

## Killing of Manik Saha

*A debilitating blow to the press*

THE enemies of the press have silenced the voice of another fearless journalist. The killing of Manik Chandra Saha of the New Age and formerly of the daily Sangbad in Khulna on Thursday was a horrendous crime committed with the ulterior motive of muffling the press.

Manik Saha paid the highest price for his honesty and commitment to the profession. He simply refused to be cowered by the threats that he was receiving regularly before his death. The beleaguered man had sought security from his newspaper and the police administration, but the steps taken to protect him were not adequate as the tragic end of his life amply demonstrated.

His death has once again illustrated how insecure the lives of journalists are in this country. At least 11 of them were killed in the southern region in the last five years. But investigation into those cases is proceeding at a slow pace, giving the killers the impression that they can get away with anything and everything.

But it would be wrong to assume that only the journalists have suffered due to the law enforcers' inability to contain the wave of attacks on them. Truth and justice become the biggest casualty when the press is targeted by the dark forces. Manik Saha and those who were killed in the past were actually opposing the illegal activities of some influential people and trying to bring them to light. Now, society should assess what a debt it owes to the relentless crusaders who have virtually sacrificed their lives -- remember that they could have easily avoided the dangerous path-- for free and fair journalism.

The debt cannot be paid back merely by condoling Manik Saha's death, or condemning the killers. It is time the men at the helm stiffened their resolve to address the issue and made some sincere efforts to blunt the force of the criminality that journalists are exposed to these days. The killers of Manik Saha must not go unpunished, for that will mean a defeat for the well-meaning, and the family of the slain journalist has to be given the help that it needs.

## Journey of hope

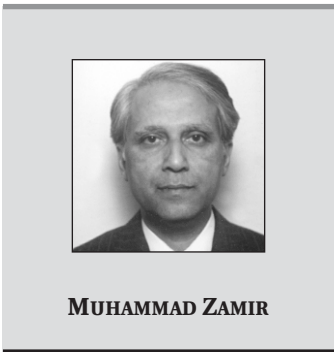
*Indo-Pak relations reaching new heights of understanding*

FIRST the air and bus link, then the train service -- India and Pakistan are travelling on the right track. It definitely brightens hope for all those who had, for long, dreamt of resumption of direct links between the two neighbours. It will increase people to people contact, which, at this point of time, is needed more than anything else. The enthusiasm of the peoples of these two countries in recent time only shows how keen they are for peace, for friendship, for stability and security. It is something the leaders of both India and Pakistan seem to have realised now. Better late than never.

The camaraderie between Vajpayee and Musharraf during the Saarc summit in the first week of the year indicated real progress towards improving bilateral ties, now the train of hope establishes it in reality. It also augurs well for the region. For now Saarc can aspire to become a force to be reckoned with; an effective body for development, progress and prosperity for the region. Thanks to the unresolved conflicts between India and Pakistan, the organisation, no matter how much it tried, could not tap its potential to the full. At least now things are moving in the right direction.

So far, it's been only the positive vibes we have been getting from the two nations regarding improvement of mutual respect. The efforts, for a lasting peace, we hope will produce more results in the near future. Though there has been, especially in Pakistan, discord in the political arena on the issue of Kashmir being 'sidelined', but such negativity can't be allowed to impose any kind of barriers in the process of renewing friendship. Both the countries have shown their own initiatives in solving the impasse that had dogged the security of the region for far too long. And we must appreciate and support it. The world community has seen rays of hope, the region can't disappoint them, neither can the countries in question break the hearts of millions of people of South Asia who had been eagerly looking forward to security, peace and prosperity.

# Dialogue within Europe: A lesson for South Asia



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

BANGLADESH is far removed from the interactive politics of Europe. As such, many of us tend to give little notice to the evolving situation in that continent. We generally forget that in the long run, the way the EU emerges in the international stage will determine future relations with Asia in general and smaller countries like us in particular. The decisions within the EU will have practical ramifications for us. It is as such important that we continue to carefully monitor views within Europe and also comments made by analysts from outside about Europe. South Asia has much to learn from the way the EU is trying to streamline itself.

Recent Ministerial meetings in various capitals of Europe have called for a new European political culture as the EU moves from a "comfortable club" to an "enormous community of nations" with enlargement next May to 25 member states. The Intergovernmental Conference (IGC) which concluded recently gave particular attention to the creation of this new culture and deliberations focussed on agreeing on a coherent foreign and security policy to make the union a global player to rival the United States.

The challenge for a post-IGC Europe has assumed strategic importance as most EU countries agree on the need to deliver competitiveness and sustainable development on the one hand and juxtapose it with good governance. This has been reflected in the efforts that have gone into the Convention to produce a balanced draft Constitutional Treaty comprehensible to ordinary people.

Smaller states like Finland and Ireland have also underlined the need to maintain credibility in the eyes of the public by ensuring one voting commissioner per member state. This has been proposed because of the felt need to have an "objective" majority voting system that would banish the old-style "horse-trading" in EU decision-making. This has reflected the concern among the smaller states who have started wondering whether the EU will emerge from the IGC stronger or weaker, more

the most competitive economy up to and beyond 2010.

Analysts are pointing out the need for great care in working out suitable strategies to overcome the existing weaknesses associated with these challenges. They have stated that there has to be a positive transatlantic agenda and more dialogue and follow-up. They feel that this is essential if the EU is to be considered as an equal partner with an effective common foreign and security policy. They also believe that this will overcome US

research and development. They are also underlining the desirability of business growth, closer cooperation between industry, government and social partners and developing education with the hope of bringing more women into the labour market. This, they believe will make the EU the most competitive economy in the world.

Analysts are also suggesting that future EU economic policy has to be based on consensus rather than confrontation. They think that there needs to be not

According to them, such a step will only contribute to the increase in the constant uncertainty of commitment of major EU governments (to the Pact) for business and consumers. Civil society throughout Europe are now in agreement that big countries must set an example and they must come to better terms with the Commission on how to meet the goals.

Four other challenges also remain unresolved with regard to the completing of the Single

Russians like such bilateral moves as opposed to comprehensive negotiations with EU in entirety. This protects their national interests. It will be interesting to see how this is corrected in the future.

The post-IGC EU will be all about maintaining a coherent, single Europe, and avoiding the development of inner cores. After the forthcoming enlargement round, the next step might be to give Turkey a real chance at EU membership, a commitment renewed in recent days as tragic events in Turkey have brought the nation closer to the EU. After that, membership priority will probably go to the remaining non-EU Balkan states.

It would not be out of place to also comment here on the great anxiety within the European mechanism that so many years later, no coherent parliamentary system appears to have evolved in the EU, despite the presence of European parties. This is probably partly because too many European party leaders remain too heavily involved in their domestic affairs and were not much interested in formulating common policies.

The EU is today passing through a critical phase. With patience, their leadership will find common denominators on which they will build a suitable institutional arrangement.

I can only hope that our leaders in the SAARC region will carefully follow what is happening in Europe and try to stimulate discussion and eventual understanding between themselves on their unresolved issues. South Asian policy czars and important decision makers have to break out of their prejudice-ridden insular mind-set and seek a responsible and mature path to peace and harmony. Such a step can only better the lot of a fifth of humanity. The recently concluded SAARC Summit has ended on a note of optimism and that should not be lost.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador.

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united or more divided: in other words, would the result be a Union working for common policies, or would national interests prevail?

EU states agree that enlargement has been a political and economic necessity. The also know that it has made the 'deepening' of Europe all the more important. However, the bone of contention appears to be with regard to the 'peace of deepening' of relations. Some feel that this needs to slow down for a time while a balance is struck between intergovernmentalism and integration.

The original fifteen members of the EU know that they are moving from a comfortable club to an enormous community of nations. They are also aware that it will take not only a special effort to make it work, but also that more radical steps will be required towards Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), particularly on tax and social security, driven by public opinion which is demanding more EU common policies.

Two fundamental post-IGC challenges appear to be looming ahead for the EU. The first is how to make the EU a strong global actor and a credible partner for the USA. The other is how to make the EU

suspicious with regard to European Union responsibility and its weakness in crisis management.

Sprucing up the competitive nature of the EU economy has also been debated at length these last weeks by the EU membership. They have realised that a slowdown in growth has weakened the chances of meeting the existing Lisbon goals. Matters have also not been helped by the fact that at the same time, the global economic environment has become more demanding, particularly with the spectacular rise of China as a global economy. They recognise that part of the problem was that Asia was not even mentioned as a factor when the Lisbon Agenda was set. What has changed (in the economic agenda since Lisbon) is the fact that EU governments are now dealing with a "moving target" compared to the situation three years ago.

The existing EU membership and the expected addition have led many today to emphasise the need to regroup and redefine the Lisbon strategy. One proposal being considered and examined is the hugely-successful Finnish model. EU economists are stressing on the need to pour more investment into

only a "European social model" centred on lower taxes, balanced privatisation, and higher employment rates, but also that the EU working life should be adjusted to accommodate family needs. Interestingly, they are thinking that it is time for the EU to reverse itself, spread the burden of social costs, encourage fathers to take paternity leave, and take fuller advantage of the "intellectual potential" of women.

European sociologists involved in the planning of a future Europe have also drawn the attention of EU leaders to the current "lack of dynamism" caused by the ageing population and a limited supply of workers in Europe. In this context, they have suggested an improved strategy whereby the original Lisbon agenda would be revitalised by committing Europe to better control of fiscal and monetary policy. They believe that this will stimulate growth and renew the original European commitment to the Stability and Growth Pact. This, the believe is vital. This concern in their hearts have become critical given the fact that the EU finance ministers backed away from threatening legal action against France and Germany for breaching Pact rules on excessive deficits.

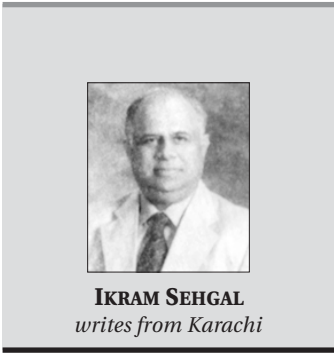
Market, two of them economic in nature -- the serious obstacle in the energy sector and attracting of immigrant labour, particularly from the Balkans. These areas will have to be addressed as solutions do not appear to have been found to these equations.

The two others are political in scope and content -- the issue of EU defence (including the related mechanism for this purpose) and the question of streamlining relations with Russia.

The EU is proud as a civil power, but if it wants to be a "factor for peace," it will need to possess not only a credible institutional military instrument but also the means and autonomy to carry out operations, if necessary. This is something which can be achieved through a compromise between the EU and NATO, but that seems unlikely in the immediate future given the differences of opinion on this subject between the UK on the one side and Germany and France on the other.

Russia, on the other hand is an example of the need for the EU to work out a common policy and not deal in bilateral negotiations. Any observer will point out that there are too many bilateral deals with Russia. Some will also indicate that

## The corruptors



IKRAM SEHGAL

writes from Karachi

WHEN posterity evaluates the merits and de-merits of the Musharraf era, it will record that one of its better achievements was the establishment of the "National Accountability Bureau" (NAB), giving it at the outset virtually a free hand to go after those who had looted public money (including a huge amount of un-repaid loans from nationalised financial institutions). Despite the fact that NAB was still in the initial mobilisation stage the results were spectacular in the first year. Today, when more than four years have elapsed, corruption convictions are still being successfully prosecuted in the courts of law, however the initial enthusiasm has somewhat dissipated with the passage of time and change of personnel. The fervour dampened even further after the democratic government assumed power in late 2002.

The main targets NAB has ostensibly gone after are, viz (1) corrupt public servants, i.e. politicians and bureaucrats and (2) businessmen who have not returned loans which they should have. Nobody leaves incriminating evidence lying around, when NAB could not acquire adequate evidence against politicians and bureaucrats, they went on "fishing" trips based on bad reputations. NAB concentrated on

the business community for repayment of loans for immediate success. In the long run this reaction thereof was counter-productive. While quite a few outstanding loans were repaid and/or were re-scheduled, the hue and cry raised by the industrialists and businessmen that NAB's investigations were hampering entrepreneurship in an economic environment that needed fresh enterprise, deterred NAB for going further down this line. The country's economic managers, keen to get the economy kick-started, sided with the contention of big business and pressurised NAB to tread softly. This easing of

what a precedent for the future! NAB's reputation has been tarnished also by the perception of selective accountability. NAB points to a dozen or so cases against ex-servicemen, this fails to satisfy critics who contend that NAB has a soft-pedal approach towards the Armed Forces, the Judiciary and the Police. It is true that the nature of white-collar crime turns up little in evidence unless hidden bank accounts and lockers come to light. Very correctly NAB turned to "living beyond means" as an approach to nab the guilty, an amendment to the NAB law was enacted and extensively used but mainly

government officials, the judiciary, police officials, white collar crime-investigators, anyone posing a threat to their multi-faceted "transactions". When BCCI collapsed a number of them were incarcerated in various countries for various reasons, many got clean away and live to cheat and fraud as privileged members of our society today.

Many years ago the modus operandi to corrupt civil servants was subtle and indirect, one favourite method being to let them win big at cards e.g. bridge, flush or poker. Another method was to give expensive gifts on occasions, in a

## AS I SEE IT

Understanding human frailties and the need for individuals and/or groups to get their way from whichever government is in power without breaking the law, developed countries require lobbyists to be registered. In Washington DC, the paid lobbyists are mainly based on the famous K Street, their motive for lobbying is well known and acceptable for good governance. What do we know about the paid lobbyist/s in Pakistan? People in this country who try to influence their government do so out of crass motivation of profit and are paid for it.

pressure was the first factor that compromised an excellent accountability process. Many of the loans were taken from nationalised commercial banks (NCBs) because of influence and patronage and very few were having the cover of adequate (or even any) collateral. Some were never meant to be repaid in the first place. This non-repayment culture became a part and parcel of the Pakistani commercial and industrial society, the main sufferers being NCBs.

The advent of plea-bargaining not only badly compromised the accountability process, it was a moral disaster and should never have been implemented. A simple analogy would be that of a dacoit returning the proceeds of his loot (or part thereof) if he was caught,

against civil servants. This is patently unfair, the law must be applied equitably to all and sundry.

BCCI is in the news again, a dozen years after the event the auditors for the liquidation are blaming the Bank of England (BOE) for not having blown the whistle earlier to 1991 when the bank collapsed on being taken over. BCCI was a wonderful bank, with tremendous potential and a gaggle of brilliant Pakistani bankers. However a small handful of executives had made the corrupting of people into an art, siphoning of money was an easy next step, same "special" BCCI executives simply had a penchant for conducting "business". They "arranged" things, starting with being highly paid pimps. Their purpose in life was to bribe

reported case the gifts received by the daughter of one Federal Secretary for her marriage included several cars, air-conditioners, refrigerators, furniture, hand-woven carpets, etc. The weakness of the individual was exploited, it being easy if the person is susceptible to whisky and women. NAB (and other such) officials must be careful of "Greeks bearing gifts", they simply have to become anti-social. The "hosts" who maintain an "open house" in the Federal and Provincial Capitals eventually make their guests pay million times over for those free drinks they dish out like water. There is nothing in this world like a free junket or free drinks!

These so-called "bankers" should have learnt their lessons but the leopard never changes its

and innocent of the motives of the generous "donors".

Understanding human frailties and the need for individuals and/or groups to get their way from whichever government is in power without breaking the law, developed countries require lobbyists to be registered. In Washington DC, the paid lobbyists are mainly based on the famous K Street, their motive for lobbying is well known and acceptable for good governance. What do we know about the paid lobbyist/s in Pakistan? People in this country who try to influence their government do so out of crass motivation of profit and are paid for it. A public official may be influenced (and then corrupted) without knowing that the person influence him (or her) is benefiting

financially for it. For Pakistan it is extremely necessary to register the lobbyists so that we know them officially, the "corruptors" should not easily exercise influence at the apex of power.

The enthusiasm and energy thereof for accountability displayed by every new regime wanes as matters settle into routine, eventually like water finding it's course, the "corruptors" discover what makes the concerned official/s tick and then go to work on them with a vengeance. Sometimes the only target may not be the Head of the organisation but for good measure his personal secretary and driver (and even operator if need be). The very same people who came with a missionary zeal to root out corruption have in many cases become the protectors of those they had come to target in the first place. The "corruptors" ingratiate themselves with every successive administration, becoming indispensable with the passage of time. For starters why not enquire into the credentials of those who are trying to be generous to NAB officials for no apparent reason? Would they give them the time of the day if they were not in NAB? All lobbyists are not bad, for the "corruptors" with a specialised lobbying skill to exploit what most of us are easily susceptible to is routine modus operandi. NAB has to work overtime to identify "the corruptors" by tracking why they are being so 'generous' and root them out from our society. The BCCI model needs to be studied if NAB is really serious about wanting to nip this evil in the bud.

Ikrum 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 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.

### VC process, VC status and woman VC

A vice chancellor (VC) process should normally involve, among other things, a set of requirements for aspirants to meet in order for them to compete for a VC position and a system for selecting, as well as appointing a VC. The VC process should inter alia be reliable, competitive, accountable and transparent so that it could create, among other things, an equal opportunity for all VC aspirants to participate in the process; and facilitate the selection of the right person at the right time. A sitting VC may enjoy his or her status from several sources. For example: one, the formal status accorded to the VC (as applicable) by say, a country's government; and two, the status the VC can derive through commanding the respect of the communities (particularly, the student community) he or she serves and the society in which he or she lives and contributes.

In the latter case, the prospect of sustainability is higher, especially in terms of time period because the status gained may even last posthumously. It is not only applicable to VCs but to professors and others. In Bangladesh, there are many examples of highly regarded and dedicated teachers and VCs, among others. I heard from my mother (Syeda Sultana Haq) and others how did a number of my deceased maternal grandfathers like, Prof. Yousuf Ali (Ershadullah, and Prof. Abdul Halim (Dhaka University) commanded the respect of their students.

I read with interest the recent discussions on the status of VCs in a number of leading Bangladeshi dailies. I have at least two comments to make on those discussions: firstly, there is a perceived need for Bangladesh to review the existing VC process with

a view to bringing about a solid improvement in the selection, as well as appointment of VCs; and secondly, the sitting VCs have the opportunity to promote and sustain their status in the society through personal, as well as professional, excellence regardless of the fact whether or not they are accorded a protocol status by the government, for example.

Bangladesh should take immediate measures to ensure gender balance in the appointment of university VCs. I do not think the country has got any female VCs at this point in time. I am confident there would not be any dearth of suitable female candidates for those positions. But the question is: Whether the country would afford them an opportunity to serve in those positions in the nearest future?

Dr. M. S. Haq

New York

Plight of retd BJMC

### employees

A recent survey of the various jute mills under BJMC revealed that the retired personnel have not received any gratuity for the fiscal year 2000-2001. These retd. personnel who dedicated their youth and the better part of their life in the service of BJMC are now in their old age and in a miserable condition -- neglected and forsaken.

Most of them are now disabled or suffering from old age diseases. They are unemployed with no source of income. Most of their children are in school, college or unemployed. They have grown up daughters whom they cannot get married off due to lack of money.

The only hope in their old age was gratuity. But this gratuity has become a mirage from the fiscal year 2000-2001.

Many of these hapless retired personnel or their dependants have died without treatment for

lack of money. They had savings no doubt but these savings lasted for only a year or two. After that, to make ends meet, they have taken large debts. But since there is no sign of getting their gratuity, even the near relatives are now shying away to give fresh loans. The result is inevitable. They and their dependants will die like paupers for want of money -- the money which is rightfully theirs but now being denied by certain unscrupulous quarters.

While we are chanting catchy slogans for the eradication of poverty, we are in fact, creating poverty, in the case by denying the retired personnel their dues.

The purpose for writing this letter is to draw the attention of the authorities concerned to the dire pitiful condition of the retd personnel. We should bear in mind that one day we all will become old and jobless. Surely none would not like to get harassed for their rightful dues.

Syed Hossain Ali  
Ex-Assit. Manager, Production,  
Khulna-9000

### Demands of Garos should be met without delay

The incident that took place on January 3, 2004 in the wake of constructing a wall to ring Modhupur forest in pursuit of controversial eco-tourism project caused the death of an indigenous youth. It is a clear sign of unbending attitude of the government towards the demands of these indigenous people. Garos have been living there for generations. Their livelihood depends on the forest to considerable extent. In fact, they are inextricable part of the forest. They have distinct lifestyle and culture that should be given every opportunity to evolve without any sort of restraint. Our constitution also embraces the

same spirit in Article 23, which states "The State shall adopt measures to conserve the culture and heritage of the people." But in the name of preserving environment, there is no reason to jeopardise their life as well as culture. So, we hope the government will reconsider the project once again in order to assuage the grievances of the ethnic group and make them believe that they are no longer discriminated against as a whole.

Bivuti Tarafder

3rd year, Department of law, DU.

### B Chowdhury, Kamal Hossain, the third force etc.

I have just gone through the news items covering the subject mentioned in the title in DS Jan 7, 2004 and the only reaction I have is that of abhorrence. Why our politicians fail to understand that the root cause of the problem lies

not how much better is the party or the individual than the other but an all round distrust of the people in our politicians of any shade or colour. They have the unprecedented record of failing us over the past three decades. Their voices have simply turned into empty rhetoric. Remember the famous story of the "Emperor's new clothes". Honestly even a child can see through their caricatures and somersaults.

I do not hold the key to overcome the current impasse! But for a change, our politicians should try first being patriots. Yet I must admit I have great faith in the teeming millions of the poor and the downtrodden of this country, who will one day deliver us from this "cage" where our politicians are holding us as hostages.

Shamsher Chowdhury

Dhaka, on e-mail