

Criminals arrested in Kolkata

Immediate efforts should be made to bring them back

WHAT we had been saying for so long has at last been proven right. Crossing the border and fleeing to Kolkata and West Bengal became the easiest way for the notorious hardcore criminals to escape from being arrested. There were reports of other listed criminals of Bangladesh being caught by Kolkata police earlier, but nothing was done to bring them back, some were reported to have been set free afterwards. Therefore we strongly suggest that a senior team of Bangladeshi police officials should be sent to Kolkata immediately so that they can have meetings with their Kolkata and West Bengal counterparts. The team can give them a list of names, if necessary photographs of the criminals and seek their co-operation in order to arrest the others as quickly as possible and make arrangements to bring all of them back. Most importantly, such a face to face meeting could put a long term cooperative mechanism into place. The border forces of both the countries could also be given a list along with photos of wanted criminals so that they can be more vigilant and effective.

This is a matter that cannot and should not be taken lightly. These are hardcore criminals accused of committing heinous crimes against human beings and that's also under the shelter of politically influential people. At the same time we would also ask the Bangladeshi officials to reciprocate in a similar manner to investigate the recent claims by Indian government about their criminals finding shelter in Bangladesh.

We congratulate Kolkata police force for nabbing Liaquat with his associate Arman and others. Unfortunately the Indian press, while reporting the arrests, have only shown their lack of information on the issue by calling them activists of Al-Qaida and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. They have to stop projecting Bangladesh as a country of extreme Islamists and conspirators at every given opportunity. We would urge them not to base their reports on wrong, misleading perceptions with exaggerated overview on the social diaspora of Bangladesh. We expect that reports on such sensitive issues would be based on simple facts, not on false imaginary information. In fact the incident under discussion provides a good opportunity for us to point out the biased nature of Indian media coverage. These criminals are on our wanted list for years, but have never been linked with the Al-Qaida. We expect the Indian press to be more careful in the future.

Baitul Aman demolition

Why resort to violence when covered by law?

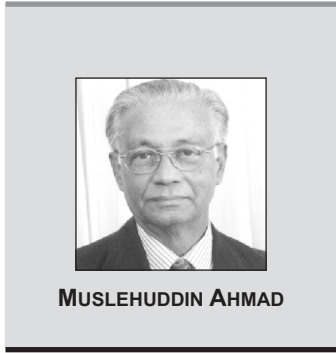
LET us try to get the facts and figures right about the Baitul Aman, which was partially demolished on Tuesday to recover land supposedly owned by the Roads and Highways Department. Khan Shahib Osman Ali, a member of the legislative assembly of the undivided India, had the two-storey building constructed in 1939. In 1967, the authorities claim, the RHD acquired part of the land on which it stands. So, one fine morning, some 35 years after the 'acquisition', RHD officials, led by one magistrate and backed by a strong contingent of police and army personnel, started pulling down the "illegal construction". It must have hit the family of Khan Shahib Osman Ali, who have lived in the building for three generations, a bolt from the blue when they woke up Tuesday morning to find their home was being bulldozed. What must have been even more disturbing was the highhandedness of the on-duty magistrate. He did not show the residents any eviction notice or any interest in the ownership papers they had produced. Even worse, he tore up the deed and ordered police to beat up the inmates of the building, women included. As it has become pervasive practice, the magistrate was quoted to have said the demolition was "on an order by the prime minister".

This paper has extended unflinching support to demolition of illegal structures on public lands and natural water bodies. But we cannot help condemn the way the authorities have gone about reclaiming the 'RHD land' on which part of the Baitul Aman stands. They have shown sheer disregard for the rights of the inmates and even their physical wellbeing. How could they order the demolition with people inside the building? Who would have owned up the responsibility had the decades-old building caved in? The demolition remains suspended now and the communications minister certainly deserves praise for timely intervention.

We hope the government would try to settle the dispute over ownership in a lawful manner. The residents of the building claim that the land has never been acquired and that they have never received any eviction notice. Let them produce the papers and check those out with what the government has in its possession. Why resort to violence when the government can settle the matter within the parameter of law and in peaceful manner?

War against Iraq delayed

Bush administration doves so far prevailed



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

THIS time the doves of Bush Administration led by Secretary Powell prevailed as President Bush ultimately went by the advice of Secretary Powell. This was despite what Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary Rumsfeld said and did to launch an attack against Iraq to disarm President Saddam Hussain. Earlier on October 10, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to authorize President Bush to use force against Iraq. But later, President Bush started showing some signs of climb down when he said on October 20 that the U.S. was trying "diplomacy one more time" to disarm Saddam Hussain "peacefully". He went to the extent of saying that "if Iraq Leader complied with every UN mandate," it would "signal the regime has changed". This was a welcome departure from President's earlier stand on regime change which was obviously against the international law.

Apparently Secretary Powell was determined to put forward his points of view to the members of UNSC in terms of dealing with Iraq President Saddam Hussain. He apparently wanted to stick to multilateralism and indeed managed the UNSC members reportedly through as many as 150 telephone calls to the UNSC members' capitals. Thus the war against Iraq has been stopped probably for the time being. Indeed the France's idea of two resolutions instead of America's one that contained

"automaticity" of the military strike was ultimately accepted. But undoubtedly the latest resolution 1441 was seen by Iraq and also by many others as very tough and provocative.

As it seems, permanent members of UNSC also moved somewhat towards US position in finally framing the resolution which virtually eliminated the trigger element leading to automatic military strike. Syria, one of the rotating members

though at one stage it said the inspection team should include some inspectors from Arab countries. Iraq said, it was choosing "peaceful means to protect the country from the threats of war". Iraq said, in its letter to the Secretary General of the UN that it "accepts the resolution, unreservedly, without conditions". The letter also said "while we are conscious of the real reasons behind the adoption of 1441... we inform you that we

the innocent people of Iraq. There must not be any more spying in the name of inspection. Hans Blix must keep in view what Rolf Ekeus and Scot Ritter, former Chief Weapons Inspectors said about spying by inspectors. Scot Ritter confirmed that some of the inspectors were spying for the CIA. In the meantime, full preparations for war by the US have been going on. President Bush has reportedly approved a plan for deploying 250,000 US troops in the

earth many times over. Thus the U.S. and other nuclear countries themselves pose threat not only to the world peace but also to the very existence of this unfortunate globe. Saddam stands nowhere compared to the destructive capacity of these countries. Former President Carter correctly brought up the issue that U.S. should first disarm itself. President Carter said, "One of the things that the United States government has not done is to try to comply with

have the weapons of mass destruction. Today, Iraq is being threatened but if it had the nuclear arsenal as other countries, including North Korea, would then such an open threat would have disappeared. Could the U.S. give similar threat to North Korea? Probably not.

There is no non-proliferation at all in the world nuclear arena. There is probably less horizontal proliferation, but there is definitely vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons in the name of upgrading or modernizing them. Now Iraq is under attack for allegedly having biological weapons. But Israel's Biological Institute has been operating for decades in Nes Tsiona, a small bedroom community, south of Tel Aviv.

Towns Mayor Yossi Shevo wrote that the Institute conducts research in the area of biological weapons and manufactures violent bacteria, which "constitute a danger to the lives of the people living in the vicinity of the Institute" [Ref: *Int'l Herald Tribune*, 24th Sept., 1998]. Israel also has nuclear weapons apart from its vast military power that the U.S. directly helped it to build up. All these are now being used to kill Palestinians. Against all these Palestinians go for suicide bombings which are considered terrorist acts, but what about Israel's practically limitless military power that has been causing devastation in the Palestinian territories. Under such an unjust political and military situation, one cannot expect end of terrorism. Killing of one terrorist produces hundreds of terrorists if not thousands and thus terrorism gets dispersed and indeed widespread. No amount of military actions can stop terrorism which is the result of political egoism and blunders and military barbarism.

Muslehuddin Ahmad is a former Secretary and Ambassador and founder president of North South University

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

The most important issue now before the world is why should not a country have the right to have weapons of mass destruction if other countries have them? If it is a "deterrent" then others should have them. Under the present situation there is hardly any sense in having non-proliferation treaty... There is no non-proliferation at all in the world nuclear arena. There is probably less horizontal proliferation, but there is definitely vertical proliferation of nuclear weapons in the name of upgrading or modernizing them. Now Iraq is under attack for allegedly having biological weapons. But Israel's Biological Institute has been operating for decades...

of UNSC also voted in favour of the resolution as it got assurances from the US and Britain that there would be no automatic military strike against Iraq. Thus 1441 was a unanimous resolution which obviously meant that the US got the support of all the members of UNSC. In other words, President Bush opted for multilateralism at least for the time being. He was possibly influenced by the fact that a good part of his administration was against unilateral strike and also there have been a series of anti-war demonstrations all over Europe and also in the U.S. These developments clearly showed that the division that some political leaders wanted to create between the West and the East did not work and is not likely to work. This time German and French governments played a very important role in thwarting this sort of trend in the international politics.

Iraq also did well by accepting Resolution-1441 unconditionally

accept the resolution in spite of the evil it contains." Iraq informed the Secretary General of the UN within the time limit of seven days set by the UNSC. Iraq is also required to divulge all information on weapons of mass destruction within 30 days.

Hans Blix, the Chief of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) reached Baghdad on November 17 with his advance team and would start tough inspection work from next week. Though Mr. Blix said, war depends not on him but on the members of the UNSC and also on how Iraq conducts itself in terms of its dealings with the UNMOVIC team. He is right so far his statement is concerned but he must bear in mind that his role is extremely crucial in terms of the future of Iraq and its relation with the US and indeed with the rest of the world. Each and every word of his report on inspection will determine the future of not only Iraqi regime but also of

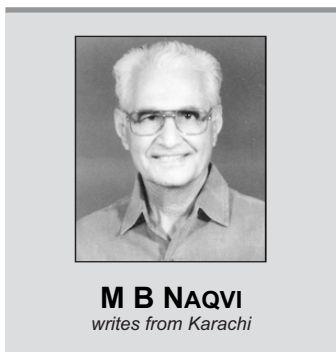
region for dealing with Iraqi regime. Therefore, the matter is not only serious, it's extremely grave. Inspection apart, even deliberately created skirmishes in the no-fly zone may lead to war. The U.S. and Britain have apparently been trying to create a situation that could be interpreted as Iraq's "material breach" with a view to finding a reason to attack Iraq. Any war will directly affect the entire Arab world and unfortunately rest of the world will also not find an escape.

If Iraq really had any weapon of mass destruction, it would not have agreed to the return of the inspectors. The idea of buying time does not seem credible as Saddam had over four years in hand to do the job. Several other countries like India, Pakistan, North Korea succeeded in the meantime in completing their work on producing and delivering nuclear bombs. The U.S. itself has incredibly huge stock of weapons of mass destruction that can destroy

and enforce international efforts targeted to prohibit the arsenals of biological weapons that we ourselves have. The major powers need to set an example... I don't have any doubt that it's that kind of atmosphere that has led to the nuclearization, you might say, of India and Pakistan. The most important issue now before the world is why should not a country have the right to have weapons of mass destruction if other countries have them? If it is a "deterrent" then others should have them. Under the present situation there is hardly any sense in having non-proliferation treaty.

The exclusive right and power of some nuclear countries have indeed created the present intolerable military situation in the world and increased other countries' appetite for having nuclear weapons. Just see the state of "stabilization" of military situation of India-Pakistan in the sub-continent. It's because both

'Yet another democratic(?) beginning'



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

NOVEMBER 16 saw a new beginning of an alleged democratic order, the fourth of its kind. Several things happened: the President took a new oath of office for his second term that will now end on Nov 15, 2007. The National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, met for the first time 37 days after the polls last month. Some 324 members took the oath amidst confusion about constitution and protests. The still extant Chief Executive and President graciously restored parts of the 1973 Constitution, though complete with all the amendments the CE has made, 29 in number, are included.

Legal experts are scheduled to earn truly large fees in the litigation that is sure to ensue, despite the extraordinary relations that obtain between the Supreme Court and the Pakistan Bar Council and most other senior lawyers' organisations; PBC has passed resolutions, has said so in front of SC judges and its members have withdrawn their own constitutional petitions from the apex court on the plea that the superior Judiciary, by taking new oaths under Musharraf's PCO (Provisional Constitutional Order), has compromised its own independence and cannot be expected to provide impartial justice. Hence their withdrawing the petitions. The SC has symbolically punished the President of the PBC. Even so, some party or other or even the government is thought likely to go to

the SC on many of controversial issues.

Today's constitutional controversies include that the President's in part restoration of the Constitution—in a specie of constitutional strip-tease—leaves the country in a constitutional deviation, while the means to redress it, viz. Parliament, exists or soon will be. But more substantial ones concern the legal validity of the Legal Framework Order which embodies the many amendments to the Constitution

the general election called under LFO and PCO; everyone knew that Musharraf had promulgated LFO on Aug 21 last—long before the polls. Why crib now? Ministers repeat some version of this argument on another of major issues that opposition parties have raised: President's initial assumption of office and his giving himself a second term of office through a bogus Referendum are all illegal.

Constitutional struggles are sure to be heard of in months and years

It is necessary to divide this lot into pro- and anti-Musharraf camps. Pro-Musharraf number amounted to 97 while 13 MQM seats are thought likely to end up in the Musharraf camp. Even so the tally does not go beyond 110 while the minimum requirement for government making was 137. Out of 29 independents, not all can go to the Q League, ensuring a pro-Musharraf government. Gen. Musharraf, also the President, will not be home and dry until Q League acquires 137 general

League. The rest were recruited by a combination of coercion and inducements by the intelligence agencies, as is being strenuously claimed by all parties other than Q League. There is near unanimity about horse-trading and skulduggery now going on. That is how a government is sought to be installed in the coming few days. But as of this writing, there is no certainty that all this force, fraud and bribes are absolutely sure to achieve the desired numbers; the Q League

be remembered for its crude force and fraud. Such a beginning for democracy in its fourth attempt does not inspire much confidence. While it is to be supposed that the General will get what he wants, eventually, how long can such a government stick? The problems of the country are huge in number and size. The economy has been going downhill, despite slick claims being made, buttressed by high monetary reserves. The precise reasons for the failure of the governments in the past not merely continue to operate but have been aggravated.

The trickiest problems concern foreign policy: from any self-respecting Pakistani's viewpoint, the country has already lost its sovereignty in both economic and political matters. The amount of interest that the Americans are taking in government making and the kind of messages that is being read by the people that emanate from Washington, it would seem that the first task of the new government is to win the confidence of Washington. Meantime Pakistan-India relations and SAARC are in a state of suspended animation. Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee has graciously begun withdrawing troops from the forward attacking positions. But there is no sign of the minimal normalisation that obtained last year in terms of communication links and visas. There is no knowing whether the SAARC summit would actually be held on Jan 11 because the Indian Prime Minister refuses to confirm whether he would travel to Islamabad. The initiative in many matters is not in Pakistani's hand.

But if a new beginning is being made the people will expect new policies on subjects that touch common people's lives. Of that there is no discussion or mention. There is far too much of uncertainty about which government will take office, when and who will comprise it.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

The question recurs: would a Q League propped candidate win the post of PM on Thursday (Nov 21) on the floor of the NA by a show of hand, although most observers think that the General will get what he wants... But if a new beginning is being made the people will expect new policies on subjects that touch common people's lives. Of that there is no discussion or mention. There is far too much of uncertainty about which government will take office, when and who will comprise it.

made and promulgated by CE Gen. Musharraf. Two blocs of parties, viz. PPP-Parliamentarians and MMA (Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal) hold that no individual can amend the Constitution, especially when the Parliament exists or will soon exist. Some say that November 16 promulgation of the partial Constitution is illegal insofar as incorrectly-amended Articles have been included. They simply dispute that the Constitution stand amended by Gen. Musharraf's saying so. There are also innumerable consequential controversies.

Yet another controversy was loudly uttered and in unison by PPP and MMA wallahs: we are taking oath of the Constitution as it was on Oct 12, 1999, if not in 1973 when it was first signed by the Parliament. The friends of the government and the supposedly outgoing Ministers claim piously that they are straining at the gnat of an oath after swallowing the whole camel of fighting

ahead. But more immediately relevant question is how will the government be run and by whom. It is now accepted by all the observers and analysts—except the few with links with the governments—that not only the military government engaged in heavy pre-poll rigging and a notable amount of doctoring of results, some help to pro-Musharraf candidates was also rendered during the polling processes. But it is only fair to say that near consensus exists on pre-poll and post-poll hanky panky, but not on polling processes being wholly vitiated. Even so the original polls results (based on 272 constituencies, i.e. sans additional seats to be filled by indirect PR elections) were: Q League 77, PPP-P 64, MMA 47, MQM 13, PML (Nawaz) 14, another pro-Musharraf National Alliance 13. There were 29 independents. Another 14 seats were won by as many as 10 other parties, half of them pro-Musharraf.

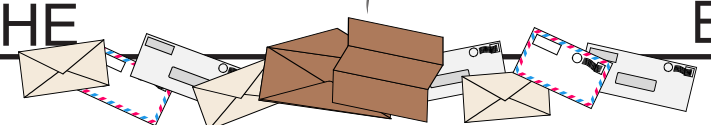
seats or 173/2 overall after new additions. Life is never easy for any crowned head. Seven independents are MMA material and a few say they are with the opposition. Even so many have gone to PML (QA) as the Q League is officially called. Now the numbers have been enlarged by virtue of adding women and minorities seats in proportion to the original number of winners. The long and short of it is that as of November 17 there is no certainty that the pro-Musharraf deputies are in excess of 172 which is now the minimum for a government to survive.

The government making has brought out the worst in Pakistan politics—and the best. A large number of PML(N) deputies turned their coats when Gen. Musharraf took over. Many others were drawn to the General's cause by his National Accountability Bureau: any corrupt deputy caught by the NAB usually got away by making a deal, one side of which was to join the Q

claims that it has 180 members' support but that convinces no body. But so did the MMA candidate for PM that he had over 174 members' support when he was discussing an alliance with PPP. The PPP-MMA talks broke down when the general's junta let it be known that it cannot be comfortable with PPP being the dominant force in the new government. There was also an easy government to Musharraf's satisfaction if MMA could be expected as a partner with Q League which both sides desperately wanted. Would the Americans be happy with that?

The question recurs: would a Q League propped candidate win the post of PM on Thursday (Nov 21) on the floor of the NA by a show of hand, although most observers think that the General will get what he wants. By the date enough new members are supposed to be pressganged to constitute a numerical plurality for Musharraf. But this marathon race for government making stretching 45 days will long

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



"The nation builders of tomorrow"

In an earlier letter published on 5th November I had advised *The Daily Star* authorities to undertake an investigation to evaluate the achievements of past "O" and "A" level certificate holders to the building of our nation and hold a ceremony to honour them. The large number of letters which appeared in this column recently indicate that a difference of opinion prevails regarding calling the awardees of *The Daily Star* ceremony "The Nation Builders of Tomorrow".

I am sure *The Daily Star* knows that HSC and SSC examinations have the same status as "O" and "A" level examinations, and that the students passing these examinations are the real nation builders of tomorrow. "O" and "A" level certificate holders are also nation builders of tomorrow, but not the nation

builders. The students achieving excellent grades in HSC and SSC examinations are in no way inferior to those from the English medium schools. "A" level certificate holders are not found to have an edge over HSC certificate holders in the admission tests of public universities in Bangladesh.

Any enlightened person would appreciate awards for achievements of our young students in their examinations by any private agency. What hurts our feeling is the discrimination between two sections of students which has become obvious in the issue of *The Daily Star* on 2nd November last. Reports of two award-giving ceremonies were published. A front-page 6-column wide photograph with a lead story described the ceremony for the "O" and "A" level certificate holders organised by *The Daily Star*. The banner declared: "Saluting the Nation Builders of

Tomorrow". In the back page, a small photograph of HSC students, with the banner calling them "kriti santan" was used to describe the ceremony by "Prothom Alo". One can say that *The Daily Star* has a right to put more importance on its own activities, but this is not enough to justify the discrimination which has become obvious. Further, use of the word "salute" to appreciate the success in school final examinations does not seem to be appropriate.

It is a common practice with us to be proud of possessing anything "Western", be it a certificate, or a degree, or an ordinary utility item. We cannot really encourage our "nation builders of tomorrow" to build up our nation, unless we teach them to be proud of our own possessions, even if they are of a poorer quality. I urge upon *The Daily Star* to remember this when they arrange an award-giving ceremony

next time.
M. M. Rahman
Professor, Chemistry Department,
D.U.

I was agast to see the whole of *The Daily Star's* letter-page being taken over by this English-Bengali debacle. I find it utterly useless and really question the sanity of this debate.

Aspirations for a good command over the English language is nothing new, it adds prestige and class to one's persona according to our social standards, grants greater access to jobs and opens up avenues of opportunities both at home and abroad. Everybody knows that it doesn't matter whether we fight a newspaper column-war or try hell bent to prove otherwise by vicious arguments. The fact of the matter is, at the end of the day, we have to live with it. There is nothing wrong with aspiring for the "better life" whether at home or abroad. If a

good command over a language makes the job easier, then I don't see why anyone should object. Those who try to see it as an act of desertion of ones country or its interests, only raise question about the sanity of their frame of mind and sense of judgement. Economic migrants have been and will be, especially so in a country like ours where one has to struggle for basic human needs. Let us not forget that there were days when the Europeans and the British flocked our country to pluck and plunder the riches of our affluent nation.

If a Bangladesh earns a single penny and sends it home, it adds to the foreign remittance. If a Bangladesh holds a job in a foreign country, it helps to enhance our image on the world map. So far we have succeeded in making ourselves known to the world as the flood washed delta with a beggarly hand stretched forward. If our

children really make a difference to this image by showing their calibre as equals in the world arena then I don't see why the likes of Mr. Hannan should object.

The *Daily Star* must be really acknowledged for their commendable stand to forge the mere boundaries of a news-daily and play a positive role in bringing about social recognition of our human resources. If we cannot pay respect to our own selves, if we cannot realise our own talents, we can hardly expect others to treat us for any worth. Nothing but ill-intended petty jealousy motivates us to these useless argument over Bengali-English schools. English school education is highly coveted and privileged for a few and the reason why in the others, the green eyed monster lurks out at the singular hint, whenever this issue comes up. We also understand why the daily never puts an end to these narrowly

expressed views: the ills of a democratic practice. But I would like to request the *Star* to really filter out the letters before they make their way into the letter-writers' columns.

If you are bothered so much about nation building, please use your valuable time and efforts in issues that really matter for our country. The Bengali and English medium students can be spared because the only thing they deserve is our acknowledgement of their hard work and achievements, and the *Star* and Prothom Alo have done what we all should have been doing a long time ago. I would, therefore, request all the letter-writers to put an end to this useless topic and engage in more profitable endeavours.

Mujtaba Ahsan
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka
"Appeal to Bill Gates"
Letters of Dr. A. M. Choudhury

(November 20) and M Hassan (November 15), asking donation from Bill Gates, made me embarrassed.

Don't we have any self-respect? Are we a nation of beggars?
Shukla Mirza
Al Khor, Qatar

I am stunned to read the letter by Prof A M Choudhury. Did he have to beg donation from Bill Gates? He doesn't have any right to humiliate us, the people and the nation this way.

We know that we are a poor nation. But we do have self-respect and let's not forget that.
Sonia Chowdhury
Banani, Dhaka