

Separation of judiciary again delayed

Time for the government to stop playing games

THE Supreme Court has once again granted an extension to the government to implement its 12-point directive to separate the judiciary from the executive. The problem is not so much that the separation of the judiciary will now be delayed another four months, but that the public now stands thoroughly confused as to what the government's position is on this matter.

The law minister has made a number of comments suggesting that implementing the directive is not a high priority, and the five extensions that this government has requested together with the spurious clarifications it has sought on points already well-settled make it seem as though the government is playing games.

The government's repeated stall tactics suggest that it has no interest in implementing the directive. The impression we have received from our sources is that the government has taken no concrete steps towards such implementation and is in fact not at all convinced of the merit of such action.

Now is the time for the government to come clean. If it has reservations about the separation of the judiciary from the executive it should come out into the open and say so and initiate a national debate on the subject.

It is possible that the government's reservations are deserving of consideration, but there is no way that we can assess this or pursue any kind of meaningful debate on the subject unless the government comes out and openly states what its position is.

It is even possible that the separation of the judiciary from the executive can be accomplished while accommodating whatever reservations the government may have on the subject.

We reiterate our long-held position in support of the separation of the judiciary from the executive at the earliest possible date, and caution the government that its current strategy of stalling and saying that it is in favour of separating the judiciary from the executive while doing nothing to implement such separation is hurting its credibility, especially since the BNP pledged to separate the judiciary from the executive if voted into office.

Bogra ammo haul

Investigation laid to rest?

THE investigation into the ammunition haul in Bogra in June has made little progress in the last five months, despite the issue having a direct bearing on national security.

It was the biggest ever ammo haul in the country which exposed glaring holes in the security arrangements that are in place. The news was significant because it came on the heels of a series of subversive activities across the country. It is still not known who would have finally received the huge consignment of bullets and explosives. But there is no doubt that it would have ended up in the hands of some terrorist organisation.

Now, people have every right to know the details of the matter which posed a grave threat to the security of the country.

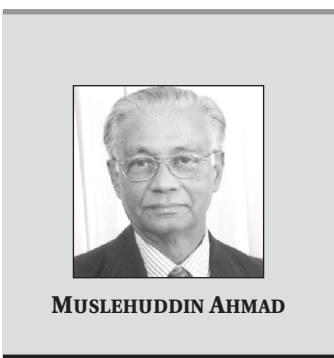
Police arrested a few suspects and the issue was quickly politicised as the two major parties blamed each other, as they always do under such circumstances. But the real culprits have managed to evade arrest. Why could the investigators make no progress even after taking some of the operators into custody? People would like to know what precisely is preventing them from getting to the bottom of the deal.

Investigation into a case like this might not always proceed smoothly. But when it remains stuck for over five months, and looks like having lost the sense of direction, questions regarding the sincerity and efficacy of the whole process will arise for obvious reasons. Are the illegal ammo dealers powerful enough to offset any move to bring them to justice? Is Bangladesh becoming a regular transit route for such contraband merchandise?

Law and order has been identified as a major problem. However, it is not clear how it can improve when investigation into a sensational ammunition haul fizzles out for inexplicable reasons.

The government should immediately look into the matter and set the investigation into the case on a fast track.

Iraq: Who are the terrorists?



ABOUT a dozen American soldiers in Baghdad kicked open a family door at dead of night and grabbed a young woman by her night dress from shoulder to while she was screaming and running to the other room amid terrifying situation where other elderly women and children were crying helplessly. This is what one could see in BBC TV screen during its World News in the night of November 13 (Bangladesh Time). Similar Gestapo-Israeli style of searches for so-called terrorists under US "Operation Iron Hammer" in Iraq were seen before also. But certainly this was another worst kind of action by the American forces when Bush and Blair were claiming to have liberated Iraqi people. Let the conscious world be a witness to this worst type of violation of human rights, which indeed amounts to terrorism against the helpless women and children.

The occupying power is terming the Iraqi resistance forces as terrorists, but these resistance forces obviously see the American forces as terrorists on their soil. Indeed, in several open interviews by the BBC and CNN, ordinary Iraqis openly asked American

forces to leave Iraq immediately. As far as we know, under any international law and also under the law of Almighty God revealed through His Scriptures -- Tourat (Tora) through Prophet Moses, Ingeel (original Bible) through Prophet Isa (Jesus Christ) and the Qu'oran through Prophet Mohammad, any occupation of someone's legitimate home by some illegal and illegitimate elements is wrong and obviously must be resisted. This is the legitimate right

and environment. There is no particular set of democracy that all people of the world uniformly follow. Each country follows its own brand based on its constitution. The whole world does not follow American brand of democracy where the president is finally declared elected by the court! What is important is whether the people of that country enjoy the freedom that is legitimate and necessary to lead their ordinary life (to

snatching away its sovereignty. One gets baffled to even imagine that such a disastrous thing could be carried out by one of the most democratic countries of the world in the 21st century.

President Bush Said Saddam was a dangerous man and so he had to be dealt with. Interestingly, London mayor Ken Livingstone called Bush "the most dangerous man on the planet.." One does not know who

for different reasons -- oil, Israel and American supremacy etc. American supremacy is a given fact in the present day world. America does not have to go on telling the world about it as Regan said -- we stand tall. The world sees the "tall man", he does not have to remind the world about it. More he reminds, dwarf he becomes to the people.

President Bush said he wanted to make America safe and secure. This is undoubtedly his primary duty as the

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

The honourable and meaningful exit strategy for American Administration is to hand over Iraq to the UN. Once the occupying forces leave Iraq and the UN peacekeepers take over under full UN mandate, relative calm is likely to return soon. Thereafter the UN may form the interim government under its care through some form of nomination from different tribal and ethnic groups on proportionate basis.

of the occupied one to fight back till he recovers his Home. Whether one calls it a Jihad or occupation resistance, it matters very little. The fact remains that the fight would certainly go on until the occupiers are thrown out. This is what is going on in Iraq. But the occupiers would obviously call such resistance forces as terrorists, but the world should accept what is right and lawful.

In the name of so-called democracy one cannot go and occupy somebody else's home. Who has given the right to a country or countries to go and forcibly impose its/their democracy on other people? The occupier's democracy may be totally unacceptable and indeed unsuitable for those who are under occupation as they might be belonging to different culture

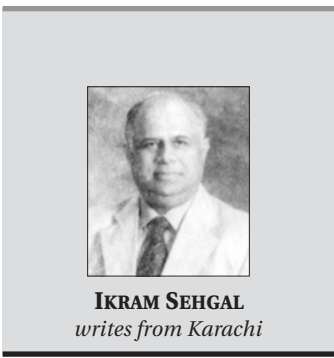
enjoy the freedom to have gay marriage and appoint openly gay Bishop is no freedom at all and cannot fall under any democratic norm in many countries and societies around the world). If not, the people themselves shall have the right and the option to bring in necessary changes. The others, if necessary, may render help in a civilized way, but not the way Bush-Blair have done in Iraq.

Time has come to look seriously into these anomalies while some countries try to promote their own brand of democracy in others' territories. When the occupying country itself suffers from serious anomalies while practicing democracy what right does it have to teach democracy to another people and that also by destroying a country and

would deal with Bush. Obviously, it should be the people of the United States. It's not far off. So far as Saddam is concerned he had been quiet for about 12 long years. He had no connection with 9/11 (ref Condoleezza Rice's statement in CNN). He had no weapons of mass destruction. Hundreds of weapons experts from the US and the UK ploughed Iraqi desert for months but found nothing. Therefore, the American people and many in the US Congress were right in saying that Bush lied to the American people. If Saddam had no connection with 9/11, no WMD, then how was he a dangerous man? Saddam's earlier "danger" was taken care of by Bush Sr. After the Gulf war Saddam was left in his place for very good reasons. But Bush Jr fell into Cheney-Rumsfeld axis

president of the USA. But has he been able to do so? The facts on the ground say the opposite. Nine/eleven led to the death of thousands of Afghans. But Bin Laden is still alive and reportedly directing attacks against America. Hundreds of Iraqis were killed but Saddam is still alive and reportedly asking Iraqis to fight back and they are really fighting back. Full scale guerilla war is on. Some of us warned about the guerilla war even before the Iraq invasion was undertaken. American soldiers are being killed everyday. Three blackhawk helicopters were brought down within a week by Iraqi hostile fire killing 39 Americans. Even Rumsfeld now says the situation is now dangerous there. Both American and Italians have been mourning the dead. President Bush said these lives were

Banning terrorist outfits



MOST of the country's image problems stems from the inability of the governments in power to take timely action. When the Mian Nawaz Sharif regime enacted the Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 it acquired enough powers to deal with terrorism per se. Notwithstanding all the laws in our statute books, the political will for serious implementation was non-existent till a few months before 9/11, and that too by a subsequent non-political regime. What is still mind-boggling is that the banned religious entities simply changed their name and carried on business as usual, this obviously cut into the credibility of the country's commitment to root out militancy in religious organisations.

A week ago, the government banned three sectarian and militant organisations and placed another on the watch list. Islami Tehrik Pakistan had been banned earlier as Tehrik-I-Jafria Pakistan, Millat-e-Islamia Pakistan was formerly Sipah-I-Sahiba and Khaddam-ul-Islam was named Jaish Mohammad. Jamaat-ul-Dawa, the new name of Laskar-I-Tayyaba, has been put on the "watch list". Offices were sealed throughout the country and raids made to seize militants. While the government is to be commended for reacting when they did, better late than

never, who in the world will believe us when militant organisations could carry on their existence by a simple change of name? These facts were well known universally to even the common man in the street let alone the government. Compounding sincerity of intent of the government is the diversion of the resources of the intelligence agencies to political (and in many cases personal) objectives far removed from their original mission.

In the past year or so there is better collation of information and coordi-

live with or (3) pursue "constructive engagement" while preserving our nuclear capability. After 9/11, it became a dire necessity to avoid being pegged with the "adventurism" tag India wanted to label us with. We have fought a losing battle, this world perception has greatly damaged our Kashmir cause, de-legitimising the sanctity of our claims.

Since militancy and their raison d'etre for existence is born out of their sectarian leanings, what are the fundamental factors that has seen the rapid

had combined to fight a "Jihad" against the Soviets, turned on each other after the war was over, both on Afghan soil and in Pakistan, (5) the wrong perception of the "fundamentalism" label, the west has been wary of Islam since the time of the crusades. Church-going Nazis in Germany put more than six million Jews to death during World War II, now "fundamentalism" has made Christians make common cause with Jews to counter the "threat of Islam" thereof.

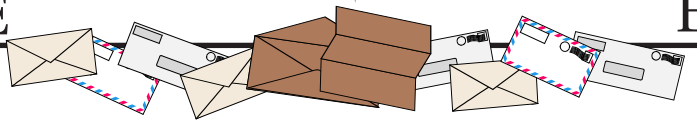
arms and equipment and the political skills to manipulate resources. From half a million in 1995 to nearly a million now, 60 per cent of the students only study Nazira Quran, (reading the letters and words of the Holy Quran without understanding them) and 20 per cent commemorate Holy Quran (Hifz) to memory without comprehending it. What is alarming is what happens to the balance 20 per cent, i.e. 800,000 students who are at best semi-literate. Dropouts from the regular school system many students probably

organisations to think and act reasonably; (6) the Afghan war sustained proliferation of illicit weapons; (7) on campus student politics fanned sectarian conflict; (8) socio-cultural and economic problems, particularly unemployment aggravated the situation; (9) the print media was careless in printing the news, fanning the perception that the west sees Islam as a mortal enemy; (10) proliferation of Jihad parties without understanding the basic concept of "Jihad"; (11) instead of using loudspeakers to call the faithful to prayers, these have been used for extremist propaganda; and (12) lack of coordination between the Provinces in countering sectarian terrorism.

The 180 degree turnaround in our Afghan policy since 9/11 gave us immediate economic dividends, it put the present regime in an untenable position with respect to both credibility and commitment. Since abandoning the Taliban, Pakistan has been on the forefront of the anti-Al-Qaeda operations, catching more than 550 hard core militants (out of the 750 so far held). However, we are now truly in limbo, hated by the militant religious organisations and not really credible to the west in our anti-terrorist actions on the other. The present government in Afghanistan may hate us but what if the Taliban come back in some form? India has spared no malice in order to tar and feather our image as a responsible entity in the comity of nations. Banning terrorist outfit may be a first step but, sustained efforts are necessary to root out terrorism, giving our security forces freedom of action to act without any bias, political or religious, while giving no quarter in dealing with militancy in an evenhanded manner.

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

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.

Polythene notice!

The government has taken a strong measure to eliminate polythene shopping bags from the market. The concerned Minister's personal initiative in polythene control drive is praiseworthy. Unfortunately, poly bags are still in use, of course in a different form, which they call biodegradable polythene!

To speak the truth, poly shopping bags has become a part of our daily life. So it is difficult to get rid of them overnight. Hence, I think, with its drive against polythene, the government should also undertake a programme to educate people on the adverse effects of polythene on our health and environment plus the method for disposal of used poly bags in fixed places. And such motivational sessions have to be organised in public places like market, community centres, etc. The Department of Environment may involve the City Corporation, Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of

Mass Communication, Department of Public Health Engineering to conduct such non-formal educational campaign. Prof M Zahidul Haque Dept. of Agric. Extension and Information System Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University Dhaka-1207.

Electronic libraries

The age of (public) libraries with printed books are gone. Now electronic libraries can be tapped sitting at home browsing through the Internet. There is great saving in time and energy; and the service is available whenever the reader is free. The CD (compact disc) is the new gadget for those seeking self-education. The visible printed library with shelves is no more.

The computer screen has replaced the paper page. This silent revolution has hit hard the economically disadvantaged readers in the third world countries. Here students at the

college and university rely on photocopies of expensive books. The prices of foreign books have gone up several times; even the cheaper second hand ones are beyond the purchasing power of many students. The standard of teaching has gone down, and the spurious tutorial centres are thriving in the private sector. The price of good education is more than mere bucks. One gets sentimental about missing the libraries of the olden days. Now it is pop-up reading.

The USIS and the British Council libraries were popular in the LDCs before Internet was available. These agencies had to change with the time; and the requirements of the LDCs have lower priority with the service providers from the Western affluent nations. This time-lag between the two worlds will always exist, regardless of the presence of the UN or the WTO. There is not much scope for internal adjustment for the economically handicapped readers; for whom the

two ends never seem to meet.

The great divide is widening, with the forced application of the principle of pre-emptive strikes against weaker nations. The 'educated' care for the education of the new generation. When even the moral codes are hanging, what to do with foreign-controlled libraries? Today culture is controlled by the media, and the media is controlled by the foreigners.

My personal library, a lifetime's labour of love, has no borrowers or browsers. My lending ledger does not fill up as quickly as I wished it would. That is the irony of life -- no golden edges. Only the clouds above still display it from time to time. Time to re-read my own library.

A Mawaz Dhaka

Facing a problem with mobile phone

I am using a prepaid mobile phone for the last three years. The purpose is mainly to remain connected with my

parents who are living out of Dhaka, for the whole time. Whenever they need to phone they call me to my official land phone or to the mobile from any calling centre. I get the official support to make local calls all time. To be continually connected to the network I have to buy prepaid cards after every 21 days. I am facing the problem from the beginning that I have to finish major part of the valued money within 21 days by gossiping. Two suggestions to the mobile phone service providers (a) Please make a sharing system to transfer money from one account to another, or (b) Please increase the validity of one card from 21 days to minimum 30 days.

Himangshu Ranjan Ghosh Renewable Energy Research Centre University of Dhaka.

Good Hope in Panchagarh

A daily newspaper in one hand and a morning cup of tea in another is a common scenario in most households

in urban areas. Not only in urban areas but also in rural areas tea is the most popular beverage in Bangladesh.

Once upon a time, we did not know how to produce tea. History tells us that Malnichara Tea Garden pioneered tea in this sub continent. It was the first tea garden of this kind, which was developed commercially. It was established near the outskirts of Sylhet town in 1854. However, tea plantation was confined within Sylhet and Chittagong district. During British rule, tea plantation started in Darjiling, Jalpaiguri, Shilliguri areas also.

Now a days, demand for tea is rapidly increasing in domestic and international market. Every year the demand of tea is increasing at the rate of 1.5 per cent. We know tea is also an exportable commodity. At present, tea is cultivated in 54000 hectares of land approximately. Against demand of tea, that is not enough. So, we are importing tea. This will remain so at least up to year 2010. Obviously it is

alarming news for us. It should not be so. Because, we have a great opportunity to increase our tea production by small holding cultivation as Sri Lanka and Kenya are doing at this moment. But we have a vast potential for increased tea production in northern areas of Bangladesh especially Panchagarh. Statistics illustrates, in this district, 1,84,000 acres of land is suitable for tea plantation. Though the lands are plain, small holding tea plantation will be very effective because of its good natured soil.

Experts are saying Panchagarh is such a district with great potential for tea plantation. Why? For tea plantation, the key elements are acidity of soil, favourable temperature, necessary rainfall, adequate sunlight, and water drainage system. All these criteria are present in the soil of Panchagarh (specially Sadar and Tetulia upazilla).

In October 1999, a group of soil scientists tested the soil of this district.

The test reports suggested that the soil of Panchagarh is ideal for tea plantation as the neighbouring districts of Darjiling, Jalpaiguri etc are in close proximity. The "Tetulia Tea Company's a private sector enterprise started its function in April 2, 2000 in this district. Later on, 'Kazi & Kazi Tea Estate' followed. This company is the largest as yet. Besides, five or more companies followed this function. Panchagarh district administration is providing them with all kinds of help and assistance they need. Bangladesh Tea Board has also set up its regional branch in Panchagarh in April 2001. A scientific officer is providing technical advice and assistance to private growers.

Now is necessary more governmental care. If the foreign investors can be lured and few tea processing zones are set up then Panchagarh will help our poor economy to grow. Mihir Kanti Routh Officer's Quarter, Panchagarh-5000