

## CHT peace accord

Authorities have to be sincere in implementation

DO we really want insurgency to return in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and make the whole region unstable all over again? The answer would definitely be no. We simply fail to understand the reasons behind the continuous delay in implementation of the peace accord. In fact the frustrations and disappointments of last five years have led the tribal leaders to express their desire to go back to guerilla warfare. Not so long ago, even the former guerilla leader of PCJSS, Santu Larma had said in public that signing the peace treaty was a 'mistake', which did not come as a surprise for many who know the situation.

The government has to show an element of sincerity in implementation of the treaty. The plights of the tribal community have to be addressed sooner than later. We can only assume that either the ruling party has accepted the treaty or they have serious reservations about it, especially since it was initiated and signed by the previous regime and BNP had strongly objected to it at that time. But then again the Prime Minister herself met the tribal leaders after assuming power and gave no apparent hints of making any significant changes in it. Therefore we see no justification for the delay in implementation of this important accord.

We understand that it can't be done overnight but there should at least be some progress which we can talk about. It is extremely unfortunate to see all the hopes that were raised after signing of the accord coming crashing down within a short time. And who to blame for this other than both the past and present governments. The delay seems to have divided the tribal leadership to a considerable extent. Armed clashes between the group that opposed the treaty and those in favour of it became frequent, even kidnapping of each others' activists were also rampant at one point. We just hope that it wouldn't blow up in a bigger conflict. One thing we would like to say is that the treaty brought the insurgency down and that's an achievement which can't be ignored. The government has no choice but to take the matter seriously and accelerate the process so that the people of hill tracts can feel that the trust they put on negotiations rather than armed conflict was not in vain.

## Sedition charge against Hasina

Does the govt not have anything better to do?

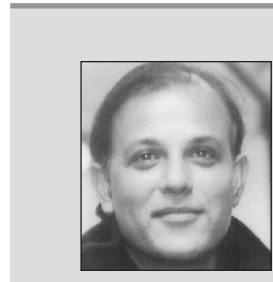
THE ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) appears to have developed an affinity to the word "sedition". It seems to smell sedition in everything that the main opposition Awami League leaders, especially its president Sheikh Hasina, say or do. Her remarks during her recent trip to Brussels, Bangkok and New Delhi have seemingly pushed the BNP hardliners to the brink of "sedition" schizophrenia. A section of them has reportedly started pushing for sedition charges against the leader of the opposition for her "anti-Bangladesh remarks". The majority of the BNP policymakers, however, feels otherwise and believes that the government should launch a media campaign against the former prime minister. Now, our question is aren't there more urgent problems to attend?

This paper has used perhaps the harshest of language to denounce Hasina's remarks hinting at fundamentalist upheaval in the country. We did the same when the opposition leader insinuated Taliban presence in the government immediately after the BNP-led coalition took over. The news dailies and magazines, barring a few, have never backtracked on their commitment to let the people know the truth without fear or favour. So the government should let us do what we do best and try to do what they are supposed to do.

About the plan of the BNP hawks to have Hasina implicated for sedition, we just want to ask why drag judiciary into an issue that is political down to the bones. The judiciary, both higher and lower, is already burdened with too many hate cases, it can certainly do without another one, especially when the proposed legal action pits the government against the opposition. If such case finds its way to the courtroom, amidst political mudslinging the judiciary's image might also be smeared.

We urge the saner elements within the ruling party to abandon its plan to malign the opposition leader either through a media campaign or legal action for sedition. Instead, the ruling alliance should focus more on what it has been mandated to do but has miserably failed to do. The government admits it or not, its last one year or so in power is strewn with governance failure. While the coalition has rode on a public outcry against crime and violence to power, crime and violence ironically have marked its biggest rise so far. What can be a more poignant testimony to this effect than the fact that the government had to resort to the armed forces to curb crime and violence? On the economic front, its performance has been lackadaisical to say the least. The economy has struggled and foreign direct investment dipped to a dangerous depth. These are issues people want the ruling party and the government to pay attention to, not such gimmicks as sedition charge against the leader of the opposition to divert public attention from their shortcomings.

## These exciting times



K.A.S. MURSHID

YOU may have noticed that there is hardly ever a dull moment around these parts. The recent spate of excitement began with Operation Cleanheart, which allowed column writers like myself to quickly mount the moral high horse to decry human rights violations, the absence of due process, the lack of a legal cover and so on, while those amongst us with a medical background were free to explore the mystery of cardiac arrests that frequently seemed to accompany the normal variety. A small minority even found words to sympathise with the Operation, borrowing from the rhetoric of the Bush administration to find certain incidents 'regrettable' while justifying the same as collateral damage! Altogether, the post 9/11 world has become a rather interesting place, even if somewhat inelegant.

Actually, I have no wish of revisiting that debate, despite the fact that the Operation moves on, the body count continues to mount while everyone, even those in the opposition, appear to have resigned themselves to it. Quite honestly, my own loyalty (to my values) has undergone some strain, for there is little doubt that for the first time in con-

temporary history, traders, shopkeepers and businessmen are not having to contend with hordes of young hoodlums before Eid; it is equally clear that the streets are distinctly safer and that the extortionists have been kept at bay -- well at least the non-institutional ones. Perhaps the most significant outcome of the Operation has been its even-handed dispensation of 'justice'. The 'hands-off' policy of the

I quite fail to see how we can come out of this mess as winners. Whatever way one looks at it the arrest of the foreign journalists and their local associates does us little credit. Let us assume the worst and conclude that these people were indeed trying to prove the existence of strong communal and rightwing elements in the country. (The operative word here is 'strong'. We all know that such forces DO exist in our midst but

surveillance of extremist activity. Our free press is our greatest asset and our objective should be to promote the highest standards of independent reporting. An open policy is our best safeguard against 'lies and calumny'!

How then will the world interpret the arrest of those journalists? Let me leave that question with you to dwell on at your leisure. In the meantime, I sincerely hope that the Gov-

even offering to provide 'evidence' as well).

There may well be ISI operatives in Bangladesh just as there are ISI operatives in India. The same goes for Al Qaida. But the thought did strike me -- I mean can you imagine large numbers of Arabs, Chechens and Pathans hanging out in densely populated rural Bangladesh, *incognito*? Word of their presence would spread like wildfire over the bamboo

Bangladesh's interest to encourage insurgency on its border. Indeed, a peaceful northeast would be of great economic benefit to us as Bangladesh is the natural gateway for this large landlocked area.

The problem with the Indian accusation therefore is it fails to provide a decent motive. I am sure even Mr. Sinha would agree that 'spite' has little relevance in international relations and is a poor substitute for 'national interest'.

There is a genuine worry however on our side: insurgencies do have a tendency to spill over across international frontiers, and it would hardly be fair to blame Bangladesh for this. Nor is it fair to ask us to patrol every inch of OUR territory for YOUR insurgents. Wouldn't it be much better if you didn't let them cross?

### Postscript: Knee-jerk reflex

The three issues discussed above have one thing in common: they are all excellent examples of what I call knee-jerk responses to external stimuli. Unfortunately much of our policy -- whether domestic or foreign, appear to be based, not so much on careful analysis but on pre-programmed responses that probably hark back to a very different era and a different context. Talk of bringing sedition charges against Sheikh Hasina is yet another example of this ludicrous mind-set. Serves you right for not allowing her to speak in Parliament! But seriously, it is high time that we dropped words like 'traitor', 'sedition' and 'conspiracy' from our daily vocabulary.

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

## BETWEEN YOURSELF AND ME

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ruling party (well, at least that of the Prime Minister) is also commendable. It is highly tempting to conclude therefore, that at the end of the day, the price has been worth paying.

My problem is I still believe in traditional, liberal democratic values -- values that the West is in the process of relegating to the garbage heap as a consequence of the Bush-Blair doctrine. I believe that in the long run we all lose out if we allow basic principles to be trampled, even if it is for a seemingly good cause. For example, arbitrary detention and custodial death can never be condoned. I fear that the example that has been set today will continue to haunt us for a long time to come. I pray that my fears will prove to be ill founded.

The foreign journalists

what we can argue about is how strong these are). Ultimately, therefore it is a question of evidence, interpretation and assessment -- all of which leaves plenty of room for a less than objective view.

There have been a number of reports in the world media relating to the presence of fundamentalist forces in the country -- some of these reports may indeed be biased. This does not mean that there is a conspiracy afoot but merely that 'fundamentalism' sells and can quickly launch even an unknown journalist into the big times. The temptation to fiddle a bit with the evidence may be too strong in one's quest for a 'scoop'. Our response nevertheless must be judicious and proportional. The cornerstone of our policy must be a high level of vigilance, constant monitoring and

ement has a somewhat more sophisticated strategy worked out to counter the 'international conspiracy' that has been hatched to ruin our fair name!

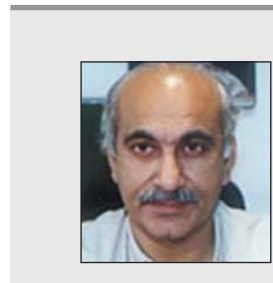
### Indian anger

It all seemed to begin with a comment by the redoubtable Mr. Advani (yes, he of the Babri Masjid fame) who claimed that there were Pakistani ISI operatives in Bangladesh, along with Al Qaida members and insurgents from India's northeast. Advani's comments predictably brought forth a sharp rebuttal from the Foreign Office -- which did not help matters very much. Thus, what began as a drizzle quickly turned into a storm with the foreign ministers of each side threatening to throw paperweights at each other, as it were (with one foreign minister

telegraph, to be picked up by the local and international press in full pictorial glory. Perhaps Mr. Sinha in Delhi has been able to get his hands on a few! Now you know what those journalists were after? On the question of 'operatives', perhaps Mr. Sinha could also supply us with a list of RAW agents in Bangladesh. It would be interesting to know what the RAW-ISI ratio was in our country.

I suspect that India is essentially worried about the insurgency on its northeast, and that is understandable. At a time when Bangladeshi businessmen and policy makers are toying around with notions of regional cooperation, trade (including trade with the northeast), the Asian Highway, growth triangles and quadrangles, etc. it is not in

## Aurangzeb's beard



M.J. AKBAR

NICCOLAO Manucci was a teenager when he arrived in India in 1653. His evocative descriptions of life under Aurangzeb combine the wonder of Marco Polo with the credulity of an uncertain, and perhaps envious, European. But the eye of this witness is less jaundiced than we might expect. A lifetime in India honed his temperament even if it did not entirely wash away an inherent belief in the superiority of Christian-western culture. One man's alien can be another man's barbarian.

One of Manucci's vignettes is his narrative of Aurangzeb's crusade against the fertile beard. We shall leave the story to the narrator: "Aurangzeb did another very ridiculous thing to show himself a scrupulous observer of the Faith. This was the issue of an order that no Mahomedan (sic) should wear a beard longer than four finger-breadths. Now the Moguls are much concerned with the preservation of their big beards, using for this many unguents. An official was appointed whose business it was, in company with his attendants and soldiers, to measure beards in the middle of the streets, and, if necessary, dock them." (This, and much else, can be found in the wonderful compilation, *Historic Delhi*, chosen and edited by H.K. Kaul and published by Oxford University Press.)

Descent into the ludicrous is a familiar failing of fundamentalism. Here is the precursor of the morality-

police of the Taliban, who whipped the barber out of the social life of Afghanistan in their pursuit of a code that emanated from a puritanism that had degenerated into a disease. Perhaps the Taliban might have been slightly more scissor-friendly if they had known that Aurangzeb had a prescription for the length of the beard, and thought that anything longer than four finger-breadths was decadent.

It is of course not a matter of the

or the soldiers for fear of receiving injury to himself. It was, however, amusing to see the official in charge of beards rushing hither and thither, laying hold of wretched men by the beard, in order to measure and cut off the excess, and clipping their mustaches to uncover their lips... It was equally quaint to see the soldiers and others covering their faces with their shawls when they beheld afar off the said official, for fear of some affront."

clarity and a heart to laugh. A fundamentalist is essentially heartless.

The heart being cold, he cannot relate to joy. Since there is no joy, there cannot be music in his soul either. The man charged with keeping beards in line was soon given another responsibility. Aurangzeb "ordered the same official to stop music. If in any house or elsewhere he heard the sound of singing and instruments, he should forthwith hasten there and arrest as many as

disobey Aurangzeb over beards and music, that relationship became flawed. It took time to die. A relationship constructed over 150 years does not decay with one spell of belligerence. But at some point in that half a century of Aurangzeb, the thought occurred and turned into a belief that the emperor could no longer be trusted to act for the common good. Aurangzeb's dogma mitigated against the history and culture of a Delhi that had been

for a foreigner to learn to produce even a light Indian tune. The ninth argument is that Indian tunes can hypnotise the beautiful spotted deer so much that it does not fear the arrow piercing its heart... the Indian can hunt down the deer with the help of his music."

So who was the better Muslim? Aurangzeb or Hazrat Amir Khusrau and Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya, at whose mazaar (grave) the most beautiful qawwali is still offered as homage? The sufi was inspired by love and his grave is as crowded today as it was centuries ago. The fundamentalist, inspired merely by an aborted doctrine, lost the greatest inheritance a prince could have had -- a Mughal empire.

Can a modern "liberal" be a fundamentalist? The question may seem a contradiction, but think about it. Fundamentalism is imposition of your view upon the other; it is the invasion of other's space. When a modern "liberal" distorts the privilege of freedom of speech and extends it into slander, he too becomes a fundamentalist. When he converts the right to expression into

a right to abuse, he too becomes a fundamentalist. When lie and malice are used to caricature and defame the gods and prophets of hundreds of millions of people, then that too is a form of fundamentalism. When you vilify Lord Rama, or Jesus, or Prophet Mohammad, you too are becoming an intolerant extremist. Those who have faith must respect those who do not have it. Equally, the agnostic and the atheist must respect the sentiment of those who go to temples, churches and mosques. The malevolence of abuse is violence against both civilisation and common sense. Extremists on the sides are squeezing the life out of the mainstream in which we hope to live.

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## BYLINE

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size of beards. It is a question of freedom and imposition. Since beards were virtually involuntary in an age when the razor blade was not common manufacture, and the barber a luxury, Aurangzeb decided that the correct size of an Islamic beard was four finger-breadths. Anything longer was vice.

Typically, the puritan first targets those of his own faith; the apostate invites far greater anger than the infidel. There were no orders given to punish any Hindu beard that had had the temerity to travel beyond four finger-breadths. The definition of apostasy turns whimsical and tortured. Religion, which prospers because it is a liberation, is imprisoned by the narrow mind of a fundamentalist.

So what happens in real life when an emperor sets out such an agenda? Back to Niccolao: "This order was not carried out, except against ordinary people, the official not daring to meddle with the nobles

As the portrait of life under Aurangzeb grows larger, there is relief: India is not to be defeated so easily. If the official was the precursor of the Taliban police, then there were others who were not ready to submit. There was an empire and an emperor, but the Mughal system was neither despotic nor ready to surrender easily before despotism. The rich, as usual, ignored orders they did not like, or which they considered silly; the size of beards yesterday, the size of Scotch pegs under the prohibition of a Morarji Desai.

If the official got tough, he was always in danger of being roughed up. The "ordinary people", again as usual, had to absorb the brunt. The thought of the official rushing about snipping off unreligious hair is comic, but Aurangzeb could not see the comedy. The puritan is burdened by the inability to laugh. How can he possibly even think of laughing at himself? It needs courage,

he could, breaking the instruments."

The musicians retained a sense of humour in the depth of their despair. One Friday about a thousand of them gathered at the mosque where the emperor went for his prayers, holding 20 "highly-ornamented biers" and wailing loudly. Aurangzeb enquired about the reason for their lament. They sobbed that the emperor had killed music, and they were now bearing music to her grave. Aurangzeb "calmly remarked that they should pray for the soul of music, and see that she is thoroughly well buried." But music has a longer life than emperors. What really happened? Manucci answers: "In spite of this, the nobles did not cease to hear songs in secret."

The emperor could give an order, but he could not ensure that it was obeyed. Power is a relationship between the throne and the people. It flourishes only by mutual agreement. Once the nobility began to

ruled by Muslims since the end of the twelfth century. Aurangzeb broke with the practice of the faith as Delhi had practised Islam. Delhi was, and is, the city of Hazrat Amir Khusrau, born in the city of Turkish parents, and disciple of that great sufi divine Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya. Khusrau was away on an assignment when he heard that his master had passed away. He was so distraught at the news that he sold off all his possessions, returned to Delhi, donned a black robe, and sat silently by the grave of his master till death took him away as well. Khusrau, who is venerated by Muslims, wrote this of Indian ragas when citing reasons why a Turk like him should live in India: "The eighth argument in praise of India is our sweet music, the fire of which keeps the heart and soul ablaze. The music attracts artists from far and near. They rush to learn it. But it is so difficult and delicate that even thirty to forty years' stay does not suffice

## OPINION

## Profiling the criminal mind

A look at the mindset of the perpetrators of crime

ERSHAD KHANDKER

OPEN a newspaper and the front page itself is sure to contain gruesome proof of the appalling degradation in law and order. Only the other day we read about a girl student of class IV drowning while escaping from some youths chasing her. The youths allegedly watched and did nothing to save her. The entire country is in utter bewilderment at this situation. Wanton acts of lawlessness are a daily reality. The dazed perplexity is shared by all to an extent that guilt and self-doubt linger in the minds of those troubled by an inability to break this impasse or lift this siege on their lives. A sociological commentary will bring out some answers to the

reasons behind this situation. Onus of this piece is to have a look at the mind of the criminal and see if we can identify the roots of this menace.

The available analysis of the criminal mind is largely based on psychological profiling and effects of environment and background. There is not as yet any concrete forensic evidence of any medical condition or bodily function or chemical discharge that can be redressed or treated. There is no clear evidence also that genes have anything to do with crime although most scholars agree that a surrounding or upbringing that is based on sociological interaction with criminal elements is almost certain to breed antisocial behaviour.

The latest study, released as recently as last week, centred on the role of genes. The study says that a single gene may explain why children abused may grow up to be violent or aggressive, though not all. In a study conducted over a span of 26 years, by Terri Moffit of King's College, London and the University of Wisconsin, "children were studied for 26 years, from birth to adulthood". They homed in on the gene -- monoamine oxidase A (MAOA) which breaks down key neurotransmitters, or message carrying chemicals linked with mood, aggression, and pleasure and is the target of one group of anti-depressant drug. Genes are strongly influenced by environment therefore that particular aspect was seriously considered.

If the abused boys had one version of the enzyme MAOA gene that caused their brains to produce too little of the enzyme, they were nine times more likely to become antisocial, the researchers said. "Boys who had been maltreated but had higher levels of MAOA were unlikely to develop behavioural problems. Their version of the gene may promote trauma resistance. However, simply having the gene did not guarantee that the boy would not grow up to be a criminal." The study makes references as to why women are less prone to crime. The gene is found in X chromosomes. Since women have two X chromosomes compared to the one X and one Y chromosomes that men have, in women the effects of one version

of the gene may cancel out the effect of the other.

Another study says that "Children normally learn to trust and develop attachments to people within the first two years of life. By then they have also acquired a sense of compassion and empathy for others. And they have begun to be taught the difference between right and wrong and that hurtful actions have consequences. Many youngsters, though, fail to acquire those early curbs on conduct".

Also, children with a propensity to hurt, torture or kill animals are showing concrete proof of a troubled mind with a dangerous lack of compassion. That, say behaviouralists, is one of the significant indications of underlying psychological trouble. Other acts

like an ability to cause bodily violence, setting fire to property and playing dangerous practical jokes with sharp objects have been identified as early indicators.

Young boys who grow up with absent or uninvolved fathers suffer doubly in that they often fail to develop a healthy sense of masculinity. An early introduction to substance abuse, meaning drug use or alcohol abuse, is of course a strong reason for potential criminal behaviour also. This is a major reason for urban crime in Bangladesh.

We have often asked ourselves - what kind of person would kill another human being? In a study conducted by psychologist Robert Hare of the University of British Columbia, two groups of people,

known psychopaths and absolutely normal people were examined to see their reactions to words related to traumatic criminal acts -- rape, murder and so on. The psychopaths recorded no reactions whatsoever while the normal people responded rightaway. This indicates with certainty that killers have no conscience to answer to as their brains do not react to actions that are wrong.

Interestingly, the study also remarks that because women are subservient and obedient because of their social setting, the compassion and emotional content that are general in most women, act as deterrent. That is why crimes committed by women are less in number.

The identification of the various characteristics of a criminal mind would not give us a direct tool to mitigating its effect. Yet, education and information can always come in handy, therefore more discussions need to be done on this topic grassroots levels. We need to tell parents to be more aware about their children and supervise them with more seriousness.

We the people should unite and look after ourselves. Let us meet to chalk out a common response when there is a problem in our locality and face that situation on a community based response. For how long shall we carry on with the negative mentality to just allow the situation to pass and take refuge in the phrase "it didn't happen to me"?