

# Holiday deaths on the road

## Avoidable annual tragedies

FROM last Tuesday through Friday nearly two dozen highway points all over the country were splattered with blood. That many road accidents took a toll of 65 commuters while 208 were wounded within a span of just four days. In one accident as many as 16 died, and in another, a whole family of eight was killed. There's a lot more left to the post-Eid inter-district mobility, so that the scenario portends greater fatalities unless precautions are swiftly put in place to head these off.

There have been all kinds of disasters: Head-on collision, three vehicles going out of control and mangling each other, bus hitting a motorcycle or autorickshaw from behind, a car ramming against a tree or nose-diving into a ditch, so on and so forth. Even pedestrians were overrun.

These accidents were just waiting to happen. To top off our poor road safety standards routinely causing mishaps round the year, there has been the holiday slack on the part of law-enforcers and transport managers and operators. That the people would be desperate to visit their village homes during Eid holidays and might lower their guard to some extent should have been the basic assumptions behind arranging transport services for them guaranteeing adequate road safety.

To meet the mounting commutation needs of citizens during a festival, all kinds of vehicles, even jalopies, are pressed into service by road merchants. Is there any monitoring or supervision of the road-worthiness of the vehicles put to use and the qualifications of drivers plying them?

All these underscore the over-arching necessity for averting the massive seasonal callousness by having a highway safety strategy in place during festival times. The BRTA, transport owners and the still amorphous highway patrol police which ought to come into play without any loss of time, should be able to put a brake on the road accidents galore. Let's not forget, our accidents are still very largely man-made.

## Bush in Baghdad

*Secrecy is hardly the hallmark of a 'liberator'*

PRESIDENT Bush's night trip to Baghdad seemed out of character with the leader of a "victorious nation" claiming himself to be the 'liberator' of the country that his troops have captured. It bears enough testimony to the tenuous US hold on the situation in Iraq and, more important, the fragility of the Bush mission.

The President Bush had started it on a note of vibrant optimism and the White House announced, time and again, that Americans would be given a hearty welcome by Iraqi people. If that were true, then Bush's trip needn't have been wrapped in impregnable secrecy; instead, it should have been an occasion to rejoice. A liberator, after all, doesn't need the cover of darkness; nor do his soldiers need morale boosting.

Mr. Bush is now facing a host of tricky questions both at home and abroad. The very rationale behind the war, which was never quite above board, is coming increasingly under international scrutiny; Mr. Bush's popularity rating has dropped; and many Americans have begun to ask why the soldiers are in Iraq, even after the 'decisive' victory has been achieved. The incongruities in the White House version of the war, and its aftermath, are becoming visible even to the Americans, who were once overwhelmed by the weight of the reasoning in favour of toppling Saddam Hussein.

So the trip has been a two-pronged move: boosting the sagging morale of US soldiers and putting a brake on the carping criticism that the president's Iraq policy is facing at home.

That said , it is far from clear what the trip has actually achieved. President Bush did not meet the representatives of Iraqi people for whom his concern sounded a bit too overriding only a few months back . Does he still believe that a morally rejuvenated army will be enough to heal the wounds inflicted on the psyche of Iraqi people?

looking at the movement of vehicles.

It is sometimes embarrassing when foreigners are approached with importunate demands for money by the beggars, specially young girls, men and women with baby in their laps. A British journalist on tour in our country with the English Cricket team, having gained a lot of experience in this regard, dispatched a series of reports on the plight of these poor people for publication in their newspapers. Frankly speaking, these beggars are not that poor as they seem, rather they have been living with their families in rented houses in Dhaka. Some of them own rickshaws, vans, etc. and regularly send money to their homes to defray family expenses. There are able-bodied young men and women who can very

# Whereto from Istanbul?

**KAZI ANWARUL MASUD**

AL Qaida has claimed responsibility for the twin bombing in Istanbul and threatened fresh attacks against the US and Japan. Predictably Japanese Prime Minister has refused to be daunted by the Al-Qaida threats though he has postponed for the time being his plan to send Japanese troops to Iraq. President Bush during his recent State Visit to Britain (the first by an American President since that of Woodrow Wilson in 1918) referring to domestic terrorism in Iraq 'by the followers of the former regime and by outside terrorists' reaffirmed Anglo-US resolve 'to complete the process of bringing freedom, security and peace to Iraq'. In his Whitehall Palace speech he warned his audience about the false hope that the danger of terrorism had passed. As example he cited terrorist attacks in Bali, Jakarta, Casablanca, Mumbai, Mombassa, Najaf, Riyadh, Baghdad and Istanbul. His zealous belief in open societies, free markets, compassionate government and democracy appeared missionary, a mission shared by 'Great Britain in the world beyond the balance of power or the simple pursuit of interest'. Once again he warned the United Nations 'from solemnly choosing its own irrelevance and inviting the fate of the League of Nations'. He expressed his belief that it was not enough to meet the dangers of the world with resolutions but with resolve.

Bush's Whitehall Palace speech was multi-dimensional: partly agreeing with Charles Krauthammer's 'new unilateralism' school of thought i.e. due to unequalled preeminence the US does not have to be constrained by others; and partly subscribing to Joseph Nye's American Paradox i.e. despite unequalled and unchallengeable American superiority global problems like terrorism, environmental degradation and proliferation of WMD cannot be resolved without the cooperation of other nations. Despite persistent rumours that hawks around President Bush (e.g. Condoleezza Rice) are loosing ground to doves (e.g. Colin Powell), rumours strengthened by a leaked classified report by the Joint Chiefs of Staff which blamed hurried and inadequate planning for the Iraq crisis with too great focus on invasion and not enough on organising peace, Bush did not appear to have moved away at all from his widely controver-

sial Doctrine of Preemption. He told his Whitehall Palace audience that global peace and security was inextricably linked with the willingness of free nations to use force to meet 'aggression and evil' and 'that duty sometimes requires violent restraint of violent men' (and) measured use of force is all that protects us from a chaotic world ruled by force'.

But US response in both Afghanistan and Iraq was disproportionately harsh considering (a) a quarter million people were killed in the first Gulf War (according to Vietnam veterans against war); (b) Iraq war not only violated UN Charter but also provisions of international law which as ratified treaties are part of 'the Supreme Law of the Land' according to article VI of the US Constitution; (c) even before US bombing began in October 2001 Iraq was already 'a country reduced to pre-industrial age for a considerable period of time' (according to UN Special Rapporteur and for-

sion of clauses contained in the Weinberger Doctrine. Bush NSS has ignored one of the principal clauses which warn that US troops should not be committed to battle without a 'reasonable assurance of support of US public opinion and Congress'. Former Secretary of State George Schultz once said 'A great power must bear responsibility for its inactions as well as the consequences of its actions'. In an article in Foreign Policy (Sept/Oct 2003) Madeline Albright has dispelled the notion that the US has relied solely 'on a reactive posture' in the past. She added that in the name of self-defence, US administrations of both parties initiated actions that had violated sovereignty of other nations. According to her, Bush administration's preemption doctrine will prove a departure from past practices only if it is implemented in a manner that is aggressive, indifferently to precedents, and careless of information used to justify military actions. Uncalibrated actions, she fears,

war on terror for more than two years, writes The Scotsman(Nov 22nd), the US and British governments have clearly not been able to penetrate the higher reaches of Al-Qaida with informers or agents making it difficult to gain positive intelligence on Al-Qaida strategy or targets. Some Western analysts believe that Osama bin Laden by striking at 'soft targets' is trying to create an image of invincibility and consequently increased support from amongst the vulnerable, and by constantly adapting to new targets, tactics and weapons Al-Qaida is stretching Western security forces and keeping them off balance. It is feared that if the strike in Istanbul is a warning to a pro-western Muslim nation then in the Middle East Al-Qaida is likely to strike at more targets undermining pro-US regimes. On the other hand General Peter Pace, Vice-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on a recent visit to Afghanistan is reported to have said that Osama bin Laden has 'taken him-

ter into conflict. Such a conflictual situation can easily be visualised for Iraq which was not only not fully adorned with all aspects of modernity but since the first Gulf War was already in pre-industrial stage. Therefore attempts to modernise a basically tribal-conservative society following western model that too by an occupation power is bound to be resisted by the people who see their traditional way of life being irreversibly changed through introduction of unfamiliar institutions and invasion of a trans-national culture and ideology with great appeal particularly to the youth.

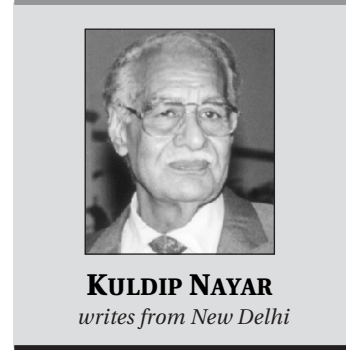
This power to transform a society through co-optation, called 'soft power' by Joseph Nye, reflect the ability to project the powers to shape what others want in the form of attractive culture and ideology. The 'soft power' is different from 'hard power' which rests on inducement or threat expressed generally in the form of military or economic power. Those who refuse 'soft power'

context of the immediate events', yet, says Luis Rubin (of the Mexican Centre for Research for Development), the punishment should not be at the expense of the values that are the mainstay of the West such as liberty, rule of law and democracy. Such an approach would not only be moral but also be essentially practical. The best way to nurture hatred and nihilism that Al-Qaida expounds is by responding with more hatred through unjustified destruction, violation of human dignity and abandonment of the rule of law.

Leading authorities on international terrorism have already advised that the US should move beyond the concept of deterrence and towards influence as an appropriate complement to military action. As terrorists are not simply single entities but often is a system enveloping diverse elements, some of them may be amenable to inducement. Besides, as Al-Qaida does no longer have any well defined 'centre of gravity', campaign against terrorism has to be sustained one and fought on many fronts and to be persuasive it should be morally high minded and reflect core civilised values. The Istanbul incident has brought to the fore the latent European debate about permitting entry into EU of an Islamic country with a large population (with substantial voting rights). Yet the European media has almost uniformly come to the support of Turkey and has opined that it would be inadvisable to deny entry of a country which could act as a window of the Muslim world for the West. Despite such counsel should Turkish entry be denied on the pretext of the Cyprus issue then more and more people may start to believe in Samuel Huntington's famous thesis on the Clash of Civilisations in which he posits that the principal conflicts in global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilisations and the fault lines between civilisations will be the battle lines for the future. It is therefore necessary to impress upon the arbiters of global fate , in the words of The Economist, 'why an unrivalled military and economic power still needs allies and partners, and why as world leader, America should rely also on soft, persuasive kind of power: the appeal of its values and culture'.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

# Can't afford another partition



**KULDIP NAYAR**  
*writes from New Delhi*

NEW Delhi should thank Islamabad for a positive response from the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) to Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani's offer for talks. Had Pakistan not encouraged Syed Ali Shah Gillani, its Trojan horse, to break away from the organisation, the APHC might not have agreed on the meeting. Gillani would have insisted, like in the past, on having a third chair for Pakistan at the negotiating table. New Delhi could not have accepted such a proposition because it would have meant extending recognition to Islamabad as a partner. It is true that India has conceded in the Shimla agreement (1972) that it will meet Pakistan to have "a final settlement on Jammu and Kashmir". Off and on, New Delhi has reiterated the assurance. Even otherwise, if India had been able to find a permanent solution to the Kashmir problem without involving Pakistan, it would have done so years ago.

Where Pakistan goes wrong is in its belief that such a situation can force India to discuss the Kashmir's accession de novo. A few Pakistani leaders took the same route in the past but

realised even after hostilities that it was not possible to reopen the whole issue. No government of any party can stay in power if it ever tries to tinker with the accession. Cross-border terrorism is an irritation but it is not something with which India cannot live. It has been doing so for more than 12 years. In any case, after the 9/11 happenings in the US, the whole scenario has changed. Terrorism of any kind at any place has come to be considered an act of violence against humanity. As President Pervez Musharraf has him-

not at the expense of Pakistan. They say so. Policy-makers at Islamabad have turned out to be shortsighted. Fearing the talks at some time, they have cut the ground from under their own feet by playing the Islamic card through Gillani, the Jamiat-e-Islami leader. His stand for Kashmir's merger with the Islamic state of Pakistan is not popular. It has, in fact, alienated the state's two other regions, the Hindu-majority Jammu and the Buddhist-majority Ladakh on the one hand and pushed up the back of communal elements in

got mired in communalism. Jammu and Ladakh have drifted away from the valley, both emotionally and otherwise. They have begun to assert their own identity, regional and religious. The APHC has been forced to admit that its sway is confined to the precincts of the valley. Yasin Malik of JKLf has fired the imagination of Kashmiris by raising the slogan of independence. The situation today is such that the majority of population that was once pro-Pakistan is now pro-Azadi. But it is increasingly realising that indepen-

return to the valley, he said, would be decided after Kashmir was settled. Some APHC leaders were unhappy with the approach. But they felt helpless because there were too many Pakistani guns in their midst. Too many foreign diplomats visiting them had spoken in different voices and given them an exaggerated notion of world's support to their cause. When the 9/11 happenings jolted the APHC's thinking, it did not want to be seen linked with terrorism in any way. Their fear was that they might one day be

Shah's entry had already made the APHC acceptable. The rest is too familiar to be repeated.

The question that arises is whether the talks would be on the lines that Sheikh Abdullah had with the government under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. There was an agreement as well in 1975. Gillani is already pooh-poohing the talks by saying that they would be another Sheikh-type exercise without purpose. New Delhi should be prudent in its approach. The APHC has come to the negotiating table for the first time and it has put no prior conditions. That it has dissociated itself from Gillani's support for accession to Pakistan and Yasin Malik's demand for independence is an indication that the APHC wants to avoid the two extremes. Can some formula be worked out to give the valley an autonomous status?

A map showing the division of Jammu and Kashmir has been attributed to the APHC. Jammu and Ladakh are shown under India and the valley and most of Kashmir presently with Pakistan under the dual control of New Delhi and Islamabad. Some features are similar to the trifurcation, a formula that the RSS had adumbrated. Before discussing anything concrete, it would be better if New Delhi and APHC were to agree on some principles which would govern the settlement. And one of them should be not to entertain any arrangement on the basis of religion. The subcontinent has gone through the traumatic experience of partition. It killed 10 lakh people and uprooted 20 lakh of families. India cannot afford to have another situation like that.

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.

Beggars at traffic intersections

A threat to normal traffic movement in the city streets is taking shape due to the presence of a big number of beggars of all ages at the main traffic intersections of the city. Every day, from early morning till late evening, these beggars keep the traffic intersections at Kakrail, Sheraton crossing, Sonargaon crossing, Panthopath, Purana Paltan, Banani and other busy areas occupied. Some of the traffic points are ideal locations for these beggars as vehicles remain stuck for an unusually long time and this opportunity is grabbed for good collection. These beggars, mostly handicapped, keep on crossing over roads without

looking at the movement of vehicles.

It is sometimes embarrassing when foreigners are approached with importunate demands for money by the beggars, specially young girls, men and women with baby in their laps. A British journalist on tour in our country with the English Cricket team, having gained a lot of experience in this regard, dispatched a series of reports on the plight of these poor people for publication in their newspapers. Frankly speaking, these beggars are not that poor as they seem, rather they have been living with their families in rented houses in Dhaka. Some of them own rickshaws, vans, etc. and regularly send money to their homes to defray family expenses. There are able-bodied young men and women who can very

well perform any other jobs but prefer begging as means of their livelihood and the alarming aspect is the number of new faces is increasing continuously.

I would like to make an appeal to the ministry of social welfare to solve the problem by forcibly withdrawing these handicapped young girls, men, women with babies from the traffic intersections and rehabilitate them. If the problem is dealt with seriously, I believe these beggars can be rehabilitated and could be engaged in productive activities.

**Rezaul Haque**  
*Lalmatia, Dhaka*

Corruption in trade mark registration

The trade mark registry has more than 50 officials but it takes about 5/6 years to register a trade mark. The files and records are not maintained in the office systematically at all. All the outgoing and incoming correspondences are in a mess. Many files are missing. Anyone can visit the office and see that the important records and files are piled up on the floors and verandahs just like street garbage.

The trade mark registry is a profit-making agency of the government but it continues to be in a very shabby condition, being located at the ser-

vants' quarters of the Shilpa Bhaban. The office does not even provide a file to any trade mark applicant. The file covers are sold by the employees at a high price. Bribing is so rampant that all employees, even the peons and low grade staff here, own buildings and shops in the capital city of Dhaka. Such is the situation created in the office that all persons coming to this office are forced by circumstances to pay huge bribes.

Though overstaffed and having dozens of computers, the office doesn't have an index of the registered trade marks; nor any index of the trade mark owners; and no record of registration grants. In the modern computerized process this entire assignment can be completed in one

month, but the office has failed to do this essential work for the last 30 years. All the trade mark offices in other countries keep such indexes open for public inspection.

The trade mark applicants or their lawyers are not allowed to see their respective files. No orders made in the files are shown to the applicants or their lawyers. Such practice does not exist even in the Supreme Court, High Court or district courts. The entire office is running on whims and caprices of some people. We request the authorities concerned to look into the matter.

**A worried citizen**  
*Toyenber Circular Road, Dhaka*

'Omrah' and 'Monga'

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Set up a hospital

Bangladesh is a poor and overpopulated country. Social and economic

problems have become acute due to overpopulation.

Among all these problems, healthcare is perhaps the most critical one. Only the rich patients can go abroad and get better healthcare, spending a large amount of money. On the other hand, the poor, being deprived of modern treatment, have to die.

To rescue the deprived people, the philanthropists should come forward and set a charitable hospital of international standard at Cox's Bazaar called 'Sea King Hospital'. I hope such a hospital will serve the poor people of Cox's Bazaar.

**Mouza Zinglaja**  
*Cox's Bazar*