

Political cadres are dirtying the Government's name

Where does one end and another begin?

AW and order appears to be gradually drifting beyond control. This doesn't apply to professional crimes. Dhaka's crime scene in particular is blurred by the identities not just of the criminals and the victims but that of the political parties as well. The recent incident where two groups of BNP cadres fought it out with guns near Dhaka College leaving one dead and others injured followed by arrests of JCD cadres makes this situation illustrative particularly.

The exact number of people killed in the last few days may not be easy to count but the fact remains that the death rate is climbing quicker than the mercury. What seems even more disconcerting is that almost all the criminals that are arrested or apprehended carry one political identity or other.

A lot of this has to do with what the public perceives as the Government. The essential neutrality of this construct is critical for the management of the state and breaking down of this image is a major blow to this process. However, internecine fighting amongst the parties especially the government party has enhanced this crisis. The party workers are now turning the situation scary and the ultimate blame for this is coming on to the government. Thus the political face of the administration is damaging the neutral face of the governing as an institution.

It's true that many criminals will use political parties to commit criminal acts and given the present mood of the country, this is an excellent strategy for any criminal. But as these majority criminals belong to the party holding power at any given time, the matter is seen not as being done by criminal elements but by the members of the party running the government. Hence, the blame ultimately falls on the government.

It's in everyone's interest that the political parties especially the party in power pay urgent attention to this issue. Their cadres and their criminalisation make the government a party to it. And that is making the situation dark for the rulers as well as the ruled.

Rabi Nyogi

Last of the rare breed gone

T's four days since he died, and the more we think of his saga of sacrifice and dedication we realise what has gone out of our lives. Hence, this tribute to his memory. We have lost an exemplary link to the past, the last perhaps of the breed that had all but vanished before him. We mourn his passing away.

A gritty revolutionary fighting the British he was condemned to the Andamans. And on his return from that heartless prison-life, he was to join the communist movement remaining wedded to it till his very last day. After the partition of the subcontinent, he associated himself with popular movements in the then East Pakistan. He took part in the Liberation Struggle against the Pakistani forces, and later on, in the anti-autocracy upsurge against Ershad.

Most of his youth was spent in movements and struggles of both political and economic nature. Altogether, he suffered incarceration for 33 years in a lifetime of 93 years. Indeed, a record of selfless service worth emulating!

Consistently and uncompromisingly dedicated to the cause of socio-economic emancipation of people around him, he was a living legend of politics of idealism which is almost nowhere to be seen these days. A true patriot and son of the soil, he clung to Sherpur, his hometown till he breathed his last. He could easily rest on the oars of his laurels retreating into the private passivity of life. But no, he chose to remain active and useful to the last drop of his energy working as the Sherpur correspondent of the daily Sangbad.

Nyogi never allowed his beliefs to be undermined by opportunism. He led a simple, austere and principled life that left his three children well-educated and on their feet. His unflinching dedication and service to the cause of the society bequeaths an inspiring example for future generations. Our condolences to the members of his bereaved family.

M.J. AKBAR

In politics, the window of opportunity has very temperamental shutters. Or, if you want to shift the metaphor to a door, opportunity does knock when it wants to, but it does not keep hanging around waiting for you to complete your ablutions. If you do not respond, opportunity simply transfers its attention to someone with better response systems. Fickle thing, opportunity.

At some point during the last fortnight, enough political parties could have got together and served as a magnet to break the ruling National Democratic Alliance and possibly even dislodge the government. Consultations did take place, and once again agreement seemed to be growing on Jyoti Basu as the head of an alternative alliance that could induce the TDP, DMK and many of the variety of Dals out of the BJP's embrace. However, these parties were ready to hop out of one government only if they could hop into another. No one was interested in another general election. Sonia Gandhi spiced the idea. The Congress put it out that it would rather wait and make Sonia Gandhi its Prime Minister rather than join or support a coalition under Basu or anyone else. They say that a week is a long time in politics. Sonia Gandhi has just gifted Atal Behari Vajpayee about a hundred weeks more of power.

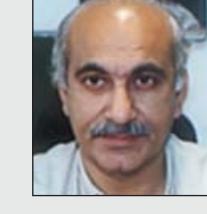
This is not the first time that she has been so generous. Cast your mind back to the first moment of what might be called the Assembly letter of thanks as he went to Lahore, pushed through a reform budget and seized the political high ground. Sonia Gandhi decided to strike when he was on high ground after having left him when he was in the dumps. Vajpayee lost his government in Parliament and won it back from the electorate. The gods could not have timed the general election better for him.

Waiting once again on Assembly euphoria, Sonia Gandhi has chosen to repeat herself, with one extra twist in the story. She has decided to personalise the battle between the Congress and the BJP into a battle between Sonia Gandhi and Atal Behari Vajpayee.

I have no idea who is responsible for such naivete; it is quite possible that this is her own decision. Someone should tell her a simple and even stark truth.

In any confrontation between the BJP and the Congress, the Congress is likely to win. That is why the Congress wins Assembly

The 3M Plan



M.J. AKBAR

Syndrome. Sonia Gandhi was still new in her job. The halo behind her coiffured head could almost be photographed. This was in the "pre-272" era of Congress history. On one magic day in autumn the Congress swept to power in five states. The NDA looked hobbled. A push was all that it needed to topple and Jayalalitha was ready to push. Sonia Gandhi, suffering from bad advice and poor judgement, decided to wait. The Prime Minister should have sent her a personal

elections and could continue doing so.

In any confrontation between Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi will lose. It is a no-contest. In fact the battle may not even be fair. Mohun Bagan may be a champion in Calcutta but it is not fair to expect it to defeat Manchester United. The two are not in the same league. Leave aside experience and political skill, Vajpayee is an Indian and Sonia Gandhi is not. A passport can give you citizenship. To be

Assembly between Amritsar and Calcutta.

It was in 1971 that Indira Gandhi became a winner in her own right, and only after she had changed the nation's agenda and placed the poor at the very top of our national concerns. Indira Gandhi became synonymous with hope, and no political muscle can be stronger than that. That muscle wasted in less than five years. When elections were held in 1977 the Congress was erased, literally, all across the main

nothing that the poor can believe in. Her only Unique Selling Proposition is that she is better than the BJP. This works, but only up to a point. The minorities might be motivated by their intense fear and anger to accept this as enough reason. But that does not add up to victory in a general election.

There are indications, on the other hand, that Vajpayee knows what he wants to do over the next fifty weeks. He has begun by rebuilding his vote base in Uttar

process. Modi cannot govern Gujarat any more. That is obvious from every day's front page. If you leave him too long in Ahmedabad no one may be able to govern Gujarat in the foreseeable future. The legacy of hate, poison and distrust he has fomented would be too much for anyone to clean up.

There is a third, discernible side of the emerging Vajpayee plan. In fact, you could call it the 3M Plan: Mayawati, Modi and Musharraf. The dialogue between India and Pakistan is being quietly resurrected. India will soon send a high commissioner to Islamabad; Pakistan has left its envoy in place in Delhi. The second track of deliberations, by which governments test the waters without the need to commit themselves, has been reactivated. Vajpayee has chosen to visit Kazakhstan for a summit at which Pervez Musharraf will be present.

There is a qualifying "if", of course. But he has got the opportunity to revive his government only because it survived.

Sonia Gandhi prevented Jyoti Basu from becoming Prime Minister in 1999 and sank in the general elections that inevitably followed. Those who do not understand the past are condemned to repeat it.

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BYLINE

There is a third, discernible side of the emerging Vajpayee plan. In fact, you could call it the 3M Plan: Mayawati, Modi and Musharraf. The dialogue between India and Pakistan is being quietly resurrected. India will soon send a high commissioner to Islamabad; Pakistan has left its envoy in place in Delhi. The second track of deliberations, by which governments test the waters without the need to commit themselves, has been reactivated. Vajpayee has chosen to visit Kazakhstan for a summit at which Pervez Musharraf will be present.

Pradesh, and quelled a minor revolt to hand over power to Mayawati in return for an electoral understanding that will add a new chunk to his party's vote. True, dealing with Mayawati is like making friends with dynamite; you never know when it will blow up in your face. But Vajpayee has obviously calculated the risk and taken it.

That was the easy part. Narendra Modi has done incredible damage to the BJP's credibility. The hawks (young ones, I gather) who protected Modi against Vajpayee's own judgment had the vision of the hawk. It specialised in the immediate kill. It is not famous for perspective. Vajpayee is now faced with one of the most difficult challenges of his political career. He has to reinvent his own government. This is not going to be possible through a tickle here and a shuffle there. He has to present a fresh visage and purpose, and recreate a rationale for his power. I would not be surprised if Modi goes in the

artery of Indian politics, that highway between Amritsar and Calcutta. It is a moot point whether Indira Gandhi could have won re-election in 1984-85 after the havoc of Operation Bluestar. (Curious fact: two architects of Bluestar, Arun Singh and Arun Nehru, are now with the BJP.) All the family charisma and his own youth could not save Rajiv Gandhi from defeat in 1989. His tragic assassination in 1991 tilted the balance just enough for the Congress for it to become the largest party and rule for five years.

A party as wedded to dynasty as the Congress will find this hard to accept publicly. Privately Congress leaders see much more clearly. They know that the Nehru-Gandhi family has been an asset to the party. But this asset is not a magic wand. The circumstances have to be right for the asset to pay dividends. Would even Nehru's magic have worked if the general elections of 1962 had been held after the China debacle? 1967 would have happened in 1962. Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister in January 1966 but in her first electoral test, in 1967, she barely scraped through in Parliament and lost every single

You cannot become Indira Gandhi by wearing a sari in the same fashion; you have to represent what she did. So far at least Sonia Gandhi symbolises

Lessons to learn'



M.J. ZAHEDI

because they were policemen. Policemen have never been victims of targeted attack in Pakistan. Then, there was a rocket attack on a group of American forces in Miran Shah, a town in interior Sindh.

The suicide bombing in Karachi is ominous because this is the first case of suicide bombing in the country. A commentator in daily The News said: "It means that there are people within us who have such a deep hatred for our government that they are willing to take the

hotel near the blast site left Pakistan on the first available flight. Who knows if any other cricket team will come to this country in the near future? Other foreigners working on different other projects would also probably leave. This will hurt the operations of multinationals in Pakistan. More importantly, chances of foreign investment in the country become slimmer: who would like to invest their money in a place where life and limb are not

led war on international terrorism". Another motive, it said, might be to reverse a positive development lately of foreigners of all sorts -- investors, parliamentarians, sailors and soldiers and occasional tourists -- shedding their inhibitions and visiting this country. This was an encouraging development and seemed to be an acknowledgment of the bold decisions the Musharraf government had taken to crack down on terrorism. However, the

the May 8 tragedy.

There have been criticisms of the police and intelligence agencies in the context of the calamity. Dawn said the security provided for the French and Pakistan navy personnel was, on the face of it, routine. Perhaps the authorities were lulled into a false sense of immunity stemming from the legal ban on militant parties. Undeniably, the intelligence agencies failed to keep potential suspects and groups under surveillance. It hoped that the

LETTER FROM KARACHI

A future strategy to deal with this curse must take into account the direness of the challenge the government faces and the political will and investigative skills that are needed to give the citizens the peace and security they have not known for a long time. The government should realize that terrorists are now found in every corner of the country; they are not only in the big cities or in the tribal areas but everywhere.

extraordinary step of sacrificing their life in order to hurt it." The French were targeted because they were Westerners and the desire was to cause maximum damage to Pakistan's image. No doubt, the last objective was achieved! The shockwaves from this carnage are echoing all around the world.

There are going to be consequences too. One immediate aftermath was that the New Zealand cricket team who were staying in a

safe!

According to newspapers, police are still groping in the dark although they are said to have found clues to the ownership of the car (although the owner, who is said to be the third owner, is missing). The motive behind the incident is also a subject of dispute: dawn thinks the driver of the car that caused the blast was working for a group determined to make its fierce opposition to Pakistan's role in the context of the US-

murder of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl and the slaughter of the French naval experts have sent a chilling message across the world. The message is clear: foreigners should visit this country at their peril. Indeed, the paper asked, how can a country be safe for foreign visitor when it is not safe for its own people? But it goes to the credit of the Chirac government that it has decided to

hour the 1994 agreement despite

agreement with some intelligence agencies for training Pakistani sleuths in modern investigative methods will prove helpful in tracking down the criminals behind the present wave of terror.

No doubt the new wave of terrorism is a challenge to the Musharraf government. It owes to the people of Pakistan, said a Dawn editorial, to prove by deeds and not mere words that it is capable of rooting out terrorism. Some extremist

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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Home Minister's comment

I read in disbelief the Home Minister's comments about the death of the 20-month-old baby in Badda (11th May). What is his point? If it is that incidents such as this are unavoidable because Allah wishes them, then it appears to me that his job is redundant. Why is he feels that 'none can do anything about' crimes such as these. Is he then saying that murderers are simply carrying out the wish of Allah? In that case, let's do away with the entire judicial system, since we can't hold any murderer accountable for his

exalted philosophy can save our poor country from spending, every year, a huge sum of money to provide state security to the dignitaries, such as for the President, the former President, the Prime Minister, the Opposition Leader and the Home Minister himself.

The Home Minister has rightly mentioned that life and death are in the hands of Allah and none can do anything about them. So, what is the need of providing security to the state VIPs? Let us forget the security of the lay people.

Faruque Hasan

Dharmundi, Dhaka

"Home Minister is right"

Reference to Ms. Fatema Nasreen's letter (May 13)

I am appalled at the crime and terrorism situation in Bangladesh and the Home Minister's comments - but what appalled me even more, was Ms. Nasreen's comment!

Is she sane? Can she say the same things if her brother/husband/son or father had been a victim? I am ashamed even to think that our society is nurturing people like her willingly or unwillingly. When will we wake up? Haven't we all hibernated long enough?

Tess

Chittagong

It's saddening to note how people reacted to the statement of the Home Minister who allegedly issued

a 'controversial' statement on the death of Nausheen.

The newspapers reported that Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury went to Nausheen's house and consoled her parents saying, "Life and death is in the hands of Allah." I don't see any problem in this. What else can really console the bereaved parents other than this statement?

Would "the police will catch the murderer and punish him" would have been more of an effect of consolation? No. The Home Minister, whose son also died an unnatural death, is in a much better position than most of us to know what to say to a father who has just lost his daughter.

Bystander

Banani, Dhaka

Madrasas breed terrorism!

Awami League and BNP are two different political parties who possess two different diversified opinions and social values and political ethics but the fact is they both originate from one platform that is Bangladesh. May I ask the honourable ex-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina why she is putting all her party efforts to tag the country as a Taliban training camp? Recently the ex-Finance Minister wrote a letter in

The Daily Star providing some weak evidences of Taliban roots in Chittagong.

According to his allegations if one investigates it would come out as Madrasas (religious teaching schools) where the students are taught the holy Quran and the lessons of our Prophet Mohammad (SM) have turned into the breeding ground of terrorism. Does it mean that Quran gives freedom and license to terrorism?

One can easily understand that these are baseless rumours, which are designed to give the present government some hard time. Could this be a part of honest politics, which are supposed to be for the benefit of the country and its people or should one call it a self-actualisation game to thrive for power and money?

There are many ways of working for true development and avoiding the path of destruction and ruins. We all hope that AL will join the parliament sessions and discuss all sorts of global and domestic issues to find positive and peaceful and acceptable solutions.

A concerned citizen

Dhaka

Unfair Japan scholarship selection

Japan, according to its bilateral agreement with Bangladesh invited Bangladeshi people for Japan Development Scheme (JDS) scholarship to pursue Masters course in Japan for the year 2002-2003. According to the guideline,

there were four stages of selection. Each stage was on screening basis. Candidate who failed to pass in one stage was not allowed to proceed to the subsequent stage. The first, second and the third stage were fully conducted by Japanese people.

After the first and second selection there was a rigorous interview named technical interview at the third stage conducted by a Japanese professor in Bangladesh in the respective subjects. At the technical interview or third selection a few number of people passed but more than the number of scholarship. Then Economic Relation Division (ERD) took the final or fourth selection.

During the final selection senior level government officials were engaged to take the interview. The final selection was a bizarre event. The government people engaged there had no expertise to select candidate from a wide range of subjects. So on the basis