

Why is UN Silent?

If it is an unequal war the Chechens are fighting against the Russian Federation, the latter is unquestionably locked in an unpopular war. The unpopularity of Russia's use of force since December 11, to crush Chechnya's three-year bid for independence, hasn't remained confined to the tiny area. It has spilled over.

Even allowing for a propaganda hype on both sides, there is little denying the criticism the Russian action has evoked on her home front as well as abroad. While recognising the matter as internal to Russia, Canada has expressed concern over the suffering of innocent civilians and the violation of human rights. France says her building of new ties with Russia would be contingent upon a stemming of any further deterioration in the Chechen situation. That is all we have by way of western reaction to-date.

The problem is, this is not only a no-win situation given the sentiments that run high on both sides, but is also a highly convoluted question. With each passing day, as the casualties on both sides increase, the military involvement deepens and the stakes grow higher. Extrication becomes difficult by the day. That's why the question figures as to why the international community, the UN, to be precise, or the world's only super-power, the USA, still remain silent on the issue. We are not urging of them to interfere in the matter, but to merely intercede using their persuasive powers with President Yeltsin to halt the bloody conflict. Yeltsin has called for a two-day ceasefire; obviously, much more needs to be done by him to facilitate a negotiated settlement after all that has happened.

Russia regards the Chechen resistance as 'armed banditry' and vows to restore, what it calls, constitutional legality, but the situation on the ground is boiling with 'holy war' sentiments and volunteering for suicide missions among the Chechens. This cannot be dismissed as a fundamentalist war either, because the nationalist fervour seems to be a common welding factor in the Chechen community, religious affiliations regardless. The fury of the war has led to some exodus as well, innocent people fleeing to safety outside Chechnya.

Even if Russia captures Grozny in rubble by the sheer might of weapons she will continue to face the Chechen fighters for independence in the rest of the country. If the battle for the Presidential Palace, the focal-point of Chechen resistance, is any guide then one shudders to think of the heavy casualties lying in store.

The UN must wake up to the tragic consequences of further escalation in Chechnya.

Hero's Homecoming

January 10 is marked by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's return home from nine months of captivity in a Pakistani jail. It was an event that made our victory over the marauding Pakistani forces and the political instigators in Rawalpindi even sweeter. The man who inspired the Bangalee nation to shape its own destiny could not be present during the nine months' liberation war. Yet he was the symbol of national unity and despite his absence was the guiding force behind our just but unequal fight against a superior and brutal force.

Evidently without him the victory would have been incomplete. When death did stare in his face all through his captivity in Pakistan, the architect of a new sovereign state exhibited amazing courage. No amount of intimidation or appeasement could make the man waver from the goal he set for himself. Sheikh Mujib only grows in stature if we consider his lonely confinement in a frightening and dark cell. So it was only natural that his larger-than-life image — despite his confinement — expedited the process of the country's liberation. Also natural was the fact that people of this land were one in receiving him with the hero's welcome he so eminently deserved.

In a new-born state his presence was necessary for providing the binding force at that critical time. He actually did that with aplomb. Within a very short time did the life-long crusader for parliamentary democracy transform the system of governance from the presidential form into the parliamentary type. This was enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic in 1972. Although he later on adopted a presidential system, the fact remains that for a much greater part of his active political life he was a champion of parliamentary system. This message needs to be heeded.

There is no doubt the country and its people were always in the forefront of his thought-process, a great patriot as he was. It is most unfortunate that such a major event relating Bangabandhu is not celebrated or observed nationally. By not according him the recognition he deserves, we only belittle ourselves as a nation.

Chaotic Rickshaws

Rickshaws have often come under stinging criticism. And not for nothing. But at the same time it must be added that rickshaw is the most environment friendly, 100 per cent locally produced, and a highly socially relevant means of transport. There is no denying the fact that without rickshaws life in the capital city is almost unimaginable. The transport system of the city will virtually collapse if they are withdrawn today.

The vehicle itself is not to blame entirely for this. It is the uncontrolled proliferation in their number that accounts for the deplorable state of affair. For example they are adding to their approved fleet by an ever increasing number. This newspaper brought out a story on the unapproved manufacturing of rickshaws in places of old Dhaka. Wonder of wonders, a few of the manufacturers are even unaware of a legal ban on the manufacture of rickshaws.

This lack of control at the manufacturing end certainly has its impact at the user's end. It is primarily the rickshaw owners who reap the richest harvest and the pullers and law enforcers come next in the line. The passengers pay exorbitant fares. For unlicensed rickshaws to ply on the street, laws have to be skirted at many points with active co-operation from a number of agencies. The use of the same licence number for a number of rickshaws plying in different areas is a very ingenious device. But the law enforcers ought to be smarter still to outmaneuver the tactic. How much they turn a blind eye to it deliberately and to what extent the exercise is beyond their capacity are what need to be determined first for a turn-around in the situation.

ONE of the most important factors that needs to be emphasised is the morality issue. Economic growth should go hand in hand with the stability of moral standards of the people. The root causes of criminal justice are from crime causation and essential factors responsible for man's false views that eventually leads him to committing crime are: 1) poverty, greed, hatred, delusion; 2) bad companions, crime victims, inefficient institutions; 3) vulnerable places, drugs, weapons, improper time, beloved object; 4) polluted environment, migrant forces, jobless vagrants etc and 5) triads, rickshaws, illegal immigrants, underground cadres.

World wide crime is on the increase. No less a person than the late distinguished criminologist Mr William Clifford used to say 'Crime is the price one pays for freedom and in a way that is true although it depends where one lives and with whom.' And here lies the basic importance — the urban social life has proved to be more fertile ground for immoral activities and indiscreet exposure of vices — where the so-called urban sophistication has prevented someone to interfere in other's activities knowing well that is undesirable. A simple example, a show of willingness to step in with a word of advice to children whom we see misbehaving in public and who are not supervised is more visible in small community than in urban area where this is rather interpreted otherwise.

In the backdrop of the position stated above there has been research in social defence system and some of the developing countries have set apart quite a portion of their budget for assessing the impact of technological development vis-a-vis moral degradation and to halt the degeneration of the increased disturbance in family structure. Unfortunately, in the developing countries like ours — especially in this region — not much importance has been attached to this aspect. To be specific, Bangladesh stands as a unique example where the

Strong Family Role Can Help Prevent Urban Crime and Delinquency

by Dr M Enamul Huq

As Aldous Huxley said, never before have conditions been so appropriate for the 'human beings' achievement of happiness as our present times due to the advancement of science, technology and other areas. But at the same time, to achieve this desideratum we have to overcome many obstacles, the main being crime.

unusual population boom within comparatively lesser habitable area on one hand and dire poverty and innumerable jobless vagrants on the other have posed a serious threat for normal life. But this has not drawn as much attention as it deserved from the pundits who are concerned with perspective planning and objective law-enforcement. Result is that to-day we do not have the authority of the old guards who used to lead the family as per age-old norms and practices.

The term family generally signifies a group of people including husband, wife, son, daughter and dependents including parents who are part and parcel of the smallest unit of society to be maintained by common budget which is generally earned and controlled by the head of the family. Abject poverty, shortage of accommodation, lack of facilities have nailed the solid structure of the family while, on the other hand, very few who are victims of the curse of abundance have drifted apart through loose bonds of the integrated family and to them old values do not appeal much rather they are prone to adventures and comforts, mostly baneful of course.

From the experience of a law enforcement officer, it has been noticed that in this country generally incidence of crime is caused comparatively more by the rich and the poor whereas the middle class is rather more law-abiding and respectful to the conventions and customs. To illustrate through an example, addiction to drugs is a new phenomenon in our country statistics show that wards of very well-to-do family accompanied by their

friends who are extremely poor and have nothing of their own-go for the addiction unhesitatingly. This indicates that the 'Haves' associated with the 'Have-Nots' in other words wealth and frustration mingled together to commit undesirable things. And probably in both the cases the guardians have not done much to control their dependents. And curiously enough these offenders who often show muscle power and brandish illegal weapons know that through undue influence they will be immune with their misdeeds.

Economic deprivation has led to dissatisfaction, frustration and breach of harmony and at times thereby increased discord, dispute and distrust among the very close members of the family. In some cases the head of the family has resorted to unfairness and had to surrender the noble principles of 'meeting the minimum requirements' with the introduction of garments industry thousands have been provided with the opportunity to supplement their family income. Undoubtedly this has helped innumerable families to overcome their pecuniary difficulties but this has a dark side too. The earning female member though has consolidated her position in the family but again the male guardians have some reservations about them. Not exactly corollary but to some extent this has created misunderstandings between husband and wife, because after the day's work when the husband comes back he expects the wife to serve him but the wife also deserves some rest when she comes back

after her occupation. Unfortunately, we have not yet developed the mental makeup of supplementing each other not only in income generation but also in discharging household/domestic liabilities. Besides, when both the parents are per-occupied in earning the bread, their children do not get due care and nursing, nor the family members have the scope to spend time together desirably. This has some adverse effect. Perhaps child-disease and ill-nourishment are the physical ailments while the adults get frustrated and tend to sorts of addiction which is socially unwelcome.

Incidentally, the question of 'Day Care Centre' can be linked with this episode because the services may be useful on one hand while on the other the working mother and father can concentrate better in their knowing that their kids are in safe hands in their absence.

We cannot but be aware of the environmental influence which has predominant reactions over the incumbents. To elucidate, if within a residential area some body runs pornography show or there is scope for earning easy money through smuggling and corruption here the children are bound to be influenced negatively.

Similarly, if the proponents of ideals speak high sounding words at political platforms which are not reflected in their daily lives then our younger generation has reason to question and perhaps we as a whole have no face to show before them. If we take the family as lowest unit of the society we do need to cite ex-

ample by parents first to their wards, by elders to their juniors, by the teachers to their disciples, by preachers to their followers, by leader to their supporters, otherwise all sermons are bound to be futile.

International labour migration is one of the most visible phenomenon in the Asian and Pacific region in recent years. Poverty and decrease in employment opportunities in one sector or region have led to increased migration to other sector. Besides, abundance and poverty, there are two other things which have indirectly influenced family life. First, to search for jobs elsewhere good many people have sold their belongings, paid huge amount to manpower agents and have

Unconventional criminal incidents during 1983

Table with 5 columns: Location, Cruelty to women, Abduction/Kidnap, Extortion/Terrorism, Rape/traffic, Car theft. Rows include Dhaka Metropolitan, Chittagang Metropolitan, Rajshahi Metropolitan, Dhaka Range, Chittagang Range, Khulna Range, Rajshahi Range, Barisal Range, and Padway Range.

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The Mission of Building Bridges between the Past and the Future

A Tribute by Mizanur Rahman Shelley on the 84th Anniversary of Birth of Syed Mahub Murshed

LIKE others of his generation and the one that followed them in the south Asian subcontinent, Syed Mahub Murshed lived courageously under three flags. Born as a British subject he lived to work for and see the departure of British colonial rule from the subcontinent. As a citizen of the post-1947 two-part state of Pakistan he fought with quiet dignity to establish, protect and preserve the inalienable rights of the Bengali citizens of Pakistan even as he rose, by diligence and merit, to the high position of the Chief Justice of the High Court of erstwhile East Pakistan during the sixties.

During the post liberation period, in sovereign Bangladesh of the seventies, he strived on for ensuring justice, human rights, democracy and national harmony. Retirement and failing health could not deter him from his relentless struggle for ensuring justice and equity in the secure context of a liberal, democratic society. In the final analysis Chief Justice Syed Mahub Murshed (1911-1979), an avowed spiritual and moral disciple of John Stuart Mill, was a democrat. As he himself stated with elegant simplicity, 'In my early youth, I was a Pan Islamism. I later became a socialist, until recently I used to consider myself to be a social democrat, nowadays I think of myself as (merely) a democrat — a democrat, pure and simple' (The Pakistan Monitor, September 1970).

Son of an aristocratic Muslim Bengali family, a brilliant student who entered the legal profession in the mid-thirties and was called to the Bar in England by the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn in 1939, he responded to the challenges of his time with a clear head and conscience. It was a mission fraught with countless difficulties.

The failure of the then subcontinental nationalist platform — the Congress to convince the leading Muslims of its secular character — led to emergence of what could be called Muslim nationalism and the Muslim League exploited it to the hilt. The liberal elements among the leading Muslim Bengalis tried their best to find a reasonable and practical way out. Syed Mahub Murshed was a young activist of this group. Through the All India Muslim Majlis formed during mid-forties, Murshed tried to bridge the Hindu-Muslim political chasm and challenge the dominance of the All India Muslim League. The Majlis said that the Muslims should ask for 'Pakistan' only if it became an unavoidable necessity' (Dr. Shela Sen, 'Muslim Politics').

As the time for the final parting of ways drew near, Murshed joined those who enthusiastically supported the Cabinet Mission' plan of 1946 in its last ditch effort to keep the subcontinent together. The Cabinet Mission led by Sir Stafford Cripps proposed a near-confederal sub-continent with autonomous Muslim majority groups of provinces in north-west and east of undivided India and a Hindu-majority group in the rest. It did not work. 'Indians in general wanted freedom; the Muslims wanted self-assertion. In the last days of British Raj... the struggle was three sided and the creation of Pakistan was its most extra-ordinary result' (H V Hodson, The Great Divide, London 1969, p.1).

When the partition of the South Asian subcontinent (United India) seemed inevitable during early 1947, a

group of Muslim Bengalis led by late Abul Hashim persuaded the then Premier of Bengal, HS Suhrawardy to start negotiations with leaders of Bengal Congress, Sarat Bose (brother of the legendary South Asian nationalist leader Netaji Subhus Chandra Bose) and Kiran Shankar Roy to explore the possibility of a sovereign independent Bengal, outside both post-British-Raj India and Pakistan. Syed Mahub Murshed and his father-in-law A K M Zakaria, a Congressite and Mayor of Calcutta in 1936, actively participated in these processes which were defeated because of intransigence of the Congress, particularly its leaders Nehru and Patel. The majority of Bengali Hindu leaders also did not support the idea and it was dropped. The dream that Murshed shared

variant of the Northern Indian hybrid, Hindustani — as the lingua-franca of Pakistan.

Bengalis of East Pakistan, on the other hand, identified their territory closely with South and South-East Asia. They were proud of their millennia old language and culture. They successfully resisted all efforts of the predominantly non-Bengali ruling elite to impose Urdu as the sole state language of pre-1971 Pakistan. As a relatively young member of the Dhaka High Court bar, Syed Mahub Murshed was drawn into the Language Movement of East Bengal. He thus participated effectively in the successful process spear-headed by the Bengali youth to gain recognition for Bangla as one of the two state languages of pre-1971 Pakistan. He also participated actively

in the more comprehensive and long-term process of ensuring the political and economic rights of the Bengalis in Pakistan through a radical transformation of political and economic power within the state. Alongwith Late Abul Mansur Ahmed, noted political leader, thinker and writer, who served in the fifties as a central Cabinet Minister and acting Prime Minister of Pakistan, Murshed helped draft in 1954 the 21-point manifesto for autonomy of East Bengal. The 21-point programme constituted the platform of the United Front Coalition of the autonomist Bengali political forces which routed the ruling Muslim League in the 1954 provincial elections.

Despite the restlessness of his times, Murshed was faithful to the tectonic trends of time. Law. In the words of the noted lawyer Sved Ishiaq Ahmed, Murshed's elevation to the length of High Court marked the beginning of 'an era in judicial annals'. As Chief Justice of erstwhile East Pakistan (1964-67) Murshed faced his times with the raw courage of a romantic idealist. Those were the hey-days of a successful military dictator, Ayub Khan. His rule was garnished by apparently constitutional trappings. The boldness of Murshed's judgements during these days became legends of judicial history. These judgements encompassed the so-called Ministers' Case (which made President Ayub Khan change the constitutional provisions relating to Ministers), the Mahmood case, the Dhaka University Convocation 1962 case and the Basic Democracies case. These proved that his commitment and loyalty to the Rule of Law was unflinching. He realized the essence of justice: that laws were for human beings and not vice versa. That realization of the timeless truth antedated and followed his years in the elevated height of the bench of the High and Supreme Courts. He remained faithful to life and, therefore, its essence, human beings in the final analysis. Syed Mahub Murshed was a people's man. That was why even as early as 1961 when it was neither convenient nor fashionable, he took the lead in organizing the centenary of the birth of the Bengali Noble Laureate Rabindranath Tagore. He steadfastly stood by the essential cause of the people. That was why even after his resignation as the Chief Justice of erstwhile East Pakistan he played an active and leading role in the mass uprising against autocracy in 1969 and forcefully advocated the case for meaningfully establishing



That loyalty to profound principles and his benighted people remained intact during his exacting and splendid years in the bench of the Dhaka High Court (1955 — November 16, 1967). Even after the imposition of Martial Law in Pakistan in 1958, Justice Murshed worked coolly and resolutely to ensure the dispensation of justice according to the Rule of

Bengali rights at the Round Table Conference convened by the Pakistani dictator, Ayub Khan during the lag end of his regime.

In post-liberation Bangladesh he was instrumental in projecting the voice of reason and justice until his demise in 1979. After the emergence of Bangladesh he was the first prominent public figure who pleaded for a general amnesty for all political prisoners. He also urged the then government to start immediate negotiations for the repatriation of the Bangladeshi Bengalis stranded in Pakistan since December 1971.

A learned man, Murshed knew his history well. He, therefore, never failed to identify and work with his own people, the Bengalis who in 1971, saw some fulfillment of their abiding dream of the reemergence of a sovereign Bengali state in the form of linguistically and culturally homogeneous Bangladesh. Syed Mahub Murshed was certainly the epitome of a nationalist citizen of Bangladesh. He was more. He was at once a participant in and an observer and analyst of life as it was lived during his times. He was at ease with several languages, besides his mother tongue Bangla, including English, Urdu, Persian and Arabic. A gifted writer, he wrote on cultural and social themes with matchless elegance. He had the privilege of publishing, as Editor of the Dhaka English monthly 'Concept', several of his thought-provoking and superbly-written articles during 1964-67.

He could look beyond the mist of contemporary times. He was also a 'cultural cosmopolitan' which Bengalis of Bangladesh, thanks to their luck of being citizens of a sovereign country in an emerging global village, are in the process of becoming. He was a pioneer in many fields as in this one. Looking beyond immediate parameters, Murshed saw promise and possibilities in sub-continental regional cooperation. That is why he wrote in 1976, 'The countries and the peoples of the subcontinent should draw closer and work together. They have so much in common. They have to overcome the prejudices that keep them apart. The nations of the subcontinent have to unitedly work together in order to approximate common goals. Unify in our part of the world, however, has to grow from within. It cannot be imposed by any external agent'.

That enduring vision seems to have been partly realized in the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), initiated by the late President of Zaur Rahman of Bangladesh. Chief Justice Syed Mahub Murshed was ahead of his times — in the forties, fifties, sixties and even in the seventies when he breathed his last. That is perhaps the tragedy of those who live faithfully with their times and yet have visions that transcend their own age.

To the Editor...

Road accidents

Sir, Road accidents are on the increase and there seems to be no end to it. There has already been so many complaints and suggestions as well to effect road accidents but hardly anyone seem to be bothered about it.

I refer here to the sad and tragic road accident on 19th December, '94, where a family of three died on the spot, when they were returning home from Zia International Airport, after seeing off one of their relatives. Who knew it would be their last day? Imagine how sad and pathetic the incident is. I suppose, road accidents will keep on occurring until and unless if this jink spells on some one big and influential but let us not hope so.

Many people have suggested many ways to check road accidents and most reasonable ones are: a) stop plying of trucks during the day time, b) reintroduce inter city speed-limit, which should not exceed 30 mph, c) take steps to minimise the flow of rickshaws, d) make efforts to impose strict traffic rules and its meticulous supervision, e) take stern steps and impose heavy punishment and fine on the defaulters.

Mass education

Sir, The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Alumni Association of Bangladesh has recently arranged a seminar on 'Education and Sustainable Development' at a local hotel in Dhaka. Education Minister Barrister Jamiruddin Sirca attended the function as the chief guest while Hironao Suzuki, Resident Representative of JICA was present as the special guest.

The keynote paper titled 'Education and Sustainable Development: The Global Imperatives and the Bangladesh Perspective' was presented by Dr Mizanur Rahman Shelley, Chairman Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB) and Senior Adviser (Education), JICA, Bangladesh. Terming 'education' as the engine of sustainable development, Dr Shelley stated that the economics with higher levels of education and less policy distortions regarding free market displayed a yearly growth rate of 3.8 per cent. However, 'The countries that had both higher levels of education and fewer distortions — grew at 5.5 per cent a year'. (Ref: World Development Report, 1991).

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