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FOUNDER EDITOR
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## Filth taking over Dhaka

*Private sector in city cleaning welcome*

THERE is no doubt that garbage disposal presents a stupendous problem for the city. Issues like air pollution, extremely unhygienic conditions in the slums, poor drainage and sanitation etc, cannot be addressed successfully unless the city is cleared, in a scientific way, of the huge volume of wastes produced every day.

We welcome the Dhaka City Corporation's initiative to assign the job of garbage dumping to private operators under a pilot project in eight wards of the city. The Bangladesh Integrated Environment Development Forum (BIEDF), a coalition of 38 environment protection organisations, is now working as a private operator in this crucially important area. The organisation has been engaged in primary garbage collection in 17 wards for the last one year, and it has now been given the much bigger assignment after evaluation of its performance by the DCC.

So, the initial results of involving private operators in garbage disposal have been encouraging. But the operators, who began their work on the pilot project on May 15, are facing some practical problems. The primary picking and deposit of wastes in dustbins throughout the day, which violate the DCC time-table, make it impossible to coordinate the activities for an effective final disposal of the garbage. Unplanned and untimely primary disposal creates stockpiles of garbage at different places throughout the day. Little wonder, the private operator was initially jolted by the huge piles of rubbish.

The operators are also thinking of relocating the dustbins. This is necessary to make sure that no place is left out of the garbage disposal plan. Then there is the need for creating greater awareness among citizens so that they can cooperate with the operators and make their task easier. Cleanliness is a comprehensive package in which everybody must play a role.

The BIEDF needs to increase its operational efficiency by adding more vehicles to its fleet and increasing the manpower. The plan to set up a joint monitoring team with the DCC is welcome. It is imperative that city dwellers be not only associated with the process but also encouraged to provide feedback to the operators on a regular basis so as to impel them to perform better.

The DCC could not single-handedly manage garbage disposal; that's why the private sector has been involved. But unless an element of competitiveness is introduced, no radical improvement can be expected in the area. The DCC's task now is to provide the support that private operators need to overcome their practical difficulties.

## Shifting examination dates

*A challenge before Shahjalal University*

IF someone told us that thanks to student agitation, final examinations at a premier university of the country had been delayed in seven consecutive years, we would simply brush it off as absurd. But the irony is it is not. A report in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo has it that every year when the final exams at Shahjalal Science and Technology University in Sylhet got nearer ruling party student wing would start a movement to change the scheduled test dates. And this has been going on, according to the report, for the last seven years encompassing a part of the AL rule! Needless to say, the abnormal situation left the teachers, students and their parents frustrated and angry.

This history of changing exam dates through strikes and agitation on the campus evidently has had nothing to do with the welfare of students. How could a small number of students who apparently have very little interest in studies, hold the fate of hundreds of others in ransom? Because of the stalemate in the campus, the university remained closed for almost 440 days over the last seven years. In addition, the academic career of the students has been delayed by two years!

The university authority has to do some serious thinking to bring about a change in terms of academic discipline. The final exams for this year have already been postponed for a week. We hope, at least this time the authority would show some grit and reverse the pattern of shifting examination dates in consideration of the fact that it could set a bad precedent for other institutions. We must remember Shahjalal University cannot compromise its position as a front-ranking science and technology institution in the country.



# Interventionists should follow uniform principles

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

EIGHTEENTH century German philosopher Immanuel Kant would have liked a "true policy" to first pay homage to morality. Politics united to morals, he felt, would not be difficult or complicated. But in the real world foreign policy is often dictated by selfish interests of the decision makers representing the state projecting their agenda beyond the boundaries of the state. In the process of such projection morality is often the first casualty. Since a democratic government is expected to reflect the wishes of its constituents, the foreign policy actions of the government may sometimes be concretised beyond state borders in a foreign land. Concretisation of such foreign policy moves can be in the form of military intervention as we have seen in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The war on Afghanistan to drive out the Taliban was morally defensible as the UN Security Council had established that terrorists may be considered as agents of the state that harbours them and has made it illegal for states to sponsor or shelter them. Taliban refusal to hand over Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida network to the international community for trial and punishment rendered the Taliban and Afghanistan liable to international military action. Odious nature of the Taliban regime had acquired barbaric perfection and was contrary to all civilised norms, and perhaps most importantly the Taliban had given a convoluted expression to Islam, quintessentially a religion of peace and brotherhood. Therefore the global pantheon unhesitatingly agreed on US, NATO and allied military intervention to totally demolish the Taliban politico-religious construct. World conscience did not suffer any pangs of contrition for the pulverisation of Afghanistan.

Going back into history the allied participation in the Second World War was unquestionably moral given the hunger of Nazism and Fascism for occupation of other countries and the unspeakable atrocities meted out to the conquered people and particularly to the Jews. Decolonisation of the colonial empires was a logical follow up of the Second World War. After all if the allied powers could put their men, women and money in harms way to save others (and themselves) from the Nazis and the Fascists' devouring hunger, then clearly any moral ground for the colonial powers to hang on to their colonies, occupied by force in the first instance, in the pretext of carrying the "white man's burden" to civilize the uncivilized people of the colonies, did not hold water.

It must also be recognised that only moral pressure did not force the colonialists to give freedom to the colonies. In many cases the colonial powers entered into an agreement to grant freedom after the Second World War was won in exchange for the support of the colonies to the war efforts. Equally indigenous leaders of the colonies well versed in the western precepts of democracy, civil and political rights, expressed the unquenchable thirst of the colonized for freedom, sometimes expressed through armed struggle( e.g. in India or Mau Mau in Kenya) but more often through non- violent political movement.

**It is necessary for the delinquent states to acknowledge the changing definition of sovereignty and territorial integrity so that states become responsible members of the global village. It is equally necessary for those who have issued themselves imprimatur to change the map of the world that they not be inconstant in pursuit of their principles and have an immaculate set of values which they would practice without meandering away from the principled path.**

Be it as it may the decision of the colonial powers to grant freedom to the colonies was backed by moral principles. But the onset of the cold war instigated the western powers to support dictators in many parts of the world as bulwark and sentinel in the west's fight against communism. Until the fall of the Berlin Wall and the consequent collapse of the Soviet empire, western powers as a matter of policy propped up brutal regimes like those of Mobutu in Zaire, Pinochet in Chile and Ayub Khan in Pakistan and many others. These were expedient policies devoid of any moral fibre.

Contrary to expectations the end of the cold war has not necessarily seen the end of western support to military dictators. Sporadic assault on dictatorship has been dictated more by self-interest than by western obeisance to the god of democracy. Military intervention in Panama to oust General Noriega and to reinstall President Aristides in Haiti, for example, were not solely to free the oppressed people from the clutches of dictators as Noriega was a drug peddler and scores of Haitians were crowding the American shores for refuge which the US was reluctant to provide.

Albeit the west has encouraged the developing world to embrace democratic values because of the conclusion reached by the west that tolerance of "democratic exceptions" does not further western interests in the long run because closed political systems and stagnant economies result in frustration of the enslaved people and these places become breeding ground for terrorists. Indigenous insurrections may result in failing and failed states with the government controlling a portion of the states' territory or with several competing governments exercising authority in their respective areas of control. Unlike Afghanistan of the Taliban it is assumed that terrorist activities are carried out in these cases against the wishes of the government "in power". UNSC resolution 748(1992) enjoins all states " to refrain from instigating, assisting, or participating in terrorist acts in another state or acquiescing in organised activities within its territory directed towards the commission of such acts".

In the Chechen case would military intervention, in remote parts of Georgia where Chechens have taken up abode from where they undertake terrorist activities while these areas being outside the control of the Georgian authorities, be legal? Repeated use of preemptive actions resorted to by various US Presidents (Cuban missile crisis and Iraq war for example) would make it difficult for the US to oppose Russian military intervention in Chechnya. Such acts of preemption now articulated in the Bush Security Strategy document of November last year stretches the definition of self-defence beyond the limit of the elasticity of the concept. Besides, the use of force in the absence of imminent and discernible threat can only be resorted to by one militarily too strong against one militarily weak as in the case of Anglo-US war on Iraq without global consent. Tomas Valasek of the Center for Defense Information opines that further endanger international peace and security because the state intervened could cause immense damage to the interventionist state raising the cost of intervention to unacceptable level. This could perhaps be one of the reasons behind Indian reticence to intervene in Pak occupied Kashmir despite being persistently victimised by cross border terrorism from across the line of control in Kashmir.

Another related issue is humanitarian intervention. The UN charter provides that "no other state and no international organisation may scrutinise what is happening inside a state except with the full consent of the territorial state". But recent world history is replete with examples of humanitarian intervention. In 1971 Indian intervention was dictated partly by humanitarian consideration as a result of genocidal attacks on unarmed Bengalis by the Pakistani occupation army which forced millions of Bengalis to flee from then East Pakistan to the neighboring states of India.

More recently NATO forces intervened in Kosovo to protect the ethnic Albanians from the Serb security forces. In recent days the western powers are pressing the Burmese military junta to free dissident leader Aung San Suu Kyi from detention and have imposed strict sanctions on assets abroad of the junta and their supporters as well as on trade with and investment in Burma. US Secretary of State Colin Powell characterised the military rulers as "the thugs who run the Burmese government" and warned that the action of the military rulers would not be allowed to "stand as the last word on the matter". Clearly the Anglo-US, EU and Japanese ( albeit less strident) response, however welcome these may be to a large part of the international community, can be termed as diplomatic and economic intervention in Burma's internal affairs contrary to article 2(7) of the UN Charter. Yet such intervention can be justified if the decades old war waged by the military junta against the civilian population is seen as state terrorism where victims are the Burmese people. Besides, if one were to consider the influx of refugees from Burma into Thailand and Bangladesh then the war against the Burmese people can be given an external dimension.

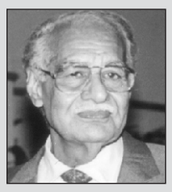
Anglo-US military intervention in Iraq has been justified by supporters of interventionists on the grounds of UNSC's inability to face up to the challenge posed by Saddam Hussein. Lately one sees a growing demand by some quarters for UN reforms. British FCO Minister Bill Rammell addressing UN Modernising seminar in London last month emphasised on the need for UN reforms to face up to the challenges before the international community. He called for examination of "principles under which we intervene to tackle global threats more widely" just like the ongoing discussions of the principles under which some countries intervene in states on humanitarian grounds. One may recall that during the inter war years terrorism increasingly referred to oppressive measures imposed by various totalitarian regimes like those in Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy or Stalinist Russia. More recently military dictatorships in South America and Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe have been open to charges of using terrorism as a tool of the state. If the argument that such regimes practice terrorism on their own people is accepted then intervention to remove oppressive regimes from power thus denying them the ability to wage war on their own people becomes a valid instrument in maintaining international peace and security.

Problem arises when interventionists themselves do not uniformly follow the principles because of self interest. While the western powers encouraged the African Union and the Organization of American States to pledge themselves to upholding uninterrupted practice of democracy, the west for example continues to shower Pak President General Musharraf with political and economic support while sizeable part of Pakistani people are pressing the General to shed his uniform. General Musharraf has become the blue eyed boy of the west because of Pakistan's position as a front line state in the war against terrorism. India's persistent complaint that Pakistan is the epicentre of terrorism in South Asia has completely fallen on deaf ears of the western powers.

The argument proffered, for example by Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew that Asia is more comfortable with communitarian values where the interest of the society takes precedence over the interest of the individual as opposed to western values of putting more emphasis on politico-social rights of the individual has not received universal support. It has been contended that cultural differences as an argument for systematic denial of basic civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights cannot withstand critical scrutiny. Nobel laureate Amartya Sen argues that rights have intrinsic value and most obviously people have the right not to be killed in the process of exercising their civil rights. Besides he found no correlation or causal connection between authoritarianism and economic success. It is therefore necessary for the delinquent states to acknowledge the changing definition of sovereignty and territorial integrity so that states become responsible members of the global village. It is equally necessary for those who have issued themselves imprimatur to change the map of the world that they not be inconstant in pursuit of their principles and have an immaculate set of values which they would practice without meandering away from the principled path on the pretext of serving immediate national interest.

*Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.*

# Complicating the issue



KULDIP NAYAR
*writes from New Delhi*

THE Sankaracharya of Kanchi has unnecessarily complicated the Ayodhya issue by modifying his original formula. Had the eminent Hindu seer confined his well-meaning efforts to the original formula, requesting the Muslim community not to object to building a temple on the undisputed site, the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) would have been under tremendous pressure to accommodate him. Of course, the Supreme Court's permission would have been necessary for it had disallowed any structure to come up on that land. But I have a feeling that the permission would have come if both parties had made a joint request to the court. The Sankaracharya's original formula went to the extent of building a wall to separate the disputed area from the undisputed one so as to allay the misgivings of the Muslim community. He also gave the assurance that the disputed site could be "discussed at a later stage." There was no confusion.

The AIMPLB would have been hard put to reject the formula because the concession sought was on the undisputed site. Many men of goodwill, who were working behind the scenes, were at pains to convince the AIMPLB that the Sankara-charya's formula was a good opening to hold discussions on the entire gamut of Muslim religious places which were often threatened by the fundamentalist fringe among the Hindus. Most of the 51Board members saw the point but before they could meet they received from the Sankaracharya another formula which made everything go haywire. I have not been able to comprehend why he changed his original formula. The pressure of the RSS and its militant wing, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), was there for all to see. Their statements were pernicious, to put it mildly. Still something else must have happened. Too many central ministers flew to Chennai to meet him after he sent the first formula and before he modified it. So it would be safe to guess that there is a lot more to it than meets the eye.

The second formula straightaway asked for "donation of the disputed site." It did not mention anything about the "undisputed land." It was not required: once there was an agreement on the disputed portion, the rest would automatically follow. Without trying to ascribe any motive to the Sankaracharya, let me analyse the modified formula.

It suggested that the Muslim community should "donate" the site where the Babri masjid once stood. Strangely, on the one hand, the formula contained a request for donating the disputed land and, on the other, it warned the Muslims "to be mentally prepared" to hand over the Kashi and Mathura mosques. But a mere declaration by the Sankaracharya that the mosques "belong to the Hindus" is no sanction to their ownership.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

**It is difficult for the RSS and the VHP to comprehend, much less appreciate, this ethos. It was fashioned by the fire of the struggle for independence. The Sangh parivar was nowhere near the national movement. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, thousands of people and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Sardar Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad sacrificed everything and spent years in jail to uphold the ethos.**

They are mosques which have been sharing the same walls or premises with the Hindu temples for centuries. Those were good times when the worshipping places of different communities stood side by side, underlining the society's ethos, pluralism. Whether it was the mosque at Kashi or Mathura or the one demolished at Ayodhya, all represented India's composite culture going back to thousands of years. It is difficult for the RSS and the VHP to comprehend, much less appreciate, this ethos. It was fashioned by the fire of the struggle for independence. The Sangh parivar was nowhere near the national movement. Under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, thousands of people and leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Sardar Patel and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad sacrificed everything and spent years in jail to uphold the ethos. Their eyes were fixed on the India of their dreams: a secular and democratic India after independence.

By dividing the nation into Hindus and Muslims, the RSS and the VHP are only plugging their communal line: the Hindu Rashtra. It is apparent that elections are uppermost in their mind. They are not interested in resolving the Ram Janambhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute but only in scheming to get more votes. They have not yet decided when to play the religious card to further saffronise the society. But there is no doubt that they will do so. They should, however, remember that the demolition of the Babri masjid brought them defeat at the polls in UP, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. The voters then saw through their game. There is no reason why they will not do so this time.

The Sankaracharya was right when he said in his modified formula that a small temple of Ram was already functioning at the disputed site. But it was a forcible construction after the centre took over the UP administration on December 6 itself. I recall that when I inquired about the construction from Narashima Rao, the then Prime Minister, he said that the temple would not be there "for long." Eleven years have gone by. The temple is very much there.

Still the Muslim community, which seems resigned to a court verdict, can probably be brought round. But this cannot be a one-sided settlement. Those who claim to represent the Hindu society should be prepared to give a constitutional guarantee through parliament that all the religious places of Muslims, including the mosques at Mathura and Varanasi, would stay intact, as they were at the time of independence on August 15, 1947. There is already an act to this effect. Only a constitutional edge has to be given to it. Once such a guarantee is on the ground, the Muslim community may be persuaded to forego its right on the Babri masjid site or donate it. The reaction of the RSS and the VHP is bound to be hostile. They have said that there can be no compromise on the mosques at Mathura and Kashi. The VHP leaders have indulged in their usual sabre-rattling rhetoric: "The Muslim leadership had once again proved its loyalty to Islamic invaders..." How would the Muslim community interpret it when the VHP is a member of the Sangh parivar leading the government at Delhi?

In the meanwhile, more and more facts about the demolition at Ayodhya are coming to light. In the current hearings before the one-man Liberhan commission, the Government of India's counsel has put the blame on Kalyan Singh who was then UP chief minister for the masjid's demolition. But he has refuted the allegation. His contention is that L K Advani, the deputy Prime Minister who is also in charge of the Home Ministry, and the RSS leaders had hatched "a deep conspiracy to destroy the mosque." He said, "Their leaders had not only kept me in the dark but also betrayed me." This remark has obviously rankled the RSS. Kalyan Singh too has earned the title of "pseudo-secularist," the parivar's way of labelling their critics.

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), which is under Advani's own department, the Home Ministry, has charged him before a special court for delivering inflammatory speeches and instigating the *kar sevaks* (volunteers) to demolish the Babri masjid. While I admire Advani for not trying to influence the CBI in any way, I think he should have offered to resign. This is what values are all about.

*Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian columnist.*

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

**Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.**

### "Communicative English: A failure"

I carefully read Dr. Alam's letter titled "Communicative English: A failure" published in To the Editor's page in your daily on July 07, 2003. In his letter, Dr. Alam, a person not related to the field of ELT, appears to have completely brushed off the suitability of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in such an authoritative manner that I feared people might have a wrong impression about this approach to language teaching in Bangladesh.

I found the charges that Mr. Alam brings against CLT were ungrounded -- he has not referred to any valid research that substantiates his comments. We hardly doubt that "the curriculum of secondary English is a complete flop" considering the poor standard of our students in English as Dr. Alam asserts. The reason is not introduction of CLT into our curriculum that Mr. Alam believes.

Our English language teaching in general, and at secondary level in particular, was always a fiasco and if some people came out with a good grip in the language even through this system, they did it chiefly on their own effort. This whole problem of English language teaching in Bangladesh which is a result of many years should not to be associated simply with a method. The reasons are many: teacher-student ratio, poor infrastructure and facilities, defective evaluation system where no language skills can be validly and reliably assessed, lack of training for the English language teachers, etc.

Because of these limitations, we thought that only by changing our way of teaching (which also we could not do properly) the situation may get better. Communicative Approach to Language Teaching is often misunderstood by language teachers and more often by laymen as they somehow manage to understand that it does not allow to teach grammar. In fact, this is the most flexible way of language teaching the world has ever seen, it is not a method like many others that set some demarcation lines, it is rather an approach that gives teachers a huge latitude to teach English.

The core of this approach is teaching whatever the learners need and and doing that interestingly through proper contextualization. But such good features of this approach may prove to be ineffective if the teachers are not well trained and creative enough and are not supported by other related aspects like evaluation system, design of textbooks etc. For example, you are teaching students how to write communicatively on their own in classroom but asking them to memorise some set topics for exam. Such situation will never motivate the students to develop writing skills which is precisely the case in Bangladesh.

Moreover, when we are introducing CLT into our curriculum, there is no room for measuring two important language skills in our exams namely speaking and listening. In this system of language teaching, if we discover that our students are not developing these skills it is unreasonable to blame CLT.

I find Mr. Alam appears to be grossly contradictory and confusing when he says that 'students are not eager to learn grammatical rules' but suggests 'old time-tested method' for them. Who does not know that this 'old time-tested method' is all about learning grammatical rules? And on what ground does Mr. Alam call the old method 'time-tested' (which was rather timeworn)? We do not remember students coming out with good English through that 'time-tested' method.

Mr. Alam's is probably biased with old, familiar things. Again, it is not clear why Mr. Alam suggests that CLT is appropriate in a first language situation while he is talking about teaching in classroom.

Lastly, it is claimed that if CLT is adapted to learners' need and their interests, will prove to be effective. What it requires is some creativity and endeavour on the part of the teacher and perhaps this is where we are suffering for our traditional mode of thought and teaching.

**Md. Zahid Akter**
*Asst. Professor, Dept. of English, Leading University, Sylhet*

### Sending troops to Iraq

Bangladesh is not a coalition force of UK-US forces. US and its allied allied forces losing their soldiers almost everyday in Iraq. It is chiefly because the occupation force did not try to meet up the basic needs of the Iraqi people. They failed to fulfill their need of food and shelter.

The US force dismissed many Iraqi employers. For this, the Iraqis are getting more and more irritated with the US allied forces. So I think it won't be wise to send Bangladeshi troops in Iraq in such disorder.

**Md. Zillur Rahaman**
*Bangabandhu Hall, University of Dhaka*

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This refers to Mohammad Zaman's opinion 'On sending troops to Iraq', published July 9. Mr. Zaman, who is residing in the US, pleads for sending troops to Iraq for the reason what he found in post-war reality. As I guess, Mr. Zaman is talking about Bangladesh's economy while he himself is contributing to the USA's GDP. Funny, isn't it?

We understand Mr. Zamans' present condition in USA after the twin-tower incident. We also understand the Muslims residing in the US must try to improve the situation.

But, my question to Mr. Zaman is do you want to improve the condition at the expense of your brothers? Will sending Bangladeshi troops to Iraq solve all the problems Bangladeshis now facing in the US?

Lets not talk about morality now.

**Mustafiz**
*Dhaka*