DHAKA SATURDAY AUGUST 31, 2002

Shutting down of an independent voice

The courts are right but please recognize public need

HE verdict of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court on ETV's validity is given and it's final. Notwithstanding the verdict the fact is, ETV had been a very popular station. And there had been a considerable body of opinion in favour of its continuation despite the legal rulings. Obviously, people wanted a channel which was interesting, informative and ultimately relevant. It was in providing choices that people were supporting.

ETV did reach millions of people, provide quality media products and entertainment and at a terrestrial alternative to BTV, which has simply never lived up to public expectation. Of particular concern was the news and current affairs programmes which despite flaws and tilts did offer the best news programme in town.

ETV had also given a great push forward to international broadcasting from Bangladesh and its beams reached many parts of the world. Of particular significance is the reach of ETV in various parts of the western world where the Bangladeshi diaspora live and they were being fed news from home. The benefits of this are immense and India is a good example of the non-resident connection to the motherland.

It's a lesson to future and present broadcasters that quality broadcasting is no substitute for legal rights to operate. The Supreme Court verdict can't be dismissed by street protests of programme suppliers. The management must take upon itself the responsibility of being above board within the limits of law. Talent, good intentions and legality are all necessary in this kind of operations and we hope that all involved in the media business will remember that in future.

With the legal process coming to an end, attempts should now be made to see how this successful TV channel can be put back on air. It cannot be denied that public interest has been greatly harmed and people of Bangladesh are poorer with ETV gone. We urge the government to immediately look into ways on how the public may be served and cause of greater flow of infor-

We hope that ETV will again go on air and this time it will be based on a platform, which is absolutely valid, and serve the people.

Police, peace and society

Political interference and policing can't go together

PEAKERS at a recent seminar held by the Centre for Strategic and Peace Studies have all said that police reforms can't work if there is political interference. This significant news item never made any headline although the participants included the most elite representatives of the ruling class including the Home Minister Altaf Hossain Chowdhury and various other

The reason for this lies in the fact that they have been said so many times before. After all, those present at the seminar were the very people who either formulate or interfere. So if they have seemed fit to pronounce such homilies on the subject that have been heard so many times before, one shouldn't be blamed if they are accused of generating non-news

Everyone knows that the political will to end lawlessness is not particularly there. Unless authorities are pushed against the wall and see a massive fall out from inaction, little action will be taken. And no matter what the Home Minister says about the police being heroes because they take on criminals armed with sophisticated weapons, the era of police located as protectors in the public imagination is over.

The police being used at the Dhaka University to bash girl students and then trying to pass the police off as public heroes perhaps best exemplifies it. That this simply doesn't work is lost upon the establishment. By forcing them to beat women, it's almost impossible to project them as saviours. Fortunately, politicians are not bothered by such contradictions. Fortunately, such statements can easily be made at seminars without much difficulty and it carries the weight of the meaninglessness that pervades much of the law and order system.

Policing without political system can work but if the politicians and attendant members of the ruling elite say this while doing exactly the opposite, are we supposed to have confidence in what they say? Or be further pushed into a world where nothing is certain or truthful as far as law and order goes?

Why don't Arab nations support war on Iraq?



HARUN UR RASHID

INCE September 11 attacks in the US, the Bush administration has been preoccupied, even obsessed with the necessity of conducting a worldwide campaign against terrorism. While the US had successes in removing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it appears that she is determined to extend war to Iraq. However the Arab nations do not support an armed attack to topple President Saddam Hussein. The present position is in sharp contrast to the one they adopted in 1990 during the

Gulf War. All Arab nations were

supportive to the Gulf War against

Iraq after it occupied Kuwait This time around the US conspicuously lacks any Arab support. Saudi Arabia declared that it would not permit the US to use its military base for armed invasion to Baghdad. So also is the case with respect to Jordan. Jordan's King Abdullah during his recent visit to London and Washington said that it would be "ludicrous" to wage a war with Irag while the region is burning with Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Even the northern Iraqi Kurds, protected by "no-fly zones" by the British and the US war planes, do not reportedly support war against President Saddam Hussein.

The US may have been surprised at the attitude of Arab nations. It is assumed that since these countries support war on terrorism, they will lend their support when war on terrorism is extended to Iraq. However the opposite is the case

they support? There could be several possible reasons as described below.

It appears that they want a solution by the Iragis themselves. That implies that Iraqi opposition forces must come up with a plan for a "regime change" in Iraq. The other states may provide diplomatic and moral support to the Iraqi opposition's viable plan

It is suggested in some quarters

head of the Iraqi National Congress and the country's best known opposition leader the 57-year old Chalabi is known to have played in the past one group off against the other with threats, violence and bribes, His critics say that Chalabi has never been a team player.

Historically it has been the experience if a strongman is toppled. invariably a core of military Generals lose their power and the disgruntled emerge in Iraq (Shi'ite Muslim 54-65 percent and Sunni Muslim 32-42 percent of the total population of over 22 million in Iraq) which may have its impact in Shi'ite Muslim dominated Iran.

In an alternative scenario of a democratic government in Iraq, it is argued that it may have follow-on effects throughout the Arab World leading to destablising the existing regimes. The UNDP Report of 2002 Europe as the dominant power in the world after the Second World War.

What is dividing a wedge between the US and the countries in the Middle East and other nations is the perception of the degree of danger emanating from Iraq. The regime is not a danger to Arab nations because there is no immediate casus belli presented by Iraq. They appear to have concluded whatever threat posed by President

to resolve the Iraqi situation. It is argued that if Iraq poses a threat to international peace and security, the Council should determine it. If the decision is affirmative, an armed attack on Irag is legally justifiable under international law. This was the case in 1990 when Iraq occupied Kuwait. The Arab nations may support war against Iraq if the Security Council endorses it

President Bush seems to publicly back-pedalling his war plan on Irag. Two key factors appear to be responsible for it. One is the poll taken in the US which demonstrates that ordinary people's support is dwindling for war on Irag. Second. the British ruling politicians are reconsidering their stance. In recent days British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw held the view that inspection of weapons of mass destruction was the prime goal and not regime change in Iraq. Germany's Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder is fully opposed to war on Iraq and has made it an election campaign for national election to be held on 22 September.

Furthermore it is for the first time that the President has been facing opposition on war against Irag from his own Republican members of Congress. Former senior officials who had served his father including former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, former Secretaries of State James Baker III and Lawrence Eagleburger and a few retired military Generals did not support war. Dr. Henry Kissinger and Madam Albright (former Secretaries of State) also opposed war on Iraq given the present situation.

It seems that the President got the message and called himself "a patient man" and would consult the Congress and the allies before he would decide to embark on military action against Irag. It looks that moderate factions appear to be winning over the hard liners of the Bush administration.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh

BOTTOM LINE

It is for the first time that President Bush has been facing opposition on war against Iraq from his own Republican members of Congress. Former senior officials who had served his father including former national security adviser Brent Scowcroft, former Secretaries of State James Baker III and Lawrence Eagleburger and a few retired military Generals did not support war. Dr. Henry Kissinger and Madam Albright (former Secretaries of State) also opposed war on Iraq given the present situation.

that the US's alignment towards Israel in the on-going conflict with Palestinians has alienated the Arab nationals in the region. As a result it has made difficult for Arab leaders to take a position supporting the US. in particular an attack on an Arab

Furthermore there appears to be a great concern about post-Saddam period. The use of chemical and biological weapons by Iraq during war may not be ruled out altogether. In that case the US will naturally counteract fiercely. Israel's reaction to use nuclear weapon may not be a remote possibility if it is attacked with Iraqi Scud missiles. The effect of such warfare would be devastating in all sectors in the region.

Although six groups of Iraqi opposition, in a rare display of unity, recently met senior officials of the Bush administration in Washington, they remain suspicious of each other and are reported to be hopelessly split in opposition movement. Many political observers believe that the opposition groups have been outside Iraq for decades and few have connections among brutalised and depoliticised young Iraqis. The military officers are not likely to go away from the political scene. They are likely to be behind to destablise the country through a wave of coup attempts as evidenced in the Philippines in the late 80s when its 'iron man' Ferdinand Marcos, holding the office of the President for 21 years, was removed in 1986. Such phenomenon may create chaos in the post-Saddam era.

There is a more serious fear. Iraq could be split into three countries. One Kurd state (about 4 million Kurds live in Iraq) may be established in the north with Mosul as its capital, the other one with Shi'ite people in the South with Basra as its capital city and the other one with Baghdad as capital. The new Kurd state may destablise Turkey because the Turkish Kurds may wish to join the new state.

Iraq is richly endowed with oil and there is likely to be a fierce competition among the few opposition "war lords" who wish to control the oil rich areas. It is likely that in that event. outside powers may join in to support one 'war lord' against the other. In addition to these, sectarian conflict between Sunni and Shi'ite may on the Arab World does not make it a comfortable reading to Arab leaders as it identifies lack of democracy (meaning free election, respect for human rights and rule of law) in the region. In recent years the Arab media has become bold and critical of the political system prevailing in Arab countries.. For example the Al-Jazeera satellite television from Qatar has been able to handle many subjects, previously regarded as taboo, including the lack of democracy, transparency and accountability in the Arab World.

In this context, one cannot be unmindful of the consequences of war that resulted in the elimination of power structures and in the creation of a new world-order. The First World War (1914-19) saw the disintegration of the Turkish Ottoman Empire and creation of many new Arab states in the Middle East. The Second World War (1939-45) witnessed the loss of colonial empire overseas. Both wars had set afoot a chain reaction globally that was hardly foreseen. The fact that the UN headquarters is located in New York and not in Geneva is a testimony to the fact that the US has replaced

This perception of danger from Iraq may be understood in the context of an analogy given by a Western writer in the following manner. A man armed with a knife may decide that bear prowling the forest is a tolerable danger inasmuch as the alternative -- hunting the bear armed only with a knife -- is actually riskier than lying low and

Saddam Hussein is more tolerable

for them than the risk of removing

him unless evidence is substanti-

ated Irag's link with terrorism. But

the US, being a stronger power,

seems to have developed a "zero

tolerance" for President Hussein

after September 11 attacks in the

a tolerable risk from the bear. It seems clear that Arab nations have no enthusiasm for armed conflict in Iraq. They believe that the UN processes need to be exhausted prior to taking any armed action against Iraq. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal urged the US to give diplomacy more time

hoping the bear never attacks. The

same man armed with a rifle will

however, most likely, make a differ-

ent assessment of what constitutes

Ambassador to the UN, Geneva

Janmashtami

Hindu philosophy and Lord Krishna

PREM RANJAN DEV

HE Hindu culture and tradition does not derive from any one prophet or founder. It has neither a uniform creed nor any organized church. Its history and pre-history, so to say, are ageless. The Vedas, which are the scriptures of the Hindus, are unique in character. We find in the Vedas a great variety of subjects and a great flexibility of doctrines.

Another ancient work of profound philosophic value is known as Bhagayad Gita, the song celestial, as it has been called. It forms a part of the great epic Mahabharata. The Gita attempted to bring about a synthesis of the existing Upanisads of the time. This book has attracted the interest of the philosophers as much as have the aphorisms of the Vedanta. Almost all of the great Vedantists have some commentary on this little book of seven hundred stanzas. Apart from the Vedanta philosophy, there exist other systems of thought, such as Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya. These system's of thought are not in any sense in serious disagreement with the Vedanta. An attempt has been made to bring about a synthesis of all systems of thought by the Pureness, literally, ancient thruths. They are semi-philosophical works. There are

eighteen of them, attributed by tradition to one person, Vyasa. The most outstanding of these Puranas is the Srimad Bhagavata which itself is considered as commentary of the Vedanta. In this book have been fused all the great systems of Hindu philosophic thoughts with wonderful genius and skill. Those who are especially influenced by this book Rather than vie for a complete monopoly on wisdom, these risis respect one another and work collabortively. Risihood in Hinduism is knowledge-based, and such knowledge can be cultivated. But methods of science and logic may be applied here. This knowledge is progressive and dynamic capable of continuous development. The risis Rather, each system is recognized and respected by the others." Hinduism encompasses an

entire civilization and way of life that has evolved since the dawn of human civilization. The Vedas, the Upanishads, the Bhagayad-Gita and the epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata play an important role in the development and practice of

heavenly unification of mankind irrespective of caste, creed and races. The Bhakti movement of that time, espousing whole-hearted devotion to God in one aspect or another, opened up what was previously esoteric knowledge and practice for large numbers of people Means were made available for everyone to realize God, with no

His infinite mercy and love. He maintains an existence of concrete bliss. The entity of the creatures of the cosmos is part and parcel of Lord Krishna. There is a chronological order in the manifestation of the supreme Sri Krishna

Modern civilization is now in a state of transition. If we are to survive, it is a moral and spiritual revolution which should embrace the whole world. In this context, a penetrating thought and look into the totality of Lord Krishna can enhance the sense of our cosmic existence and sanctify the coming world. Philosophy of Sri Krishna can contribute so much to life and its fulfilment not only for the Hindu community, but for the world community of the 21st century and beyond. Hindu ancient wisdom continues to be a catalytic force in the transformation

All gods and goddesses are translations of Brahma. Krishna is the most perfect translation of pure Brahma in the human experience. We can talk about Krishna, meditate on Krishna, love Krishna and dedicate our lives to Him. In this universe nothing and none parallel Krishna. the supreme being. He is the

Prem Ranjan Dev is President, Bangladesh Jatiya

TO THE EDITOR

Modern civilization is now in a state of transition. If we are to survive, it is a moral and spiritual revolution which should embrace the whole world. In this context, a penetrating thought and look into the totality of Lord Krishna can enhance the sense of our cosmic existence and sanctify the coming world. Philosophy of Sri Krishna can contribute so much to life and its fulfilment

commonly go by the name Bhagavata or Vaisnav

Everybody knows that there is no single human authority accepted by all the Hindus nor has there been any movement to create such a central authority. There is also no ecclesiastical or hierarchical binding authority in Hinduism. In spite of all the above considerations, there is a definite body of knowledge and common themes that can be clearly identified as Hinduism. This core of knowledge and practice can be perceived as Hinduism. The risis or Vedic seers function as a binding force. Authority resides in the risis. and there are several of them

can also cultivate supernormal faculties and are very important in Hindu tradition.

Festivals, ceremonies and rituals are integrating and uniting force in the Hindu tradition; pilgrimages and temples play the same role. There is a huge literature of stories, mythologies and legends that affect the imaginative man. There is also integration at the conceptual level. At this level, many systems of philosophy are developed. The classical philosophies like Nyaya, Vaisesika, Samkhya, Yoga, Mimamsa and Vedanta come under this category. "Again, there is no conflict over holding the single, universal truth.

Hinduism. These, the ancient holy scriptures of the world, uphold the eternal truth of the eternal existence of the supreme Lord Srikrishna. "Owing to the eternal will-tocommunicate the God descends on earth to re-unit His Joyful Self with His created beings." Essentially God manifests Himself in human form to crush and annihilate worldly vices and revive eternal values. Lord Krishna has bound Himself to man and in that consists the greatest glory of human existences. He came down with his full divine manifestations and raised human civilization almost to a celestial plane. Thus came Sri Gauranga and brought a

conflict between knowledge and practice

Sri Krishna focused on the unity of religions. His Gita is a deep reservoir of knowledge. There is also a wide range of spiritual disciplines and practice, such as Karma-Yoga, Bhakti-Yoga, Raja-Yoga and Tantra. These disciplines are significant to Hindus as well as practical and beneficial to all of humanity. The meanings and intention of the Gita have historically found elaboration and explication in the Smritis, the two great epics and various major and minor Puranas. Sri Krishna attracts all beings towards Himself so that they may realize the depth of

embodiment of bliss and love.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDIT

Bangladesh tops the chart again

Last year when we top charted the corruption list, the leaders then tried to blame the rating process as faulty and as we naturally again maintained the position this year the focus is on blaming it on the previous The response pattern shows our

leaders suffer from absolute denial. I see no reason wrangling about the rating process or passing it on another shoulder whereas the level

of corruption has hit its rock bottom in the recent years. The fast growing germ of corruption has infected the mass by its tremendous power and reached the unit of the society the

family. If I am not too sarcastic about my vision I think if we consider each corrupt individual with red dots and white dots for who are not the whole picture of the country would reflect as red where one may need assistance of magnifying glass to discover white spots. In this sort of acute crisis the first attempt may be of accepting the bad name and then only we can understand the national crisis' and help each other to live

Zaiami Dhaka

According to Transparency International (TI) that compiles Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of different countries, Bangladesh ranks 102nd this year having the lowest score 1.2 out of a highly clean score of 10.

Thus, it makes us one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Compare to its CPI 0.4 in 2001 report, the increase of score is significant; but apparently being the last out of 102 countries that were studied in 2002, it does not make any real difference on the scale of corruption.

The Guardian, Wednesday, August 28, 2002 terms Bangladesh as one of the countries where corruption is "rampant". Sadly, our country is worse than Nigeria, Paraguay, Madagascar, Angola, Kenya and Indonesia! TI's ranking is based on the survey done on the public officials, politicians and their cronies and thus, it excludes corruption by various other quarters. In any case, if we were able to sum up all sorts of corruption and their financial implications to our economy, we definitely would be shocked and surprised

When it comes to corruption nepotism and abuse of power unveiled by an independent tendency among the ruling party (s) either vehemently refuse it and or blame the former government for corruption and misdeed without looking at the alleged faults and irregularities. Such a blanket covering thus encourages the wrong doers to continue their misdeed even more vigorously. There have been several reports of abusing official power for personal gain includes wheat scam, tender scam, illegal toll collection, bribes and kickbacks etc. How a person on earth can claim that TI's 2002 report reflects the misdeed of the former government? With a change in power, filing graft cases against politicians/public servants have become a routine work, and people are not surprised at all given the fact that precedent of punishment is so. so rare! Unless the ruling party (s) takes strong measure to clamp down corruption and root out evils from within its own party members and cronies, it is unlikely that the fate of the poor and vulnerable will ever change

body/institute like TI, there is a usual

Md. Sahed Ali Vancouver, British Columbia,

"Earning

overnight"

It has been reported in your esteemed daily that while inaugurating the newly built automated car parking facilities at the Zia Int'l Airport, the State Minister for Civil Aviation and Tourism has proudly announced that the cost of the building will be recovered within 3-4 years (the initial parking fee has

been fixed at Tk. 30). But why do we have to recover the cost of such a big project within such a short period of time by taxing the public? Why the government should opt for realising the cost of a project (made for the beauty, benefit and improving civic facilities) in such quick succession? This kind of attitude of the government should be

discouraged. Moreover, a visitor to the airport (all aren't invariably rich) is already taxed heavily for an exorbitant entry fee (unlike most airports around the world). Now if he/she has to pay another Tk. 30 for the parking will it not be too much a taxation?

I earnestly request the hon'ble Minister to reconsider the charge of parking as well the entry fee and to expand the visiting area, so that many more people get encouraged to visit the airport even for fun, which will pump in more funds to the

exchequer. The parking fee should be around Tk.10 and entrance fee not more than Tk. 15.

Floodlighting Minto Road!

For the last two weeks, if somebody has passed by along the Minto Road, where our ministers reside, one would be surprised to find out a minister's house is lighted so heavily that one would wonder if there is a marriage ceremony being held.

Who is paying for the electricity bill? And why this being occurring for weeks together?

F Hussain

"Great Army"

This is a response to Mr. Ziaur Rahman's letter. By using the general word "khaki soldiers" I was just referring to a generality. It was an encounter not limited to me. There was a bus-full of students. Some of them are AMC colonels by now. I just can't lie.

From your narrative, it is clear that those soldiers were guilty of compromising their own security for they rode in a civilian transport. They

should have been punished by their officer and we should have gotten an apology. It did not happen. A little humility (on the officer's part) was all that was needed.

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Ziaur Rahman, I am a pacifist. But I understand the need for a military in Bangladesh. And I want the military to be "OUR MILITARY (as you said so forcefully).

And do you know who are those nefarious souls spreading venom against OUR MILITARY? They are none but our OWN MILITARY, when they fail to respect their own Masters (I mean, the PEOPLE). A Concerned Citizen

A lot of letters have already been written on this issue raising several points. One of the points was that the army has been indulging in business deals, and that implies they are involved in corruption. Only an independent enquiry can reveal whether it is true or not. One point is certain that if you

happen to be even the smallest army officer, you have the right to have your son's or daughter's wedding reception arranged at Sena Kunja or BDR Darbar Hall or in any of the army-owned halls paying a

very negligible amount. But if you happen to be a civil servant, whether you are a Secretary or a retired Secretary, you have to pay at least three times more for arranging a function in one of those army establishments.

Why this discrimination between an army official and a civil servant? The enormous money that the army is making by running these institutions, how that money is spent? Has there been any independent audit done on their income? Are they paying tax to the government since these are run on commercial lines? The government is requested to look into the discriminatory practice that the army is following in renting their facilities to the armed forces and civil government officials. This action of the army is creating a rift and a feeling of animosity between the army and civilian forces of the coun-

Vox Populi

The roads and our

misery

The pitiful condition of the roads plays a major role in the everworsening traffic problem. I am sure during your visits abroad you have noticed that the edge of the roads are always raised by at least 4 to 6 inches; this prevents the vehicles to go outside the road surface, thereby ensuring that the edges of the roads are not broken. If this can be done in our country, I think it will not only increase the longevity of the roads but also create less dust/mud with tire friction.

While I endorse the government's decision to phase out the auto rickshaws, I would like to draw your attention to the ever-increasing number of unauthorised rickshaws in Dhaka. I do understand that in a poor country like Bangladesh these rickshaws not only offer a cheap and environment friendly mode of transportation but also ensures the livelihood of a large section of the people.

However I sincerely feel that the government should take immediate steps to control the number of rickshaws plying the Dhaka roads. Whenever I go out, I see dozens of absolutely brand new rickshaws. As far as I know there was a ban from the government regarding manufacturing of new rickshaws. I would request the government through your columns to look into this

Rais Uddin Ahmad