

## Law and order breakdown Where is the guarantee for normal death?

WE are a day too late with comments on the death-of-five news story we woke up to on Sunday morning with a shudder. There are reasons for this delay. First, there has been such a murders galore lately that we found it rather difficult to sift one from the other. Secondly, it struck us as being so complicated that we took our time to put our thoughts together and come out with a coherent reaction to say something new.

The newspapers were rife with gory details of armed extortionists finishing off industrialist Nizamuddin Bhuiyan, Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police Dinesh Kumar Biswas and Juba Dal leader Abdul Khaleque. This was strikingly ramified with what happened in the backlash: killer Alauddin, an infamous gangster on the police's wanted list and his brother Raquib being lynched by a mob.

Alauddin who died the diabolic way he killed people without a blink of an eye had been driven by 'high political ambition' to take to a get-rich-quick life-style. Although he had no fixed political belief, the money he amassed through extortion earned him a clout and an immunity to law enforcement.

His capacity to have kept out of police reach despite being named among the 23 highly wanted criminals was nothing exceptional, though. It was just a part of the pattern: the odds were only 5 to 23 against him insofar as the bleak police record of arresting those 'worst' criminals went. For, out of the infamous 23, only five have landed in jail so far; and with Alauddin dead now, as many as 16 are yet to be arrested. Eluding the police grip has been largely a success story.

Add to this the easy access to weapons of all kinds and you arrive at the crux of the matter. So, these are where actions have been long overdue and can't brook any further delay. Higher visibility of police and their patrolling in the city which one witnesses these days are evidently overground scenes; the police will have to be effective in the underworld to make any dent in the situation. They must be given whatever material and equipment support they need. There should not be any lack of motivation on their part, because in the recent days, a number of their uniformed colleagues have died in the hands of gangsters.

One more disconnect is virtual lack of community involvement. The latter requires enhancement of public confidence in the police that has touched a new low now. But one good way of making a headway would be to have ward and rural grass-roots level law and order committees that function and are not just on paper.

## Under watery siege

Freak weather revives climate change concerns

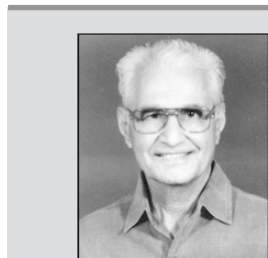
TORRENTIAL rains and flooding rivers, which have ravaged vast areas in Asia, Central America and Europe over the last couple of weeks, killing hundreds and leaving millions homeless and hopeless, have certainly revived concerns that modern civilisation could be at fault. In our blind pursuit for material wellbeing, we may have disrupted the crucial ecological balance on which our very existence depends. Scientists, environmentalists and green-peace activists across the world are of the view that unprecedented rains and floods stem from the global climate change. Such assessment raises once again the old debate on the developed countries' commitment to environment issues. Again, some European Union politicians have taken a swipe at the United States. Germany's overseas development minister has already said that the devastation should "open the eyes of those in the US government" who deny a relationship between pollution and natural disasters. The flak is obviously drawn by the Bush administration's refusal to ratify the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change on the ground that it would undermine the interest of American businesses.

There is definitely truth in the claim that the 'freak' weather is an indicator of a fast changing climate pattern and a reminder that the rich nations are not doing enough to cap alarming environment degradation in their own countries and around the world. Incidentally, the floods have struck just days before some 50,000 delegates across the world attend the United Nations Earth Summit in Johannesburg to consider the effects of development on the environment. The summit would certainly have ample evidence of the detrimental impact of humanity's development *oeuvres* on the ecology. The question, however, remains whether the developed countries would be bold enough to own up their responsibilities in this regard or would just side-step the crucial issue on one pretext or the other as they have previously done.

The fact of the matter is, as the developed countries blame each other for not doing enough towards environment conservation, it is the underdeveloped countries that are paying the price. A metre of global warming-induced sea-level rise could mean immersion of vast areas of poor countries like Bangladesh. Therefore, Bangladesh and other underdeveloped countries that stand to lose more due to global warming must unite and force the developed countries into doing their bits.

The floods have been a great leveller and, one hopes, have given the rich countries a taste of what the poorer nations live with year in, year out. If only they could translate their realisation into concrete climate-related actions.

# Confusions, uncertainties mark electoral manoeuvrings in Pakistan



M B NAQVI  
writes from Karachi

LECTORAL manoeuvrings among the parties are in full swing, though the background music is quite confusing. The regime is strongly propagating that 'the enemy stands on the door and can commit aggression'; 'don't worry the defence of Pakistan is in strong hands'; 'we do not want war but if it is forced on us our brave Army will carry the fight into enemy's home'. On the other side, it has not yet made fully clear under what precise legal framework will the polls be held or what will be the powers of the National and Provincial Assemblies and how will they relate to the already entrenched President. Meantime the government is making vigorous political moves that reek to high heavens of realpolitik.

Despite various uncertainties and obscurities about the fundamentals of the Constitution-to-be and with an all-powerful President poised to alter the very basis of the Parliamentary system of governance, political parties --- after a sort of purification rites of holding internal elections within a week or so --- are selecting candidates with a graduation degree, preparing a manifesto and adopting a strategy for winning the election only 53 days away. Naturally there are many uncertainties but there are some certainties too. The greatest uncertainty is about what the regime is aiming at vis-à-vis the election: would it make it as free and transparent as the people, bigger parties

and the outside world want; or it will 'manage' the polls to produce pre-determined results.

Signs are ominous from the point of view of opposition parties. The regime has undertaken an intensive drive to cobble together a political force that can hopefully win the general election. It is doing all it can to win. For the purpose, it says, Benazir Bhutto of PPP, perceived as security risk, and PML's Nawaz Sharif, a personal enemy of Musharraf, have to be kept out of

can get. For the rest, statistically the number of parties actually supporting Musharraf is impressive indeed. By some estimate it is nearly 80, not to mention the independents who will gravitate toward the lode star: Musharraf.

How many of these parties can send in even their top leaders is uncertain. Some say none while some are ready to concede a few seats --- in low single digits --- just to be on the safe side. Most assessments say that parties that hope to

Gen. Zia used ample force and fraud to break the party but failed. Some deputies could not resist the pressure but they soon returned to the fold or faded out politically. No one believes that the regime can cause a serious split to hurt Benazir. But if during formal but indirect Benazir-Musharraf negotiations through Faheem, any extra understanding has been arrived at only time and the next government will show. Some analysts are sure Faheem has been 'approved' as the

Pashtuns as the fading credo. PPP made significant gains in 1997 election in the Frontier; that it is still a force was shown by last year's local governments polls. It will be given a fight by a new and first real break-away PPP faction led by Aftab Sherpao, that is, it is surmised, likely to be supported by the remnants of old Muslim League in all its rich proliferation of factions and most likely help from the "agencies". A deal can easily be smelled here. A fourth force in the Frontier is reli-

they pose no problem to any party or regime. They would be heard of if the MMA remains its earlier anti-Musharraf stance.

Sindh is a fiefdom of Benazir except its large cities where Altaf Hussain still reigns supreme through his MQM. The regime has taken several blatant steps to create some support for the GNA or for other independent supporters of Musharraf like Farooq Leghari's Millat Party or cricketer Imran's Tehreek Insaf Party. Money is no consideration for the regime, of course. A certain official earlier condemned as a thoroughly corrupt officer, who helped absconder CM Abdullah to reach the apogee of corruption, is back in the saddle; there are several new anti-PPP ministers in Sindh government, doing nothing but reorienting the administration through large-scale transfers and OSD-making. Still, the outcome so far remains uncertain.

But there are many observers who have become convinced by the evidence of what the administration is doing. Polls will not be postponed despite much temptation. Pre-determined results will come out of the polls' exercise --- and if necessary all stops will be removed. Caution can be thrown to the winds if necessity arises. Next PM will really be the nominee of General Pervez Musharraf, whether he is a certain Mian Azhar or Faheem or one of the two Somoors: uncle ex-Speaker NA and nephew who is about to resign as Governor Sindh. Army dare not disturb the apple-cart here and the firm rule of General Musharraf can be seen as far into the future as can be seen, given the steady Bush support.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

## PLAIN WORDS

There are many observers who have become convinced by the evidence of what the administration is doing. Polls will not be postponed despite much temptation. Pre-determined results will come out of the polls' exercise --- and if necessary all stops will be removed. Caution can be thrown to the winds if necessity arises. Next PM will really be the nominee of General Pervez Musharraf...

political arena altogether; their parties, however minus these leaders, can on certain unspelled out conditions contest the election and if any, or the two together, win the required plurality can form the next government. This constitutes a minimum deal with both PPP and PML supremos; it is already under the belt of General Pervez Musharraf as both are out of the fray. But the joker in the pack however is the unspelled out conditions under which he will tolerate a PPP, or PML or a rainbow coalition, government.

Also under Musharraf's belt is that latest addition to the political landscape: a Grand National Alliance of a plethora of Musharraf-loving parties, though a few of such parties have chosen to contest on their own standing. Needless to say nobody talks of what programme these parties will implement. It is understood that they accept in advance whatever political system Musharraf will roughen and, as for economic programme, more of what obtains will be carried on --- that is as unreconstructed a Right as you

send in most deputies are two: PPP and PML(N), with former thought to be way ahead of the second. Chances of the second might take a further knock or two because of the growing perception that the paterfamilias of Sharifs has buckled under Musharraf's pressure and has accepted his terms --- let Nawaz stay out in Saudi Arabia for the next seven years or more while another member of the family is acceptable to the President even as head of the PML with others returning later. So the younger brother of Nawaz, Shehbaz Sharif, ex CM Punjab, was duly elected President of their faction of PML while the people await events that are bound to disclose other terms of the deal.

As for PPP too, tiring of any deal with Musharraf to let Benazir come back and lead the party in the election, has elected a new leader for purely parliamentary purposes. In this, there appears to be a reliance on CE's word that under anyone else -- easily recognised as Makhdoom Amin Faheem -- PPP can form a government if it wins the polls. But PPP is a peculiar party;

second or third choice in extreme necessity for the job of PM, if indeed he is able to deliver the party.

Most of the electoral uncertainty concerns Punjab where populous central Punjab is the most important arena: Nawaz was popular in the urban middle class. But in the peasantry, PPP still has a hold on people's affections, though mostly in terms of nostalgia for the elder Bhutto: Zulfikar Ali who had given the slogan of roti, kapra aur makan, alongwith human dignity and equality for all. Recent disclosure of the Sharifs' deal with the regime is sure to dent the chances of PML(N), though it may yet not be wiped out. All regard southern Punjab as PPP territory while western, rain-fed Punjab, dominated by big landowners, can be divided among the new Grand Alliance and other pro-Musharraf mushrooms, if the Mulahs do not allow in PPP by dividing the votes for the turncoats.

NWFP is expected to see quadrangular fights. This is home ground for Awami National Party of the descendants of Frontier Gandhi with his secular nationalism of the

gious parties, Jihadis, Taliban and other remnants and friends of Taliban regime in Afghanistan. These are so many dark horses.

Mainstream religious parties -- Jamaate Islami, JUI's two factions which had fathered Taliban and JUP of Shah Ahmed Noorani and its Punjabi splinter --- are supposed to be united in an alliance called Muttahada Majlis-e-Amal (MMA). It had nothing but fire and brimstone for Musharraf, to start with. But that was until a week or two ago; meantime the regime has opened its charm offensive. JI Chief, Qazi Hussain Ahmad, had a three-hour-long meeting with Musharraf about which neither side has said anything significant. There is much talk of dissensions within MMA and much uncertainty about its electoral cooperation with the pro-Musharraf GNA. MMA is strong in parts of NWFP and Baluchistan. The outcome in NWFP is however wide open and MMA can give an edge to pro-regime forces, if Musharraf succeeds in wooing a party two away from it. As for Jihadis and Taliban are concerned, on their own

# Western allies can stop America from raising another 'Desert Storm'

AMM SHAHAUDDIN

AMERICA'S superpower ego seems to have received a big shock, rather unexpected, from the reaction shown by some of its closest allies, particularly, the European Union (EU) and the Arab League, towards Washington's 'unilateral' policy towards Palestine-Israel conflict, and specially its repeated threats of air and ground action to topple Saddam regime in Iraq which has been identified as one of the three members of 'axis of evil' by President Bush as his next target in his war against terror. George Bush, however, has hastened with a statement promising "consultations with allies" on the future course of his war on terror. These comments were aimed at pacifying the increasingly growing criticism by some US allies of what they called a 'unilateralist' approach made by US to key foreign policy issues. Perhaps apprehending a possible rift among NATO members over Washington's go-alone policy, Bush also advised NATO allies "to make concerted efforts to adjust to the new realities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and improve their capability to fight the war on terror." The latest adverse reaction from its close allies clearly shows one thing that America has become desperate about ending the 'evil' Saddam regime and thus has created a sort of terror-panic in its own allied camp which had so far stood solidly on one platform to fight war on terror.

### 'Food for oil'

And the US desperation has come after total failure of different measures, taken both under UN and independently of the UN during the last two decades since the Gulf War ended in 1991, to cripple Saddam and his regime. What has happened

of the most unjustified UN sanctions against Iraq is an open history. Then there was the most ridiculous 'food-for-oil' programme which was a camouflaged policy of robbing one to give it to others. It was nothing but an improved system of what was imposed on Germany, by the allied powers after the First World War (1914-1918), as 'war reparations' which Germany had to pay through its nose till Hitler came to power to break the shackles. And this is for the first time that such a punishment has been imposed on a country after a regional war as if Iraq is the only country which had committed crime

board to pound Iraq on one plea or the other. And since the creation of these zones, Anglo-American air forces had carried out almost uncounted sorties to bomb the areas, killing hundreds of civilians and destroying civilian properties, dubbing them as defence establishments and factories producing war materials. During the last two decades, UN weapons inspectors have been searching for Saddam's hidden weapons of mass destruction and had so far failed to locate any. They seem to be searching for a black cat in darkness. Even Saddam has invited the weapons

weather report, a strong 'Desert Storm' is brewing round the corner of Iraq. The forecast has come from no less a person than George Bush and the Secretary of State Colin Powell. Bush in a statement had vowed to deal with Saddam saying: "He (Saddam) is a problem, and we are going to deal with him...I will not allow a nation, such as Iraq, to threaten our very future by developing weapons of mass destruction." Colin Powell, on the other hand, going a bit further, dropped the strongest hint yet that Saddam regime could be Washington's next target in the war on terror. It may be

sometime next year, involving some 2,50,000 troops simultaneously. The second plan of action, perhaps a bit revised and modified one, revealed the plan of taking Baghdad and one or two command centres and weapons depots in the hope of prompting a quick collapse of Saddam and thereby pre-empt Iraq's use of weapons of mass destruction.

Such thundering media leakage caused a widespread consternation, rather a tremor, promoting unwelcome concerns in cross-sections of Washington's allies both in EU countries and the Arab world.

Kofi Annan had also warned US that any action to topple Saddam from power "will not be wise". However, it has been officially announced that "no decision has been made on how to deal with Iraq". But US National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice had said that "regime change is the best solution" for the Iraqi problem. So the plan of action is still on the card.

### Criticism within US military?

Whether the advice given by the world leaders from East and West, particularly of the close allies of Washington, the EU and the Arab world, would ultimately fall on deaf years in the US Administration or would carry some weight to refrain the hawks from going for any adventurous military action in Iraq, only time will show. However, there seems to be a silverline, though too dim to mark, behind the thickening clouds, that can be seen when you read between the lines of a part of a *Los Angeles Times* report, which quoted Prof. William Arkin, of the US Air Force School of Advanced Air Power Studies, saying that the US Central Command's plan of massive air and ground action against Iraq had "sparked criticism within the US military." Will US Administration overlook such criticism within the military before going for the adventure? Look before you leap and not afterwards. America should take lesson from what happened with its 'peace' forces in Haiti, Somalia, Manila, Okinawa and even during the Korean War in 1950. Public memory may be proverbially short but the wounds still prick.

AMM Shahauddin is a retired UN official.

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and what Israel had done with the Arab countries since 1967 invasion does not make it deserve any such action. Under the 'food-for-oil' programme the sale proceeds are deposited in a UN-controlled, (rather US-controlled), fund from which some nominal grants are made allowing Iraq to buy food and medicine for its people. And a huge portion of this money is paid to those who had worked in Iraq but left the country during the Gulf War, as compensation. Who is paying whose money and to whom? Who bothers?

### No-fly zones

Then there is that hanging sword over Iraq in the name of two 'no-fly zones', one in the north covering the Kurdish minorities and another in the south for the Shi'ites. The two zones have been created, not by UN, but by US, to serve as its spring

inspectors to have a look again.

### Anti-Saddam coup attempts

According to US media reports, Washington has been convinced that hard nut Saddam can't be removed from power either through a coup or proxy war with the help of rebel Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south because so far five or six coup attempts sponsored by distant masterminds in the 1990s had miserably failed. It is quite strange that after taking so many punitive actions during last two decades, Saddam has not shown any sign of bending, not to speak of crawling before the threatening posture of the West. It must have been quite provocative for Washington, being the lone superpower and world policeman for peace. So according to a latest politico-military

noted here that while Iraq, one of the three 'evil axis' countries, could be Washington's next target, Powell had held recently 15-minute informal chat with the Foreign Minister of North Korea (another member of 'evil axis'), on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Security Conference held recently in Brunei, for the resumption of suspended US-NK dialogue. What a contrast! But, as they say, 'everything is fair in love and war'!

### Media leakage

And such war cries were followed by, what they call, a media leakage, giving out at least two elaborate plans for military action against Iraq. The leading US daily *New York Times* scooped the stories to spread around. The first plan of action, carried by the *NY Times*, quoting US military officials, was about a large-scale air and ground operation

Washington must have already got the message of strong disapproval of US' unilateralist policy towards Iraq from its close allies. The Arab League, in its recent emergency session in Beirut, has warned US of any military action to remove Saddam which would bring disaster in the area. Jordan's King Abdullah II, in a recent interview with the *London Times* and BBC, echoing the feelings of the Arab League, warned both US and Britain, saying that any US military intervention in Iraq would "open a Pandora's box" in the Middle-East.

The Arab League Secretary General Amr Musa, a leading voice of the Arab world, also warned that any US-led invasion of Iraq would destabilise the Middle East. The European Union (EU) member countries had already distanced themselves from America's policy towards Iraq. UN Secretary General

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

### "Great Army"

The armed forces are not above criticism in a representative democracy. Hence, we have parliaments, newspaper columns, and public meetings. A balanced perspective, however, is desirable for such a discussion to be worthwhile. Much of the criticism in *The Daily Star* letters page, unfortunately, has been more typical of the traditional left-wing bias against men in uniform.

Yes, the military runs more than a few economic concerns in the country. These concerns, generally well run, generate employment for military families and resources for their welfare which otherwise would have been passed on to the taxpayer. Seems to me like a good money-saving idea!

Indeed the military has its share of shady dealings. Nowhere in the armed forces, however, is corruption remotely comparable to the habitual and inherent malfeasance in the civil service departments like the T&T

Board, the Secretariat, or the Police Service.

One reader begrudged the military having its members getting ambassadorial posts to the detriment of career civil servants. Frankly, there is no inherent right for a Foreign Service officer to become an ambassador. The ambassador or high commissioner is an envoy of one sovereign to another and hence can be picked from any group. In fact most regimes try to find the most suitable personality available in the country's elite for a particular post abroad. It is thus inevitable that a serving or retired general sometimes fits the profile. Some of Bangladesh's best envoys abroad have been civilians, some military. Of the latter, Generals Khwaja Wasiuddin (UN) and ZAKhan (Australia) particularly distinguished themselves.

The point is that the military is not some rogue element, which is trying to get more than its due share of the nation's resources. It is simply another institution carving out its place in our society. It is also the public institution which is the most well organised, least corrupt, and the first one to respond to the nation's tragedies.

Our armed forces stand on guard for us 365 days a year. If for no other reason than that, the men in uniform deserve our basic respect.

**ES**  
Missouri, USA

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This letter refers to the letter by Mr. Sobhan Chowdhury (August 13). My question to Mr. Chowdhury is can you please cite one good example of our "brave" army, which proves that it can provide security to the people against any foreign attacks?

It was attacked by Burmese army in 1992 killing 14 soldiers and officers, went un-retaliated. It's been losing its civilians every-day killed by the BSF, goes un-retaliated. Forget about the killing of

two Presidents. Why their budget will be kept a secret, will not be debated in the Parliament?

In which country the army officers are the wealthiest except for in Bangladesh?

Finally, where did you find a civilised nation's elected governments overthrown by the sepoys and went scot-free.

Before it's too late, our army should immediately be overhauled and put into their shoes with the duties properly monitored whether they are carried out properly or not.

Why not audit the property of the retired and on service generals and officers by a neutral commission?  
**Ahmed Hasan**  
New York, USA

### "Scandal rocks BFF"

With reference to your sports page headline "scandal rocks BFF" (August 14) it is with great sadness that I resort to commenting on an issue

that hurts my patriotic feelings for Bangladesh.

The scandal follows hot on the heels of the Commonwealth Games scandal where you will recall 5 athletes absconded from the games held in Manchester, England. Although we all want a better life in this world tarnishing the integrity, professionalism and hopes of future genuine participants of Bangladesh cannot be condoned. This is a selfish and unethical act, which needs to be appropriately punished if and when these people return to Bangladesh. The 'officials' who allegedly made illegal money out these parties should never be allowed to be part of any professional bodies again.

In addition I hope a full investigation is in process and the selection of officials in our sports bodies is reviewed. Our sports is ridiculed here in the West which is deeply hurtful.  
**Goyas**

### England "English Medium students in trouble"

My attention was drawn to the letter, "English Medium students in trouble" by Mr Abdur Rab (August 19).

English medium school students study Bangla language and literature. Since they do not study Science subjects, History and Geography in Bangla, it is expected that they would not do well in College admission tests, since they would be unable to understand many "Bangla terms" in relation to the subjects mentioned above, particularly in an exam setting. Therefore students not faring well do not necessarily mean that English Medium School students, "Do not know Bangla".

I must say that I am surprised at the Notre Dame College requirement that the answers to science/arts/technical subjects should be in Bangla only. Science and even higher arts degrees at the universities are taught in English in our

country for the basic reason that there are inadequate subject matter books in our mother language and perhaps because higher studies are actually international in nature.

A good understanding of an international language like English is a must to communicate with the rest of the world. Can colleges in our country shut their eyes to the fact that English medium schools exist in the country and many of them are trying to provide a good education to our children?

Of course I have to admit that these schools should put a stronger effort in ensuring that their students not only get a good grasp of our beautiful language but learn to love it as well. Bangla medium schools could also do well to emulate some of the methods that the English medium schools are using to prevent rote learning and to encourage children to think for themselves. The general body of learning being provided to our children all over the

country has actually resulted in a total cessation of their thinking processes. I am sure that most employers in our country would agree with me that the quality of students that we are producing is deteriorating day by day. I personally put it down to the practice of rote learning at the high school and college levels of education. Once this is habit is picked up it is hard to change even during higher studies at the universities.

**Zeba I. Seraj**  
Dhaka University

### Punish them

I am appalled by the tragic death of an innocent little boy, Bappi. I have a son of Bappi's age and I can well imagine how Bappi's parents must be feeling right now. Exemplary punishment should be meted out to those beasts who committed such heinous crime.

**Waheeda Alam**  
Toronto, Canada