

Bangabandhu murder case  
Speedy disposal at the highest level needed

THE Bangabandhu Murder case has been stalled at the Appellate Division level and looks like it will take some time before the case is decided. At the moment there are five Appellate Division judges of whom one has expressed embarrassment regarding the hearing of the case and two were involved with the case at the High Court level. The other two judges can't constitute the adequate number required to form the bench and that's why one may have to wait till there is fresh addition to the existing number to make up the required three. While that may constitute the administrative reality of the highest level of the judiciary, one needs to recognize the political significance of the case. It has already caused concern and no matter what one says it will need some extra efforts if adding a political dimension to this case is to be avoided.

The background of the case can't be denied even if one chooses to. The particular killing has defined most political contours for the last two and half decades and most political combines have been formed linked to this case in one way or another. Although the killing took place in 1975, the ghosts of the event haven't been allowed to rest and it continues to haunt the political manor of Bangladesh incessantly. Till the case is settled through a judicial decision which is respected by all, the matter will never be over. Justice needs to be done and the case needs to come to an end one way or another. It can't therefore be treated as just another case. It isn't about the importance of political figures but the impact of unresolved issues on political life.

One of the ways out would be to consider deputing a High Court Division to the Appellate Division for this specific case so that the necessary three judges may constitute the bench. The advantages are obviously that of speedy dispensation. For the sake of political calm, one must exert the utmost and ensure that at this stage it too doesn't become a political issue.

The government's position is clear and it is not in the wrong at all. But the compulsions are legal, political and moral as well. The case has to be decided finally because by completing the judicial process, the law will not only have taken its course but the judiciary will have come with its reputation intact, all of which will together make the situation far more positive than at any other time in our history.

It will return the glory of law in total to Bangladesh.

Kausar's death from 'police torture'

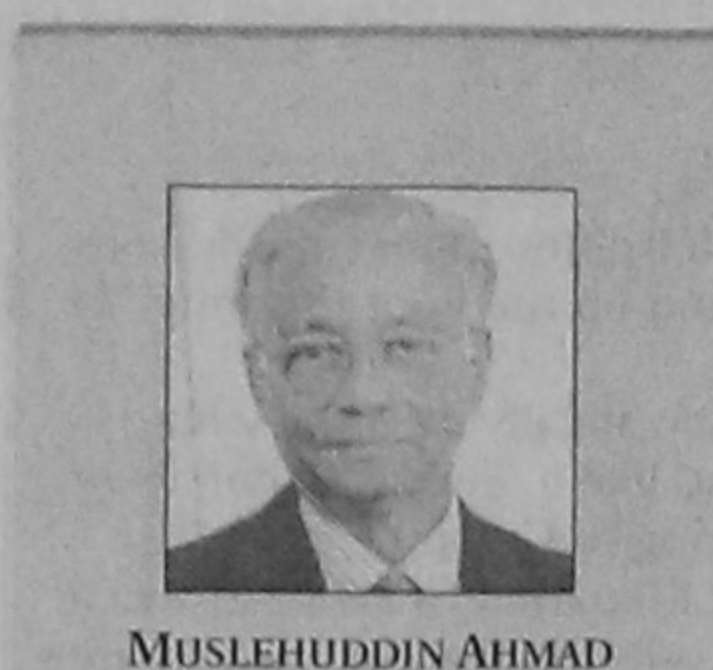
Institute probe, punish culprit

WE are outraged by the alleged police brutalisation of 15 year-old Kausar to death. The story is tell-tale. On February 4 at noontime Kausar went to play cricket at the staff quarters ground near Taltala. There blasts a bomb, he runs for safety, cops catch him, send him to court, he lands up in jail, arrives with wounds at the ICDDR,B and dies, all within a matter of three days. The officer-in-charge of Mohammadpur Thana Nur Ahmad tells 'Prothom Alo' correspondent that Kausar did not die from torture but of cholera. There are obviously holes in the police version, several questions arising from the reported handling of the juvenile suspect that only a probe, not even a scooping type but pretty much a routine one can help us find answers to.

First, what was the proof that Kausar burst the bomb? The mere fact that he was 'fleeing the scene' could not be held against him as anybody would run for safety under those circumstances. What Kausar told visiting family members at the jail about police sub-inspector Ilias torturing him to extract confession to possessing fire arms smacked off an attempt to build a case against him. Secondly, and this question can hardly be overstressed: why didn't the Mohammadpur Thana authorities inform his parents about their son's purported delinquency when he was an under-aged suspect likely to raise anxiety at home if he would be missing for long hours, in this case three full days? Not only that, they ought have let them know under which section of the law he had been arrested, and why? They had a right to consult a lawyer which was obviously as well denied. Furthermore, why were not Kausar's guardians informed of the 'cholera affliction'? What is the explanation for the injuries an ICDDR,B employee noticed on his person as he arrived at the hospital in heavy shackles?

There must be a civilised way of handling a juvenile suspect assuming that his conduct raised suspicion of culpability in the first place. Meanwhile, we ask for a probe and want the responsibility for Kausar's death fixed for meting out exemplary punishment to the guilty.

Let Arafat act decisively to achieve calm



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

PRIME Minister Ariel Sharon visited the White House for the fourth time and had a 45-minute meeting with President Bush on Thursday, February 7, and thereafter a press briefing was held where Sharon, for the first time and in the presence of the American President in the Oval Office of the White House said, "And in the end of the process, I believe that the Palestinian State, of course, will be... we'll see a Palestinian State." May be, at heart, he never felt that there should be a Palestinian State as he appeared to have uttered these words very reluctantly in broken sentences in the presence of American President, Ariel Sharon knows America and the international community are committed to a "viable Palestinian State". He should also be aware of the recent developments in Israel itself. The Peace Now Group is insisting on peace with the Palestinians. More encouraging was the Peace activists' open demonstration in Tel Aviv two days ago protesting Sharon's policies. The reservists and some army officers also started open protests and gave in writing expressing their refusal to serve in the West Bank and Gaza. Thus things are getting gradually

difficult for Sharon in Israel. It would be good if such a trend continues, this may ultimately lead to the change of the leadership and the government in Israel. Sharon also knows the views of the Orthodox Jewish Scholars who met in Washington to protest Sharon's visit and continued to insist that "according to the Torah, the Jews are forbidden to have a state, even a religious one. Therefore, all Rabbis and God-fearing Jews, since its inception

engaged in the region and remain engaged with the Palestinian Authority." This is why Sharon did not follow through his plan. This is why his idea of finding alternative leadership of the Palestinian people also failed. After all, Arafat is democratically elected leader of the Palestinian people and America and the rest of the world cannot go by the dictates of Sharon. He is, indeed, none to select the leader of the Palestinian people. Indeed, his and

the rest of the world also shared Israel's view. Arafat must have been fully aware of the danger of such a trap and could not have taken such a foolish step when he himself was trying hard to have the peace process back on track and with that end in view he had several of the suspected terrorists arrested. He also reportedly asked for an international investigation in the matter with full US and Israeli participation. It's not known why this was not

question as to how Arafat would do everything in his power when his power has been curtailed to zero through confinement. He can't go out and address his people and ask them to refrain from doing things that are against the interest of the Palestinian people.

The latest report shows that the EU has started criticizing Arafat's confinement and has indeed started working on a plan asking for immediate establishment of the Palestin-

last one and really the last one. This seems to be the only way to take care of the concern of Sharon and his radical associates.

Such a determined effort by Arafat to achieve "calm" would also lend support to EU towards its present efforts to bring up the issue of the early establishment of the Palestinian State. With the fourth visit of Sharon to the White House and none yet for Arafat, it is fairly obvious that the US is getting one-sided picture of the conflict and this is likely to make the role of the US in the peace process somewhat fuzzy. It would, therefore, be appropriate for the EU to take the lead now for actions that may arrest the present spiral of violence that killed so far 253 Israelis and 834 Palestinians. As the situation stands, the violence will continue unabated unless some very positive steps are taken to lift the blockade, stop political assassinations, killing of innocent Palestinians, destruction of Palestinian properties, etc by the Israeli authorities. The Palestinian Hamas and other radicals also take advantage of the situation and continue their killing of Israeli civilians. Therefore, there must be an immediate international effort to stop this madness - killings and counter killings - and, under the changed situation, the EU seems to be the right body to take the lead and this may induce the US to reassess its strategy and see reasons to go for a joint international effort to stop violence and put the peace process back on track. This would greatly help US's "War against Terror".

Muslehuddin Ahmad is a former Ambassador of Bangladesh and the founder President of North South University.

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

A determined effort by Arafat to achieve "calm" would also lend support to EU towards its present efforts to bring up the issue of the early establishment of the Palestinian State. With the fourth visit of Sharon to the White House and none yet for Arafat, it is fairly obvious that the US is getting one-sided picture of the conflict and this is likely to make the role of the US in the peace process somewhat fuzzy. It would, therefore, be appropriate for the EU to take the lead now for actions that may arrest the present spiral of violence that killed so far 253 Israelis and 834 Palestinians.

have opposed Zionism in any form and all of its ensuing actions. With pain and sorrow we will gather to protest against the Torah defying "State of Israel, specifically against their leader the bloodthirsty, Sharon...". It seems that he now finds no alternative but to agree to a Palestinian State. But is there any chance of the resumption of the peace talks while Sharon is in power? Probably not.

Sharon was indeed determined to urge President Bush to sever ties with Arafat, but apparently Bush Administration cautioned Prime Minister Sharon before the meeting and asked him not to raise such issues with the President. The White House Press Secretary Ari Fleisher said, "The president will make clear the United States will remain

his cabinet's decision to declare Arafat "irrelevant" is really irrelevant for the rest of the world.

Another most amazing remark that Sharon made about Arafat in the same press briefing was that "Arafat is an obstacle to peace." The press did not follow up as this must have sounded to them a joke. However, President Bush repeated his earlier pronouncement and said, "Mr. Arafat has heard my message. I can't be any more clear about it, that he must do everything in his power to reduce terrorist attacks on Israel. And that, at one point in time, he was indicating to us that he was going to do so, then all on a sudden, a ship loaded with explosives shows up that most of the world believes he was involved in." It's certainly the view of Israel but doubtful whether

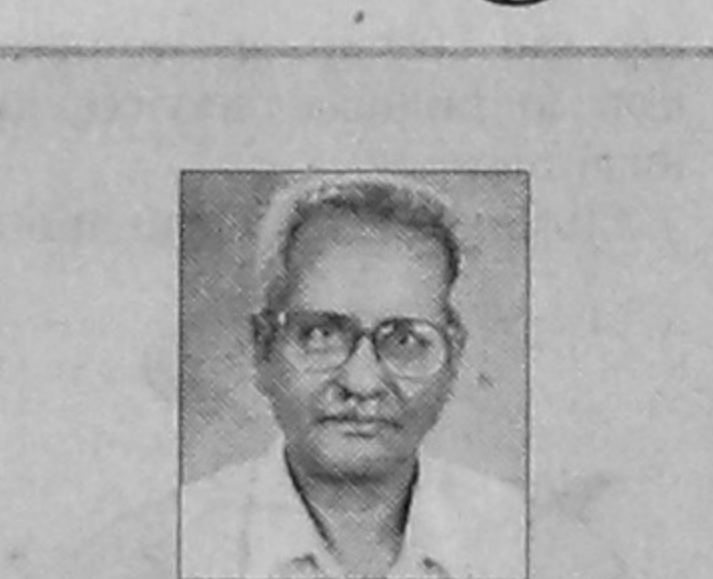
accepted. One could suspect Hamas or any other radical group's hand in it. In any case, Israel is a mighty military power with the most modern military equipment including nuclear arsenal. Against such a vast wealth of deadly military materials and weapons, about 50 tons of weapons, even if it's conceded for the sake of argument that PA was involved, could not be considered a crime.

However, President Bush was right in asserting that Arafat "must do everything in his power to reduce the terrorist attacks", but one does not understand how he would do it when he himself is confined to a place surrounded by Israeli tanks and machine guns. It's surprising that a galaxy of pressmen who are so well experienced did not even put a

ian State. This sounds encouraging for the peace loving people of the region as well as of the world.

The only course that is open to Arafat now is to accept the challenge of seven days "complete calm", make the last appeal to his people including Hamas and other radical groups, organize series of meetings to address them. He should announce that he would move out of Ramallah, come what may, to reach the people in other areas for the purpose of achieving complete calm and then let the world see what Sharon and his tanks do with Arafat. He is the top leader of the Palestinian people and this sort of humiliation must not be tolerated. One expects his people including Hamas and other radical groups to go by his appeal -- one he should term as the

'A long-term partnership, not a short-term dance'



M.J. ZAHEDI

PRIME Minister Musharraf's visit to Washington and his meeting with President George Bush was the subject that kept the local Press occupied during the last week. There were editorials, articles and analyses on Pakistan-US relations and the meeting, both before and after it. All this was natural and right too. Although Musharraf and Bush have met before but those were casual meetings, it was the first time that they met officially, and at the latter's invitation.

But most analysts were of the view that it was too early to judge the outcome of the visit. But it served, in the words of a *The News* editorial, 'a very solemn and meaningful purpose'. It made the US President admit before the world that the USA had abandoned Pakistan in the past but this would not happen now. The News reminded its readers that just before Sept. 11, Bush had turned the heat on Musharraf. But now he said, "we will not walk away as in the past and we are fostering a long-term friendship, it is not a short-term dance".

Once this new basis of bilateral relations have been laid, economic and other benefits are bound to follow and both the leaders have indicated that the nitty-gritty of

these exchanges is being worked out. US officials have been talking about a debt relief package, economic and financial experts are discussing details with IMF and World Bank. In some ways the ball has been set rolling towards a resumption of Pak-US ties that once used to be.

The only confusing part of the US position is the demand for return to democratic rule. But any talk of diluting Musharraf's power runs

impinge on Washington's agenda and its implementation in Pakistan. And for that Musharraf should not be blamed. *Dawn* also said that the US could ignore Pakistan only to its disadvantage.

At the meeting, President Bush has all praise for Pakistan, for its economic recovery and development as well as for Pakistan's sagacity in conducting its foreign policy.

He made extra effort to clear the perception that the USA was walk-

with the Paris Club of inter-government lenders. The upgrades mainly reflect the country's improved external liquidity situation. Moody's said the current government has implemented a broad array of economic reforms, supported by the one-year stand-by agreement with the IMF. It also mentioned Pakistan's latest Paris Club agreement concluded in December 2001.

In short, General Musharraf and

value to other security partners would be determined by its strategic value to the latter. Pakistan's geo-strategic position at the juncture of three regions, its character as a moderate Islamic state and its economic and military potential have brought it back to America's strategic fold.

An insurgency in Kashmir and a civil war in Afghanistan have ringed Pakistan for more than a decade. The economic and political impact

and nationhood. Afghanistan and Pakistan together provide the necessary bridge in developing the wide range of linkages among the regional states.

This is a long-term process and its significance goes beyond the immediate task of eradicating the Taliban and Al Qaeda networks. Old relationship that Pakistan had with the USA has provided a good basis of understanding of each other's needs, interests and limits within which they will be assisting each other. Pakistan is going through a crucial phase of international economic and political restructuring, which requires Western support. Pakistan expects US support in its effort to rescheduling and restructuring debt, seeking development assistance on reasonable terms, access to Western markets for its goods and some form of security cooperation that addresses the concerns and interests of both the sides.

Pakistan cannot any more fumble in foreign or domestic affairs. It would be dangerous shortsightedness to pin all hopes on only one country, such as the USA, and live in the euphoria that it is well connected with world powers. The real task is nation and state building from within and relations with USA and other powers should serve that purpose.

The emerging partnership with USA offers a good opportunity to get out of the economic crunch that has been crushing Pakistan. But if we waste it the way we did similar opportunities in the past, burden of our domestic failures will be too heavy to allow us to move forward, or even to stay as a credible partner', an editorial said.

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LETTER FROM KARACHI

Pakistan cannot any more fumble in foreign or domestic affairs. It would be dangerous shortsightedness to pin all hopes on only one country, such as the USA, and live in the euphoria that it is well connected with world powers. The real task is nation and state building from within and relations with USA and other powers should serve that purpose. The emerging partnership with USA offers a good opportunity to get out of the economic crunch that has been crushing Pakistan.

against US interests. A general election, of whatever kind, even the non-party kind of Zia-ul Huq's in 1985, would dilute some of Musharraf's power and his capacity to act as quickly and swiftly as he had done in the past few months. Musharraf is committed to party-pose. Similar praise and pledges of support have come from IMF MD Horst Kohler and World Bank President James Wolfensohn, during meetings with Musharraf. Allen Greenspan, head of US Federal Reserves, whose words on economy are considered more respectable than those of the US President's, had a 10-minute meeting with president Musharraf in which he expressed hopes about Pakistan's economic future.

International ratings agency Moody's upped Pakistan's ratings for its eternal debt and bank deposits, citing the country's agreement

ing away from Pakistan in the past. He said that the two countries were fostering a long-term partnership and it's not a short-term dance. He said the people of Pakistan should be confident that we support them. "When we say we are committed, we are committed". Similar praise and pledges of support have come from IMF MD Horst Kohler and World Bank President James Wolfensohn, during meetings with Musharraf.

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his government as a whole had much to be happy about. Pakistan has restructured the ties that exist with the USA. The emerging ties offer an opportunity for Pakistan to get out of the economic crunch that has been crushing it.

But not all analysts have taken the changes on their face value. Some asked the inevitable question: how long will these last? Is it the intrinsic strategic value of Pakistan itself or the fears, threats and danger to American interests that have pushed the two countries towards close cooperation? Some however felt and explicitly said that such a question was irrelevant. According to them, the convergence of interests, which is the cornerstone to state-to-state relations takes shape in response to events, changes or threats that have regional or global significance. A country's strategic

of crises in the neighbouring region has greatly affected its own security dynamics. Pakistan had to pay a heavy price for these legacies. But the chapter is now over. The crises have hit the USA straight in the face. That is the reason for the change in the situation. Sept. 11 events have demonstrated quite emphatically that collapse of states, civil wars and terrorism keep close company and have far reaching effects. To understand what is contributing to the new partnership between USA and Pakistan we must look at the larger question of stability in the crises that Pakistan has been living with.

Besides Afghanistan, the central Asian states have deep interest in developing their natural resources, exploring new markets and access route toward the south. This would modernize their economies and in this process strengthen their state

OPINION

Foreign policy of Bangladesh: A few thoughts

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

THE foreign policy of a country is formulated on the basis of core and instrumental interests. The core interests of the state flow from its desire to preserve its essence: territorial boundaries, population, and government. The territorial disputes are the most fundamental of all interest-conflicts. In these areas the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman left the process of demarcation of land and maritime boundaries with India complicated. The handing over of Berubari enclave in exchange of Dahagram and Angorpta enclaves in India could hardly be justified because Berubari enclave was part of former East Pakistan according to Noon-Nehru agreement. Similarly, many non-demarcated and disputed enclaves remain on this or that side of the border which may cause conflicts between the two neighbouring countries. The recent serious border clash during the period of Awami League government is a glaring example. Here lies the failure of diplomacy. The same problem of demarca-

tion of maritime boundaries with Burma now known as Myanmar remains. It would have been the major task of the government of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to complete the process of demarcation of land and maritime boundaries because of favourable political climate between Bangladesh and India, apart from seeking recognition and rehabilitation of refugees. If the boundary problem remains, the population along the border with neighbouring countries could not live in peace.

If a state maintains political unity and cohesion among the large segments of its population and strengthens its power, it stands a fair chance in deterring threats by other state(s) or maximizing its planned option for action. If a state power remains weak, it would be difficult for it to protect interests of the country vis-a-vis outside power(s). In the case of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's charisma, the formation of strong government and criticism by foreign powers in fact contributed much to the withdrawal of Indian troops from the territory of Bangladesh by

March 1972 within three months of the birth of the country.

The present government in Bangladesh should take up the issue of demarcation of boundaries and disputed enclaves with the governments of India and Myanmar to resolve the outstanding problems for the sake of peaceful border which is *sine qua non* for the economic development of the country.

Geopolitics does not dictate formulation of the policy which was prevalent in the early part of twentieth century. Presently economic and commercial interests receive prominence in the conduct of foreign affairs.

Barry B Hughes of the University of Denver in his book *Continuity and Change in World Politics: Competing Perspectives* wrote that the state should apply artfully state power, guided by an understanding of the contemporary state system and a vision of desirable change in it. "State action should not be ad hoc reaction to daily events, but rather purposeful long-term pursuit of state interests." Viewed in this context the foreign policy, if any, has been

made on ad hoc basis in Bangladesh. The high officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remain busy in organising trips for the Prime Minister abroad to receive the blessing for a posting at a better station. This trend should be discarded for the country's interests. Rather there should be guidelines for the Ambassadors to cultivate foreign dignitaries and persuade them to pay a visit to Bangladesh. That will help brighten the image of the country in the international arena. The visit should take place on reciprocal basis and on the occasion of a national emergency to explain the stand of the country and seek support of the governments which wield influence.

There is a need for continuity of policy with little emphasis here and there and it is not desirable to shift policy with the departure of any political government unless national interests had been ignored or neglected. Another point of relevance is that often visits from Bangladesh side are practically imposed on the receiving state which causes unnecessary irritant with the host government. This tendency of seeking

invitation for a visit to a foreign country should be avoided. This will enhance the image of the country.

Since the foreign policy is considered as the first line of defence, therefore, careful study of the situation in close door neighbours around the region and international arena needs to be made from different perspectives: political, economic and military. Ambassadors of the country should work as watchdog of the government and report on the events which may have bearing on Bangladesh at present or in the near future. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs there is no research division to conduct research on important issues in the region or in the international arena. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a focal point should hold discussions with academicians, prominent lawyers, defence strategists and business people. Their views should be incorporated in formulating policy which needs to be debated in Parliament before being implemented.

The image of the country depends not only on the cumulative effect of the position of the

country in the comity of nations but also, the successes and failures of the political leadership and the achievements of the men of letters and scientists. The image of the country is also tarnished by the irresponsible utterance of political and religious leaders and other activists. Bangladesh is being presented as a liberal Muslim country to the western countries. But the torture and humiliation inflicted on the Hindu minority community makes such projection ludicrous. This has caused very bad impression about the government outside Bangladesh. The government for its own sake and for the sake of international community should initiate punitive action against the culprits without any favour and to ensure that no such incident occurs again. The decision of FIFA to ban Bangladesh Football Federation brought shame to the country. Mingling politics with sports is an ill-conceived idea. However, the crisis has been overcome. But these are very ominous signs. No amount of diplomacy will bring any good to the country unless corrective measures are taken. As German Chancellor Otto Von

Bismarck rightly pointed out, foreign policy is the extension of domestic policy. If domestic policy is not formulated on a correct path, the foreign policy will not succeed.

Bangladesh is still dependent on foreign aid and will continue to remain so till efforts are made to diversify its trade regime. As a result of many emerging new countries on the world map the flow of aid has been declining. For example, the United States no longer remains world's largest donor of economic aid. This also affects Bangladesh so far US aid is concerned. Bangladesh is presently recipient of negligible aid from US. Japan becomes the top donor to Bangladesh. Most European countries attach conditions for granting aid. These are: good governance, establishment of democratic norms, rules of law and improvement of human rights. Strictly speaking, Bangladesh does not qualify for foreign aid if European countries strictly adhere to the criteria attached for granting aid. In view of the declining trend of bilateral aid Bangladesh should find ways and means to have more markets for its prod-

ucts. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its missions abroad should pursue a policy to cultivate entrepreneurs in Far East in particular and the Middle East to invite foreign direct investment (FDI) and portfolio investment which will substantially restructure the country's economy. This will also open up job opportunities for the idle work force. Ambassadors and other diplomats should work like salesmen to promote idea of having industries in Bangladesh. They should not sit only in the office but continuously move around and meet and cultivate these entrepreneurs. For the purpose of inviting FDI there is an urgent need to increase the level of efficiency of the government, Board of Investment, NBR, PDB and EPB in particular. Foreign policy is the result of the process by which a state translates its broadly conceived goals and interests into specific courses of action in order to achieve its objectives and preserve its interests.

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