

DHAKA SATURDAY AUGUST 10, 2002

Murder of a schoolboy A poignant pointer of diminishing

human values

HEN the kidnappers, and eventually killers, of 13-year-old Khandaker Shihab Ahmed were sentenced to death after a speedy trial, there was a general feeling that the verdict would be exemplary as well as deterrent to such heinous act of crime in the future. To prove how wrong we had been, came the murder of seven-year-old Rubaiyet Ahmed. The only son to his parents, and the loving brother to his three sisters was kidnapped by people he had known for long. In fact, the mastermind of the abduction, and eventually the killing, was none other than his own cousin. Rubaiyet went out with his cousin in good faith, for a walk he was told, a walk he never came back from. His cousin and his accomplices took the little boy on a boat ride and as he went to sleep, tired and hungry, they strangled him and threw the body into the Shitalakhya. While the killers have come clean to the police about the crime they committed the body of little Rubaiyet is yet to be found.

First it was Shihab and now it is Rubaiyet. Two schoolgoing little boys, in whose little world suspicion did not exist. Everyone they knew, to them, were people they can have complete trust in. Unfortunately, both were proved wrong in the cruellest way. Greed sometimes overwhelms innate human quality of love and compassion, they learnt the truth with their short-lived lives. Their deaths, meanwhile, have posed a number of questions to our collective consciousness. What kind of a society do we live in, where young men in their teens and twenties strangle little boys to death and either chop their bodies into pieces and dump into manholes or simply dump their bodies into river just because their kidnap plans had gone awry? What kind of a society is it where young people think crime is the easiest way to make money?

We are confident that police will get to the bottom of Rubaiyet's murder as they did in Shihab's case. We are also confident that the court of law would be quick to mete out exemplary punishment to the killers of the seven-year old. What we are not confident is whether the acts of justice would mend the holes the killing has left in the social fabric.

Road repair joke

Adhocism will not do

HEN mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka lately announced a crash programme to do up some dangerously potholed stretches of 20 major city streets he sounded almost messianic. Or shall we say it was music to the ears of thousands of city dwellers who had been hitherto cursing their lot while using these scarred, undulating roads as pedestrians and commuters? Near the intersections, the spacious portions resembled either the moon's surface or marshy rural roads and abandoned countryside maidan. With the denizens wondering why must the streets of the metropolis be far worse than the roads in the countryside, let alone the interdistrict highways, their patience was clearly running out. Yes given the rains beating down on the poorly maintained streets with atrocious drainage system of the city, it was an off-season wish to be expecting any enduring work on the heavily damaged roads. That's why there was in appreciative sense of relief at the mayor's assurance that, while for the present there would be temporary repair work, as soon as the rainy season ended, the roads will be durably done up and carpeted. The transient undertaking was also necessitated by a concern that the 'patch-work' could at least stem any further dilapidation. But in reality how has the temporary repair work gone? The brick bats, stone chips and bitumen that the contractors had promised to fill in the potholes with were either sparsely used or were of extremely poor quality themselves. After that extremely perfunctory work what has happened is that with each heavy splash of rains the road stretches are gaping even more than before. After all, the potholes had to be contoured along the sides to hold the gravel. That's why after being rain-washed they would look even more scarred. The lesson we ought to draw from all this is adhocism cannot do with the city streets gone so terribly derelict over the years. Beneath every city street perhaps is the hidden tale of scandalous corruption that must stand in stark contrast to the high standard of construction demonstrated by the highways built by international companies. We are saying all this because after the rainy season big road development projects are going to be undertaken. As a rule, we must allocate adequate money for maintenance of city streets. This must be done in conjunction with an improvement made to the waterlogging situation.

US policy towards Iraq swings like a pendulum

HARUN UR RASHID

ASHINGTON appears to be determined to change the regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq. All the statements emanating from the Department of Defence point out to an unmistakable indication that plans are afoot to change the regime in Baghdad, often leaking battle plans and intelligence assessments to some of the US media. What task could not be accomplished by Bush Sr. in 1991, Bush Jr. seems resolute to complete the "unfinished business" in Iraq.

In recent days Iraq, sensing danger, took two diplomatic moves. First was to send a letter to the Secretary General of the UN inviting the Chief UN Inspector Hans Blix (a former Swedish Minister and a former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency) to Baghdad for "technical talks" on UN inspection. The second was to extend an invitation to the members of the US Congress to Irag to visit any place they would wish to find out weapons of mass destruction However both offers were

promptly dismissed by the US as stalling tactics on the part of Iraq. The Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called the Iraqi move as a "joke". The UN Security Council discussed the contents of the letter and the UN Secretary General on 6 August told the media that he demanded clarification of Irag's invitation to discuss the resumption of arms inspection. He also hinted that Iraq had to comply with the earlier Security Council resolutions



IKRAM SEHGAL writes from Karach

HE Bhutto family functions on the premise that most Pakistanis have verv short memories, unfortunately they are quite right. Ms Benazir was the first major politician to welcome the military regime's dispatching of Mian Nawaz Sharif on Oct 12, 1999. The PPP Chairperson finally realized that was going nowhere, the military regime being in no mood to drop corruption charges against her or her husband, Asif Zardari. Frustrated in the hope that on the basis of "an enemy of an enemy is a friend", the military regime's animosity towards Mian Nawaz Sharif would force political compromise with her. Ms Benazir did a smart U-turn. transforming her politics into virulent

laying down the requirements of the UN inspections (i.e. unfettered inspection to any place at any time within the country). There are reports that Iraq wants UN inspections subject to conditions that the UN sanctions are lifted and inspections done within a time bound frame

Let us now briefly examine as to how Iraq poses a threat to global peace and security. It appears that a case has been

allegedly established to link Iraq with the attacks of September 11 in

the US. It is alleged that meetings

were held between the leading

hijacker Mohammad Atta and Iragi

intelligence. There was also an

allegation that Baghdad would

supply weapons to Osama Bin

Laden (if alive) or his supporters

with weapons of mass destruction.

Like any other dictators, President

Saddam may be a problem to the

West but he is not a problem

because of terrorism. The alleged

unsubstantiated link of Irag with the

Al-Qaida network, many political

observers believe, is to prepare

public opinion in the US for another

regime is perceived to be danger-

ous and a challenge to the security

of the free world. In early June.

on Indian Parliament, harbouring

and sponsoring terrorism, etc. To

retain the loyalty of her party work-

ers while in self-imposed exile, she

has kept a barrage of misleading

propaganda going, the latest being

that she would return to Pakistan by

special aircraft on August 14 and

fight the elections despite the elec-

tion laws. This brinkmanship may be

brilliant politically, the fact remains

that other than being forced to

knuckle down to the existing reality

of the military regime's ground rules

Secondly, President Saddam's

assault on Iraq

have waited too long". This implies that Iraq will be a threat in future and that cannot be permitted. In this statement deterrence and retaliation as means of self-defence employed during the Cold War era have been thrown out of the window. It has been argued this new doctrine of pre-emptive intervention comes within the ambit of Article 51 of the UN Charter on the right of self-

defence. Critics to the new doctrine maintain that pre-emptive strike depends on someone's predictions and

on Iraq could inflame Muslim anger throughout the region at a time when Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been in doldrums Iragi regime is no doubt totalitar-

expressed his fears that an attack

ian and the President's ways of maintaining his grip on power has been rooted in a mix of both brutality and nationalistic fervour since he took power in July 1979. No doubt the Iraqi regime has been ruthless in suppressing all its opposition forces. Its brutish treatment towards

BOTTOM LINE

to Baghdad. In terms of the strength of military hardware Irag was much zones" over Iraq and political isolathe West?

Iraq used chemical weapons in the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ite

March 1988 against the Kurds in

Halabja killing about 5000 Kurds,

the US appeared to have remained

unconcerned. In February 1989, the

Assistant Secretary of State John

Kelly flew to Baghdad and report-

edly told President Saddam

Hussein that "You are a source for

moderation in the region and the US

wants to broaden her relationship

pean Union seem to be uneasy to

extend the war on terrorism to Iraq.

In Germany the Chancellor of

Exchequer Gerhard Schroeder is

reported to have lent no support to

any unilateral attack by the US on

Irag and has made armed confron-

tation with Irag as an issue in elec-

tion campaign at the ensuing

national election in September in

Germany. He has told the voters

that "a vote for him is a vote against

war in Irag" and he hoped that this

Many countries within the Euro-

with Iraq".

during that time to supply weapons stances prevailing in the region. ter Tony Blair appears to have given more dangerous in the 80s than it is tacit support to the US on its military now. The UN sanctions, the "no-fly tion have made Iraq weaker than it was in the past. A question may be asked that if Iraq was tolerated in the 80s with much more menacing weapons, why is it a threat now to

had been no hesitation for the West

It is interesting to note that when

attack on Iraq, the newly appointed Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams, the head of 70 million members of the world-wide Anglican Communion, is reported to have stated that he would only support military action against Irag which the UN had cleared. The former British Chief of Defence Staff Field Marshal Lord Brammall reportedly said that Britain risked being dragged into a "very, very messy" and lengthy war if it supported a US military assault on Iraq. The members of Parliament from all political parties urged the British Prime Minister to convene a

The Daily Star

"unwise" in the light of the circum-

Although the British Prime Minis-

special session of Parliament to discuss the wider ramifications of Britain's involvement in war against Irag with the US. Political observers believe that

no country, however strong and militarily powerful, has licence to attack someone else's country just because the leadership is not liked. Rather the powerful country is supposed to be taking a lead on the moral issues of the world. Another question is hotly debated as to the consequences after the regime change in Irag. If President Saddam Hussein is toppled there is no certainty that security threat to peace will disappear from this region.

It is argued that the relationship between Iraq and the US is similar to that of a pendulum because in the 80s the US perceived Irag a "moderate" nation and now they consider the regime with the same President, although weaker than before, a "threat to human civilisations". For the sake of credibility, an evil is to be considered an evil irrespective of situations and time. This element seems to be missing in Iraq's case.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

in the south had been deplorable. It

is argued that Irag is not the only

result in the pointless killing of many country which adopts such measures within its territory Political observers believe that Iraq's acquisition of chemical and biological weapons (weapons of mass destruction) is prompted mainly to counter Israel's possession of not only chemical and biological weapons but also of nuclear weapons. Other countries in the Middle East are also likely to acquire weapons of mass destruction to balance the military might of Israel because the production of chemical and biological weapons is cheap and easier. These weapons are called "poor man's atomic bomb". Furthermore Iraq is not the only country which possesses biological and chemical weapons. According to a media report, there are at least ons in their arsenals. tary action against Irag? King

pacifist majority. The UN Secretary General called any attack on Iraq as

25 countries that have these weap-

slogan would appeal to Germany's Iraq fought war with Iran (1980-88) with the Western backing. There

Abdullah of Jordan during his recent visit to London and Washington

elections has seen it lose ground.

dropping to its lowest ebb in 1997.

More importantly, one does not see

young faces in PPP, only the old

guards remain, but the Jiyalas do

remain faithful! In 1993 a trio of

generals placed in critical slots

under the Moin Qureshi caretaker

ist forces cannot be brushed away. including PML (N), PML (Q-A), PML (F) etc they also have safe family seats which they will certainly win whatever the circumstances. As far as NWFP and Balochistan are concerned, PPP is in real danger of not even getting a single seat for the first time in its history. NWFP is estranged PPP leader Sherpao's territory and while his faction of the PPP may not get the majority, alongwith either the ANP or PML's

maior leaders are in PML (Q-A). these individual personalities will win their own constituencies. Shahbaz will have to toe a fine line between family preferences and political realities. While it is too early to erase the bad blood, particularly with the Chaudhrys of Gujrat, the PML factions will do well by having seat adjustments, primarily on the format that none of the factions would oppose MNA/MPA elected to the 1997 Assemblies. On those seats rendered vacant because of

have votes but not many seats having some political nuisance value. Imran's gray area is a substantial number of youth between the ages of 18 and 26 can be seen supporting him, how they actually vote on Election Day is another matter; can Imran convert his charisma into seats? This applies to the urban rather than the rural youth. Having no political heavyweights can be an advantage because our youth is turned off from the veteran corruption-laden political machinery

of vestervears One cannot write off the religious parties despite their Afghan and subsequent failure to pass muster in the streets when the chips are down. They will always have NA seats, in the NWFP and Balochistan Assemblies they will be able to be part of the ruling governments. In a close contest they may even make a difference in the Centre. According to Ms Benazir she returns in four days time on 14 August, is this another one in her series of bluffs or is it for real? For reasons of "national security", corruption, etc the military hierarchy is not enamoured of her. The mood among the rank and file, particularly the younger lot is rather more hostile, they have been facing the enemy on the borders while she has been staunchly pro-Indian on every conceivable media channel for the past several months. Ms Benazir does not have a corner on becoming emotional on various issues, Sepoy Nathu Khan once aroused on issues of patriotism can quite be dangerous, to the point of being lethal.

regime manipulated PPP's forming of a coalition to make the government. Has anyone yet explained how and why the MQM and its 14 seats were made to boycott the NA elections in 1993, and why in 18 other faction, they can cobble As i SEE IT

According to Ms Benazir she returns in four days time on 14 August, is this another one in her series of bluffs or is it for real? For reasons of "national security", corruption, etc the military hierarchy is not enamoured of her. The mood among the rank and file, particularly the younger lot is rather more hostile, they have been facing the enemy on the borders while she has been staunchly pro-Indian on every conceivable media channel for the past

thousands and policies that balance human lives against desired outcomes call for careful, critical weighing up of the probable outcomes, not just invoking of simplistic right of pre-emptive military intervention. It is argued that the large-scale preemptive action by the US in Vietnam in the 60s was based on the muchinvoked "domino theory" and on predictions about the outcome that overlooked the negative impact of that war on Cambodia and certainly did not envisage the final withdrawal of the US from Saigon in not so comfortable circumstances in 1975. It may be noted that Iraqi regime appears to pose no threat to its neighbours and they do not wish to

get involved with another war with Iraq. If Iraq is so dangerous, why don't the neighbours support mili-

Political observers believe that no country, however strong and militarily powerful, has licence to attack someone else's country just because the leadership is not liked. Rather the powerful country is supposed to be taking a lead on the moral issues of the world. Another question is hotly debated as to the consequences after the regime change in Iraq. If President Saddam Hussein is toppled there is no certainty that security threat to peace will disappear from this region.

predictions are fallible. A wrong

prediction, according to them, might

animal, she gave the appearance of keeping back channels open to the COAS, mainly to shore up the morale of her increasingly demoralized supporters who were expecting some relief in Nawaz's ouster. When the military regime denied any such contact, she declared "war" on the

opposition. A consummate political

For the past eight months Ms Benazir has been assailing the defenders, synchronizing her attacks on our men in uniform in line with India's contention, i.e. Pakistan Army is to blame for cross-border terrorism across the LOC, the attack

several months.

for politics in Pakistan, she has succumbed to internal pressure within PPP forcing her to nominate Makhdoom Amin Fahim as the head of a newly created Parliamentary entity of the PPP. Her choice as rubber-stamp was Aftab Shahban Mirani. Winking at the military regime for sometime, she then tried international pressure to stare them out, and has now blinked.

Ms Benazir's father exploded the myth in 1970 that Pakistan was the preserve of veteran political forces, mostly feudals, and there was no room for Johnny-cum-lately upstarts in the Pakistani political process. Thirty years later his daughter is trying desperately to project another myth, that PPP will sweep the other parties like chaff in the October elections. PPP is a major national party, about that one should not have any doubt but it is far from being the political force it was in the 1970 elections, every subsequent

critical urban-rural seats, the electoral position changed after midnight from favouring PML (N) to PPP? I hold no brief for Mian Nawaz Sharif but the fact remains that PML (N) was cheated out of making the government in 1993

While Ms Benazir represents the most potent of political forces in South Asia, the family personality cult, the PPP continues to have very fine and capable politicians who can win their individual seats in their own independent capacities. Within interior Sindh, PPP remains a very strong political entity and will certainly win a majority of the seats in both the NA and PA elections. In the Sindh urban area, they are still no match for the MQM, which incidentally was the only party to conduct party polls in an organized and transparent manner. It was a treat to watch the democratic process, one hopes that their militancy will remain within bounds. The Sindhi national-

Punjab is the real battleground and the appointment of Shahbaz Sharif in place of Mian Nawaz Sharif as President PML (N) has drastically changed the political dynamics. PPP depends upon individual political heavyweights to win their own constituencies, particularly in Southern Punjab. The PPP was relying on the PML remaining fractured among ego lines; for sometime it was a political reality, with Shahbaz around it will not remain so.

What PML (N) should have done in 1999 (and even earlier) they have done now. Mian Nawaz Sharif making way for his brother. A very nice man. Mian Sahib was a disaster as a Sher Shah Suri, known more for his making the GT Road but who really conceived and implemented a superb administration. As Chief Minister Puniab, Shahbaz did an excellent job and thus has a potent vote bank. The problem is that the

together the Provincial Government. attrition due to electoral losses disqualification, deaths, etc there could be give and take. With seat adjustment PML will be by far the strongest grouping in Punjab. With the help of ANP-PPP Sherpao combine in NWFP and MQM in Sindh, they can easily form the Federal Government and the Governments of Punjab and NWFP. The PPP will certainly have the best chance of making a government in Sindh but they will be hard put to do so in the face of determined challenge from a coalition of MQM. PML factions, the Sindh nationalist parties and independents.

Important political forces like Awami National Party (ANP) and Muttahida Quami Mahaz (MQM) will get significant number of seats. enough to make them king-makers but not enough for them to be kings themselves. Of the newcomers.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

"Hearty news for heart patients"

Your report "Hearty news for heart patients" (15.7.02) motivated me to write this letter

I was in Sikder Hospital for nearly a month and underwent bypass surgery. Because of my age (68) and eating habit, there were multiple blocks; low and irregular pulse and the kidneys were not functioning properly. Thankfully all the problems were tackled efficiently and I was discharged exactly a week after the surgery in the best of condition considering the circumstances

While in the Hospital I marvelled that such an institution existed in Dhaka. Because we are only aware of the abattoirs called DMCH and Suhrawardy. But in Sikder Hospital it was a different story. Clean and hygienic surroundings was a welcome sight. The cardiac, anaesthetic and surgery teams oozed confidence and efficiency and I would exhort patients not to be put off by their youthfulness

The Hospital is of course not

responsible for the tannery smell (no problem once you are inside), life

but the problem is that the roads of the area are really in a bad shape and the Bund road is gradually being converted into a chaotic truck stand. The government must take steps to improve the overall condition of the area. When an institution like Sikder is a reality in Dhaka, all those who go abroad for such treatment now should think twice. S Sikander ahmed R K Mission Road, Dhaka

On dengue

Omar Khasru's brilliant article on dengue and the government's lackadaisical approach (Daily Star, August 7) is only a reminder of how deep we are sinking in the rut and muck.

The 'pie in the sky' monorail did not take into consideration the civic sense of our people who are apt to urinate from above as they do at the stadium. This is neither a dig at the common people nor an attempt to ridicule their abject poverty. After all, we are responsible for denying

them the right to the very basics in Projects like Monorail and Bullet

Train are bonanzas for 'hari looters' as is evident from the unfeasible Jamuna Bridge. It was more viable to have 50 or 100 more ferries than build a bridge whose pay back period can never overtake the debt servicing and capital repaymen Hafiz Siddigi

Dhaka

'New flag law'

With reference to the above news item (August 7) it appears that no party can tolerate the sentiment of the others. They try to close all peaceful avenues of expressing the sentiment, even if it is the tragic death of a dear leader

No wonder the hartal culture will live for ever.

MAH Dhaka

Bappi murder

The memory of poor Shihab is still fresh in our minds. Yet, similar

incident occurred again! Immature, teenage boys dream about easy money, kidnap someone else's precious child and then kill the victim mercilessly after not getting their demanded ransom.

We need to teach our next generation to be more realistic. They need to know that the only way to make good money is to work hard. The only way to stop these kinds of kidnappings and killings is to immediately give exemplary punishment so that every one feels the dire consequences of the heinous crime. May be public punishment is good for our country where rape, killing, hooliganism and all other forms of crime is ever increasing. I know that people will say that public punishment is inhuman, but may be that's the only way to get back our humanity!

Mohammad Sadique Hossain Dhaka

Tomi Miah and Bengali adventurers

It's nice to know from Mr. Sirajul Ali Lopez, had revolted against the Islam's letter captioned "Let us Portuguese and handed over the

Bengal.

Chittagong.

According to Ronald Svensson,

a Swedish naval historian, at the

peak of imperial days, one hundred

thousand 'Lashkars' or naval infan-

serve in the British naval ships.

They lost their jobs after the mutiny

of 1858. At that time many Bengali

'Khalashis' or sailors used to serve

in Portuguese ships as well. One of

the leaders of the 'Khalashis', John

remember Tomi Miah's predecescontrol of St. Helena--an island in Dhanmand, Dhaka sors too" that Lord Liverpool, a the South Atlantic, to the British. former Prime Minister of Britain, The island is now inhabited by was a part Bengali. It may be interpeople of Bengali origin. esting, for the readers, to know that It is said that the present another ex-prime minister of that

Malaysian Prime Minister, country, John Major, can also trace Mohammad Mahathir, who has back a part of his ancestry to brought economic miracle to that country may also trace back his Abraham Ball, the grand father ancestry to Chittagong

of John Major, was born in Kolkata, It is also said that the present of an unknown British soldier and a population of Maldives is the girl of House of Roy of Fultala, in descendants of settlers from Sylhet. Khulna. He went to America as a People from that district of member of a circus team in a boat Bangladesh settled in Maldives in owned by Ibrahim Qureshi of the beginning of the last millennium.

The history of Sri Lanka says that an ancient prince from Bengal, Vijoy Singha, with his companions, went to that island, conquered it and settled in there and founded the trymen, mostly from Sylhet, used to kingdom of Singhal. A few years back Sri Lanka used to be known as Singhal.

> We, the people of Bangladesh, are very much enterprising, what we lack is a disciplined mind and a little bit honesty. **Faruque Hasan**

Army comes cheaper

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Imran Khan's Tehrik-I-Insaf and

Farooq Leghari's Millat Party will

This is a response to 'A citizen's' letter (July 24). According to him if we can afford to keep the corrupt civil administration why cannot we afford to keep the army? Well, can we imagine a country running without the civil administration?

In fact, everything that we get in our life is by dint of civil administration. No person, no nation, no country can run without civil administration.

In this regard I support Mr MA (July 24). The Army is not and cannot be beyond criticism, civil law and control Acitizen Dhaka

Our police

1. Our police fail to nab top terrorists (23 listed criminals) but they can beat innocent girls in Shamsunnahar hall, 2. Our police can rape and kill

relation with common people. Nazmul (Seema, Yasmine and so on) in Tokyo, Japan their own custody but they cannot catch Jasimuddin manik who holds

The next 60 days are likely to be very interesting and given Pakistan's political history we have not seen the last of the twists and turns.

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.

a record of century (rape).

3. Our police can torture Rubel to

death just for the sake of investiga-

tion but they cannot find terrorists of

bomb attacks at Udichi, Ramna etc.

4. Our police do not turn up while

gunfight goes on over feuds, killing

innocent people (Sony or Noushin)

on crossfire, but they become very

active to beat the general students

joining procession (recently at DU).

5. Our police can take bribes from

even street beggars but they never

Our police can pick anyone from

the street and demand money from

the family for release but they

7. Our police needs BDR, Ansar and

army very frequently to help them

but they never had to help them in

8. Our police keep regular contacts

with the terrorists, inform them

occasions but never keep good

before raids, visit their houses on

cannot nab kidnappers in time.

could ensure their safety.

for lack of proper investigations.