men who some weeks ago experi-

address as a mark of indecisive

leadership on state-run television

Additionally, those who have, in

Independence from the constitu-

tion and replaced it with vet another

instance of falsehood, a preface

that makes us all go red in the face.

should be shamed for the criminal-

doubts about his state of health

notwithstanding, can vet do a fine

job. How about beginning through a

reallocation of responsibilities to

the advisors, through giving them

the jobs they can do really well?

Years ago, President Abdus Sattar

had his chance to be part of history.

until he stumbled. President

laiuddin Ahmed knows the story --

and so ought to step gingerly

Sved Badrul Ahsan is Executive Editor. Dhaka

across the stones.

Courier.

President lajuddin Ahmed,

ity they have indulged in.

It is a call which goes out from



LATE S. M. ALI

**DHAKA WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2006** 

### Improved corruption perception index (CPI) Very little to take comfort from

E wish we could take solace in the fact that Bangladesh has graduated to the third position in order of merit in the list of corrupt nations, according to the latest Transparency International CPI. But, as it was pointed out, the changed index does not have any statistical significance as the differences are marginal. Also, it does not mean that we have become less corrupt. In fact other nations have taken our place.

But we should not go by what others say; we did not do so in the past, nor should we do it now. Instead, we should depend on our own judgment and assessment of the issue. The fact is, corruption remains the number one problem for us, and nobody but us, who have been so grossly affected by the acute impact of it in every sphere of our lives, can vouch to the fact -- particularly of rampant corruption in the most high places. We are painfully aware of the all-pervading phenomenon that corruption has become, and more so in the last five years. Not a single institution has remained impervious to it, including the lower judiciary.

But if corruption is abhorrent, even more deserving of our condemnation is the fact that the government has done nothing to prevent its spread. Our criticism of the last government is that while it questioned the TI methodology of determining the state of corruption in a country and various data that were used to come to that conclusion, it did nothing to stem its spread, on the contrary reverse has been the case. Lack of accountability and lax financial discipline have helped it to arow.

And the ACC, whose idea had so much promise, has been made dysfunctional, and some of the actions by the erstwhile government make us wonder whether that was done deliberately to allow corruption go unchecked.

Regrettably, as far as corruption is concerned we are where we were yesterday, and will continue to be there tomorrow unless drastic measures are taken to render it the least lucrative enterprise with the worst punishment possible for those who indulge in it. Nothing less than a national crusade against corruption will help us emerge from the mire. And as our Noble laureate Prof Yunus has said, if there is one thing for the chief advisor to do it is to fight corruption, and in doing that if he can take one single case of corruption and make example out of it, it would be worthwhile. That may be the start of total elimination of corruption from Bangladesh.

## Welcome Zidane

#### His visit will provide a fillip to our football

E join all the football enthusiast of Bangladesh in welcoming Zinedine Zidane. As much as we are delighted with his visit, it is undoubtedly a big event for our footballers and football enthusiasts alike, we cannot but reflect on the poor state of the game in Bangladesh. Over the years, if anything, the standard of football in Bangladesh has gone down. To be honest it is worse than what it used to be in the 70s and the 80s. Nevertheless, we are sure that for our budding footballers the brief visit will be of immense inspiration.

Football, often described as the game of the century, has a popular following in our country. Even to this day, as a matter of fact, one must admit that cricket comes second to football in so far as its mass appeal is concerned. And we say this without meaning to take anything away from cricket.

It is also important to remember that the game could also be instrumental in providing succor to the teeming millions of ordinary people in the country who often live in a state of deprivation as far as inexpensive amusement is concerned. The game happens to be their biggest form of entertainment. There are a number of reasons behind the bad state of our football. Primarily, it is due to the fact that compared to some other games there has been comparatively less investment as such in the development of football. But lack of fund is not the only ailment; those that administer the game in Bangladesh must also share some of the blame. Football is played far less frequently at professional levels at home, and there is simply not enough exposure for our players at the international level. We suggest that the people concerned address the entire range of problems that has hampered the growth of soccer, in all earnest. What we need are the will and the commitment on the part of the organizers and the administration alike. Coming as the visit does when the state of soccer is in a shambles we hope that the organisers will also feel inspired. We wait for that day when a Bangladeshi footballer, like



SYED BADRUL AHSAN

T makes sense to suggest that a fairly good number of advisors in the caretaker adminis-

tration have not come by the responsibilities they could have handled with a fair degree of efficiency, if not with downright aplomb.

When you step back and watch the caretaker machinery at work from a distance, you have reason to think that other than Akbar Ali Khan, Sufia Rahman, and Mahbubul Alam, none of the advisors is in a position to demonstrate the skills he or she has acquired through a lifetime of education and experience

Shafi Sami ought to have been in charge of diplomacy in this transitional phase of government, for he has had a career symbolic of the competence which one associates with a nation's foreign policy establishment. Sultana Kamal should, in all

logic, have been presiding over the ministry of law; and Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury, with his impeccable military career behind him, could have made a difference at the ministry of home affairs.

That these people, all bright individuals, have been made to stay away from all the plum jobs gleaming before them is a matter of some regret. The redundancy is glaring. The president of the republic, having once surprised us by

leapfrogging across certain proviahead, tentatively and with trepidasions of the constitution to take up tion, to a good, healthy general the job of chief advisor as well, only election in January. Those unceradded to the surprise by deciding, tainties would not be so worrying in the infinity of his wisdom, to keep

away from the possibility of upsetting the electoral process.

all the important and therefore The Bangladesh Nationalist powerful ministries in his control. That truly turns him into a super-Party and its right-wing allies have man, except that in the circumadopted the queer position that stances in which the people of standing like a rock behind Chief Bangladesh find themselves at this Election Commissioner MA Aziz as point there is little of conviction in he clings to his job is a surefire way them that President lajuddin of ensuring a proper election. Why Ahmed is actually the superman the BNP and its friends should be they have been waiting for. When defending a man whose continued vou note that, you realize the import stay at the Election Commission of what the bold Oli Ahmed of the only prolongs the national agony is Liberal Democratic Party has been not hard to understand

Years ago, President Sattar had his chance

GROUND REALITIES

A thorough, clean overhaul of the civilian administration is a pre-requisite for the

survival of democracy. And let no one forget that there are all the policemen out there

who have actually and most absurdly compromised themselves through their partisan

With Justice KM Hasan gone, The health of the president and these men who were in governthe health of the country somehow ment until the other day are surely do not allow us to think that lajuddin keen about keeping a semblance of Ahmed can handle all these jobs all respectability in the face of the by himself. And if he cannot, there fourteen-party juggernaut through arises the very grim spectre of what making sure a second domino does unknown and fearsome course the not fall. That is a fine attitude to country might take should he falter. adopt. But attitudes must also The speaker of the just-dissolved come in company with morality Jatiyo Sangsad, we have been told Where is the morality here? There on good authority, has had to hold a is not much pride in defending men who have made a mess of the voter list and have then, without embar-Maybe it was his very own BNP that asked him to stay put. Maybe it rassment of any kind, hung on to was someone else, or some other their jobs despite all the public body. Whatever be the truth, the disapproval of them

assumption of near-absolute Somehow the queer has been powers by the president and the getting enmeshed with the hilaripostponement of Jamiruddin ous, and not just at the Election Sircar's trip are a pointer to the Commission. The four-party alliuncertainties we in this country try ance has been getting hopping to muddle through even as we look mad about the visit two of the

advisors made to the residence of the chief of the Awami League. Bringing their old conspiracy theories back into play, they jumped to the sordid conclusion

that Shafi Sami and Sultana Kamal were up to some mischief through "abusing" their positions in the government. Let no one be fooled by these desperate men. They know very well, without anyone having anyone to explain matters to them, that in the volatile conditions which define society and politics in Bangladesh today, it is not for caretaker advisors to drop by at a politician's home without prior and proper authorization from the larger body of advisors. And yet the disin-

formation campaign has gone on. Watch, though, that none of these former government-wallahs have seen any reason to take Justice Fazlul Hag to task over his uncalled for, and unbridled, remarks against the fourteen-party opposition. Anything that hits the Awami League or its friends hard. anything that seeks to push the secularists into a corner, is one of the finest things that can happen in politics for these elements

But such tricks may not work any more, unless there are more surprises, even matters of an ominous nature, for the country in the days and weeks ahead. But just so that we as a people are not left dazed and shattered by the dangerously unexpected, it is only proper that careful watch be kept not just on the

caretakers but also on those they have replaced in office. While we keep vigil, we expect President lajuddin Ahmed to go for swift action against the four-party partisans lying in ambush in nearly every area of administration, ready to torpedo the elections if the outcome does not look promising.

behaviour in the past five years. These are men who must be kept at a safe distance. The chief of the state-owned yet be his own man, to be tough on BSS has had the exit pointed out to him. That was a good move, but the country to the man who today is it is not enough. There are a good number of changes that yet in control of its destiny. The country remain to be put into effect. The press secretary to the president, the chief of PID, and the director those who have lately tried making a mockery of national history. The general of External Publicity are individuals who have served the four-party government to the best enced little shame in denigrating of their abilities. That is hardly any Bangabandhu's March 7 public cause, though, for us to think they can make us happy by staying on in their jobs as we prepare to see a need to be shown the door. new government take over come January. Say thank you to them, the manner of medieval conspirawish them a happy future and let tors, torn out the Proclamation of

them move on. The caretakers ought to be doing the same to the ambassador in Washington and the high commissioner in London, to the press ministers in London and Delhi and wish them a happy journey into the twilight. The requirement today is for the country to begin afresh, seeing that too much of the villainous has seeped into the nation's body politic.

A thorough, clean overhaul of the civilian administration is a prerequisite for the survival of democracy. And let no one forget that there are all the policemen out there who have actually and most absurdly compromised themselves through their partisan behaviour in the past five years. These are men

who must be kept at a safe distance, away from the possibility of upsetting the electoral process. Yes, of course the president-

cum-chief advisor has a tough job

**Europe and Islam: Impending doom?** 

A pattern, however minute in statistical terms, seems to be emerging that shows disenchanted Muslim youth finding solace in unspeakable acts of violence in the name of religion. The Muslim community has to look at itself and discover why it has become an incubator for breeding terrorists. Bland, apologetic PR such as: "Islam is a religion of peace, it is only some Muslims who are crazy" is sounding increasing hollow. Europe too needs self-introspection. While Muslim extremism must be roundly condemned, ignoring European antecedents in radicalising Muslims seems like convenient amnesia.

trying to tell the country.

planned tour abroad in abevance.

SYED S KAISER KABIR

OCE di Tenore José Carreras speaks as delectably as he sings. Commenting on the long-standing

integration is evidently too slow for comfort, and the voices demanding more effective assimilation are growing louder and strident. In the UK, celebrity endorsement for this concern has spewed

policy has largely been welcoming of immigration and mindful of the special needs of immigrant communities. True, the stench of racism had never quite disappeared from every-day life; howgroup can only be described as outrageous, --- and ironically, they seem to be all too easily outraged. Be it Danish cartoons, or severed heads of religious figures in Mozart's Indomeneo, this assemblage of zealots can be counted upon to deliver protestations with repugnant intolerance. But when Sunnis massacre Shiites on the first day of Ramzan in Iraq, this 'champion" of Muslim sensibilities is nowhere to be found

Moderate Muslims have little in common with this group of overzealous pariah. Just as the average German is not a Nazi, nor is Le

however ill-formed is becomina socially chic. Commenting on the recent Papal fiasco, Karen Armstrong notes with characteristic wisdom: "Hatred of Islam is so ubiguitous and so deeply rooted in western culture that it brings together people who are usually at daggers drawn. Neither the Danish cartoonists, who published the offensive caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad last February, nor the Christian fundamentalists who have called him a paedophile and a terrorist, would ordinarily make common cause with the Pope; yet on the subject of

misconstrued

In this charged atmosphere, the

Muslims from the zealots.

Muslims to grievous acts of vio-

lence committed in the name of

the causes that are based on the

liberal ideas of human freedom

Indeed, the world has been in a

creative turmoil ever since the

American and French revolutions.

While democracy was a creative

idea older instincts coalesced

around capitalism, more devel-

oped forms of which were the

imperialism of various great pow-

ers of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Now, there is only one overwhelm-

ing imperialism, of the US, which

The democratic idea has sur-

vived, to be sure. But it is not on

tional law and an effective world

equality and amity

religion has been regrettably subdued. Such perplexing restraint risks being interpreted as a tacit approval of barbarity.

A pattern, however minute in statistical terms, seems to be emerging that shows disenchanted Muslim youth finding solace in unspeakable acts o violence in the name of religion The Muslim community has to look at itself and discover why it has become an incubator for breeding terrorists, Bland, apologetic, PR such as: "Islam is a religion of peace, it is only some Muslims who are crazy" is sounding

were they not debilitating ones as

Zidane, will be an inspiration for others.

social tensions between the autonomous community of Catalonia and Spaniards, he recently remarked to the effect: "The more Catalan I am allowed to be, the more Spanish I shall feel."

This sentiment conceivably strikes a consentient chord with many moderate Muslims living in the West, especially Europe, A chilling headline splashed across the front-page of the International Herald Tribune (October 12) --"Europe's Tolerance for Islam is Fading." No longer restricted to the far-right elements, uneasiness about the immigrant Muslim community is rapidly engulfing the entire political spectrum. Cultural

from Prime Minister-in-waiting Gordon Brown and former foreign secretary Jack Straw. The message is clear: "Integrate, Integrate, and Integrate." In an era of the Global Citizen perhaps this attitude is a logical eventuality. Yet, is there still merit in a Carrerasian posture: "The more Muslim I am allowed to be, the more European I shall feel?'

A hybrid culture in which the core values of two communities co-exist in harmony is clearly preferable to forced assimilation if history is any guide. Indeed, guided by this observation postwar Europe has championed the concept of unity in diversity. Public

ever, that Europe has made a conscious effort to create a multicultural society is unassailable. And it is in this context that the irascibility of Europe with Muslims seems so perplexing.

Trevor Philips, the black chairman for Great Britain's Committee for Racial Equality perhaps captures the European mood: "We have allowed tolerance of diversity to harden into the effective isolation of communities." Probably this isolation became even more evident post 9/11.

Religious illiberality among a section of the Muslim community has certainly been a lethally divisive element. The conduct of this

Pen representative of the French psyche, or the British National Party nothing but a repulsive fringe-element, the moderate Muslim is not a pariah. It would be a grievous mistake to overstate

the commonality between the moderates and the zealots simply because both groups refer to themselves as Muslims, pray to the same God, and follow the same prophets.

Sadly. Europe appears to be blundering along this very line. Moreover, in doing so it appears to be attacking Islam --- a gesture that risks aggravating even the most docile of Muslims

Worse still, criticising Islam,

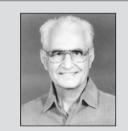
Islam they are in full agreement. increasing hollow. The answer to Islamic-Europe too needs selfextremism is not European introspection. While Muslim extremism. It is a measure-formeasure that is dangerously

extremism must be roundly condemned, ignoring European antecedents in radicalising Muslims seems like convenient amnesia.

fact is being lost that both Muslims are very much part of Moderate Muslims and native the European community. Europeans share a deep appreci-Disenfranchising them through ation of diversity, free-will, respect knee-jerk intolerance that lacks for alternate points of view, and so historical perspective will exacerforth. Moreover, an unbridgeable bate the problem of radicalisation philosophical divide on these very even further. issues disassociates moderate

Syed S Kaiser Kabir is a businessman and a Still, the reaction of moderate practicing Muslim.

# Crises in a dysfunctional order



**M B NAQVI** writes from Karach

ORTH Korea test exploded a nuclear device on Octpber 9. It is rearettable. The issue was referred to the UN again after the US, Japan, China, Russia and the two Koreas, North and South, failed to agree on what form of punishment the world community should impose on North Korea, Happily, the US has apparently abjured the military option. The UN has imposed new binding sanctions. Russia and China are opposed to new hard sanctions while others favour the US.

There is a second, and perhaps even more portentous, crisis over Iran's uranium enrichment. Iran says that what it is doing breaches no law: even the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 permits all signatories to prepare (enrich uranium)

# PLAIN WORDS

The democratic idea has survived, to be sure. But it is not on the ascendant, as it was earlier. Exigencies of power politics, and the role of imperialism, have prevented the growth of international law and an effective world order. So far all attempts to introduce rationality and equality in inter-state relationships, while managing expediencies of imperial struggles, have been frustrated by the predatory self-interest of the stronger powers.

fuel for their reactors for generating electricity. It is doing just that.

they say Iran will enrich uranium to a degree that becomes the fissile core of atomic WMDs. They just do not trust Iran's declarations that it only wants to generate electricity, and has no intention of fabricating nuclear WMDs. US President George Bush had included Iran in his famous demonology of Axis of

The Iran issue is again in the UN Security Council, also with a view to punishing it for refusing to obey what is mainly a US demand to stop enrichment of uranium. The

US, in this case also, has a six power -- the P5 plus Germany -group to persuade Iran to do as Americans wish, while it would offer incentives, including

enriched uranium, for its underconstruction Bushire power plant. The US and its friends disagree: Iran goes on asserting its right

to enrich uranium on its own soil to ensure the security of the fuel supplies for its reactors; it proposes to have many more reactors for power generation. Hence the failed six power parleys; again Russia and China are opposing tough UN Sanctions on Iran. Politically, the UN itself is on

Evil a long while ago. trial in dealing with the North Korean and Iranian crises. North Korea has crossed the red line, and, in real life, the UN can do

> little: it can only add some more sanctions. Meanwhile, Japan has imposed its own sanctions. For one thing, if Russia and China oppose both sets of UN sanctions there will, in effect, be no UN

Secondly, at least in Iran's case, the US seems likely to strike. Israeli military action may destroy Iran's enrichment facility, which may also lead to a land war. Such a war will again highlight the UN's impotence to prevent war. World opinion may write it off. Given the recent history of US-Iran relations, few can assume that the US will only take diplomatic action, as with Korea. The threat to peace is real.

What is, however, common to both crises is that the US has used the UN as an instrument to punish North Korea and Iran. The UN is punishing one through sanctions and, as for the other, may provide its cover for American or Israeli action. Iran is an oil-rich and assertive power. It cannot be pushed around. Iran has warned that any serious UN sanctions, or

war, will entail its own sanctions. and it is ready to fight if necessary. Iran can withhold its own quota of crude oil: that will probably

cause a severe depression in the developed world. In a war, Iran's capability cannot be overrated. But its location, and what military capability it seems to have shown recently, do pose a serious threat to the world's oil supplies. And it may prove to be a twenty time more difficult operation than Iraq.

As for morality and international law, the crude way that the US is using its military clout to promote its strategic and economic interests has made the UN ineffective. and international law is being subverted. The question of nuclear proliferation is perhaps the crassest example The US is hyper-active to pre-

vent proliferation of atomic weaponry. Not only does the US possess thousands of nuclear, chemical, biological and other WMDs, it refuses to do anything to implement the NPT's requirement of taking credible steps towards scrapping its own nuclear WMDs. The NPT was a compromise: the world will stay non-nuclear while the atomic powers get rid of their atomic weapons. All great powers have reneged on their promise. What moral right do they have to preach abstinence to others while

living in sin themselves. What is clear to all sane and well meaning persons is that nukes should not be in the arsenal of any civilized power, and interstate matters must be rationally and democratically tackled. The current system, despite some progress, is still based on states that fancy themselves to be above law. morality and justice.

A few rich states have immense power because of technological superiority. The stockpile is indeed so immense that the world can be destroyed perhaps 50 times over. By virtue of that, the US claims the right to so reorder the world in a way that will suit it better. But the great powers' internal differences have made the UN ineffective. This collides with ideas of human equality, freedom, and justice. These values must win.

The world is the way it is does not accept colonial responsibecause of the great powers' bilities resources, knowledge, and will to stav strong. Those with more power than wisdom or morality will the ascendant. as it was earlier not forego the benefits that are Exigencies of power politics, and theirs today. The poor and the the role of imperialism, have weak stand no chance now; they prevented the growth of internaare used, abused and exploited, and they are manipulated so that order. So far all attempts to introthey do not unite. Shouldn't this duce rationality and equality in change?

Reordering the world is a managing expediencies of impe-Herculean task, even the rich and rial struggles, have been fruspowerful US in Iraq and trated by the predatory self-Afghanistan has not succeeded interest of the stronger powers because of partial unity of local groups. Many developed coun-The hopeful experiments, the tries' citizens have shown that they League of Nations and the United are not for brutal exploitation of the Nations, have failed to deliver. weak and the poor. Global public opinion is an emergent force that Should mankind remain mired can, and should, be recruited for

in the morass of chaotic struggles between the US Imperium and smaller powers and non-state actors? Instead of wishful thinking let rational and humanity-loving people strive to evolve interna tional law further, and amend the UN to give it both democracy and teeth. How does one strive?

It requires careful articulation and going to the common people everywhere to mobilize world opinion. World opinion is an emergent force and is growing to become an antidote to brute military force, the child of all atavistic instincts, assumptions, and selfserving beliefs. Can we make reason and goodwill prevail?

MB Naqvi is a leading Pakistani columnist. inter-state relationships, while