entrance of her residence, Allah is

DHAKA WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 14, 2001

LATES, M. ALI

# Proliferating small arms

Act before the polls

HE heavy influx of small and light weapons into the country virtually leaves no place for anyone to hide. That is the impression one derives from the outcome of a seminar held in the city on Monday. We begin by thanking the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BHSS), South Asia Partnership (SAP), Bangladesh and the Canadian High Commission in Dhaka for making the colloquium possible at an appropriate time. Grave dangers are posed to our civic and political lives by the existing caches of arms and ammunition within the country, not to speak of those in the pipeline, given the continual trafficking of illegal weapons through our porous borders with India and Myanmar.

If previously weapons had found their way into the country surreptitiously there are reasons to believe that it is now an open secret, the level of demand inside the country practically determining the rate of supply. With all kinds of differences at the personal, business-related and political levels sought to be settled at the gun-point weapons are in heavy demand all round. The fact that as many as 80 terrorist syndicates are operating in the country, including 28 in Dhaka city alone explains why there is such a huge appetite for acquisition of weapons.

Here is a set of recommendations we would like to spell out for checkmating proliferation of small arms: first, the ruling party must demonstrably discourage musclemen or terrorists who lay claim to their patronisation; secondly, this should be reciprocated by the opposition political parties; thirdly, with the national elections approaching, it will be in the common interest of political parties to cooperate with the next caretaker government in a massive arms recovery drive the latter should carry out before the polls; and fourthly, a greater vigil needs to be mounted along the borders in concert with the authorities in our neighbourhood and appropriate international surveillance groups to combat arms smuggling. Simultaneously, the law enforcement agencies will have to be better trained and materially much more equipped to cope with the situation, albeit aided by realistic and effective gun laws.

The bottomline, however, is: either we muster bipartisan political will to de-criminalise politics or choose to perish.

### Nigerian set free

Reform the prison system

HE Nigerian national, Ochendo Goddaya, has found his freedom after an inexplicably long detention at the Dhaka Central Jail for nearly six years. A High Court Division Bench issued a suo moto Rule last week after Goddaya's case was highlighted in a front page report by this newspaper. The Daily Star had disclosed that after being implicated in an alleged drugs smuggling case with an American teenager in 1992, Goddaya had been acquitted in July 1993. He was subsequently charged and sentenced to two months imprisonment for travelling on an invalid passport. After serving his sentence, he continued to be detained indefinitely in prison on flimsy legal grounds.

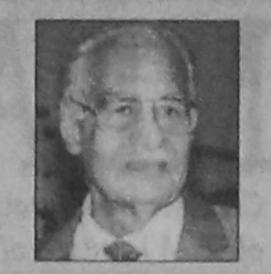
That such a gross violation of human rights could have been perpetuated in such a callous manner is simply repugnant to our sensibilities. But for interventions by the media and the NGO Ain O Salish Kendra, which filed a writ on his behalf, and the High Court's immediate intervention, the Nigerian could have languished in custody for an unknown period of time.

The case must serve as a warning that the system has been dangerously undermined. The Nigerian could not have been exploited in such a blatant and sustained manner without the existence of a cancerous level of indifference, callousness and disregard for law.

There had been other similar cases of systemic abuse that the media highlighted, leading to suo moto action by the High Court. There may be other cases as yet unexposed.

The implication that interventions of this nature have become necessary for justice to be done in this country is damaging not only for the nation's psyche, but also to its image outside. We call for a full inquiry into this case and urge the authorities to initiate a thorough reform of the prison system, establishing that accountability would form an integral part of authoritative privilege, at all levels.

# Outside shadows over Dhaka



KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delhi

was in Bangladesh when the news of the Gujarat earthquake reached Dhaka. Sympathy oozed its way through a wilderness of needs and troubles in which Bangladesh has lived since its inception. Newspapers ran the disaster story on frontpages for several days and many people spoke or merely shook my hand to share grief.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who heads the ruling Awami League, and Opposition leader Khaleda Zia, president of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), exuded genuine sorrow. Sheikh Hasina told me that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had asked her on the two MPs of our party." The government response, keeping in view the Bangladesh resources, has been generous. Even the BNP has sent saris and foodstuff. Very rarely are Hasina and Khaleda on the same wavelength. The Gujarat tragedy made them echo similar sympathetic notes. Otherwise, they seldom join hands even at the time of worst disaster within Bangladesh. The set talking to Hasina and Khaleda sepaof coteries surrounding them sees to rately 1 found them fearing a large-

have points of difference because the two stand for different things. verges on pathological hatred.

The Gujarat earthquake was the nature-made calamity. But I see the man-made disaster building up in Bangladesh and hitting it later in the year in the shape of elecitons to the one-chamber Sangsad (parliament). I could see the signs: amassing of weapons, recurring violations of law and order and tempers flying

it that the two remain apart. They scale violence before and during the anti-liberation elements and fundaelection. But both seemed prepared to live with it as if they had no other But their dislike for each other option. Why couldn't they meet to settle the rules of the game?

Hasina said she offered to resign last year so as to meet the opposition's demand for fresh elections. Khaleda said that they did not press the demand because her party was participating in the deliberations of parliamentary standing committees ern wing of Pakistan, Hasina and in a way cooperating with the defended the draconian legislation government. However, the main without batting an eyelid. It reason for not pressing agitations by Fundamentalism is thickening the BNP is the people's exaspera-

mentalists. "Their supporters are trying to uproot democracy from Bangladesh," Hasina said. "I had to legislate the Public Safety Act (PSA) to stall violence." (The act allows police to detain anyone for months

before laying charges formally.) A product of Bangladesh freedom movement, which was based on the right to differ from the westsounded as if she did not care about adverse reaction. She explained how

have only one political party and one newspaper in the country would evoke criticism anywhere in the world because it amounted to negating democracy, the ideal for which he sacrificed his life. Why should anyone be gagged on that point, supporters or opponents of

Bangladesh freedom? There are no anti-liberation forces," Khaleda told me emphatically. "Sheikh Mujib himself declared amnesty and so all are equal." Khaleda claimed that she had more freedom fighters on her side than the Awami League. She

written in bold Arabic words. Till recently she donned a headgear perhaps to placate fundamentalists. There is, however, no doubt that the liberals tend to prefer her to Khaleda because they fear the old atmosphere of anti-liberation and communalism to revist them will the return of the BNP. "I want one more term," Hasina told me. "Then I will be sure that democracy in my country is on a firm footing." What she probably means, among other things, is that the sentence against the killers of Mujib would have been carried out by that time because their cases are still pending in the Appellate court. Khaleda does not support them if they are the 'real killers.' But it is taken for granted that they would be released once the BNP came to power.

Khaleda was at pains to explain to me that her criticism of the Ganges Water Treaty or the Chittagong Hill Tract agreement was aimed at the Awami League government, not of India. Even when she repeated the charge that the guns were coming from India, she watered it down by saying the Naxalites were doing so, not the men in New Delhi. She does not want to efface her anti-India image.

She may be honestly wanting election in Bangladesh to be fought on merits and demerits of programmes and policies of her party and the Awami League's. But her links with the pro-Pakistan elements are openly discussed. have a nagging feeling that shadow of both Pakistan and India may darken even the brightest spots of both parties. The real issues may not come to the fore. But are there any which are devoid of pulls from New Delhi and Islamabad?

## BETWEEN THE LINES

The Awami League and the BNP put the blame on each other for the eerie atmosphere in the country. While talking to Hasina and Khaleda separately I found them fearing a large-scale violence before and during the election. But both seemed prepared to live with it as if they had no other option. Why couldn't they meet to settle the rules of the game?

ago. A policeman was its victim in a come on the streets. hartal against the court's ban on as if the society was a hostage to the phone: Aap kab aiyenge (when will two parties, which were set on the must do something; probably send great tragedy where you knew the end and still you went towards it relentlessly. Leading men and women in different professions are conscious of it. Still, they feel helpless. The question they ask is: How much more toll can the situation in which they are trapped take? The Awami League and the BNP put the blame on each other for the eerie atmosphere in the country. While

day by day. Fanaticism claimed the tion. It found them tired of hartals life of three communists a few days and processions and reluctant to

The real danger which has farwas, edicts by Islamic clerics. I felt emerged after a pause in demonstrations is that the cadres of both parties have been arming them- is reprehensible. There is no doubt polity. The BNP has given credence you come)? Khaleda Zia said: "We way to destruction. It was like the selves for some time. They have she must have become a prisoner to to this belief in two ways: one, by been even settling scores through the authoritarian way of thinking. violence. There are too many illicit Her critics have suffered the most guns and every college hostel is a from the PSA. Another questionable mini-arsenal. Most responsibility measure introduced by her is that no can be put on the two organisations person can pass "insulting remark" of fundamentalists, the Jamaat-e- against Bangabandhu Sheikh Islami and the Islami Oikya Jote. Both Hasina and Khelada allege that amounting to "disrespect" either in the 'outsiders' are sending arms. writing or verbally. Being founder of Hasina did not name Pakistan but made it obvious when she said that respect and he does. But it has to be the old forces opposed to the birth of from heart. It cannot be imposed. Bangladesh were instigating the For example, the steps he took to campaign only after the Haj. At the

the detention measure had helped her maintain peace. Maybe, the opposition drove her to the wall. Maybe, the anti-liberation elements and fundamentalists tired her out. Whatever the reason, the legislation Mujib-ur-Rahman or any comment Bangladesh, he should command

may say so but the general impression is that the BNP has given cover to all those who did not participate in the freedom struggle against Pakistan and who did not like Bangladesh to be a non-communal joining hands with General Ershad, not by any stretch of imagination from among liberators and, two, by having a common front with Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Oikya Jote. The Awami League is free from such a taint. It is bound to gain if the vote is cast for liberation and against fundamentalism. Still when it comes to the Muslim sentiment, Hasina too goes quite far to appease it. She says she will begin her poll

## All bare in this hammam

Ardeshir Cowasjee writes from Karachi

S there any objective non-party person in Pakistan who will deny that both Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, their cohorts, their governments were corrupt to the core and collectively responsible for the robbery and plunder of this country and its people?

I will say nothing about the judiciary as I stand accused of having committed contempt of court. I have asked Chief Justice of Pakistan Irshad Hassan Khan to hear my case before I or my lawyers die and am anxiously awaiting a summons to Islamabad.

When Benazir was dismissed for the first time in 1990 President Ghulam Ishaq Khan filed six references against her alleging corruption and misconduct. None of these were decided during Nawaz's first tenure (1990-93). So, when Benazir came back for her second round she naturally had herself acquitted on all charges. The country lost; the people lost.

In her second round, Benazir and her husband discovered a new source of income inspection companies. Six cover companies were named and used: Capricorn Trading, Dargal Associated, Mariston Securities, Mariston Business, Nassam Incorporated, Bomer Finance. On September 8, 1997, the Swiss Federal Office for Police Matters, Berne, informed our government that sufficient evidence had been found to justify their writing to four banks informing them to block the accounts of "accused persons Bhutto Benazir, exprime minister, Zardari Asif Ali, husband of Madame Bhutto, Bhutto Nusat Begum."

1996 for the second time, charged with corruption and malpractices, and Nawaz came in for his second bout with the nation one thing he did do was to manage in 1999 to in time, he had nothing to gain but

healthier locations?

have a high court convict both all to lose. And now, he stands collec-Benazir and Asif. Asif is in prison whilst Benazir has embarked on a world lecture tour, posing to be as pure as the proverbial driven snow. Both have appealed to the Supreme Court against their conviction and this appeal is to be heard at the end of this month.

Now, at this moment in time, a 'spook' emerges. As is the wont of his profession, a deputy director of the Intelligence Bureau writes to the President of Pakistan on January 29 and sends him a bunch of tapes of bugged conversations. The spook writes on IB-Lahore letterhead, so one should presume he wrote from Lahore. The letter and the transcripts of the tapes are leaked to and

tively responsible and guilty, together with the other members of Nawaz's cabinet, for the crimes and wrongdoings perpetrated by the government between the years 1997

But it must be remembered that as a law minister he had every right to speak to the country's judges and advise them to adhere to the prevailing laws when hearing cases of public importance. To attack him on that score is ridiculous, particularly when the attack is based upon bugged recordings made unlawfully, recordings that so easily could have been doctored to suit the circumstances. If the Ehtesab Act provides that cases be heard on a day-to-day printed by The Sunday Times, basis and decided within 60 days,

The 50-page Report details the grimy monetary dealings of seven notorious wheeler-dealers. The Republic of Pakistan has the proud privilege of having one of their own on this august list. The list: Raoul Salinas, former Mexican government official, brother of former president of Mexico; Asif Ali Zardari, former Pakistani government official and legislator, husband of former prime minister of Pakistan; El Hadj Omar Bongo, president of Gabon; Abacha Sons: Mohammad, Ibrahim and Abba Abbacha, sons of General Sani Abacha, former military leader of Nigeria.

Under the sub-title "The Facts", it is written of Asif Zardari: "The second case history involves Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of Benazir

Bhutto, former prime minister of

Bhutto and Mr Zardari stole over \$1 billion from the country."

Listed are details of Zardari's relationship with Citibank which began in October 1994 "through the services of Kamran Amouzegar, a private banker at Citibank private bank in Switzerland, and Jens Schlegelmilch, a Swiss lawyer who was the Bhutto family's attorney in Europe and close personal friend for more than twenty years. Schlegelmilch was invited and came to Karachi for Benazir and Asif's wedding in 1987 and has paid several visits since then.

The relationships between the account holders, banks, depositors, kickbackers and cover cocerns is highly complicated and can only be sorted out by a careful reading of the opened. Citibank records show that one \$5 million deposit was made on October 5, 1994, and another was made on October 6, 1994. The source of both deposits was A.R.Y. International Exchange, a company owned by Abdul Razzak Yaqub, a Pakistani gold bullion trader living in Dubai .....

"The Zardari case history raises

issues involving due diligence,

secrecy and public figure accounts. The Zardari case history begins with the Citibank Dubai branch's failure to identify the true beneficial owner of the M.S. Capricorn Trading account. As a result, the account officer in Dubai performed due diligence on an individual who had no relationship to the account being opened. In Switzerland, Citibank officials opened three private bank accounts despite evidence of impropriety on the part of Mr. Zardari. In an interview with Subcommittee staff, Citigroup Co-chair John Reed informed the Subcommittee staff that he had been advised by Citibank officials in preparation for a trip to Pakistan in February 1994. that there were troubling accusations concerning corruption surrounding Mr. Zardari, that he should stay away from him, and that he was not a man with whom the bank wanted to be associated. Yet one year later, the private bank opened three accounts for Mr. Zardari in Switzerland, Mr. Reed told the Subcommittee staff that when he learned of the Zardari accounts he thought the account officer must have been 'an idiot'."

If this government does not do

If this government does not do whatever needs to be done, however correctly or obliquely, to disqualify and debar every man and woman who held elected office from 1988 to 1999 -- all collectively responsible for the present state of the nation -- from henceforth holding any elected office ever again, history will hold it responsible for the accelerated disintegration of what is left of this country.

London, on Feb 4. But the spook is in London. How did he get there? Who pays for his keep? Would it be reasonable to suspect that the entire episode has a high fishy smell?

I hold no brief for Spook Rahim or his associates or his felons-in-arms. I write for my old friend, barrister and senior counsel, Khalid Anwer. Our friendship managed to survive the period he spent as law minister in the second Nawaz Sharif government, for when he accepted the position I knew that it would not be too long before he once again landed with his feet back on terra firma. For Khalid's knowledge, intelligence and ethics, I have noth-When Benazir was thrown out in ing but respect. He will not admit to having misjudged Nawaz and made a mistake in joining him, though he surely now realizes what a monumental blunder it was. At that point

and if a judge procrastinates when dealing with a government case, it is the law minister's duty to advise him to get going.

In this world of information technology the crimes of Benazir and her husband are widely known. For those interested in the topic, I suggest they switch on their computers, get on to the Internet, click and www.levin.senate.gov/issues/psire port2htm, retrieve and read a US Senate document headed "Minority Staff Report for Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations Hearing on Private Banking and Money Laundering: A Case Study of Opportunities and Vulnerabilities" dated November 9, 1999. I particularly recommend that our judges, our NAB men, and our official prosecutors download and study this

Pakistan. Ms Bhutto was elected prime minister in 1988, dismissed by the President of Pakistan in August 1990 for alleged corruption and inability to maintain law and order, elected prime minister once again in October 1993, and dismissed by the President again in November 1996. At various times, Mr Zardari served as senator, environment minister and minister for investments in the Bhutto government. In between the two Bhutto administrations, he was incarcerated in 1990 and 1991 on charges of corruption; the charges were eventually dropped. During Ms Bhutto's second term there were increasing allegations of corruption in her government and a major target of those allegations was Mr Zardari. It has been reported that the government of Pakistan claims that Ms

Report. Hereunder a few excerpts: "The staff invited Ms. Bhutto to

provide additional information on the M.S. Capricorn Trading accounts, but she has not yet done

"During the period 1994 to 1997, Citibank opened and maintained three private bank accounts in Switzerland and a consumer account in Dubai for three corporations under Mr. Zardari's control. There are allegations that some of these accounts were used to disguise \$10 million in kickbacks for a gold importing contract to Pakistan

"Citibank told the Subcommittee staff that, once opened, only three deposits were made into the M.S. Capricorn Trading account in Dubai. Two deposits, totaling \$10 million were made into the account almost immediately after it was

whatever needs to be done, however correctly or obliquely, to disqualify and debar every man and woman who held elected office from 1988 to 1999-- all collectively responsible for the present state of the nation -from henceforth holding any elected office ever again, history will hold it responsible for the accelerated disintegration of what is left of this country.

## TO THE

#### Tributes to Tawfiq Aziz Khan

I express my great shock and grief at the sad and untimely passing away of a leading journalist and great sports personality of our country. It is an irreparable loss for The Daily Star family. I would like to extend my heartfelt sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

Aziz Amirul Uttara, Dhaka.

I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the management and staff of The Daily Star on the demise of Tawfiq Aziz Khan, Executive Editor of your well circulated daily, who was a personal friend of mine.

He was sedate, with versatile qualities in full measure and in my view, he attained the stature of a personality in the arena of journalism in Bangladesh.

His sincerity of purpose, dedication, loyalty and devotion to his professional responsibility should be remembered. Let us pray to Allah that his soul may rest in eternal peace.

Mohammed Idris Dhaka

III

He has passed away, bravely escaping from the ravages of cancer that had attacked his body and mind. Maybe, he is at peace. At least, he is

free from the pain. From far away, I remember the kindred spirit in him, always loving, giving and caring for all those around him. His presence of mind, puns, and sense of humor delighted us endlessly. He never hesitated to lend a helping hand to anyone and was a shadow of kindness in our lives. His life touched each and all. Both Kaka and Kaki were two souls who generated happiness and laughter around them. My sympathy to Kaki and the family. All of us have lost a good man. I bid our Tawfiq Kaka a fond farewell.

Farzana H. Anwar (Kanak) Virginia, U.S.A.

### Havinghercake

At a meeting with Islamic religious leaders Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina maintained that her party was "the real friend of Islam and (is) doing everything possible for the development and in spreading this great religion". She cited several instances of how her party and government has striven to reach the teachings of Islam to the people. One is surprised at these remarks coming from a leader who professes to uphold secular values and concepts and whose party proclaims secularism as one of the four principles of the state. The PM is proving to be a bundle of contradictions. She wants to have her cake and eat it too.

Robert Kader Chittagong



Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.

Next door to open drain!



PHOTO: Aziz Amirul, Uttara Make-shift tea stalls have sprouted like mushrooms everywhere, flouting RAJUK's rules. Besides disturbing the peace of residential areas, the stalls are open to health hazards, with unsuspecting clients being exposed to food that could be contaminated. Open drains, polluted with toxins, pose an obvious health risk. Would the city authorities clean up the drains and move the stalls to designated and

Too much to ask?

An English saying holds that, "No kitchen is big enough for two women". I would like to update it by saying that no country is big enough for two women! For about 10 years now, we the common citizens of the country are living in turmoil, turbulence, watching the tampering and tarnishing of the truth for the benefit

of a few corrupt politicians. People ask for nothing more than a respite from these politicians. Is it too much to ask for?

**SMHyder** Dhaka

### Price check

Thanks for making your 10th. Anniversary Issue (January 30, 2001) a thick and memorable one with so many useful articles to preserve and cherish. Above all, thanks for making it available at the same price as on five days of the week. Perhaps this will induce others not to tax readers' pockets. As it is, the price of a news paper is much too high in our country, compared to the SAARC region, never mind other countries.

Mazhar Hag Gulshan, Dhaka

Dhaka

### **Smoking ads**

I'm inspired to learn through your newspaper that India has banned tobacco advertisement and urge the concerned authority here to do the same. We would welcome more articles in your Focus page about all forms of air pollution in Dhaka. This would encourage the authorities to take steps to minimize the hazard. Dr. Lailun Nahar

#### Back to the future If India, Pakistan and Bangladesh

were one country, it would be an unbeatable combination. There would be no need to fight in Kashmir. Hindus and Muslims could live side by side in harmony, friendly competition and endless disagree-

The wealth of this country would. be incredible. With the Himalayas to the north, and no real enemies to be spied across a border, the economic might of this vast intelligence would solve all the problems of poverty and caste division, making the country the major force in this century.

The disaster in Gujarat reminds us that this multiplicity of cultures is mixed inexorably between Hindu and Muslim. The subcontinent is littered with abandoned ancient cities. It is time for a new monument, a new center that binds together India, Pakistan and even Bangladesh into a logical and cohesive whole that will ride forward on the crest of the wave of the future. secure in its history and confident of its future, the most diverse country on the planet that would, like the United States, benefit from its vast differences and its mighty numbers.

Let the earthquake that crushed so many people become the catalyst to bind India, Pakistan and Bangladesh together. The guns will grow silent; the rhetoric will be laced with more humour, the people will grow rich in mind, spirit and commerce and the planet will watch in wonder.

James Weisman Massachussetts USA