

## Law and order in dire strait Looking for scapegoat gets nowhere

THE development partners are spot-on with their diagnosis of Bangladesh's development ailment: a poor law and order situation. They have reflected media concerns and public sentiments about a growing sense of insecurity being endured by the people here. Six months after the Bangladesh Development Forum meet in Paris, a mid-term appraisal exercise with Bangladesh officials in Dhaka lately has yielded a donor community remark that both poor and rich in Bangladesh feel increasingly insecure today. The poor public security situation is throwing the efforts at development off-gear in a second track. For hartals, which had been the persistent damper on development process thus far, seem to have been replaced at this point in time anyway by civic and business insecurities of all kinds.

Parallel to the joint appraisal meeting between the development partners and the high government functionaries, the national parliament held a discussion over the law and order situation on Monday.

The government response to the views aired through both the forums was marked by finger-pointing to the opposition, as usual. The deterioration in terms of public security was all the doing of the opposition, a word-for-word diatribe of the charges the preceding AL government had levelled against the then opposition BNP. With a grudging admission that 'so much still needed to be done' on the law and order front, Finance Minister Saifur Rahman relapsed into the trade-mark reaction of blame transference. He was quick to come out with a poser: what if a law and order situation is created deliberately (by a party)? We are disgusted with this blame-trading musical chair. In the parliament several ruling party leaders rolled off the government's natural onus in providing security to the public shamelessly berating that the current spate of insecurity owed its origin to past legacies.

The AL's failure on this count translated into its debacle in the last general election. But the BNP which won on an electoral pledge to curb violence and improve public security is nearing the completion of its first year in office. And what's its track-record towards the end of the crucial one-fifth of its term? If one takes a look at the nature of crime and violence taking place one finds that: (a) the ruling party is riddled with factions mostly at the JCD and Juba Dal levels; (b) the emphasis is on harbouring elements who can be put to use by factional leaders against each other on a short notice; and (c) overall, there is a manifest arrogance of power among the young party activists which we have repeatedly entreated with the government to contain or else face a further credibility downslide.

Once again we urge the government to stop looking for a scapegoat for what manifestly has been incompetent handling by it. Failure in the law and order domain has to be taken seriously by the government, because it erodes state authority, the last resort for public security and welfare.

As we have never tired of saying it, so we say again: the distinction between the government and the ruling party should not be allowed to be blurred.

## Stern action against fraud manpower agents

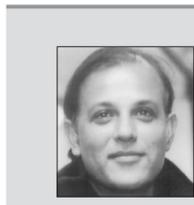
Authorities must go to the bottom of it

IT is encouraging that the government has decided to take stern action against manpower recruitment agencies that sent employment seekers overseas with fake documents and without permission of the Bangladesh Manpower Employment and Training (BMET). In case of allegations of irregularities, and fraud on the part of recruitment and travel agents, show-cause notices will be served on them first and; if found guilty, they will be stripped of their licences. Is it anything new? Unfortunately, not. The existing rules say every person seeking overseas employment must obtain clearance from the BMET and pay Tk 1,600 as immigration fee. The problem is unscrupulous manpower and travel agents, in connivance with some corrupt immigration officials, routinely subvert the process to save a few hundred taka for every person. While the recruiters and their cohorts at Zia International Airport (ZIA) get away with such aberrations, courtesy our miserable enforcement system, the employment seekers invariably land in trouble on foreign soil. They end up either being detained or deported, with their hopes of a better tomorrow cruelly shattered.

The same story has been retold many times over and so has the government renewed its vow to weed out unscrupulous manpower recruitment and travel agents. On the ground, no substantive change has occurred and every year quite a few people fall into their trap. There are reasons to doubt that deployment of vigilance teams made of members from the Special Branch, the Detective Branch and other security agencies will actually bring about any positive change. The government needs to realise that the whole process needs complete overhaul. Tightening security here or making payment of fee mandatory there does not hold the key.

There has to be an organised cartel at work at home and abroad to make such acts of fraudulence possible. The prime objective should be to dismantle the nexus and the government should seek co-operation of host countries for this. It has to be done sooner than later. We are talking not only about individual inconvenience only but also the country's image which is at stake.

## Let's take that bucket off!



K.A.S. MURSHID

I was suddenly reminded the other day of Mr. Mbeki, the South African President and his position on the problem of HIV-aids in his country. While the infection was spreading at lightning speed bringing in its wake devastation and despair on an unprecedented scale, Mr. Mbeki preferred to keep his eyes tightly shut. His view was that HIV-AIDS was related to poverty and not to unprotected sex or intravenous drug use -- an opinion that he clearly bumped into at some fringe web site (as if everything on the internet was to be trusted as gospel truth). Curiously, it was in South Africa that one of our ministers apparently proclaimed that arsenic contamination of groundwater in Bangladesh did not pose a major threat as it has been effectively 'mitigated'. Wonderful news! The next logical step should be to shut down all the arsenic projects that are currently being run in the country. Further, the search for the elusive arsenic filter should also come to an end, while we merrily proceed to

sink a few thousand more tubewells up and down the country.

The words of that minister have been echoed once again recently, when yet another important minister proclaimed that arsenic and HIV-AIDS were not a major threat to the country. A panic was being deliberately engendered, one understands, to create 'business' opportunities for a few NGOs (yet another conspiracy theory?). Excessive talk of arsenic, it

WFP/ CARE could divert some of their wheat to 'food for sludge' groups who would collect, process and market the sludge, perhaps for export. Thus, even the 'little' arsenic that we DO have can in fact play a tremendous role in rural development.

Actually, our outspoken minister is perfectly correct when he refers to the greed of some NGOs. One understands that a LOT of money is available for arsenic projects and that there

deal with the (small) arsenic problem. I am also certain that donor-supported and government-owned mitigation measures have yielded exemplary results. And of course our response to this minor problem has been, quite correctly, proportional. It is likely that even as I write, we are rapidly progressing in our endeavour to chalk out and delineate the exact areas and formations where arsenic is a problem (and where it is not). In the meantime,

this and buy a rather large bucket to put over our collective head, preferably after being suitably blinded.

On the question of HIV, we are on more solid ground. After all, and notwithstanding our corruption status (which relates only to money), our morality status is definitely high. And further, we are mostly Muslims, even if moderate ones and WE do not indulge in risky behaviour. Nor do we covet our neighbour's wife or even his ass. On

blood against contamination. There are also reports of a high prevalence rate of STDs (sexually transmitted disease) amongst certain social groups -- evidence that taken together, sit somewhat uncomfortably with ministerial proclamations. Under the circumstances it is unlikely that the bucket solution will work. In fact, you would be well advised to seek some other form of cover.

One other thing: we are certainly right to be concerned about our image. In this connection let me recount a conversation that I had with a young compatriot at Bangkok airport late last year. This young man lives and works in South Korea where the Bangladeshis appear to have carved out a niche for themselves in the local labour market. Their luck in the bars and taverns however was less favourable as the moment the girls found out about their citizenship, they simply ran away. Improvisations were called for and he and his friends instead said they were from New Cali, Ranguinia, Sylhet and so on -- obviously these were rich countries in Europe or cities in the US.

It is certainly time to pay close attention to our image. One must however ask whether a culture of denial (no arsenic, no HIV threat, no illegal migrants in Assam or India, no political prisoners or rights' violations) is the best way forward. Gentlemen, perhaps it is time to take that bucket off?

Dr K A S Murshid is an economist and Research Director, BIDS.

## BETWEEN YOURSELF AND ME

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seems, may hurt our agro-export potential. This view will be of great comfort to the tubewell wallahs who have all along been pursuing their single-minded objective of fielding tubewells in ever-larger numbers. The 'filter' wallahs should not despair either. I am sure they will manage to convince the donors that every tube well they finance should come equipped with their new, wonderful filter that will be able to eliminate any arsenic that may still remain, even after 'mitigation'. The arsenic sludge (undoubtedly rather small quantities of sludge would be generated since there is very little arsenic in the water to begin with) can provide a potential source of employment generation.

is a veritable gold rush for a share of the loot. However, one understands that many of these so-called NGOs involved in the gold rush are in fact entities set up at the behest of 'influential' persons (and in great haste) to try and benefit from the largesse. If funds are ending up with these gold-diggers, one must then question how this is happening despite the 'excellent' oversight mechanisms of the donor agencies and of the NGO Bureau. The time-honoured tradition of passing the buck (e.g. where donors blame the government and the government blames NGOs) should perhaps be reviewed.

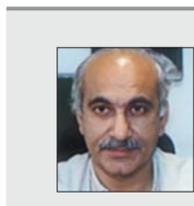
I am confident that there is a clear national policy or strategy in place

perhaps the Department of Public Health could share with us what public health measures have actually been taken to make our water safe. In particular they could let us know how many hundreds or thousands of additional tube wells have been sunk in recent years and where, and how many of those were found to be free from the toxin (since surely they monitor water quality regularly). More importantly they could perhaps comment on the allegation that up to 35 million people are potentially at risk from arsenic poisoning? (I for one am in complete agreement with the view that this is yet another conspiracy to malign our good name.) The other alternative would be to forget about all

the other hand we are much more mobile today than at anytime in our history. We are hundreds of thousands strong in North America, Europe, the Middle East and SE Asia. We are frequently called upon to patrol unfamiliar streets in Bosnia, Cambodia, Sierra Leone and Somalia -- areas where HIV has made deep incursions. And we are largely young and single. But as I have already noted, we are good, upright, God fearing Muslims, and have therefore little to fear.

However, closer to home the drug rehab places appear to be doing brisk business. The professional donors continue to be the largest source of supply for the blood banks, which unfortunately are unable to screen the

## A nine/eleven diary



M.J. AKBAR

THE only sign of hysteria in New York on 9/11, a year after either the world changed or America changed (the two might be indistinguishable) was the prose in the newspapers. Some of it was so breathless it died in front of your eyes, suicide by syntax.

As a fellow practitioner of the world's second oldest profession, my heart went out to the hacks who had hacked themselves to death in the service of national hype. Images floated through my professional conscience. I could see so many of the hacks polishing their phrases for weeks, disturbing the serenity of countless vodka-bitters, the life-sustaining medicine of innumerable Scotch-and-sodas, all in anticipation of the piece that they would have to produce, for that dramatic piece for the 9/11 edition, a report that would etch their place in the history of journalism.

My heart was particularly moved by the sportswriters searching for insidious ways and sinuous means to fit a national cause into a football game. But the good thing about sports journalists is their in-your-face honesty. They served their nation in bold type. Leave it to Op-Ed columnists and political commentators to communicate in normal sized Times Europa. The sports editor of USA Today chose a 14-point type for his body copy, and placed it in the centre of the page, just in case there were any myopic readers who could not read from right to left. I assume he was the sports editor, because no one less than that could have got away with the conceit.

Even the *New York Times*, always most excellent in its fact-of-the-matter approach to headlines (including the use of full stops, sometimes, to tell you that it had paused mid-headline), slipped towards phrases like "Doves on the Wing". That was the mood of the moment. Life had become larger than life.

And so when nothing happened it came as a bit of an anti-climax. Perhaps the authorities felt the need

watch), Colettan (my knowledge base stops short of this word), Tiffany (famous for breakfast, diamonds and Audrey Hepburn), Saks Fifth Avenue (famous for 30% discount after 100% mark-up), Burberry (British checks), Steuben (glass), Hugo Boss (ordinary clothes at extraordinary prices), Bloomingdales (always happy to offer you for first job as salesgirl at slave wages) and Macy's made sure that when the heartstrings were

assigned to me, he said "Window". Then his face succumbed to a series of grimaces as he tried to communicate what he had been clearly told to keep his mouth shut about. Since he was human, he could not keep it to himself. "Sit anywhere anywhere anywhere... There's no one aboard..." he muttered, but he did avert his face as he said those hateful words. I am about to make a claim. I must have been the only Muslim on a longhaul,

almost conscious effort not to indulge in the sin of racial profiling; to avoid seeming hostile. Why else would so many people passing by on the streets smile at me? It could not be for my looks, but it could be because of my colour.

But the questions, hundreds of them, shot at me during the Ron Owens radio show where I was the morning's guest on the 12<sup>th</sup> were sharp, angry and almost unanimously suspicious if not accusatory

tell the difference between Islam and Osama bin Laden. And George Bush, of course, cannot understand the difference between Osama and Saddam Hussein. In his speech to the United Nations President Bush included in his list of reasons for the invasion of Iraq the charge that he killed children in front of their parents. A slightly different explanation is offered by the marketplace for President Bush's obsession with Saddam. One of course is the son's Freudian desire to show daddy that he can do better. The second is that if you cannot locate Osama and Mullah Omar one year after conquering a country to find them, the second best thing to do is to change the subject. The fact that the CIA has been trying for months, without any success, to link Mohammed Atta (of 9/11 fame) with an Iraqi spy is no deterrent. A 21-page fact sheet that the White House released along with the Bush speech did not once connect 9/11 with Saddam Hussein. But when Bush comes to shove, all he wants is regime change in Baghdad, preferably by war.

I have very little sympathy for Saddam Hussein's dictatorship, or with any dictatorship for that matter, but I must point out significant achievement of Saddam Hussein. Iraq is the only issue on which India and Pakistan agreed on in the United Nations. Anyone who can make India and Pakistan agree on anything these days deserves some kind of medal.

Stray facts about 9/11. A figure has been finalised: that terrible day claimed 2801 victims. The bill for that day is over a hundred billion dollars, of which 21 billion went to New York city, eight billion to the airline industry and five billion as compensation to the victims. Dick Cheney, vice president of the United States, disappeared to an unknown location both last year and this year on the fateful date. And the winning number that came up on this year's New York lottery, drawn on 9/11 was 911. What could have been the odds on that?

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

## BYLINE

Traffic was light and the air heavy. In New York, air means air waves. Radio and television were inundated with church bells and thanksgiving services. New Yorkers celebrate by going out. They commemorate by staying in. Most companies offered a holiday option to their employees...San Francisco was deserted, but not on edge. There was a softer, less brittle mood; San Francisco remembered the day with flowers in its hair...A figure has been finalised: that terrible day claimed 2801 victims. The bill for that day is over a hundred billion dollars, of which 21 billion went to New York city, eight billion to the airline industry and five billion as compensation to the victims.

to manufacture some excitement. And so in Miami (where else, are you asking? Anywhere else, in the West on 9/11) the police did a movie-style car chase to catch three medical students because a woman thought they were speaking in Arabic in a restaurant and reported them to the guardians of law and order. It turned out that they were only speaking American, but one of them wore a Muslim skull cap. Dangerous thing to do. Stories are floating around about two brown airline passengers who terrorised a plane because they went to the loo together. I am not going to indulge in racial profiling by describing their ethnicity. Suffice to add that the pilot force-landed the plane when one of them wanted to return to the loo, and insisted on going to the same one.

Capitalism, I am happy to report, survived 9/11 with flying colours. The brand name industry made sure that when history was written it would not be found wanting in the Emotional Outpouring Stakes. Chanel, Toruneau (New York's most famous watch shop), Mikimoto (Japanese pearls), Chopard (Swiss

being plucked they had first rights to a twang. They took out ads in the *New York Times* remembering the day when their markets crashed.

Traffic was light and the air heavy. In New York, air means air waves. Radio and television were inundated with church bells and thanksgiving services. New Yorkers celebrate by going out. They commemorate by staying in. Most companies offered a holiday option to their employees, and the sensible took the option. Never was sense more popular than on 9/11.

On a normal morning a taxi ride to the airport can give you serious blood pressure, even when the taxi driver has decided to cooperate. On the morning of 9/11 the city's avenues became freeways. The scene at the airport at noon was stunning. There was no one at the airline counter. Airline staff and security at John F. Kennedy airport outnumbered passengers by twenty to one. Since no one had much to do they chatted and laughed. Practice from morning had taken any nervous edge off the laughter. When I asked the attendant which seat he had

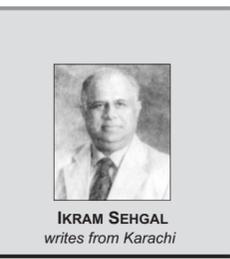
or even a short-haul, flight in America on 9/11. If that constituted an invitation to tough security, the invitation was accepted. A large black man whose neck was twice the size of my head, took off my shoes, belt, wallet, pens, studied my attitude for danger signals, and informed me that if I felt a sharp prod between my thighs I should not consider it personal. It was duty, not affection.

Just to ensure that I did not become a racist, the procedure was repeated just before I boarded Flight 017 to San Francisco; this time it was a white man with a neck half the size of my head who was in charge of the physical. The size of the baton that examined the space between my legs was the same. I might add that I cannot recall having seen the soles of my shoes since I bought these boots. Now within half an hour I had seen them twice. They do not need repair.

San Francisco was deserted, but not on edge. There was a softer, less brittle mood; San Francisco remembered the day with flowers in its hair. There was an

about Islam. One listener did me the favour of suggesting that I seemed warm, friendly and reasonable, adding that I did not sound like a Muslim. I was on the radio show to promote the American edition of *The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict between Islam and Christianity*, and you can imagine that the title itself was a red rag to lots of bulls out there. I can report that Jihad has now become a part of the English language, like bazaar or kebab became part of the Anglo-Saxon dictionary in earlier times. You don't have to explain the word any more. But when it comes to shades of meaning it becomes a different story. I wonder how many listeners believed me when I told them that according to the specified, and written, instructions of the title Caliph after the Prophet, Hazrat Abu Bakr, you could not kill innocent non-participants, particularly women and children, in a Jihad, nor even destroy crops or a palm tree. It will take a long time before the distance between conception and misconception is narrowed in America. Right now, Americans cannot

## Attila on leadership diseases



IKRAM SEHGAL  
writes from Karachi

very much applicable 17 centuries later. All our leaders, civil and military both, need to be given a pep talk on "leadership diseases and remedies thereof".

The first thing to guard against is "avarice dysorexia", a perverted appetite for acquiring illegal wealth. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has dealt with this disease with reasonable success but since accountability has not been applied in a fair and judicious manner to all sections of society (the judiciary and the Armed Forces are exempt) it may lose its credibility. "Physician, heal thyself" must be a prime consideration. One can talk about the obvious in procurement contracts and there is always the institutional corruption in real estate in the military-run Defence Housing entities. The laws of the land must be applicable equally, corruption cannot be condoned because of rank or station in life.

One must worry about "baseless anxiety". Since our intelligence system is geared to developing real and/or imagined "conspiracy theories" most commanders are usually very worried men. While information is extremely important, both about friend and foe alike, one must have the ability to discern truth from false -- and come down like a ton of bricks on falsehood and those who disseminate it. How many intelligence men have we taken to task for either bringing ignorant about what's happening or simply fabricating lies? Next is

"compliance compulsory". It must be ensured that orders given out are correctly understood and those carrying out the orders must have the ability to do so. Additional support, if required, must be provided and the orders must be in conformity with the national interest. Young leaders are usually uncertain about their newly acquired power and this must be recognized. One cannot

required to adapt to the changes in the world, risk or becoming obsolete. "Courage dystrophy" is another disease which all leaders must avoid. Risk-taking is the nature of leaderships, it is better to be in trouble rather than be indecisive. Those who dodge responsibility, "denial dependency", must be removed from office. One must be accountable and not avoid blame.

the leader's confidence, they cannot be effective in their jobs. If their security is not threatened, they will not be a threat to the security of the leader. One must not be overly cautious. Consider the lessons Field Marshal Sium imparted in his "Unofficial History", "do not take counsel of your fears" and "it pays to be bold". Those who have "failure phobia" tend not to take risks and

available around them. This also calls for shunning "inflamed egos", an illusion of having achieved high rank completely through one's own efforts, that rising to senior position was only a matter of fulfilling one's destiny. Dr Robert says, "Your persistent delusion of self-importance is poor compensation for being grounded in reality". Those suffering from "insensitivity com-

"invulnerability illusion", this is idiotic thinking as everyone is vulnerable. Without exception, no one is invincible. Leaders must avoid "loose lips", disclosing confidential information about plans, conditions, particularly to impress female company. This affliction is not confined to South Asia, history is strewn with the high and mighty succumbing to this weakness. Add alcohol and one has a potential disaster, wine loosens the lips more. Many leaders become consumed by a desire for absolute power, this is called "omnipotence obsession", unbridled ambition that may ultimately alienate colleagues and subordinates. Those affected by "popularity paralysis" are not ready to take tough, unpopular decisions that are good for the community and the nation. Those who have the courage to make the right decisions and shun cheap popularity will avoid the poor results of indecisiveness. The "predatory inclination" among some is dangerous, one of our more brilliant PMs was so affected by this insecurity he used to deliberately target the weak. This gave him a fatal sense of superiority. Coupled with this is "sadistic gratification" where one makes the innocent and helpless suffer needlessly. This disease is rampant among the rich and the powerful.

Then there is the widespread disease in which leaders look busy and do nothing, "productivity chafade". This leads us to "recognition

rigor mortis" which means one needs constantly to be flattered on one's achievements instead of publicly acknowledging the hard work and effort of colleagues and subordinates. There are those who believe in "suffering syndrome", a false and chronic conviction that one's command functions best when they are miserable; not so! Human beings perform best when they are happy.

Leaders need to give themselves time on a daily basis to reflect on the fundamental principles of good leadership viz (1) keep a sense of humour and not take themselves too seriously, (2) stay mentally flexible as rigidity of mind inhibits progress, (3) develop good relations with one's colleagues and subordinates, (4) focus on helping other one oneself, (5) maintain a balance of mind, body and heart in both public and private life, work and reaction and lastly (6) enjoy whatever one does, avoiding both complacency and excess.

The true leader exhorts his colleagues that they are his comrades, that they have to take risks together and prosper from mutual support, the cause of Pakistan being greater than anyone living or dead. A true leader is one who will practice what he preaches!

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

## AS I SEE IT

Our leaders, political, military and civilian, seem to live in an "invulnerability illusion", this is idiotic thinking as everyone is vulnerable. Without exception, no one is invincible...Many leaders become consumed by a desire for absolute power, this is called "omnipotence obsession"...Those affected by "popularity paralysis" are not ready to take tough, unpopular decisions that are good for the community and the nation.

afford to be surprised and outraged or issue more orders that will complicate the issue.

Another issue which is extremely worrying is "corollary constriction", i.e. being committed to one's own point of view must not mean that they become impatient with those who are not. One can deal wisely with good advice but it is for the leader to fend off bad advice from close aides and friends in the "inner circle". A good leader must surround himself with smart aides and specialized advisors rendering good advice since one can't be master of everything. These aides and advisors are

that is beneath the dignity of command. In the same sequence those who have "empathy amnesia" are usually over-anxious to impress their superiors with their ability to get the job done. A leader's job is to improve the lot of his command, not indulge in improving his own lot.

While it is required to deal with subordinates who threaten authority, insecurity must not be allowed to overwhelm maturity. There is a tendency to be pervasively suspicious of one's colleagues and subordinates, this "factual paranoia" must be shunned. Unless key advisors and close associates have

have to settle for mediocrity." Being safe does not guarantee success, in fact one sacrifices the possibility of success in avoiding failure. One may also fall behind in one's action plan because of focus neurosis", anything that takes the focus from one's aims and objectives conflicts with reality, wastes time, consumes resources, and creates anxiety. Then there are some who tend to consider themselves more brilliant with every promotion, "know-it-alls" who in reality accomplish less because they have "frontal lobe fixation" and refuse to draw on the advice and intelligence

plex" become so engrossed in themselves that they overlook the interests of their colleagues and subordinates. While chiefs do need a modicum of insensitivity so that they can make hard decisions in the larger interests of the community and the nation, the sure way of avoiding insensitivity is to have advisors who will have the courage to speak up instead of allowing things to simmer and end up in disaster. Leaders have a tendency to shoot the messenger bringing bad news.

Our leaders, political, military and civilian, seem to live in an