

## Shocking

We had no idea of this man-made visitation and the imprint it leaves for life on the face of the victim. We must thank here the Nari-Pakkho for doing for the first time something that has shocked the nation into an awareness of the reality of an acid-hurt young woman's life.

Society and, as its conscience, law cannot but wish death unto those that perpetrate a crime like throwing acid on young women's face. The victim, if she survives the attack, suffers death agony over the myriad moments of the rest of her life. Perhaps the culprits, for justice's sake, should have been condemned to the same fate as the victims. However, let us rather take death punishment as the society's expression of revulsion and we could not agree more with the law that the acid-thrower must die.

There will then be social pressure against this. A sustained mass campaign against the crime may also help. For the media part of such a campaign, The Daily Star volunteers to support it wholly.

After the instantaneous shock comes first the thought that can they be not restored to their own true visages, by the blessings of modern scientific progress? Shouldn't the services of the best plastic surgeons in the world be procured for them? Let the government float a fund for this and give it its own mite and call upon the public to participate. The Daily Star would contribute to this fund-building campaign and its appropriate utilisation in all manners possible.

More importantly, all of us have to be emotionally and practically accommodative to help these scarred, traumatised people resume their life picked to pieces for no fault of their own. We suggest affirmative action for these unfortunate people in case of employment both in government and private sectors.

While viewing death penalty as a definite deterrent we also feel it has to be backed by a strong and expansive campaign at all levels of the society to prevent the recurrence of acid throwing incidents.

## BOI's Way with Words

The Board of Investment chief Anisul Huq Chowdhury has held out an assurance that he would launch a 'search and destroy operation' against hurdles faced by foreign private capital investors. Catchy phrases are signs of at best wordy dynamism that one in a significantly focal-point position could willy-nilly fall for in an attempt to parachute out of an aerial ordeal he feels he has been put through. The upbeat news is that the sky for the first time in a recognisable sense is getting starry to be the proverbial 'limit' for foreign investment to flow into Bangladesh. Many owners of foreign-origin manufacturing units in the textiles, leather and agro-based sectors, on being expressly keen to relocate their establishments in Bangladesh, are tripping over spikes of all sorts before taking a plunge.

The BOI chairman being aware of his limitations has zeroed in on the doables: elimination of customs clearance problems, setting up of a separate immigration desk at the airport to handle prospective investors and quickening the processes of land acquisition, connections for utility services and incorporation of business firms in the Joint Stock Company. Several agencies are involved in the grist to the mill, but given our national track-record on coordination, the safe and effective option to take would be for the BOI chief's investment decisions to be binding on the agencies.

Three basic road-blocks to rapid foreign investment, namely low level of electricity generation, inadequate and mutually contradictory investment laws allowing for sent-seeking to boot, and the occasional political gyrations inducing second thoughts in foreign investors need to be removed urgently. The Law Commission's updating of the financial laws and the implementation of MOUs for foreign capital investment in the energy sector can only be delayed further to the detriment of our vital economic interests. All our yells from the house-top that our incentives package is the best in the world will be a waste of breath so long as we fail to give it the legal cover it needs. The political ambience can certainly be pro-investment without losing out on the tug-of-war element of it.

## PM's Concern

There is enough food for thought sprouting out of what PM Sheikh Hasina has asked the six education board chairmen, including the two for technical and madrasah studies, to do by way of bettering their performances.

The PM's suggested anti-dote for cheating at the examinations through question paper leakages etc. is a radical improvement in the moral texture of the learning environment. This has to be made possible in a congenial academic atmosphere to be maintained consciously by people in educational administration and teaching who ought to be setting examples of ethical conduct for the rest. Parental control needs an early reinstatement. The aversion to reading text-books occurs from uninteresting curriculum or ill-written books. These aspects cry out for attention, too.

The PM's emphasis on technical and vocational education at the secondary and higher secondary levels is fully endorsed by us. We are already a back-runner in the race for creating a pool of technically skilled manpower. Besides, a pragmatic off-loading of pupils on the heels of the HSC stage will help us cut back on the meaningless rushes for admission to the institutions of higher learning.

For a start, let's identify and phase out the schools and madrasahs living off government grants by faking entitlements through the submission of fraudulent documents. This could save us some money to set up a string of vocational institutes.

# Why the Economy is Not Moving?

*There has been no surge in demand for goods and services. A sure sign of rapidly rising consumption expenditure strongly points out to a growing economy. This has not happened — even one year after the hartal days are over.*

**I**N spite of the best of intention of the government, the economy is not moving up the ladder of growth — there is no surge or swell of economic activities, visible in terms of the enhanced level of transactions at the marketplace. It was the expectation, at least of the party in power as well as the non-political segment of the private sector that political stability have at last been established and a spurt in economic growth of a significantly increased magnitude could be expected. Since the party in power is also committed to liberal economic policies with full incentives to direct foreign investment (DFI), the growth expectations were reasonable. However, after 10 months of the new government in power, the economy is yet to move at the desirable rate of growth.

Therefore why the economy is not moving? There has been no surge in demand for goods and services. A sure sign of rapidly rising consumption expenditure strongly points out to a growing economy. This has not happened — even one year after the hartal days are over. Rising domestic demand would inevitably lead to rising domestic investment.

Given this scenario, DFI cannot be far behind. And, it is

through reduced farm level investment. It must be noted that agriculture and related services still accounts for the major portion of the GDP. Strangely enough, farm level prices do not constitute a significant factor, according to government's view — since there has been no mention of it or any attempt to initiate a bold and vigorous agriculture price support programme.

On the other hand, the government has drained away Tk. 500 crores as fertiliser subsidy since it did not lend to any growth inducing impact.

Surely enough, it enabled higher levels of fertiliser use and consequent additional production. But fertiliser is a purchased or cash input and only adequate price of paddy would enable the farmers to realise the necessary returns and recoup the cost of fertiliser. Therefore, the huge fertiliser subsidy resulted in a lost opportunity to invest Tk. 500 crores worth of public revenue in a much more worthwhile growth inducing initiative; while, its impact was whittled away due to depressed farm gate prices of paddy.

The notorious stock market debacle had a tremendous negative impact which also explains a great deal of why the economy

is not moving at the desirable speed. It is estimated that around 300,000 savers lost their interest earnings from fixed deposits or postponed other investment decisions, particularly housing construction and invested the funds during the bull-run of the stock market. Most of them lost heavily. The few who gained did not reinvest either in portfolio investment or directly productive enterprises. A large part of the funds, it is alleged, moved abroad.

Thus the debacle acted not only as a huge leakage from the investment trough, the rising hopes of a fast emerging market and the confidence bestowed on the upswing of prices — all crashed and it was, so the least, a monumental disaster. The worst still is the continued downward retreat of share prices. The key issue is — how the confidence can be restored? The economy can move up when investment decisions are based on solid price earning ratios. The postponed investment decisions was a regressive movement for the economy and we are still suffering from it.

The expectation that the business would respond positively to the restoration of a stable, trouble free, democratic order was far-fetched.

The hartal politics was over but who knows when it would come back. Now it is the turn of the other party to come up in full measure. Above all, the business class, particularly those who made it to the top are the products of the last two decades when Awami League had no hand in business promotion. In fact, many of them have serious misgivings since they might have suffered from the early 1970's nationalisation phase.

There were therefore lingering suspicions. The private sector as a whole was not fully ing down to the neck. He was once an employee of Karachi Development Authority but later went into business but with little success and in the process made many friends, many of them in high positions, because of his frank and amiable behaviour. Above all, he was helpful to all he met selflessly.

I knew Khoka for a long time and perhaps influenced his thought for championing the cause of science and technology for the development of Bangladesh.

During the last few years, Khoka fought relentlessly for the development of Khulna Division and wanted the resources generated in the Division to be ploughed back. He pioneered the movement for the construction of 'Rupsa Bridge' and placed a list of development plans for Khulna for consideration of the authorities. These included the construction of a refinery near Khulna, improvement of port facilities of Chalna and a dual-purpose nuclear power station for desalination and electric power.

The people of Khulna owe him a lot for his continuous struggle to improve their lot by way of organizing meetings, poster campaign, lobbying, influencing political leaders and even a hunger-strike. If the people of Khulna and relevant authorities would accelerate their efforts for a more prosperous Khulna Division, his soul will rest in peace. On behalf of those who knew him, I wish to record my heartfelt condolences to members of his bereaved family.

Dr Anwar Hossain  
Energy Adviser  
Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies  
Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209



## Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

# Israeli Politics in Turmoil Netanyahu Not Indicted, but Not Exonerated Either

*The political situation in Israel remains destabilised as opposition has gone to the High Court on appeal with the prayer for turning down Attorney General's decision not to indict Netanyahu. Netanyahu remains shakily defiant.*

**N**ETANYAHU seemed to have made a mess of peace and politics in Israel in the quickest possible time — only 11 months in the office. He showed contempt to Oslo peace agreement, defied international opinion and finally turned deaf ear to US advice against settlement while ordering construction of houses for Israelis as Har-Homa, a hill top in East Jerusalem that belongs to Palestinians. He was also fully aware of what would be the obvious reaction of Palestinians on his decision and resultant loss of lives; he however, could not care less.

His defiant attitude and the latest loaded and extremely clumsy decision to dole out favour to buy political support caused "political earthquake" in Israel. He appointed a political crony, Roni Bar-On as Israel's Attorney General under an alleged deal that Bar-On would bring to an end the corruption trial that Shas Party leader Aryeh Deri was facing in return for Shas Party's political support in the cabinet and in the Knesset. Israeli Television (Channel-1) reported that Deri assured Netanyahu that if Bar-On was appointed as Attorney

General his party would support Netanyahu's agreement with Arafat to pull out of Hebron. Roni Bar-On's appointment created uproar in Israel's political circles as he was considered unqualified for the post and he had to resign after 12 hours. Israeli TV's story on the episode led to police investigation for 12 weeks resulting in a 995-page report that recommended indictment of Justice Minister, Netanyahu's top political aide and Aryeh Deri, Shas Party leaders. One report said, police recommended indictment of Netanyahu but another report said, police did not specifically recommend but said, Netanyahu "did some puzzling things" in the matter and left the issue of indictment of Netanyahu to the State Attorney, Ms Arbel.

State Attorney Ms Arbel and Attorney General Rubinstein examined long police report and pondered over it for a couple of days — and on Sunday, April 20, Attorney General announced his decision not to indict Netanyahu saying that "police recommendations to indict him were based on insufficient evidence". After weighing the evidence we have concluded that we do not have enough

proof to charge the Prime Minister. Attorney General, however, said that "Prime Minister's conduct has been bewildering; doubts and suspicion remain. There were doubts about motives and testimony," he added. He also talked about the "black box" which was still in hand. Despite all doubts, suspicion, black box, etc., Attorney General decided to close Prime Minister's file. This seemed somewhat surprising. When he himself talked about the "black box" which, once in hand, could provide real proof towards Netanyahu's involvement or innocence in the matter, the discussion not to pursue Netanyahu's case indeed closed that option. It was also puzzling that nothing was known about Roni Bar-On's nomination or candidature — nobody could say how his candidature came up.

However, Deri kept on insisting as the reports indicate that Netanyahu must live up to his commitments which means Netanyahu gave Deri some commitment on this appointment. This also indicates that it was Deri who initiated Bar-On's candidature — may be verbally and accordingly only Netanyahu would know it as nothing written was available.

The US may not lend any support to Netanyahu as he



## Spotlight on Middle East

Muslehuddin Ahmad

Probably this is what Attorney General meant when he talked about the "black box". Therefore, unless this "black box" mystery was solved, the closure of Netanyahu's file seemed premature. It is also true that unless definite proof was on record there could not be an indictment. The only option could have been to wait and continue the search for the "black box". Of course, this would have created more turmoil in Israeli political situation including desertion of coalition partners leading to Netanyahu's fall.

In any case, the political situation in Israel remains destabilised as opposition has gone to the High Court on appeal with the prayer for turning down Attorney General's decision not to indict Netanyahu. Netanyahu remains shakily defiant. His once gleaming glossy face looked somewhat pale in the press conference following Attorney General's announcement; his voice sounded subdued. He said his position was vindicated though he admitted that mistakes were committed. One still does not know whether that mistake bordered a criminal act. He blamed the opposition who, he added, "pumped up the charges

openly showed disrespect to the wishes of the US Administration on Har-Homa housing issue and brought the peace process to the brink of collapse. Undoubtedly, as over 90 per cent of Israelis are in favour of peace, with Labour Party in power the implementation of the peace agreements would have hopefully gone well and the negotiations of Jerusalem would have started on schedule. In any case, Har-Homa disaster that brought peace process to a halt and cost so many lives would not have occurred.

Palestinian Authority has rightly termed Netanyahu-Deri episode as Israel's internal affair and kept off. There was also lull in the Intifada-like demonstrations against Har-Homa settlement. Though security cooperation between Palestinian and Israeli security forces is still in abeyance, the Palestinians appear to be ready to engage in peace negotiations. It is a good sign. Peace momentum, even though painfully slow, must be maintained. The process has just begun. The territories lost in six days in 1967 war may take another six years to regain and that also may not be in full; the losses are hardly recovered in full.

# Are We Serious about Eradicating Violence?

by Gemini Wahhaj

**A**RTICLE 3 of the National Policy for the Advancement of Women, declared on March 8, states clearly, "Eradicate all kinds of violence against women". But how? Through police action and protection? If Yasmeen and Sheema Chowdhury's stories are to serve as any kinds of examples of police behaviour, then police protection is the last solution to a woman's safety.

The police force is an overwhelmingly male tight-knit community, which has been armed and mandated to exert its force over the female population. At a Daily Star conference on the subject, Sigma Huda said, "When a woman is raped, they think it is the right of the male over the female because of male power." Moushumi Nasser says in her article *Puberty and Problems*, A man... considers his relationship with a female to be a game of power and obedience (Star, April 11, 1997). What this means is that, a gender insensitive, male police force is likely to be more of an aide to 'violence against women' than a deterrent. In fact, to put it very strongly, having giving these men the legal and administrative power over the female population, we have ensured that women should be unsafe and at the mercy of the police. If women had been given guns and knives and allowed to use these with impunity against their aggressors, then they would have been much safer.

So what is the solution? There are two — gender sensitivity training of the police force and recruitment of female police. In fact, the national policy states this as one of the strategies to eliminate violence: "Ensure the participation of women in the judicial system

and at all levels of police force in order to implement laws properly."

Women have not been recruited in the police force since 1990, after a gazette order against this. Not having women in the police force has had very clear implications for women — it has meant that women have essentially been disempowered in society, or in other words, that only the male have the mandate to protect women. Given that most acts of violence against women are committed by men, this is laughable. In fact, we may argue that the only reason women are unsafe, the only reason there is any kind of violence against women, is that women have not been allowed to fight for their own security, either through self-protection or through appointment of female law enforcers. The objection against women police was that women cannot undergo the rigorous training for police. But such a reason is unacceptable, and serves merely as an excuse to keep women weak and at the mercy and protection of men.

The government of Bangladesh recognises that such a situation is no longer acceptable, and The Ministry of Home Affairs has already repealed the order to allow recruitment of female police.

However, this does not solve any immediate problems for the women of Bangladesh. Recruitment of female staff in the police will probably be slow and inadequate, and heavily subject to budgetary constraints. Meanwhile, women continue to

be subject to every kind of violence at the hands of men, including domestic violence, rape, sexual harassment, and trafficking, so visible and widespread that it has become an accepted norm of this society. (718 violence cases were reported in 1997 as collected by Aino Shalish Kendra, while 2,983 complaints were lodged with the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs). There is an urgent and immediate need to make drastic changes in the structure of the police force to stop this situation. Clearly, having enough women police, armed and empowered to intervene on behalf of women, is the only solution.

So what are the costs involved? Let us say that we want to place women in every thana in the country. There are about 460 thanas in the country. Following the model of the Women's Investigation Cell in Mirpur thana, let us say we want to place two women Sub-inspectors (SIs), two Assistant SIs, and two women constables in every thana. Calculating basic pay and other benefits, an SI gets a salary equal to Tk 4,000, and a constable Tk 2,000. Therefore, recruitment of a female force in each thana will cost us Tk 9.2 million per month (assuming Tk 4,000 for each ASI as well). Translating this number to a five — year budget, the government would need about Tk. 552 million (\$ 13.1 million). If we add logistics (arms, a car and a phone line), and ring up the total, we have Tk 267.7 million (\$ 6.3 million). Add training, worth about Tk

84.4 million (\$2 million), and that brings us to a grand total of \$ 21.4 million.

As the government prepares its annual development budget, this is an allocation it should bear in mind, if it is at all sincere about making real changes in the situation of women. And if all the donors working in the WID and gender sector would like to make a real, meaningful and drastic response in their programmes to 'eradicate violence against women', then here is their answer — commit US\$ 21.4 million to truly allow women to eradicate their own violence.

Many people feel that recruitment of women in the police is too simplistic a solution. After all, women police are themselves women, with their own safety and provisions at stake. Can we justify such 'token gestures' as having women police, when we may be endangering the situation of these women by assigning them to remote and dangerous thanas? The only acceptable response to such concerns is that women must be recruited at all costs and no cause for the safety of women should ever stand in the way of placing them in positions of power where they should have been centuries ago. If women need additional provisions, then these must be provided. If safety is a concern, then this concern must be dealt with. But these problems cannot be an excuse to keep women out of the police force.

The Women's Investigation Cell at Mirpur thana provides some insights into what may be needed. The cell has made a significant difference in the number of complaints lodged, and the quality of services provided by the thana. However, the women police in the cell have no arms and no logistic facilities (they borrow the thana car and use an extension of the thana phone). They also complain that links with medico-forensic facilities are very weak and get in the way of speedy investigations. Also, the Cell, effective as it is, raises a real question about the marginalisation of women police. While such Cells should be installed in every thana, women police should continue to be visible in the mainstream force, and not assigned to these adjunct cells only (which means, again, that more recruitment of more women police is the only answer).

## To the Editor...

Denis Compton

Sir, I saw Denis Compton batting at the Eden Gardens Calcutta in the late-'30s and early-'40s. He was as entertaining as Mustaque Ali; sparkling with the bat — and the crowd.

Later, Denis returned to Calcutta with an English international football team to play some exhibition matches in the region. I recall his gem of a goal, on the half-volley, from the corner of the field (he was playing left out).

A great sportsman — who etched himself into the spectator's memory with his charismatic performances — and the darling of the crowd. Great Denis — Sir!

The 'Sir' after the name is an ironical reference/remind that Denis was denied the Knighthood. Most unsporting!

But not surprising, as Australia only just, for the first time, had a cricketer — Bradman — on the postage stamp.

When we praise our sons and daughters, we develop dysentric vocabulary in this overflooded land of bile humour.

A Mauvaz  
Dhaka

## Condolence for an unknown warrior

Sir, I would like to express my deep sorrow on the sad demise of Mr Enamul Huq of Mollahat, Bagerhat, who died in his village home on April 17 last after suffering from liver cirrhosis for a long time. Mr Enamul Huq, who was 71 years of age, was popularly known as 'Khoka' amongst his friends and colleagues and 'Nana' among the University students and was thin, dark with an overgrowth of white hair flow-