

## Eid-e-Miladunnabi

### A living legacy

PROPHET Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) whose life and works have been spoken of in glowing terms by great thinkers and social reformers remains a beacon of hope for a troubled mankind. It was George Bernard Shaw who called him the "saviour of humanity" in an early 20th Century setting with a hindsight of the prophet's deeds fourteen hundred years ago.

The prophet of Islam disciplined the Arab Bohemians, steeped in dark-age superstitions, into a community of people with an ennobling set of spiritual ethos to guide them through their day-to-day material existence. That itself could be a life-time achievement worthy of tributes, even for a messiah, let alone the rapid growth of Islam into one of the largest religions in the world, of which he was the moving force, the revered architect.

But Prophet Muhammad (SM)'s philosophical influence upon human affairs went beyond the Islamic domain, something that has been acknowledged on all hands over the ages. He was truly a messenger of peace, tolerance, equality, justice and fair-play in human relations, between individuals, communities and nations. He would not preach a single virtue that he did not practise himself.

It is time the rigidity of opinions we are experiencing today gave way to a flexible understanding and accommodation of each other's point of view. That way belligerence will be replaced by a disposition towards peaceful co-existence.

## Deliberate ploy to disrupt religious equanimity

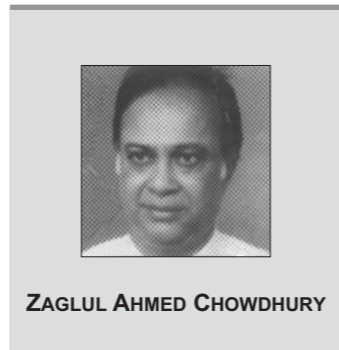
### Trace out masterminds, punish them

THE latest in the recent spate of powerful bomb blasts at public places across the country has had us benumbed with disbelief. The monstrous act of cowardice has woken us up to a dreadful possibility that has hitherto been our worst fear: a sinister circle is at work to destabilise the religious equanimity people in this part of the world have so carefully nurtured and taken pride in over the years. The demons in the guise of human must have had a perverse pleasure at the sight of dead bodies in a pool of blood, the cry for help of the injured and the momentary speechlessness of scores who escaped unhurt. They want the horrific murders and mutilations permanently imprinted on the minds of those who have seen, and read and heard of the incident, and see these gradually breed inter-ethnic and inter-religious mistrust and malice. However, they would be sorely mistaken if they believed such acts of cowardice could result in religious intolerance and communal conflicts. It would never happen, not in this country. People have always come closer after such dastardly attacks on religious, cultural and political gatherings. They have identified themselves with the victims, decried the incidents and demanded stern action against the perpetrators. The same has been the case this time around, too.

The most unfortunate part, however, is that despite the collective condemnation and strong demand for arrest, trial and punishment of the perpetrators, criminals in most such cases have slipped through the loopholes of law, created by the inefficiency and, at times, insincerity of law enforcers. Police and its intelligence and investigation wings have for the most part let us down. We do not have to go that long back in time to find where they failed. Take the case of Ramna Batamul blast on the Bangla New Year's Day. We have seen an elaborate exhibition of enforcement and investigation activism all right; however, the fact of the matter is there has been no progress on the case nearly two months after the heinous incident. We wonder whether there would ever be any. The twin blasts at Paltan Maidan and Bangabandhu Avenue late last year are still part of an unresolved mystery. Such is the abysmal performance of the law enforcement people in the face of a string of bomb blasts. A church was targeted on Sunday, a mosque or a mandir or monastery may come next, who knows.

That firearms, ammunitions and explosives are more affordable and accessible than ever also bears testimony to an enforcement failure of a fundamental nature. The police and other enforcement agencies should get their act together immediately and mount surveillance and pre-empt attacks on newer locations or our image is sullied further.

# A promoter of peace is no more



ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

ASSASSINATION of King Birendra of Nepal along with Queen Aishwarya and most members of the royal family reportedly by his own son and heir apparent hit most of us in the region like a bolt from the blue. Gone are the days when members of the royal families in different countries would resort to killing each other for the throne. While there may only be a few such instances in recent decades in monarchies across the world, the possibility of such an incident, by any stretch of imagination, in South Asia region was remote. Two countries in the region - Nepal and Bhutan - have monarchy, of which the first now practises only ceremonial kingship. Other nations of Asia including some Arab countries, Thailand and Cambodia in the south-east and Japan in the far-east adhere to monarchy - albeit ceremonial in most cases. The king of Nepal was a powerful head of state with all the executive powers when he ascended to the throne in 1972 but was only a constitutional one when he was assassinated last Friday night at the royal palace in Kathmandu.

What appears unbelievable is the reason and circumstances in which the 55-year-old King was gunned down. More disquieting is the earlier report that the crown prince did not hesitate to kill his parents, younger brother and sister along with other members of the royal family including his father's sister and her husband. Evidently, this was not a planned shootout and happened at the fit of anger and that too not related to the issue of exercising powers or accession to the throne but a trivial matter like Prince Dipendra's liking for a girl, to which his parents objected. Reportedly, the issue of marriage of the crown prince was being discussed at the Friday weekly family dinner but he felt his case was being ignored and royal family members particularly his mother Queen Aishwarya stood a stumbling block to his plans to marry the woman he liked. An infuriated Dipendra went out of the dinner hall and came back with firearms and indiscriminately shot dead all present before turning the gun on himself. He did not die immediately and succumbed to his injuries on yesterday. It is also reported later that he was shot in the back and may not be the killer after all. This is how a king and his family have been wiped off. The otherwise beautiful Himalayan kingdom of Nepal is now soaked with the blood of royal family members. Whether the marriage issue of the prince was the sole reason for the massacre and whether the crown prince ran amok are not clear and would remain a matter of discussion in the future. Presently, the world has lost a king and this region a statesman of good soul.

King Birendra was one of the most well-known leaders from the developing world in the current era despite the fact that his country in real sense did not wield much

influence in the world or regional affairs and he too had relinquished political and executive powers since 1990. He was a monarch who was very much in the circulation and demonstrated his skills in diplomacy and in the affairs of running his country for two decades. Even as the ceremonial king later, he continued to give valuable advice to the democratic government of his country - regardless of political party or group - to pursue the path of peace and harmony in regional and

which are also large in size, and these two countries looked askance at each other's intentions if not always hostile. Both obviously were keen to see that Nepal remained aligned to its side but King Birendra remained equidistant from both. This speaks of his maturity and wisdom because the task was a difficult for a small country squeezed between two giants. He, at the same time, was conscious of the level of poverty in his own country and the surrounding region, and

optimism exuded about SAARC at the first summit in Dhaka in 1985 and at the one he chaired in Nepal in 1987. His unflinching faith in the SAARC as a measure for selecting Nepal as the venue of the SAARC secretariat.

Since 1990 when King Birendra was not in the scene as the effective head of the government, he was seen less beside other leaders but as the constitutional monarch he spared no efforts to encourage the concept. Indeed, he would be fondly remembered as long as the SAARC is there. It is an irony that he died at a time when Nepal was preparing to host the next summit which is hanging in the balance for some time but appears to be held not much later as impediments to its holding are being removed. The tragic development in Nepal has forced the long-awaited meeting of the foreign secretaries of the SAARC countries scheduled to begin in Colombo from June 8 to be postponed. No doubt, it is a setback for the forum when it looked to be overcoming the problems but hopefully the meeting would be reconvened at an early date. In any case, the slain Nepalese King would be remembered as a great promoter of the SAARC.

changed his father's "Panchayat system" to give the country existence of multiparty political system and agreed to allow full democracy in Nepal. He brought about major political reforms and restricted himself to ceremonial monarchy. Earlier, King Birendra was a familiar face in international conferences espousing the causes of the developing and least developed countries. His death came at a time when Nepal is struggling with a fractured parliament, frail economy and long-running Maoist insurgency which has gained momentum in recent months. The opposition agitation asking Prime Minister Girija Prasad Koirala to resign over an alleged financial scandal added fuel to the domestic unrest. The killing of the king at this time may encourage instability in his country and also impact negatively on the region. For, King Birendra was more a statesman than a monarch who was revered in his country and respected outside even after ceasing to be an executive head of state. His untimely death is a great loss to the entire South Asia and the void thus created is difficult to fill in soon.

## MATTERS AROUND US

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international arena.

Birendra succeeded his father King Mahendra to the throne following sudden death of the monarch but the actual accession was delayed due to the forecast made by the astrologers who enjoy tremendous clout in Nepal. The objection to his (Birendra's) son's marriage also reportedly stemmed from astrologer's advice. Once effectively firm in the throne, King Birendra made his presence felt as a statesman as he put the small country of just over 20 million people at the altar of peace in a world, especially South Asian region, afflicted by enmity and belligerence. Nepal's two close neighbours are two biggest nations in the world in terms of population,

lost no time in throwing his entire weight behind the SAARC when it was mooted by Bangladesh. A founder member of the regional economic forum, King Birendra was enthusiastic in nurturing the nascent regional bloc and hosted its third summit in Kathmandu. During the formative stage of the SAARC, the task of putting the idea across about it as a viable and commendable venture also met with scepticism as two major regional countries (India and Pakistan) initially dragged their feet before they finally agreed to the concept. It was King Birendra of Nepal who extended full support to the idea at that juncture and helped clear the decks to the emergence of SAARC. We all remember his

# Let's follow the ideals of the Great Prophet

KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

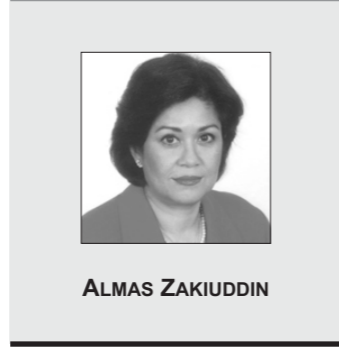
BEFORE our holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) attained Prophet-hood in the beginning of the sixth century (610 AD) the Arabian Peninsula "stood on the verge of chaos ..... mankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism." In Arabia and the adjoining areas the mighty oppressed the innocent, the tyrants terrorised them at will. Apart from this there were adultery and usuary, polygamy and polyandry. Daughters were killed immediately after their birth, women were deprived of their basic rights, people were addicted to liquor, gambling and drugs, they were by nature fond of "war, wine and women." In short, there was complete lawlessness in the society. As if the whole Arab land was burning, there was fire everywhere, fire in the shape of every kind of evil and atrocious deed. And when such was the social scenario of Arabia, the Almighty and Merciful Allah was graciously pleased to send a Prophet to extinguish the blazing fire. He detailed a Harbinger of peace Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) to the people of Arabia with a message of hope and peace. At that time, Arabian Peninsula was a country where every day peace was the first casualty. It may be recalled here that our holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) was born in the year 570 AD and Prophet-hood was bestowed on him in the year 610 AD when he was 40 years of age.

So, for the Prophet it was undoubtedly a Herculean job, a challenging task indeed to tame a disorganized and vicious people and bring to them the much-needed boon of peace. With Allah overhead and heart within he took courage in both hands and embarked upon the task of bringing peace in every sector of the strife-torn Arab society. And what was the "medicine" he tried for checking the rot? What was the panacea for all the ills and ailments the whole Arab society was suffering from? Yes, Islam was the "medicine" he tried, Islam was the panacea he used for bringing the Arabs out of the morass they were in. Islam was the name of the religion our holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (pbuh) presented to the people of the Arab land who had gone astray, who worshipped gods, demigods or deities instead of One and only One God, that is, Allah the Almighty, the All-knowing and Merciful. Unlike any other religion the very name of the religion (Islam) the holy Prophet introduced to the Arabs is also very appropriate. What do we mean by the word "Islam"? "Salam" is the root word, and the word "Islam" denotes a system or a code of life which signifies peace, which ensures peace in every sphere of life. And peace, it may be further pointed out, is the sine qua non for onward progress of human society. Besides being the latest and the last religion, Islam is also according to a Quranic Aayat, the chosen religion of Allah Rabbul Alameen. Thus the peace mission of the holy Prophet started yielding good results.

But at the initial stage the people of Mecca and other places including Taif oppressed the holy Prophet, and the oppression was so unbearable that he migrated to Medina at the best of the Almighty in the year 622 AD. The people of Medina, cordially welcomed him and he started to preach his new religion Islam among them without let or hindrance. The great messenger of peace did not retaliate nor he was vindictive when after a period of eight years he returned to his dear birth place Mecca with his companions as a victor. He declared general amnesty to all people living in and around Mecca, although many of them had oppressed him like anything before he left his native city for Medina. Historians have aptly commented on this general amnesty declared by our holy Prophet (pbuh). Renowned historian Stanly Lane-Poole says, "No house was robbed, no woman insulted, one thing alone suffered destruction. Going to the Ka'ba Muhammad stood before each of the three hundred and sixty idols and pointed to it with his staff saying 'Truth is come and falsehood is fled away,' and at these words his attendants hewed them down, and all the idols and household gods of Mecca were destroyed. It was thus Muhammad entered his native city, and throughout all the annals of conquest there is no triumphant entry comparable to this one...."

This is how a peace loving Prophet like Hazrat Muhammad (peace be upon him) behaved with people and preached the new and chosen religion of Allah. This is the holy month of Rabi-ul-Awal, the month in which he was born. Let us renew our pledge to follow his ideals and celebrate this auspicious occasion with due solemnity and fervour.

# In the name of love



ALMAS ZAKIUDDIN

THEORETICALLY, anyone can be a killer. You or I could be an axe murderer or a serial killer or a young ruler-in-a-stupor, the late King Dipendra of Nepal. He was, after all, flesh and blood. Terribly high caste flesh and blood, I concede, but mortal all the same.

So what went wrong inside this man's head? Why did he dash into the dining room with a machine gun in his hand and decimate his entire family? What made him flip in such an irrevocable manner?

For ordinary individuals, it is exceedingly difficult to come to terms with the massacre that has wiped out the royal family of Nepal. For one thing, a tragedy like this has not happened before. Comparisons with the Romanovs, the Russian ruling family who were also wiped out en masse in 1918, do not completely match because they were killed by guards, under orders from a revolutionary leader, Lenin. Dipendra's family, on the other hand, were (probably) killed by one of their own.

One of my colleagues, a sports journalist whose most passionate pronouncements are reserved for an arena in which human beings are at their most civilised, has not been able to contain his anger at Dipendra. In his view, boiling this killer in oil would have been too easy a punishment for the crime of having killed his own mother and father. Nothing, says this colleague, can ever justify such an act. No penalty

can ever equal the wrong that he has committed.

I agree with him. This tragedy has erased two parents, several siblings, cousins, aunts and uncles in one fateful moment. And all, reportedly, at the hands of an angry eldest son. While some doubts linger in the mind as to how exactly Dipendra managed to execute these killings and then turn his weapon upon himself and there is added speculation after anonymous sources have alleged that Dipendra was shot in the back, there is little doubt about the storm that was raging inside the royal family. It is this storm that is

beloved (and this is an occupational hazard of 'true love') I am not wont to tear this person's flesh apart or worse, haul off with a machine gun and destroy my own family. Romeo's last words were not "Take that ye wretched parents!" but rather, "Thus with a kiss I die." Neither he nor Shakespeare had the slightest inclination to wipe out the Montague clan. Indeed, it was the death of the two lovers, Romeo and Juliet, that brought sanity and amity back to the Montague and Capulet clans.

Yes, that was fiction. This is reality. But even so, I fail to accept

## IF YOU ASK ME

To me, the ill-fated Dipendra will go down in history as a man who lost his way, but not because he loved. But because he did not love at all. He did not love his woman. He did not love his family. And sadly, he did not love himself at all.

assumed to have been the cause of the tragedy.

Predictably, the storm was about love. Why predictably, you might ask. Well, love has a nice ring to it, as opposed to lust. It makes martyrs out of men (and also some women). This thing called love is supposed to be the passion that drives human beings, particularly men, into doing insane things such as throwing acid on their lovers' faces or stabbing their rival suitors or husbands to death or, as in the case of Dipendra, savaging their own family in anger.

To me this is a load of baloney. Yes, there is such a thing as true love. Let me not give the impression that I am so long in the tooth or so cynical about life that my heart does not flutter or my breath does not catch or my knees do not wobble at the sight and sound of a beloved. But excuse me, if I cannot have my

the explanation that Dipendra was a love smitten Romeo, driven to kill his parents because of his passion for a woman. Or, indeed, because his parents threatened to take away his crown in favour of his brother if he married the woman he loved.

Others have loved, and lost. They have lost their kingdoms, like Edward, Duke of Windsor, who gave up his throne for the divorcee Wally Simpson. They have lost their minds, like Majnu who wandered in the desert for years, crazed because he had failed to get his Laila. They have lost their homes, like my Hindu next door neighbour in Toronto who was forced to abandon India because he could not marry the Muslim girl he loved. Real life sagas of unrequited and unfulfilled love would fill more pages than Gibbons' Rise and Fall.

If Dipendra had been driven by

true love for the alleged beauty who had tainted genes and was thus deemed unsuitable as a life partner for him, he could have—(a) given up his throne, (b) given up his family or (c) given his own life. He could have waited a little longer, as that big-eared royal in England has been doing for his Camilla, until the time was right. That he did none of the above led to a tragedy whose repercussions will be severe on the people of Nepal and will leave them and many others with questions to which answers may never come.

For me, as a mother, a daughter and also (surprise!) sometimes a beloved, love has many faces. There is pain in love and hope in love. There is want and need and unresolved hunger in love. There is waiting in love and patience in love. There is caring and nurturing in love. There is giving in love. There is taking in love. There is laughter in love. There is a challenge in love. There is monotony and boredom in love. There is the beginning and end of love. Love is often a loss. Sometimes, there is gain. Love of children is always a gain. Love of parents is never a loss. Nowhere in my limited understanding or experience of love, has there been killing in true love.

There is love of children, of family, of man and woman, of God and country and of humanity. Surely true love is all this and then some. The great Faiz Ahmad Faiz said it best when he wrote:

*Aur bhī dukh hain zamane me mohabbat ki siwa  
Rahaten aur bhi hain wasl ki rahat ki sewa*

(There are obligations to others besides you, my love  
There is peace other than that which coalescence may bring.)

To me, the ill-fated Dipendra will go down in history as a man who lost his way, but not because he loved. But because he did not love at all. He did not love his woman. He did not love his family. And sadly, he did not love himself at all.

# TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

## PHOTORIAL

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.

THIS PHOTORIAL HAS BEEN SENT BY AZIZ AMIRUL FROM UTTARA. WE WOULD LIKE MORE CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR READERS. PLEASE SEND US YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS FOR PHOTORIAL.

### Endangered ecosystem

These hill mynahs, parakeets and munias are for sale at a pet shop in the city's Uttara area. Although law prohibits poaching and trading in wildlife, the business goes on brisk and uninhibited in the city and elsewhere in the country. Avis population is an integral part of the ecosystem. Unbridled poaching of birds poses grave danger to the eco-balance. The authorities should realise the birds are not only endangered, we are too.

## Blast at church

Isn't there any secure place for us anymore?

Some months ago a carnage took place inside a mosque at Mohammadpur. Then there were the blasts at the CPB meeting in Paltan and at Ramna Batamul. And now inside a sacred church!

In heaven's name, please stop this bloodshed of innocent people.

**J.D'Silva**  
Dhaka University, on e-mail

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On 3<sup>rd</sup> June a powerful bomb exploded during prayer at a Catholic Church at Baniarchar village under Gopalganj district. At least ten people have been killed and many injured, some of them critically.

The whole nation is shocked and ashamed of this most unwanted tragic incident. We have no language to express our disgust and dismay over the matter. We pray for the salvation of the departed souls and convey our deepest sympathy to the members of the bereaved family.

This incident is not a unique one. Similar incidents took place in the past. The Udichi tragedy at Jessore, explosion inside an Ahmadiya Mosque in Khulna, blast at the CPB rally at Paltan and in Ramna Batamul are to name a few. But what happens afterwards? Nothing but protest by the civil society and accusation and counter-accusation by

the political parties. What is most frustrating is that till date the government have failed measurably to bring to book any of the culprits of these incidents.

We earnestly request the government not to blame any quarter without authentic evidence and to put an honest and dynamic drive to find out the culprits and punish them. These type of heinous incident is a conspiracy against our infant democracy and this conspiracy must be unearthed for the sake of the security of general citizens of the country.

**M.H.Bari**  
Khulna, on e-mail

### PM's security

I am not going to comment about the so-called "Security Law" for Sheikh Hasina and her family as any one with IQ above 60 can identify innumerable points against it. But I want to address the approach of Awami League about the issue.

Whenever AL is asked about this 'Security Law' their answer is in line with, "BNP did similar acts" or "BNP enjoyed such privileges" or something like that.

My response to such remarks is, we voted for the Awami League thinking that they were different from the BNP. If they want to cite BNP as an example for things we dislike about Awami League then why did we bother to vote for the Awami League?

According to *The Daily Star* (May

## EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

31) Sajeda Chowdhury said that "Gonobhaban was built for the Father of the Nation but he did not live there and thus made his life vulnerable. Had he resided there (Gonobhaban), he would not have been killed so easily," noted Sajeda..

Only in a monarchy, state money is used to build houses (or fortresses!) for the king but in a democratic country, which is what I thought we were, things are built for the 'post' not the 'person'. Or am I missing something here?

**Dr. Talat Islam**  
University of Southern California  
Los Angeles, USA, on e-mail

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I support the idea of providing life long security to our Founding Father's family, but at one condition. First, give security to the people of this country before spending a single paisa from the exchequers' pocket to the selfish needs of the politicians.

Is Sheikh Hasina afraid of insecurity? Welcome to the club, Madam Prime Minister. We ask her to join us and relish the "Shonar Bangla" of mass murder, torture by police, political fascism, rape and so on.

The nature of the proposed 'Security Law' is totally uncalled for. There should not be any reward for the prime minister and the opposition leader who have utterly failed to provide us what Sheikh Hasina is asking for, security.

Our prime minister should try to act like a leader by having faith in democracy and by practising what she preaches.

**K. Rafiat**  
Chittagong, one e-mail

### Vanishing footpaths

If one wishes to go a little distance on Qudrat-e-Khuda Road (Elephant Road) or for that matter anywhere in our metropolis, walking is out of question.

Footpaths are used for many other purposes but not for movement of pedestrians. The authorities concerned are promoting another use for the space meant for footpaths. The expensive ceramic brick decorated footpaths are now demolished everywhere to make way for car-parks. Because car-parking spaces are occupied by rickshaws. Conversion of footpaths is counter-productive. I must take a rickshaw, because I cannot walk. And if I need a rickshaw there will be more of those, occupying more space and cars will be driven away on footpaths compelling people to use rickshaws and so on and so forth.

**MAH**  
Dhaka, on e-mail

### To the Editor

While I appreciate your idea of recognising a 'Letter of the week', which is of significant value or interest, I question if you need to announce it as a special attraction. I also question why it is necessary to announce that, due to an unprecedented number of letters on the India-Bangladesh border clash, such correspondence is closed. The prerogative of publishing, or not publishing, letters is at the discretion of the editor.

I would think that if there were a letter of significant interest, even if it concerned the border clash, that the editors would deem it worth publishing. Especially since you've announced you would be recognising letters of significant value or interest.

To this layman, at least, the two ideas seem in conflict.

**M. M. Haque, on e-mail**

### Arsenic contamination

The UN Secretary General's speech (May 15) at the Brussels meet on the LDCs is a ray of hope of the vision of good tidings for the third world.

The next General Assembly will have a special session on HIV-AIDS. In Bangladesh, with a population of 120 million, more than 35 million people in the rural areas and small towns are facing arsenic poisoning.

It is time for the UN agencies to take notice and mount a campaign and implement selected projects, under a five or ten year programme.

**A.Mawaz**  
Dhaka