differently from Israel, Furthermore

LATE S. M. ALI **DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 4. 2002**

War ends for the time being

The peace activists must initiate peace building

HE siege on Yasser Arafat, confined to his room in Ramallah for weeks, has been withdrawn but it's hardly the end of the war. Most of the field reports filed from the area say that the roots of violence go much deeper than what may be uprooted by short term US brokered deals. Hate as we might feel to say reigns. Peace is still only a hope and one hopes all the parties involved Israel, Palestine and the US really see that peace with dignity will actually benefit them all.

One lesson that has been learnt from the last violent episode is that the tolerance threshold for Israeli mayhem by the western world is much higher than thought before and this fact has to be factored in now in all future negotiations. The surrendered six Palestinians, all except one members of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and another, a PLO operative who has been accused in the arms import deal, from Iran to Palestine, will be tried in Israel under some degree of international observation. But instead of rage, Palestinians must now be realists. The people of Palestine should be the ones to decide how and to what degree they are ready to travel to secure peace. At least this phase of peace.

Sadly, anger and hate always been more successful in the region and only voices of death and fire are heard properly. The PFLP had recently regained a lot of its clout after it killed the Israeli tourism minister, and the outfit itself discards the Oslo accord. On the other hand, the Jenin operations have shown how far the Israelis are ready to go to achieve their objectives. But after the trial begins, fresh batch of suicide bombers will be ready and another round may begin.

Conventional approaches to peace will not work in Palestine and the older leadership in Israel, Palestine and Washington must display its capacity to think fresh and daring. To find peace, the 'impossible' thoughts of peace activists must now be given a chance. The words of the peace activists in Israel in particular now deserve to be heard.

Power unfortunately always resides with the unreasonable and the believer in force. Unless that force is snatched away and given to those who believe in the common sense of a just peace and neither in "security above all" nor "revenge for the past", the dead children of Jenin will be the permanent and the only memory possible.

Whither Press freedom?

Violence rages on for the public watchdog

AY 3 was observed as World Press Freedom Day in Dhaka by drawing attention to the problem of reporting facts that are unpopular with various power constructs including the state. The meeting organised by a media outfit presented an audit of media violence. The focus was on security of journalists and various speakers including those from outside Dhaka described their personal experiences. The meeting also heard from Tipu Sultan and Prabir Sarker, the two most well known victims of physical violence, for whom the media stood up unitedly and the issue gained wide publicity.

But speakers also pointed out that violence against media practitioners was not an isolated issue and it's linked to the matter of managing the state. It was also stated that perpetrators include the socially powerful, the criminal, the administration and the affected politicians. It was aptly reiterated that journalism is a profession that is always dangerous and International Labour Organization (ILO) has recognized this fact officially. It's against this background that we must look at the national context.

lence against and intimi In Bangladesh, incidences of vio dation of media is increasing. While some cases do get more publicity than others, most are swept away by a variety of reasons including lack of accurate information and a sense of impunity of the ruthless powerful. Many now feel that to get justice one must also be properly connected.

But to offset that feeling it's important that we recognize the role of media and its function in institution building. Providing security will not happen in isolation, but as the watchdog of the people and as reporter of national governance media has extra responsibility with which has come this extra burden and threat, hence the need of protection.

Violence will not end by making appeals to the authorities who initiate, condone and encourage such acts in many cases. It's the people who can't remain passive in such circumstances anymore. The media and the public must realize their mutual needs and forge unity at all levels and make the world safe for each other.

Israel's defiance of UN decision: Ominous implications



HARUN UR RASHID

SRAFL has been successful in derailing the UN Fact-Finding Mission to the Middle East. The UN Secretary General failed to receive Israel's co-operation to the UN Fact-Finding Mission led by former President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari. The Mission and its members were stuck in Geneva for days and were not able to proceed to the Middle East.

The UN Security Council in its unanimous decision of 15-members approved the Fact-Finding Mission (not investigative mission) to uncover truth as to what occurred in the Palestine refugee camps in Jenin in the West Bank. Israel first agreed to the visit of the UN Mission and its Foreign Minister Peres said that there was nothing to hide. Now Israel has refused to let the Mission to do the job. There is a growing speculation that Israel has realised that the UN Mission would be able to uncover truth which Israel is trying to hide from the world.

Amnesty International in its preliminary report suggested gross violations of humanitarian law by Israel in Jenin. The other observers from Europe have expressed deep shock at what happened to the civilian population by Israel's military intervention. Palestinians called it a massacre of civilians. No civilians should be killed under the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and if any state does, its leaders may be liable to charge of war crimes.

Israel wanted to pick and choose the witnesses before the team.

Third, Israel wanted the acts of Palestinian suicide bombers to be a part of the mandate of the UN Mission. Israel is fully aware that the mandate of the Council was very specific as to what occurred in the refugee camp in Jenin.

What does Israel's conduct

The UN Secretary General did what he could do to implement the under the Charter including the decision of the Security Council. Article 6 states that a member of the UN which has persistently violated the international co-operation (in breaches of peace) contained in the Charter may be expelled from the UN. South Africa was debarred in attending the UN General Assembly during apartheid era for its violation of UN resolutions

Israel appears to have set a verv dangerous precedent under intercil's resolution in the way as Israel

former Yugoslav President Israel's defiance to the UN will Slobodan Milosevic's arguments have significant implications. It is before The Hague Tribunal of doulikely to alienate the Arab people ble-standard of international combecause of practice of doublemunity towards his regime will standard policy towards Israel by big powers. It will put to severe tests the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Kuwait to contain the seething sentiment at what ordinary people in the Arab world will perceive half-hearted attempt of the

appear to be buttressed by Israel's defiance to the UN. The motive of war on terrorism is likely to be questioned in the Arab world by Israel's conduct. Israel has demonstrated that it cares less of the views of international community because it has possessed superior arms including nuclear weapons in the region. Israel is behaving like a "spoilt child" without fear of international punishment or sanctions. The orientation of greater co-operation in a global society is

likely to be replaced by international

anarchy if Israel's conduct is fol-

lowed by other states The UN is the most visible element in securing a stable world order. Its success depends on cooperative interaction among states including respect and observance of its decisions. If a state, such as Israel, can flout its decision, it not only undermines the confidence on the UN but also may lead to the "law of the jungle" in the post-cold war era. The UN stands as a symbol of hope and peace for international community and regrettably Israel seems to attack its very edifice on which it stands.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bandladesh Ambassador to the UN Geneva

BOTTOM LINE

The UN is the most visible element in securing a stable world order. Its success depends on cooperative interaction among states including respect and observance of its decisions. If a state, such as Israel, can flout its decision, it not only undermines the confidence on the UN but also may lead to the "law of the jungle" in the post-cold war era. The UN stands as a symbol of hope and peace for international community and regrettably Israel seems to attack its very edifice on which it stands.

Under international law the leaders are responsible for war crimes as was manifested in the 1946 Nuremberg International Military Tribunal for Nazi leaders.

Let us examine Israel's conduct in relation to the UN Fact-Finding Mission. First, Israel set out conditions on the mandate and composition of the Mission. The UN Secretary General was reported to have met the conditions.

Second, Israel was believed to have objected to meet witnesses as the Mission deemed appropriate.

resolution of the Council. The UN has been frustrated in its every move because Israel comes up with new conditions which the UN will not be able to comply with

Israel's action to defy the UN Security Council resolution is contrary to the specific obligations of Israel under the UN Charter, Article 34 of the Charter states that the Security Council "may investigate any dispute or any situation which might lead to international friction...' Under Article 4 a member state is obliged to carry out the obligations national law. When the NATO attacked Yugoslavia for genocidal and harsh treatment of Kosovar-Albanians, no one would listen to Yugoslavia's views. In the case of Palestinians, it appears that international community has abandoned them and kowtow Israel.. There are however a few remarks of unacceptability of Israel's attitude from European leaders (European Commission President Romano Prodi and British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw). It is believed no other

state could have flouted the Coun-

international community to do iustice to Palestinians

During the recent visit of the Crown Prince to the US, it is reported that Saudi Arabian defacto ruler warned the US President Bush that Israel's conduct may result in "grave consequences" in

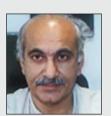
the region. Iragi case of not allowing UN nspectors in the country is likely to be stronger. Irag may argue that if Israel violates resolution of the Security Council without any consequences, why it should be treated

party is in familiar disarray. The

most high-profile Congress MP

from Andhra Pradesh, T. Subirami

Dilli dur ast



M.J. AKBAR

HICH of the two is funnier: a government flying off the handle, or an Opposition soaring away on a flight of fancy? The colour of such humour is black, of course; but then we are no longer in control of our choice of entertainment. We have to live with what we have

inability of governments to appreciate a lesson as old as fable and as new as fact: you cannot put the genie back in the bottle. You cannot put a monster into political play when you need it and then expect it to go back obediently to bed when you need to reappear with your respectable mask. You cannot get away with deception either. Facts refuse to change when they become inconvenient. Moreover the days when facts could be buried under various forms of pressure are over. I am not talking about a demarche from the European Union here; India has never lived behind any curtain, iron or bamboo, or indeed that horrifying curtain of European collusion and silence behind which the rape (the word is not a metaphor) of Bosnia continued for years before the Americans intervened. India is a democracy in fact and spirit. It has media and civil institutions that rise to meet the challenge of oppression, using the power of honesty and conscience to shake the power of authority. A

and suddenly even a dormant government institution on human rights discovers a soul. A retired police officer like Julio Ribeiro uses the weight of his reputation, the authority of his contribution to the nation's fight against terrorism in Punjab to draw a line in Gujarat. NGOs move in to serve the afflicted and speak the truth that is being denied by ministers. The courts wait to lend their credibility to the cause of civilised values. The multiple

work. Democracy is not protected

merely by the freedom to vote on

television channel takes its own decision about how to handle a developing story. If there is one thing that media people guard with extreme jealousy, it is their independence, and this includes independence within their own tribe as well. But media has to be sensitive to both the street as well as its own values. Frankly, there is no daily demand on the conscience of a mediaperson, which is why you might get the impression so often

are discussing maladministration. or power used for malice and deliberate, wanton terror. We are talking

If the BJP does not remove Narendra Modi from Gujarat, then Narendra Modi will remove the BJP from Delhi. Indians, of all hues and religions, may at times get swayed by the powerful hypnotism of communal hatred, but India will never elect a government that permits the use of hate as policy.

The Congress response to this

complex point in our history is

If the BJP does not remove Narendra Modi from Gujarat, then Narendra Modi will remove the BJP

from Delhi. Indians, of all hues and religions, may at times get swayed by the powerful hypnotism

of communal hatred, but India will never elect a government that permits the use of hate as policy.

of change were blowing even through the CII, so everybody please take note and begin practisng genuflections. After hearing the speech someone commented that the CII had been renamed the AICC, but we can ignore once again such disobedient humour.

We noted at the beginning of this column that no one had told Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee that you cannot put the genie back in the bottle. But he did know another proverb, which he conveyed to

Reddy, who has just been rewarded by Sonia Gandhi with a Rajya Sabha ticket, has his own definition of a political party. For him a political party is something that happens at a five-star hotel. So where are the 272 Lok Sabha seats going to come from that will make Sonia Gandhi the next Prime Minister of India? The BJP has recognised its weakness in Uttar Pradesh and

done something about it. It has overruled its own regional leaders and come to terms with Mayawati. If this alliance holds in a general election, which of course is not certain at all, both will benefit. Instead of building her own alliances in UP. Sonia Gandhi chose to spurn the opportunity offered by Mulayam Singh Yadav. It is possible that her new political advisers have told Sonia Gandhi will win in UP; and maybe such advice fetches rewards

You can get serious indigestion if ou stuff yourself with khiyali pulao. Anyone in Lucknow will be able to explain what that means, if Mrs Sonia Gandhi cannot understand this simple Hindustani.

I suppose switching to a foreign language like Persian is not much help either, but there is another saying in Persian that might be relevant: Dilli dur ast.

The Congress can come to power in the next elections. The BJP is doing its best to ensure that. But for it to happen, the Congress has to get back to the harsher world of reality, rebuild its political links across the space it has lost among its traditional voters of the north. work hard to protect what it has achieved in its own states, and believe that it is a long, hard and bitter road ahead to power. Riding a high horse takes you nowhere very

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.



I am completely baffled by the

Gujarat awakens that conscience

that media does not have one. points of power in the spread of democracy come into play to pro-Maybe that is why governments get tect the principles upon which a shock when suddenly there is democracy must rest in order to evidence of a conscience, and call it

The politics of hatred cannot be

a conspiracy.

one day in five years; democracy is switched on and off. It certainly the right to be free every day of your cannot be stopped by the person life, and the right to protest against who started it. That is the problem oppression and barbarity whenever with the Narendra Modi administrait happens, wherever it occurs. tion. It has no credibility left. The Indians will not let the truth of truth may be bad enough; his image Narendra Modi's Guiarat remain has become far worse than the buried; that is the great strength of truth. You can keep him in office for as long as the BJP has a majority in the Assembly, but he will not be able It is too easy to blame the media, to run a government. Power is not which is the classical response of the ability to give an order. Power is any government, of whatever colour the ability to get an order obeyed. or dispensation it might be. The ploy Authority is dictatorship without a is too trite to succeed. I may as well moral element, and Narendra Modi add, talking from the inside, that has no moral authority left. There is "media conspiracy" is an oxymoron. nothing secret about what he did; The only thing that editors really the world knows that the revengeconspire about if they conspire at all riots were ordered by him. It is true is about one another. This may that a failure to protect law and seem less dramatic than conspiring order cannot be reason these days against government, but alas it is for the removal of a chief minister: the truth. Editors do not hold cloak very few if any would survive such a and dagger meetings and then, principle. But we are not discussing presto!, all headlines take a U-turn weak administration in Gujarat; we the next day. Each newspaper or

curious. It has begun to behave as if it is already in power. One can discount the swagger in the step; any Opposition force that marches into space vacated by the ruling party has the contemptuous bounce of a victor surprised by the enemy's retreat. Other things cannot be as easily discounted. The party has divided the country into two Indias. a Congress India with its own council of chief ministers, and the unfortunate rest. Sonia Gandhi is the Prime Minister of Congress India and the rest of the country must oblige her with the status and protocol due to such eminence. The conference of the Confederation of Indian Industries was indicative of this new approach. Mrs Sonia Gandhi would not play second fiddle. And so the outgoing president of the CII, Sanjeev Goenka, son of a Congress Raiva Sabha MP. R.P. Goenka, broke precedence and invited Mrs Gandhi to speak before the Prime Minister through a contrived plenum. Mrs Gandhi chose to underline her new eminence by announcing that the winds

politicised CII: don't count your chickens before they have hatched. A national election is the sum total of regional moods. This was

Sonia Gandhi at the newly-

proved once again in the last general elections, when the wave that lifted the Prime Minister to power could not stop a BJP defeat in his own state, Uttar Pradesh. The Congress is sanguine that the 14 states where it is in power will ensure a majority for the party in the next Parliament. Even mild political analysis exposes such naiveté. Leave out Madhva Pradesh and Maharashtra and the number of Parliament seats in the other dozen do not add up to the number sent by UP and Bihar alone. In all 14 states the Congress will pay the inevitable price of incumbency, and get fewer seats than it got in the last general elections. In four decisive states where the Congress is not in power, UP, Bihar, Bengal and Tamil Nadu, it has no chance of winning. This means that the Congress is not in the picture in around 200 seats of the Lok Sabha. In Andhra Pradesh, where the Congress should win, the

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

"Mir Zafar, the Uzbek and we"

This is in reference to Mr Tintin's comment on my letter.

I am in full agreement with the Transparency International report that, stands high (!) above all the other countries in the world from the viewpoint of widespread corruption. I accepted that report in shame, with my face down. But at that time I saw some Bangladeshis, who were staunch opponents of the then government, rejoiced over that report. In my view, they are the traitors.

I do not agree with the FEER report that Bangladesh is a cocoon of terror. In one place the report says, "...The overseas community, while concerned about increased violence, also seems to downplay the threat. ..." In a very short stay as only for three days, the FEER reporter could unearth the cocoon of terror in Bangladesh, which, the overseas communities, who reside in this country, cannot even smell!

We must stomach healthy criticism, but not the criticism based on false assumptions. Even if the report has some basis, then we should be ashamed, horrified and on our guard, not delighted.

The extremist evangelical Christian organisations in the USA enjoy more public support in that country

than the public supports now being enioved by the Jamaat-e-Islami party in Bangladesh. It does not mean that the USA has turned into a cocoon of terror.

Jamat-e-Islami openly and actively opposed the independence of Bangladesh. Till now they are not repentant of their past role during the Liberation War. After 30 years of liberation, this party has been able to share power. This has happened because of the bad governance the people of this country have experienced during the rule of the political party, which claims itself as a proliberation force In the 5th JS election Jamaat bagged

12.13 per cent of the total votes cast, while in the 7th JS election, only 8.61 per cent. These election results show that the popular support, what so ever it may be, for the party was on the wane. It is AL and BNP, who always keep this party in the main stream of politics. If these two parties can be true to their respective principles then no extremist party, in this country, will get ground under their feet. Faruque Hasan

Dhanmandi, Dhaka

Potka fish

Being a complete glutton I was very interested in Dr Rahaman's letter. I did not know that Potka fish are the same species as the puffer fish. I have always wanted to taste

Fugu. as the Japanese know it. but I've never had a chance and even then I'd doubt if anyone would let me try it. Apparently when prepared by master chefs, you get a tingly feeling on your lips and tongue from the minimal toxins left in the meat. My question to you doctor is, do we

have any recipes in Bangladeshi or Indian cuisine for potka fish? Historically was potka fish considered a delicacy in this region as it has been for thousands of years in China and Japan? As you said the poorer sections of society buy this fish, I'd imagine there is a Bangladeshi folk custom of preparing this fish.

Misleading propaganda

The Awami League is indulging in misleading propaganda on the portrait of Bangabandhu. It has not been banned by the government, but the legal obligation has been removed-- riahtly There are other national leaders

who cannot be ignored, even if not palatable to AL. For example, AL is silent on the blackout of General Osmany during its regime. Millions of citizens do not like it.

Bangabandhu is above party

politics, hence AL is interfering too much on this issue (as a proprietary item). There should be an apolitical national committee on such issues. The politicians are allowed too much freedom, and it has spoiled them. We voters are too polite! **A Mawaz**

Dhaka

Wastage of foreign exchange

The market is flooded with liberal imports of non-essential consumer goods from Asean, Saarc and other regions; resulting in waste of scarce foreign exchange. Many of these items are now manufactured in the country up to satisfactory standard. It is easy to meet the requirements of the newly rich, while some sources of such earnings are dubious. Imports should be middle-class oriented. We are exporting biscuits, but

the market is full of imported biscuits, which are not superior to ours. Same is the case with conserves. jams and jellies, and many fast food popular items. Fruit juices in small paper and plastic cartons are imported from thousands of miles away such as Indonesia, and sold at retail prices around taka ten to fifteen. The shipping cost of carrying 90 per cent water in the juice is almost half the retail price. Why not import the powder and bottle the drink locally? The import levies on imported raw materials and imported finished products should have a telling and deterrent effect. I have seen several shops where only imported goods are sold.

Economists classify goods into three major categories: essential, necessary, and luxury. The import and protective levies should be proportional, regardless of WTO stipulations and free market condition wrongly imposed on the DCs and LDCs, on the basis of opening the market.

Traders prefer consumers with fat purses. What is the rate of investment return on the large number of air-conditioned shopping complexes, which have come up in Dhaka? Quite a number of analysts in the newspapers suspect money laundering service in these investments: as the purchasing power of the majority of the shoppers is quite low, in a country where almost half the population live hovering around the poverty-line.

I visited some of these fantasia shopping complexes for windowshopping. I felt lonely due to lack of buying crowd there were more salespersons than customers! How can we afford these luxury markets at \$ 300 per capita income, which is supposed to be the average standard of living index, or whatever it is called?

The question arises whether Bangladeshi export goods can enter those exporting countries as easily as the imported items from these countries. There is no market review in the media. CAB is also silent on the implications. The coming budget should take care of these anomalies (especially trash imports).

Bangladesh does not breed terrorism

I am proud of my country. In my retired life I notice that some people make sweeping remarks about our culture and glorious past. Bangladesh is not a "nest for terror". We are a brave nation.

Unfortunately, the younger generations are not being taught at home or at educational institutions the basic concepts of virtue needed for the advancement of the society. We should work with a spirit of patriotism and upgrade the image of our country. Let it be the aim of all of

Abdul Ashraf Noor

Japanese modesty

through the decades has surpassed the total aid from the West by several times.

flow of Japanese aid to Bangladesh

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Japanese people are modest and polite as per traditional Asian cultural norms. Japanese people visiting Bangladesh or residing here for work should be encouraged to mix more freely with the natives and take active parts in public performances and appearances, especially in the non-formal sectors. The Japanese PR can easily be enhanced, regardless of the language barrier

The official aid is substantial, but the private investment climate has vet to match the generosity of the Japanese government. Very few factories of Japan have shifted to Bangladesh, compared to other developing countries in Asia. It is understood that Japanese mind is conservative and disciplined in approach and they decide policies on the basis of internal consensus. Abul M Ahmad Dhaka

Does anyone care about Palestine?

In 1948 Israel occupied a major part of Palestine to establish a Jew state with the help of the two world pow-According to the statement of the ers -- Britain and America. Since Finance Minister (April 22), the quiet then a lot of tragic incidents have

world leaders to free Palestine. But US, the supreme nuclear power, did not pay any heed to his request and what they did was nothing more than arranging some peace-talks over the years. And the other vetopowers never challenged USA. The Arab world is still silent. President Bush seems to be more interested in conflict than establish-

taken place. The PLO chairman

Yaseer Arafat sought help to other

ing peace in Palestine. The human rights organisations also centres round the US allies. We really do not know what waits for Palestine. In fact, no world power is concerned or sympathetic to the Palestinian Muslims. Md Mohse-ul-Gani

Raishahi

Not exhibition centre The Bangladesh-China Interna-

tional Convention Centre is NOT designed for exhibition and shows, which need huge open floor space for stalls and display. The recent computer show by

BCS did not have enough open

space for the show. Therefore exhibitions should not be held at this magnificent conference centre. There are proposed projects for

nternational exhibition centres. Its construction may be expedited. **A Husnain**