

Fujimori's Visit

Even in this age of wondrous facility in communication and the touted shrinking of the world due to its effect, there come occasions which remind how many miles we still have to go to consider the planet as a truly global village. Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori's two-day visit which concludes today tends to substantiate the observation in more than one ways.

In fact, Peru is a test case of our relative ignorance about the whole continent of South America. Apart from the sublime grace of their football and the obsessive love of their people for it that we glimpse in the infrequent assembly of the World Cup, not to forget coffee and their share of socio-economic problems, the Latin continent has largely been an unknown commodity to the people of this part of the world.

From that point of view, the visit of the Peruvian president has the potential to go down in the annals as a milestone in any future effort to expand the horizon of our practical acquaintance with South America.

Peru shares with Bangladesh many of the problems faced by the developing countries. Apart from the socio-economic considerations, the land of the Incas has a history of military interventions, something we have not been unfamiliar with in these parts of the world.

A leading fishing nation, Peru has extraordinary rich mineral resources, including gold, silver, copper, iron ore, phosphates and manganese. But a large part of its commercial potential has been restricted by its trading with only a few countries like the US, Japan and Germany. Bangladesh's entrepreneurial prospect also suffers from lack of exploratory initiative. With the opportunity for enhancing South-South cooperation presenting itself through this visit, Bangladesh should look forward to exploring whatever possibilities are there for its goods in the Peruvian market.

We deem the trip of the Peruvian president to this region as a trail-blazing enterprise in international relations. And, it heartens us a great deal that he came here having been drawn to the pioneering nursery for micro-credit. We have to, as Mr Fujimori pertinently observed, chart a new course of relationship to meet the challenges of the Twenty-first Century.

Significant Verdict

The great Iranian people, repository of the wisdom of an ancient civilisation continuing to this day without a break, has chosen moderation and reform and a liberal mould for its governance. In a historic water-shed national election to the office of the all-powerful president, the 33 million electorate have overwhelmingly voted for Mohammad Khatami, the liberal among the ruling clerics, who is also a former minister of culture. The election has gained in significance because at the same time it has rejected the sitting speaker of the Majlis who is known to be representing the wishes and policies of those in power for the last 28 years. It was wise for the Iranian people to have risen against the royal Pahlevi despotism in 1969. And it is wise again to prefer an improvement in time on the 28-year old political as well as social straitjacket. It is important to note that the vote does signify more than just a political choice. Indeed, it is far more a signal for social change, for a change to a more tolerant society.

It is being said that women and young people came out strongly for Khatami. So much so that he garnered almost two votes in three. There are very plain reasons to believe this. But these votes alone couldn't have won the day for Khatami. These could be deciders adding to a solid half and half support from older males. Clearly there is a message here.

One, however, should not be persuaded to expect in a surge of ill-advised enthusiasm that there will soon be radical change in either the domestic or foreign performance of the Iranian government. It would be best perhaps to view the fantastic election outcome as a means by which the Iranian Revolution of 1969 is coming of age with a touch of realism.

The Messianic Nazrul

This nation would have immeasurably been benefited if Nazrul's were a truly living presence in the society on his 98th birthday anniversary, observed yesterday throughout the nation like some ritual long bereft of life and purpose. Nazrul is not nowadays invoked to inspire bringing into the open the incipient rebel that lives in many a soul — against injustice and oppression — social, political, and religio-communal. But these are problems, even of today.

Nazrul was the only among the great artists — not many writers can be so called — mixing activism with creative exertion. A lifelong rebel, he was fast transforming himself into a Marxist revolutionary — when tragedy struck. There were many among our poets coming later who subscribed to Marxist ideas of society and of the individual's imperatives there, like, say, Subhash Mukhopadhyaya. But Nazrul was the first to break ground and his was no conversion from one dogma to another. It is life that taught him straight and taught him to rebel and make a humanist religion of that. His would have the most effective leadership in our struggle against our own in-built adversaries of greed, power-mongering and other vices of individual aggrandisement — had he been living with unimpaired faculties.

As in the case of Rabindranath, Nazrul too lives through his music. It is sad that here also the long and evil hand of intolerance abetted by conspiracy has forcibly limited the cultivation and propagation of his songs numbering more than four thousand and delightfully diverse in the numerous genres these have been culled and sieved from. But the narrow confines of some ghazal and Islamic members, two hundred at best, cannot for long be foisted on the music-lovers who would go out to discover the whole and unmaimed Nazrul by and by. It is the same way society will discover a kind of messiah in Nazrul. Necessity will mother that discovery.

Eliminating Terrorism from Our National Life

by Dr Khandakar Qudrat-I Elahi

To break the civil laws, the criminals, terrorists in particular, must have the backing of the forces that can control or defy the power of the state.

WE all may not know a dictionary definition of terrorism, but we all surely do know its true nature and meaning. Terrorism is everywhere in our society: workplace, marketplace, streets and educational institutions, to mention a few. It has made our daily lives unbearable and extremely frustrating and our future hopeless and precarious. In jobs and businesses, we can not accomplish our goals; so, our personal lives are in despair and desolation. We cannot give proper education to our children; so, they are in despair and desolation too, which often make them desperate. We must, therefore, eliminate terrorism from our national lives in order to materialise our dreams and aspirations, and create a healthy society for our future generations.

In the midst of all our despair and desolation, we may find some sign of hope as the present government is promising to eliminate terrorism from our society. Personally I have profound respect and confidence on our Home Minister Major (Retired) Rafiqul Islam. By his role in our War of Liberation, he has proved that he has selfless love for freedom. It is this quality that makes a two-footed animal a human.

Terrorism is a slippery term that is used advantageously by different people in order to serve their specific purposes. For example, during the War of Liberation, the Pakistani army was a terrorist group to all who were in favour of freedom. But the freedom fighters, nicknamed Indian infiltrators, were terrorists to those who did not want freedom.

For our purpose, however, terrorism may be defined as an act perpetrated by an organised group through the explicit threat or use of violence with the objective of producing some kind of political result. This definition identifies the nature of terrorist acts as having the following elements: i) all terrorist acts are crime as they involve the explicit threat or use of violence; ii) all terrorist activities have some kind of political purpose; and iii) all terrorist acts are perpetrated by some organised group.

The hallmark of terrorism, states the Encyclopedia of Sociology, is that all terrorist activities are intended to produce some kind of physiological damage. This means several things. First, the actual victims and the target audience of terrorism may not be the same people and therefore, the connection between the actual victims and the target audience may be remote. Second, the identity of the victims may be secondary or even irrelevant to the terrorists. Finally, it is the motive that differentiates terrorism from all other crimes: the motive of terrorism is political.

Since terrorism is a crime, the terrorists must be violating the laws of the society. What are these societal laws?

John Locke, the theoretical architect of modern democracy, says that there are three groups of laws regulating our lives in the society. First, there are divine laws which determine the duty and sin, right and wrong, and good and evil in our personal lives. The second group of laws are those of opinions or reputation. These are by far the greatest in number and are enforced by the mere fact that humans cherish their reputation and do not desire the condemnation of their companions and friends. Finally, what Locke calls the civil laws are those which we all generally understand as laws. These laws are created by the state machinery and determine crime and innocence of the members of the society.

The forces executing the laws are different for the three groups. There are no formal forces or authorities behind the first and the second groups of laws. Personal beliefs and values in religions are the power enforcing the divine laws, while the fear of social censure

and/or the desire for social recognition are the motivations enforcing the second group of laws. The civil laws are, however, enforced by the forces and the authorities of the state.

We obey laws because disobeying or breaking laws invites punishments. The nature of punishments, however, differs from one group of laws to another because the nature of authority and forces executing them are different. Punishments inflicted for disobeying divine laws are the deprivation from divine blessings and/or severe physical tortures in the lives after death. Social disapproval and banishment are the punishments for not respecting the second group of laws. Finally, the state can perpetrate a horrendous number of physical and financial punishments including death sentences for breaking civil laws.

The first and foremost characteristic required in people to break any or all the three groups of laws is the lack of conscience reflecting the dearth of ethical and moral values. The threat of divine wrath that may befall in this and other world cannot prevent those people from doing wrong things and/or harming other fellow humans who have little ethical and moral values. They also care very little about social condemnation and/or personal reputation. But the lack of conscience is not enough to break the civil laws as they are enforced by the power and authorities of the state. To break the civil laws, the criminals, terrorists in particular, must have the backing of the forces that can control or defy the power of the state.

The terrorists, individually or collectively, are not capable of defying the power and forces of the state, and the resistances of their victims. Because all terrorist acts are guided by political motives, the source of ter-

rorists' power is the political parties. Thus, it is our political parties, both in and outside the government, that are behind all sorts of terrorism in our society. In educational institutions, terrorist acts are being perpetrated by students' organisations which are directly controlled by political parties. Labour unions are often found connected with terrorist activities occurring in the mills and industries. A careful investigation should reveal that our political parties and/or their leaders some way or other are involved with all sorts of terrorism in our society.

The deduction reached here is not any new information. In fact, people of all walks of lives know quite well the connection of our politicians with the terrorists in our society. But what we perhaps do not realise are the alarming implications and grave consequences of the linkage between terrorism and political parties. First, this writer argues that the only people capable of perpetuating terrorist activities are those who are deficient in moral values. The politicians need the help of these people to achieve their political goals. Thus, our political parties are assembling and organising the people in our society who are lacking conscience.

Second, our political parties are encouraging and propagating terrorism in our society and therefore, destroying all our hopes of transforming our country into a developed and honourable society. To understand this, we should have some knowledge of the Economic Theory of Crime, pioneered by Gary Becker. The theory assumes that a criminal, like all of us, is trying to maximise his earnings by investing his time. But unlike us, his choice problem involves an optimal allocation of time among competing legitimate and illegitimate ac-

tivities rewarding pecuniary and non-pecuniary returns and bearing consequences. In making the choice, the criminals evaluate the relative costs and benefits available to them. The costs, called deterrence variables, are the probabilities of apprehension, conviction and punishment, and the marginal returns on competing illegal and legal activities as well as the risk of unemployment and initial wealth. The entry into a specific criminal activity is shown to be related inversely to its own deterrence variables and directly to the differential returns it provides.

There may be free entry in the terrorism industry (to use economists' terminology), but the exit is not certainly free. A person may join the terrorist group by his own free will, but he can not quit the group by his own volition, because of the likelihood of severe penalties including death sentence, not only from the state authority, but also from his fellow terrorists. Once a person becomes terrorist, voluntarily or involuntarily, may have to pass the rest of his life as a terrorist.

Both the assumption and the prediction of the theory are acutely relevant and immensely important in our situation. The terrorists (criminals in general), the theory says, are ordinary people like us trying to maximise their incomes. Their choice to commit crime is being made easier by reducing the deterrence variables and increasing the expected incomes in the face of massive unemployment and low returns from legal activities. Additionally, faced by the choice between becoming unemployed or accepting lower income and amassing large wealth at the risk of fewer and lower penalties for committing crimes, people are being encouraged to join the army of terrorists. Finally, the terror-

ists usually stick to their groups, as quitting the group is very risky and therefore, the prospects of returning to normal lives are slim.

We now know what is required to eliminate terrorism from our society: the first and foremost requirement is to uproot the source of power of the terrorists. This in turn requires that all formal linkages between the political parties and the non-political organisations be cleaved. Without doing this, terrorism can not be exterminated from our society. What can be done at best is forcing the terrorists to go for a hibernation.

Will our political parties come forward to sever their relations with the non-political organisations as an act of performing their responsibilities to the nation? Will our political organisations as an act of performing their responsibilities to the nation? Will our politicians sever all their relations and contacts with the terrorists out of their conscience and awareness of their responsibilities and duties to the nation? I very much doubt it. When in power, our politicians use not only the forces of these non-political organisations, but also the forces of the state to stay in the power. (The Awami League promises to make a difference by not using the state forces to its advantage. But it would really make no difference as the system and the forces creating terrorism remain intact. It is just a matter of time for the terrorists to wake up. Politicians in opposition use these non-political organisations to pave their way for the state power. Thus, we can hardly expect that our political parties would voluntarily come forward to cleave their linkages with the non-political organisations. It is the public pressure that will make them do it. What we have always known: the mother does not feed the baby unless it cries, is true universally.

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Another Gandhi Declares an Interest

It is only a small move, but Sonia Gandhi's announcement that she is formally joining India's Congress Party has set the nation talking. A Gemini News Service correspondent wonders whether this means a new lease of life for the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty! D K Joshi writes from New Delhi



Indian dynasty: Rajiv, Indira (bottom left), Sonia and Maneka Gandhi

the political road. She accepted the advice of the then Indian President, Ramaswamy Venkatarman, and of the prime minister of the day, Narasimha Rao, not to join politics and thereby jeopardise her own and her children's security.

Both her mother-in-law and husband were assassinated by terrorists, the former by separatist Sikhs and the latter by Sri Lankan Tamil militants.

Although remaining a private person, she has enjoyed considerable respect and facilities as an inheritor of the Nehru-Gandhi mantle.

As the widow of an assassinated premier, she receives as much security as the current Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral. Her daughter, Priyanka, who recently married, has been provided with a tastefully furnished government bungalow and high-level security.

Congress leaders have made it a habit to visit Sonia's famous address — 10 Janpath — to take her guidance whenever they faced a political problem. Rao, who she backed as prime minister, consulted her on all important matters, including the composition of his cabinet.

Only towards the latter part of his term of office did Rao attempt to marginalise her. This was the subject of much speculation and has now been confirmed by Mani Shankar Aiyar, a former diplomat and a close associate of Rajiv.

By joining politics, Sonia has opened herself to attacks fair or foul from Congress critics. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party has already started claiming that a

white-skinned foreigner is taking over the country's oldest political organisation, which led the fight against British rule.

An opinion poll conducted for the English-language daily Pioneer showed that about 60 per cent of middle-aged voters felt Congress would gain from her political participation, but about 45 per cent of younger voters disagreed.

The Nehru-Gandhi clan may still rule the psyche of a majority of Congress members, but 66 per cent of poll respondents said they did not believe that the dynasty alone had the ability to govern effectively.

Several reasons have been put forward for the timing of her decision. They include: \* Completion of the Central Bureau of Investigation's inquiry into an allegedly corrupt arms deal during her husband's prime ministership. A decision is pending, and she is said to be determined to clear his name

OPINION

How the Mullahs (and Associated Press) Got Bangladesh into Trouble in the USA

Under the caption "Ramadan Fury" on February 8, "The Times" of Central Jersey, with a daily circulation of 100,000, published a half-page Associated Press photograph of Bangladeshis burning US and Israeli flags in Dhaka.

Underneath the photograph it was written: "A group of Muslim extremists burn Israeli and American flags to mark the final day of Ramadan in Dhaka, Bangladesh, yesterday. They shouted slogans against the United States and Israel. During the holy month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from food, smoking and sex between dawn and dusk as an act of sacrifice and purifying ritual. There was no accompanying article in the Nation/World section on Feb 8 could be forgiven for concluding that the Bangladeshis Muslims celebrate the end of the holy month of fasting, Ramadan, by burning American and Israeli flags. However, The Times should not be forgiven for publishing it. The Times should have deliberated carefully whether the inflammatory message conveyed by the photograph reflected reality. Since The Times did not, it is the duty of American Muslims of Bangladeshi origin, such as myself, to put the record straight.

Publishing this photo was as preposterous as publishing photographs of a cross-burning with the innuendo that is how white Americans celebrate Christmas!

I wonder if the photograph was staged for the benefit of the Associated Press photographer. I say this because very few people in Bangladesh — certainly not the ignorant types depicted in the photograph — know what an Israeli flag looks like, because the two countries do not have diplomatic relations. The picture was published in The Times on the day the local Muslims, many of them subscribers, were celebrating the end of Ramadan, one of Islam's two holiest days, making it seem as if there was a deliberate attempt to put a damper on the celebrations!

The photograph totally misrepresents how the people and the government of Bangladesh feel about the United States. Bangladeshis regard the Americans with the highest esteem.

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed

is a lesson to be learned here. It fell upon the writer to defend Bangladesh. The following letter by me was published by The Times on March 3.

A reader perusing The Times' half-page photograph (with no accompanying article) in the Nation/World section on Feb 8 could be forgiven for concluding that the Bangladeshis Muslims celebrate the end of the holy month of fasting, Ramadan, by burning American and Israeli flags. However, The Times should not be forgiven for publishing it. The Times should have deliberated carefully whether the inflammatory message conveyed by the photograph reflected reality. Since The Times did not, it is the duty of American Muslims of Bangladeshi origin, such as myself, to put the record straight.

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and wants to ensure that Congress is totally committed to achieving that aim.

\* She feels free following her daughter's marriage.

\* She has a continuing interest in the rejuvenation of Congress because the patronage she wields through the Rajiv Gandhi Trust and other organisations, depends on Congress' position in Indian politics, and she has no faith in existing Congress leaders.

\* She has become tired of "remote control" and wants the thrill of occupying the driver's seat.

\* She was afraid of being marginalised by a Congress apparently becoming weaker by the day. As a party member, she could at least lead a faction and protect her position.

If she does play an active political role, she will have a tough task, even with the party goodwill she undoubtedly commands. The verdict of C R Irani, editor-in-chief of the English daily, The Statesman: "Sonia's last gamble — it will fail."

D K JOSHI is a freelance journalist who formerly worked for the Bombay Free Press Journal.

To the Editor...

Save the soil

Sir, The small piece of arable land (16 decimals per head) cultivated by our farmers is on the verge of depletion due to lack of proper conservation and faulty fertiliser management, which has affected overall national production of crops with deterioration of quality, taste, flavour, etc. Our agricultural and soil scientists seem to be quite indifferent on this vital issue. They know the problems but except suggesting the measures they have nothing to do. They never bother to implement the measures to protect the soil from gradual depletion. According to verses of "Kakstar", pseudonym of a retired chief agricultural information officer, "Matti" should be honoured like a "Mother". Farmers who till the soil are helpless to improve its fertility by preventing depletion, for which the following factors are responsible:

For want of organic manure farmers are to apply only chemical fertiliser.

Due to non-availability of all the major fertilisers at the time of application, farmers are compelled to use only urea, supply of which is controlled and monitored by the government. Thus unbalanced uses of fertilisers affect the crops yield, its quality and soil fertility.

After privatisation of fertiliser trade, 160-year-old and outdated SSP fertiliser has been extensively used all over the country irrespective of soil zones. This fertiliser is a substitute of TSP and contains some elements which are causing serious damage to soil of some

zones. Fertiliser is a vast trade sector where about Tk 1500 crore is involved for marketing about 26 lakh tons of different types of fertilisers. Unfortunately, there is no official body to look after its quality and to monitor its yearly procurement and distribution except those of urea, resulting scarcity and high prices of other fertilisers which debar the farmers to apply these in their lands.

In absence of any administration, quality control mechanism and legislation, market is flooded with numerous spurious and adulterated fertilisers under different brand-names. But none is there to take any punitive measures against those corrupt producers. Such fertilisers are causing damage to soil to a great extent.

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Heal thyself

Sir, It may not be wise to push an idea before its time has come. The politicians have to do their homework and win over public opinion, before pushing on with their pet projects. The implications were pointed out in one of the opinions (May 6).

There are instances wherein both the previous and the present regimes have bulldozed their way with sensitive policy decisions, caring a hoot for the sounding board. This is because the parliamentary system will take time to build up, but the

builders are being interrupted by usurpers to the political throne.

Politicians, heal thyself first. First, the uazoo, then, the namaz. The doa comes later. Some political pundits start with the doa first that is like putting the rickshaw before the demon truck!

Political activities in this part of the world is based on a sort of political Brownian movement. We have to develop a core of political system analysts. Politics here is ruled by the heart and led by the head of the party. The logistics are ignored. The politicians have to cut down on the systems loss. Loss produces heat as a waste product.

A Zabr  
Dhaka

Nothing but cricket

Sir, It's a great success for us to win the ICC Trophy. In the ICC trophy championship twenty countries including the USA participated. Most of them are very very rich, both in terms of money and power. But now we have cricket. After the liberation the American Foreign Minister told that Bangladesh was a bottomless basket. Now I want remind him — "We have nothing, but cricket. Do you have?"

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