LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA MONDAY MARCH 29, 2004

Traders' security in dire strait

Licensed arms for business persons may be thought of

NCE again terror has gripped the business community of the capital. Shamsul Haq, a businessman along with his son were kidnapped on Saturday. Police have confirmed that two heads and a few body parts retrieved from Gazipur yesterday are of Haq and his son's. What actually fuelled the fears about their fate was the retrieval on Saturday of another body cut into 19 pieces that reportedly matched some of the aspects of the kidnapped trader, although no conclusive evidence has been estab-

We have been witnessing with grave concern the rapid rise of crimes -- murders, kidnapping etc around the country. But never could we foresee such a gruesome and horrific act of crime taking place in which the victim would be cut into as many as nineteen pieces. How could any sane man resort to such mind-boggling decapitation of a self-same human

Such acts surpass the medieval-type barbarism. Either the criminals are turning into homicidal maniacs, or they are being openly so cruel to show off their defiance of law. They are intent upon creating terror among the victims' family and friends to ensure that their demands are met.

Living in fear has not been a new problem for the business communities in Bangladesh. But incidents of kidnapping for ransom were concentrated in a particular region like Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts. Lately though, such acts of crime have alarmingly escalated into other areas. Some latest incidents in Dhaka go to prove the point.

We understand a large number of special squads in plain clothes are keeping vigil all over the city. The pertinent question is: How much their presence is going to make a difference in the situation? Initially high hopes are pinned on these special forces when they are deployed for curbing crime but down the road the expectations are dashed. Or when the leave, the situation gets back to square-one. Indeed, how is one to explain the continuing incidence of abduction and extortionist behaviour and the oft-repeated deployment of special squads. Actually, ad-hoc measures can't solve an endemic problem characterised by poor law and order infrastructure topped off by politicisation. The criminals seem to be carrying arms freely, while the businessmen remain protectionless. It is time, therefore, that the authorities seriously consider allowing business persons to carry licensed arms for their own protection. But most of all, what we need is to ferret out the culprits and mete out deterrent punishment to them.

Aborted UNSC resolution on Sheikh Yassin

Veto will further damage peace prospects

T has long been recognised that the US bias towards Israel is a major factor contributing to the instability in the Middle East and to hostility to the US in the region and elsewhere around the world. It is thus with a certain feeling of resignation and weariness that we once again find ourselves having to condemn the stance that the US government has taken in vetoing the UN resolution condemning Israel's assassination of Hamas founder and spiritual leader Sheikh

Once again the US trotted out the usual arguments that the resolution was one-sided and did not make any mention of terrorist atrocities committed by Hamas to justify its position. However, the text of the resolution would have condemned "the most recent extra-judicial execution committed by Israel" and "all attacks against any civilians as well as acts of violence and destruction." True, Hamas was not mentioned by name, but we will leave it to the reader to determine whether the text was unacceptably unbalanced or not.

But the larger point is not the exact wording of the resolution. This more or less identical scene has been played out in the UN Security Council countless times over the years. The underlying issue here is the unwavering US support for the policies of Sharon government and how this support is an impediment to peace.

There are many factors complicating the ultimate achievement of peace in the Middle East, but the US blindness on the matter is not a help. The US is very quick to condemn any terrorist attack against Israel and to criticise and condemn the policies of the Palestinian leadership, but the US does not balance this out with condemnation when Israel takes steps which are immoral and which damage the peace process. Thus, the Israeli PM has been given a virtual free hand to continue building settlements in the occupied territories and to construct his security wall. And while the US pays lip service to condemning Israel's policies of targeted assassination, its actions at the UN signal clearly to Sharon that he can continue

The Israeli government will interpret the US veto as a green light to continue its current policy of escalating hostilities and repression. The end result will only be more bloodshed and violence with the possibility of a peaceful settlement becoming ever more remote. If anyone believes that more bloodshed and violence are what is needed to resolve the Palestinian crisis -- they must be living in the fool's paradise.

Reigniting the flame of Jehad



M ABDUL HAFIZ

Go and filch the final strip of my Ditch my youth in prison holes, Burn my books Feed your dogs on my fishes Go and spread your net of terror Upon the roof of my village Enemy of man, I shall not compromise And to the end I shall fight If you blow out all the candles in my eyes If you fill my anguish Forge my coin Uproot the smile from my children's faces If you raise a thousand walls And nail my eyes to humiliation

-- Palestinian poet Samih Al

Enemy of man

I shall not compromise

O defiant is the mood of Palestinians. With each body blow inflicted on them this defiance only stiffened. Eversince Britain and France withdrew from their mandated territories in the Middle East and Israel emerged on the scene in May 1948 under a UN plan which partitioned Palestine, more than 600,000 Arabs were driven out of their home. To make things worse in June 1967 in a sharp swift war Israel also seized Gaza, West Bank and Jerusalem dislocating more Arab Palestinians and causing more miseries for their swelling numbers. It took more than two decades for them to be galvanised as Palestinian nation

which at long last rose in revolt in

what came to be known as Intifada

to resist the occupation. The

would want to deal with Palestinian resistance rather brutally with a

Pursuant of that hardline policy in a renewed wave of repression early this month Israel raided two refugee camps in the Gaza Strip leaving 14 Palestinians dead. The raids were carried out after an attempted suicide attack on a check post in Northern Gaza in which seven Palestinians and no Israeli were killed. The barbaric

man, has actively campaigned against ICJ (International Court of Justice) hearing the fence case calling it a bilateral dispute to be resolved by the Palestinians and Israelis. Enjoying such a patronisation in his diabolic activities it is only obvious that in the run up of the raids initiated early this month Sharon ordered the killing of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the Hamas' wheel chair bound spiritual leader as the latter was leaving

Both Israel and her patrons are wrong in their expectation. They still fail to understand that the Palestinians have refused to capitulate or surrender even under the collective punishment meted out to them by the combined might of Israel and the United States. They are yet to understand gravity and density of the living history of the Palestinian people as the national community and merely as a collec-

tion of deprived refugees. Under

simply wither away. Instead their

(Palestinians) strength and resil-

ience to repeatedly bounce back to

None of Sharon's expansionist measures and his provocative structed around the West Bank and Al-Quds being but only one example -- has given the Israelis the security they want. The desperate responses by the Palestinian militants in the form of suicide attacks continued to make life for the Israelis a high risk reality. Why is that so hard for Israelis and Ameri-

So much is heard recently about the 'road map' and prospects for peace that they have indeed obfuscated the realities prevailing in Palestine. According to Late Professor Edward Said, it is the Palestinian resistance and refusal to surrender which is the reason for the existence of a 'road map' and all the numerous so called peace plans before them and not at all because the United States and Israel or the international community have been convinced for humanitarian reasons that the Palestinians should be dispensed with justice. The road map says nothing about justice or about the historical punishment meted out to the Palestinian people for too many decades

Given this backdrop and continuing skullduggery of Israel and her patrons the cowardly killing of a renowned divine will only reignite the passion for martyrdom -considered too little a price by the Palestinians to achieve their goal. It has aptly been condemned worldwide and inflamed anger in Arab world. Palestine, it seems will continue to burn engulfing entire

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PERSPECTIVES

The military solution that the Israelis have so far tried hasn't worked at all and never will work. If anything, that has only compounded the problem and increased the Israelis' insecurity... Given this backdrop and continuing skullduggery of Israel and her patrons the cowardly killing of a renowned divine will only reignite the passion for martyrdom -- considered too little a price by the Palestinians to achieve their goal.

resistance movement spearheaded by the stone throwing Palestinian children however petered out with the coming of Oslo peace process. The Oslo trap broke the momentum of the resistance but could not destroy its soul. After an inconsequential series of Oslo efforts. The resistance grew with far greater intensity. The second Intifada radicalised by the Hamas' suicide bombing is now in

The extraordinary power of this deadly resistance is what worries Israel and her patrons in the West, particularly the US. Indeed, Palestinians have always been the problem for both Zionist scheme of greater Israel as well as the West's attempts for a Middle East settlement on Tel-Aviv's term. It is therefore only axiomatic that both

raid once again showed the extent of brutality Ariel Sharon could resort to against the Palestinians who, ironical as it is, are condemned to living in refugee camps in their own territory. This, while illegal Jewish settlements in occupied territory continue to expand at an alarming rate despite the fact that the 'road map' unveiled by President Bush last April called for a halt to all settlement activity.

Sharon has been emboldened to perpetrate the atrocity because he knows that the US is least likely to restrain him in the election year. But this does not explain the silence adopted by the EU and Russia, the two other members of the Quartet whose road map Sharon is openly confounding. Ironically, the EU with Britain's Foreign Secretary as its spokes-

the worst possible circumstances Israel made little secret of its Palestinian society has neither intention to eliminate the leaderbeen defeated, nor has it crumbled ship of Hamas in the aftermath of completely. Kids still go to school. twin suicide bombings in the port Doctors and nurses still take care of of Ashdod recently. Sheikh Yassin their patients. Men and women go is the first victim of that Israeli to work. Organisations have their scheme but it has only prompted meetings and people continue to the radical Islamist movement he live. That's what is the predicafounded to declare allout war on ment of Sharon and other extremthe Jewish state in revenge. Hamas' ists who want the Palestinians to political leader in the Gaza Strip,

 $the\,mosque\,after\,morning\,prayer.$

Abdel Aziz Rantissi made a declara-

tion of war in the aftermath of

Israeli strike killing the Hamas'

life are what baffle the Israeli supreme leader. Rantissi told that the "war henceforth is open with these (Israeli) murderers, these The military solution that the criminals and these terrorists. By Israelis have so far tried hasn't all appearance the conflict has only worked at all and never will work. If escalated belying the Israeli expecanything, that has only comtation that the death of Yassin will pounded the problem and put an end to Palestinian resisincreased the Israelis' insecurity.

Middle East in its flame.

A last stand?



IKRAM SEHGAL writes from Karachi

VER the past 12 days the Federal Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of South Waziristan is in the news for all the wrong reasons. Afghanistan has remained in turmoil even after the fall of the Taliban in November 2001, the US led Coalitionimposed Hamid Karzai Government failing to impose its authority anywhere in the country except the city of Kabul and a few outlying towns. Hamid Karzai himself is protected by a security detail of the US Diplomatic Corps, his Presidency subject to the suf-ferance of late Ahmed Shah Masood's Northern Alliance. Dostum's Jumbish militia troops continue to face off Atta Mohammad's force in Mazar-I-Sharif; in recent fighting several hundreds were killed before Kabul could manage a ceasefire. The Afghan Aviation Minister, son of the Governor of Herat Ismail Khan, was recently killed when the Karzai-appointed commander of the regular Afghan forces in the city tried to overturn Ismail's authority over his fiefdom. The Afghan regulars were soon routed and the commander has taken to the hills, fate still unknown

In the Pashtun belt extending adjacent to the Durand Line from Kabul to Kandahar, Taliban guerillas have been frequently attacking US forces. For their part, US military commanders believe that the remnants of al-Qaeda and Taliban use Pakistan's

tribal belt as a safe haven to attack the US forces at will. US Commanders have been giving broad hints about crossing the Durand Line in hot pursuit. This would violate our sovereignty and territorial integrity besides causing widespread domestic turmoil, the US has done well to act with restraint. However, the absence of action against the al-Qaeda will turn South Waziristan autonomous military stronghold

repeatedly requested to intercede. This cut no ice with the three main accused/culprits Sharif, Nek Mohamad and Noor Islam, under whose leadership the Yurgikhels are refusing to hand over the foreign nationals present in their area. There are credible reports that some Waziri criminal elements are also bearing arms alongside the foreign fighters. No government in the world can allow armed groups within its borders refuse not only to accept central

miscreants were well entrenched with fortified mud huts and communication tunnels. Ambushed on the way between Jandala and Wana, the FC Commander had to bring in reinforcements of about two FC Wings and two rifle companies. Before the ambushed FC unit could be extricated the FC took quite a few casualties, about 16 dead, a small section of about 10-

on Mar 25 to enable the families of the tribals to move to safer places. The supporting Cobra helicopter gunships have (uptil now) only returned fire when fired upon, artillery has still not been used, giving time to the tribal elders to arrange release of the FC personnel taken as hostages during the Mar

Guerillas never stand and fight, they go by the adage, "he who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day". Mostly Chechen and

captured by the guerillas, their

You cannot "wipe the tribe out", they are Pakistanis and must be coerced and cajoled into seeing the light of day. One does not see the hardened guerillas walking out with their hands up and being herded to Guantanomo Bay. It will take some doing to eliminate this festering threat in the body politic of Pakistan. This has to be done before the streets catch fire on the misinformation being dished out by some politicians who should be expected to exercise more maturity.

for expatriate guerillas.

For several months now the local Administration has been encouraging the tribals not to allow foreign fighters to take refuge in South Waziristan, given tribal tradition this is easier said than done. Pakistan Federal or Provincial forces normally do not enter FATA, the tribals having a mandate since independence to secure the country's frontiers. Inhabited mainly by the Ahmedzai Waziris who have nine sub-tribes: Zalikhel is one of the Waziri subtribes. The recalcitrant Yurgikhels are a Zalikhel sub-tribe. From time to time government and tribal emissaries have gone to the Yurgikhels requesting that the mainly Arab and Chechen guerillas of al-Qaeda not misuse their ageold Waziri tradition of hospitality. Retribution was promised if these foreign guerillas used their territory for hit and run attacks in Afghanistan. The tribal elders from the other eight sub-tribes were

authority but bar access of government forces trying to apprehend/evict foreign elements within their area. That would be like accepting a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) by the Yurgikhels.

On the basis of credible information, a relatively small unit of the Frontier Corps (FC) engaged in a probing raid on 8 Jan 04 against a small mud hut compound near Wana but was not successful. On 24 Feb 04 a similar action by another FC unit was also unsuccessful in nabbing any of the militants. Alarming intelligence reports of mud hut clusters being heavily fortified came pouring in. The Political Agent called on the elders at a Tribal Jirga to hand over those on a wanted list, a Tribal Lashkar was formed but the Yurgikhel still refused to hand over the wanted men. As is customary for the Frontier, the FC then launched a routine search operation on 18 Mar 04 but the fate is still unknown. While withdrawing the FC came across 25 dead bodies of the guerillas but could only bring back two of the dead, identified as of Arab and Chechen origin. In subsequent operations over a 100 suspects were arrested by government forces. The artillery support available with the FC could not be used as the guerillas were occupying the fortified mud houses and using civilian inhabitants as human shields.

With FC heavily outgunned by well trained battle-hardened highly motivated guerillas having excellent tactics and wonderful fire control, the Army moved a Brigade plus with Artillery and helicopter support to shore up the FC. The Corps Commander, Lt Gen Safdar Hussain, barely six days in a threestar office, set up shop to control the situation. An area 10 kms in width and six kms in length (about 60 sq kms) has been cordoned off and a ceasefire for four hours given

Arabs with a small group of Uzbeks among them, this lot of guerillas are choosing to stand and fight. This has led to speculation that there could be senior Chechen and Uzbek leaders among them, for some reason a few cannot be moved quickly cross-country, that is why this stand is against every principle of guerilla warfare. At the outset rumours pointed to a major Arab al-Qaeda leader among them, maybe even Osama bin Laden, another an intelligent guess was that his No 2 Al-Zawahiri was cornered and he had been wounded while making a futile attempt to escape in an ambulance. Intelligence estimates are that al-Qaeda men number in the area 300-400 and are augmented by about 100 or so locals, mostly Yurgikhels. The President's mention about a "high value target" was obviously based on field intelligence, communication intercepts as well as the strange behaviour of the guerillas in opting not to make a break for it. Cobra gunships are keeping a vigil to ensure that no vehicles break the There has been reaction, a

number of incidents have taken

place elsewhere in NWFP including three rockets landing in Peshawar City. Obviously the locals are not pleased, there is however greater resentment against the guerillas than the Federal troops. There have been sporadic attacks in different places, a diversionary attempt to somehow loosen the chokehold the Army has got in the besieged area. Things may become much worse before they become better but it does not help if the Corps Commander acts gung-ho. You cannot "wipe the tribe out", they are Pakistanis and must be coerced and cajoled into seeing the light of day. One does not see the hardened guerillas walking out with their hands up and being herded to Guantanomo take some doing to eliminate this festering threat in the body politic of Pakistan. This has to be done before the streets catch fire on the misinformation being dished out by some politicians who should be expected to exercise more maturity. Pakistan will expect that as a non-NATO military ally as announced by US Secretary of State Colin Powell our Armed Forces will get the necessary weapons and equipment, particularly helicopters for good mobility as well as communications and surveillance equipment, including the use of UAVs like the Predator etc vital for counter-guerilla operations. A token 2500 flak jackets have already been airlifted in by the US on an emergency basis for the troops at Wana. Make no mistake, if we do not come down upon the guerillas like a ton of bricks now, our house of cards will come falling down like many tons of bricks, sooner

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

Island dispute widens the crack between Japan and China

MONZURUL HUQ writes from Tokyo

APAN'S five closest neighbours are Russia, China, South and North Korea and Taiwan. Of the five, Japan's antagonism with North Korea runs deepest and the matter is a well-known fact in international politics. Relations between the two adversaries took a sharp downward turn at a time when many were expecting a different outcome. The Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi opened the gate towards a better understanding between the two neighbours in September 2002 when he made a historic trip to Pyongyang. But much of that gain has by now been taken over by extreme bitterness drummed up by hardliners in both the camps. As a result, the relationship between Japan and North Korea has plunged into a level lower than that of the Cold War period. But despite such open hostility, North Korea stands out as Japan's only neighbour with whom Tokyo doesn't have any dispute over

territorial claims. In the north of Japan the dispute with Russia is a fall out of an historical legacy that dates back to more than one hundred years.

good neighbourly relationship as claims and counterclaims over the ownership of territories expanding towards the northern tip of the Pacific Rim resulted in direct confrontation between the two countries from the early days of their diplomatic encounter. The island of Sakhalin, the southern half of which Japan claimed as a reward for defeating the Russians in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, has been returned to Russian ownership after Japan's defeat in 1945; so is the long chain of Islands in the north known as the Kuriles. But Japan's claim that the four southern islands of that chain not being part of Kurile Island revived Tokyo's demand over their sovereignty and the issue is standing as a roadblock in restoring normal diplomatic relationship between the two countries. Japan and Russia is vet to sign a peace treaty officially claring an end to World War II hostility. As a result, Japan's northern border is not free of

Japan and Russia never enjoyed

Of the five neighbours, Tokyo's relationship with South Korea is considered to be the closest. This is mostly due to their firm belonging to the American sphere of

The rapid deterioration of the situation called for utmost concern of both the governments and Chinese and Japanese sides eventually have dealt with the matter calmly, It looks like as if China and Japan have avoided successfully the possibility of slipping out of hand a situation with the potentiality of drifting the neighbours further apart. influence since the early days of Cold War. But here too, historical legacy continues to create new problems as the memory of Japan's Korean peninsula lingers as an obstacle not easy to overcome. Moreover, the two countries have recently locked into a territorial dispute that some observers see as an issue with disruptive potential-A small island situated midway

between Japan and Korea and known in Japan as Takeshima was placed under Shimane Prefecture the Meiji government in 1905. South Koreans claim that Japan forcibly took control of the island at a time when Korea was under Japan's colonial domination and

thus unable to protest. The Japanese, on the other hand, claim the island to be theirs.

The Japanese government was annoyed by a recent decision by the postal authority of South Korea to issue a postage stamp depicting the island as an integral part of the country and criticised the decision being of provocative nature. The Japanese postal department later decided to retaliate with a counter measure, although the postage stamp in Japan is yet to be issued.

Japan's territorial dispute with China involves a group of uninhabited islets situated adjacent to Taiwan and about 100 miles north and west of Okinawa. Known as Senkaku Islands, they were included in Okinawa Prefecture by the Japanese government in 1896, lost in World War II, and returned to Japan by the time when the control of Okinawa was handed back to Japan.

CLOSEUP JAPAN

The group of islets contains rich fishing areas and undersea oil deposits, making them worthy possessions from economic consideration. Since the late 1960s, both China and Taiwan have claimed the ownership of the islands, sighting the same reason as South Korea that they were forcibly taken over by Japan at a time when Japan's neighbours were too weak to protest. From mid-1990s, their ownership became a source of major disputes

and demonstrations by nationalistic groups in both China and Japan. The recent incident of seven Chinese citizens landing in one of the islands of Senkaku group, known in China as Daioyu, is a continuation of that nationalistic fervour at a time when the two countries are refraining from exchanging visits by top leaders in the aftermath of Japanese prime minister's repeated visits to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine.

According to Japanese officials in Tokyo, the seven Chinese flag waving activists landed on the main island of the Senkaku group early last Wednesday in two small fishing boats. The activists were soon arrested on charges of suspected illegal entry into Japanese territory and thus violating Japan's immigration control and refugee recognition law. They were later taken to Naha, the main city of Okinawa. Where the seven went through full scale questioning.

Meanwhile, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman in Beijing said China had lodged protest over the arrest of seven activists and demanded that the Japanese government guarantee their safety and release them immediately and unconditionally. The spokesman also said the arrest was a challenge to Chinese sovereignty over its territory and to the human rights of Chinese citizens. And in Beijing, as angry Chinese protesters torched apanese flags outside the Japanese embassy while Chinese police stood by watching, Tokyo was quick to criticise and condemn the act as a very regrettable one. Foreign Minister Yoriko Kawaguchi informed reporters that Japan has lodged official protest to the Chinese govern-

The rapid deterioration of the situation called for utmost concern of both the governments and Chinese and Japanese sides eventually have dealt with the

deportation of the arrested seven. According to normal procedure, Japanese police were expected to send the arrested Chinese activists to public prosecutors for indictment. But instead, authorities decided to return them to China out of diplomatic concern, thus defusing the tension for time

It looks like as if China and Japan have avoided successfully the possibility of slipping out of hand a situation with the potentiality of drifting the neighbours further anart. Territorial disputes arouse patriotic fervour, and as we know, patriotic fervour breeds distrust and hostility. To find a durable solution of the problem, the neighbours, however, have to do more than simply resorting to temporary measures. The problem of Senkaku is related more to its strategic situation than the historical perspective. The islands potentially rich in oil reserves. Hence there is a need to include the ssue in top-level discussion and try to find out a solution acceptable to both sides. But the mood so far seems to be running contrary to anything closer to that.