DHAKA MONDAY JUNE 21, 2004

Sorry state of investigation

More professionalism needed

REPORTS of investigations of sensational cases fizzling out should be a matter of concern for all. Bangladesh seems to be one country where crimes are hardly traced to their perpetrators and where investigations turn up nothing at all.

And, why do investigations fail to be productive?

In almost all cases that are sensational in nature or involve political personalities, political motives would invariably be ascribed to the crime. This starts a chain reaction of blame and counter blame. Such recriminations not only create a preconceived notion in the minds of the investigators but also dilute the merits of a case. Moreover, reports regarding an investigation, which we think are deliberate leaks, appear in the press from time to time, which tend to have a negative impact on the course of the

In our assessment, lack of progress can be attributed to three main reasons. First, unwarranted political pressure, either to influence the findings in favour of the ruling party or to rope in the opposition, puts the investigating officer in disarray. Second, shifting the responsibility of investigation from one agency to another too often breaks the link in investigation, affecting the progress in the long run. Third, lack of expertise of the investigators takes these

We think that it will be to the benefit of the society, if political pressure is eschewed and the investigative agencies are allowed to do their job.

We would also like to suggest that the matter of capacity building of respective agencies be addressed so that all modern means of solving crimes can be used to the advantage of the investigating agencies.

Last but not the least, we feel that it is the inculcation of professionalism in the investigating officers that would make a sea change in their output.

Nothing denudes the public of its confidence in the government more than its inability to punish crimes of dastardly nature, due to the failure of its investigative agencies to conduct proper investigation.

Mayors want more power

Justified demand, needs urgent

HIS isn't the first time that the mayors of all the city corporations in the country are asking for more power to serve the city dwellers. The recent meeting of the mayors of Dhaka, Sylhet, Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal has reiterated what their predecessors had been saying for many years. In fact, it was Md Hanif, a former mayor of Dhaka City Corporation who in the mid-nineties had proposed constitution of a unified authority designed to cut across the various utilities on the ground that lack of coordination among them was causing havoc to service

There have been certain hitches -- more political perhaps than administrative. The city corporations work under the ministry of LGRD while the utility services work under different ministries. That's why joint collaboration between the utility services and Dhaka City Corporation was initiated during the last government with the minister and the mayor co-heading the committee constituted for the purpose. But due to lack of proper policy guidelines, to say nothing of confusion over the authority of the body, that effort did not work out.

So, we have had the city corporations as elected bodies alright but without the necessary authority and power vested in them. Secondly, if the mayor belongs to the party which is not in the government, as it's been in the past, it creates conflict between the two. Thirdly, and most importantly, all the utility services are legally constituted bodies with specific jurisdictions. Therefore their natural tendency is not to part with power to some other authority

In such circumstances, the city corporations' work gets impaired; and consequently, the metropolitan dwellers suffer the most. The recent water logging in the city after continuous rain is a prime example of lack of coordination among the utilities. Every year road digging by different utility organisations begins just before the monsoon, no matter how much one decries it for having caused severe disruption in public life.

Such serious points at issue will have to be addressed sooner than later. That's why we think an independent commission should be formed to look at the issue as a whole and devise ways to perfect the system. Other metropolitan cities in South Asia seem to have successfully synchronised the activities of different service delivery organisations. We want the best practice model to be

An inevitable parting of the ways



HE news that Ahmad Chalabi's elegant head-quarters-cum-residence in Baghdad was raided on the morning of May 20 in presence of CIA men exploded like a bomb-shell. Not long ago Ahmad Chalabi had been the Pentagon's darling and one who could hobnob with the likes of Rumsfeld and Paul Bremer as their trusted man. The convicted criminal of Jordan's Petra Bank embezzlement was virtually hand picked by the neocons as a man fit to run Iraq for

Therefore this reversal of fortune shocked many while his close associates were rudely jolted.

After a chequered career following Iraq's 1958 anti-monarchy coup when Chalabi finally arrived in the US he could with his sixth sense understand that the US was willing to spend liberally on Iraq particularly its Shiite population opposed to Saddam Husain. Chalabi did not want to let this opportunity slip away, floated his almost overnight and went on the scene of jubilation by Iraqis was payroll of the CIA which is said to staged. As expected he was soon have paid him a purse of \$ 27 million over the years. In exchange a inducted into the Governing council where he took over the plum clever Chalabi supplied the CIA the committee of finance. A sly manip-'intelligence' it relished: all false ulator he managed to have an information about Saddam's access to the bulk of Saddam's That was an uneasy developso on, the possession of which by

ment from occupiers' point of view for those files contained a lot of incriminating evidence of the US

As an illustrious member of the

governing council and being a 'trusted' friend of America Chalabi took liberty in placing several of his cronies in key positions of important ministries. Even if his moves could have been overlooked two other things done by him could not escape the notice of the American authority which was ostensibly offended by what was considered by it an outright sabotage. First, it

convinced that Chalabi -- having been sentenced to 27 years in prison by Jordanian authority for high crimes, having fed false information to the Pentagon that led the US to a disastrous war, having been paid \$ 27 million from the US exchequer and having offered wrong-headed advice to Bremer himself -- was certainly not the star he was supposed to have been and was perhaps even a liability.

So much so that it was also

PERSPECTIVES

It is possible that he had sensed that his days with the Americans were numbered and he should think of a different power base and look for new sponsor. Joining up with anti-US Shia resistance and becoming a full-time client of Tehran is certainly an option. It is now widely believed that the US was tricked by Iran into invading Iraq through Chalabi. The US has already ordered a probe into Chalabi's role in catalyzing both Iran-Iraq war and Anglo-US invasion of Iraq.

But the love's labour on both sides started to be lost rather soon. When after the coalition forces' occupation of Iraq Chalabi was flown into his country he appeared to be a stranger before his people who were rather cool to him. It was an embarrassment for Chalabi and a disappointment for his American handlers. Nevertheless, like all other collaborators there was still some trick left with him. He could collect several hundred paid agents who pranced around in front of the cameras of the BBC, CNN and so on while Saddam's

nuclear weapon programme,

weapons of mass destruction and

Iraq was claimed later as justifica-

tion for Iraq invasion.

and British collaboration with Saddam -- even to the extent of supplying him with technical means to produce chemical and biological weapons. Furthermore, the so called 'intelligence' he and his friends supplied to Pentagon turned out to be bogus and no WMD could be found after the occupation. Obviously it was the beginning of an acrimony that refused to go away and it proved to be a turning point in the US-Chalabi collaboration based on blatant falsehood. Aptly both sides developed complaints against

was mainly on his advice that Paul Bremer, the US pro-consul in Iraq disbanded the Iraqi Army and police while also dismissing umpteen number of state employees on the pretext of de-Baathification. It only produced tens of thousands of jobless employees with their disgruntled family members, mass anger and demobilisation of state machinery apart from fuelling insurgency. Bremer eventually came to believe that Chalabi's advice was as misguiding as the information he generated earlier for Rumsfeld. Bremer seemed

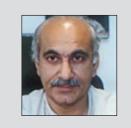
believed that Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN envoy who is helping the US putting together a new group of clients to whom the 'sovereignty' is to be transferred after a week or so was indeed thinking of sidelining Chalabi in the new dispensation for Iraq. Even Chalabi himself is not oblivious of this development. He very well understands that the time has now arrived for the parting of the ways.

Once he had established himself in postwar Baghdad and after witnessing the shifting sands of occupation politics Chalabi well understood that new power centres were developing among the Shiites friendly towards the Americans and he therefore promptly opened his independent channels with the dissident elements possibly including Mugtada al-Sadar against whom the US is currently fighting. Meanwhile Chalabi, now apparently abandoned by the US was also getting closer to the more hardline faction in Iran and attempting to emerge as one of It is possible that he had sensed

that his days with the Americans were numbered and he should think of a different power base and look for new sponsor. Joining up with anti-US Shia resistance and becoming a full-time client of Γehran is certainly an option. It is now widely believed that the US was trickeď by Iran into invading Iraq through Chalabi. The US has already ordered a probe into Chalabi's role in catalyzing both Iran-Iraq war and Anglo-US invasion of Iraq. In Iran-Iraq war Chalabi worked for the CIA while in persuading the US to invade Iraq he had been of immense benefit to Iran by removing its mortal enemy : Iraq under Saddam. It is now to be seen how Chalabi will be rewarded by Tehran when a Shia-ruled Iraq becomes a reality and develops a close ideological partnership with

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The Middle Kingdom



M.J. AKBAR

OLITICAL facts are volatile and vulnerable, as they should be in a democracy, so when they sustain they command attention. The most durable political fact of the last fifteen years and some half a dozen decisive elections has been the remarkable alliance between the Backwards and Muslims in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, led by the two eclectic Yadavs, Mulayam and Laloo. This alliance has marginalised the Congress along the banks of the Ganga and Jamuna, and more often than not kept the BJP at bay. This is the Middle Kingdom of the Indian polity. This, more than any other factor, has prevented the Congress and the BJP from forming a national government on their own, or as the dominant power in any coalition. Understandably, both the Congress and the BJP have tried to damage or destroy this alliance, by direct challenge or subterfuge, and so far failed. Mulayam and Laloo Yaday can take justifiable pride, but the reasons go far deeper than individual credibil-

The roots of Yadav-Muslim friendship lie in a history of antago-

The story goes back to the reform movements in Hindu society that took wing in the last quarter of the 19th century, and the parallel rise of the Arya Samaj, led by Swami Dayanand, in the north of India. In essence, it was an effort to restore the self-confidence of Hindu society by eliminating practices that were thought to have vitiated the strength of a once

The movement coincided with the rising economic well-being of what are now called the Backward Castes as agriculturists (tenantcultivators or even independent landholders) and herders: Ahirs, Koeris, Khushwahas and, in western United Provinces E and Punjab lats. For these castes the Arva Samaj provided a double opportunity, because they were also in search of self-esteem within a caste-ridden Hindu society.

The Arya Samaj (Aryan Society)

until Mahatma Gandhi took up their cause.

Self-esteem also needed a relationship with the divine in the sense that Thakurs linked themselves to the Sun and the Moon, and Brahmins were children of the Rishis. The Koiris claimed Kshatriya status through descent from Indra. Kurmis associated themselves with Lord Rama. For the Ahirs, the relationship with Lord Krishna was logical, for he was both a Kshatriya (in his Dwarka manifestation) and protector of

The cowherd also became the advance infantry of a parallel conflict that served, implicitly, to reinforce the new 'Kshatriya' status. The cow-protection (gauraksha) agitations of the late 19th century were the perfect means to establish the new identity for Ahir-Yadavs. It was an idea with inbuilt reinforcements, for the cow was not only venerated as a holy mother in Hinduism, but also had economic benefits for the cowherd. The killing of a cow was

Muslims The first politician to identify the

benefits of an alliance between the devotees of Allah and Lord Krishna was not a Yadav but a politician who has been much maligned in the English press for his weakness and rarely recognised for his strengths, Chaudhry Charan Singh
-- an ardent Arya Samaji, by the way, in his personal beliefs, so he knew where he was coming from. Chaudhry Charan Singh never understood power, but by God he understood politics! Others before

more than electoral arithmetic. It works in daily life, because Yadavs are now the protectors of minorities in the villages of the north They are often accused of not giving jobs to Muslims; but before ou need a job, you need a life. The irony of course is that they

could have been far bigger than the sum of the parts if they had worked together, because the Middle Kingdom in their grasp can become the central national coalition. Their mutual antagonism, for personal rather than political reasons, has prevented this from happening.

It is fascinating that an icon of urban, industrial India, Anil Ambani, has chosen to enter politics through the secular space of this rural Middle Kingdom. The younger son of Dhirubhai Ambani, an authentic genius who deserves more posthumous honour than he has been given, could have become a Member of Parliament on the ticket of either of the two national parties, BJP and Congress. He describes himself as an independent, but his close friend Amar Singh, Mulayam Singh Yadav's number two, is effectively managing his Rajya Sabha election.

Now add Amitabh Bachchan and his family to this combination. Amitabh is as close as India has to an international icon, and Jaya Bachchan is the official candidate of Mulayam Singh's Samajwadi to the Raiva Sabha. At one level of course the personal friendship between Anil, Amitabh, and Amar has brought the three of them to one place. But that is not reason enough. All three are old enough, and mature enough, to know that sentiment has a respectable but only a marginal place in politics. There has to be a much better reason to bring Anil Ambani and Jaya Bachchan to Mulayam

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therefore a double wound. Muslim butchers were the natural targets of

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of Swami Davanand might be called artificial by modern secular academics, but its myth served a deep need because caste in Aryavarta was a function of merit, not birth or karma. And so the Aryas who came from 'Tibet' or central Asia' did not discriminate among themselves but distributed vital functions between various sections of the community. Those in charge of worship were shown the highest respect and called rishis. Those who handled administration and fought wars became kshatriyas. And those who were given the vital responsibility of providing food and milk were the vaishyas. Each function -- prayer, war, food -- was vital and therefore equal. It was only the greed and injustice of the later Brahmins and Kshatriyas that corrupted the ideal and deformed society to the point where it became defenceless. The fourth category, of menials,

consisted of those who were stupid. IQ was the justification for untouchability. This is important, because the Shudras were not included in any reform movement cows. In the early teens of the 20th century, huge mahasabhas (that was how the word became part of the political dialectic) were held by Yadavs in Bihar in which they took an oath to wear the sacred thread as Kshatriyas, and stop doing "lowly work" for the castes higher than them. It was at this period that they dropped the appellation 'Ahir' or 'Gowala', which had become a peiorative, and took on the caste title of 'Yadav'. Great play was made of heroes in the Mahabharata who were agriculturists to challenge those who argued that the Kshatriya status could not be given to farmers. For instance, Maharaja Janak and his queen (foster parents of Sita) were venerated as farmers, and three sons of Kush (therefore, Lord Rama's grandchildren) were said to be skilled in the noble arts of handicrafts and architecture. Resistance from Brahmins, Thakurs, and Bhumihars towards such upward mobility renewed their determination to prove that they could be as superior Hindus as anyone else.

this agitation, and the sacrificial feast of Bakrid the focal point of the calendar for tension. In 1893, Ahirs led widespread attacks on Muslim mohalla. In a subtext that still echoes in the politics of Uttar Pradesh, however faintly, Untouchables were also targeted for being the chief conduits through which butchers bought cows for slaughter. (Since leather was a source of income for Untouchables, this was logical.) The age of communal riots over Bakrid had begun. The Gowala-Yadavs of Bhoipuri-speaking eastern UP and Bihar were especially militant as the agitation steamed or stuttered through many decades. Districts like Patna, Gava, Madhepura, and Purnea find repeated mention in the official records. The pattern of Backward-Muslim confrontation found other reasons for sustenance as politics became first shrill and then violent with the approach of Partition. Freedom did not change the pattern. The last great outpouring of communal blood in Bihar, in Bhagalpur in 1989, was a brutal one-sided war between Yadavs and

him, particularly the Lohia Socialists, had advocated a Backward Caste-Muslim alliance as the answer to the Congress, but the Chaudhry (with active assistance from a forgotten man of the province, Dr. Faridi, during the Assembly elections of 1974) was the first person to achieve it, in his little patch of the state, western UP. His son Ajit Singh is still reaping the benefits, which in turn indicates its intrinsic strength.

You have to remember the ferocity of the 1989 Bhagalpur riots to appreciate what Mulayam Singh Yadav and Laloo Yadav have achieved in UP and Bihar. The change did not come about merely because they wished it to happen. They took a stand, and delivered in moments of crisis. The turning point in UP was when Mulayam protected the Babri mosque against karsevaks when he was chief minister and V.P. Singh was Prime Minister. Laloo won the affection of Muslims when he stopped L.K. Advani's rathyatra. But this by itself would have been insufficient. The alliance is far

OPINION

The hard core US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has just paid a short visit to Dhaka reportedly for obtaining

Bangladesh army in the peacekeeping force in Iraq. What tell-tale he whispered into the ear of the PM and FM on

administration allow things to come to such a pass as may ultimately 'necessitate' Uncle Sam's interventions!

Ominous state of affairs

A R SHAMSUL ISLAM

HE print media of Bangladesh seemed to have dedicated the month of May last to the so-called Bangla Bhai. Two-thirds of the period was almost exclusively his monopoly in lead news. The rest ten days went to a horrible bomb blast at Shah Jalal shrine that came to share the focus of the journalists.

Who is Bangla Bhai? As per report of the media he is Siddikul Islam alias Azizul Islam alias X alias Y alias Z and so on that a man of his profession and character will need and love to assume as his name at different times and different places that he will choose opportune and suitable to conduct his assigned operations.

Bangla Bhai styled himself as the commander of an Islamist outfit named Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) and set up camps at Bagmara, Atrai, Raninagar, Naldanga etc of Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon districts. He told he had come to liquidate the sarbaharas. He asserted his mission was to establish Islamic rule. When asked by the journalists he said that the police and administration would help him in his job ensuring that he had talks with Deputy Minister for Land, local MPs, SP Rajshahi, local

Bangladesh is held by many as a

safe haven of terrorists and criminals. Yet probably never before has the nation witnessed a terrorist like the character of Bangla Bhai who performed his job of persecuting all those he considered his enemies by public declaration and display. Horribly gory was the way he tore his victims like relaying their death moan over microphone, keeping a corpse hanging from tree upside down -- reminding one of Sultan Ghias Uddin Balban of medieval age who erected gallows on the threshold of the capital Delhi and executed the rebels in public to warn of the consequences of insur-Of course, this is nothing new of

such armed cadres appearing here and there preferably in rural areas now and then in the name of religion and political ideology, collecting tolls and ransoms, killing and maiming victims handsomely. Painfully, almost all major political parties, all governments have more or less used these armed cadres to further their selfish ends. Bangla Bhai was no exception to collecting tolls, ransoms from the locals besides killing, wounding many of his choice. Still he stood out as someone quite different from and more potential than his predeces-

sor terrorists for obvious reasons. Firstly, the entire police force of the locality remained absolutely refrained from taking cognizance

his armed cadres. Sometimes they sided with Bangla Bhai terming his activities as a social movement to protect the people by fighting

Secondly, the Deputy Minister for Land, local MPs, main ruling party political leaders and activists all through connived at the unlawful acts of Bangla Bhai's cadres. At times they were even open to

express their approval. The Deputy

Minister for Land went to the

length of comparing the agenda of

Bangla Bhai with Natore's stick and

whistle committee. This is not

anyway tenable. The latter is a duly

government registered organisa-

tion meant for protecting the

business community of the locality

from aggression and extortion of

the terrorists whereas Bangla

Bhai's regiments are just the oppo-

Thirdly, the order of the Ministry

site in aim and action.

cern to the order issuing authority.

Fourthly and most importantly, even the order of the Prime Minister to apprehend Bangla Bhai remained disobeyed by the petty officials of the local police units. This unfolds a story full of thrills and amusements.

As appeared in the newspapers, PM's order to arrest Bangla Bhai reached Rajshahi on May 21, 2004.

The following day, May 22, 2004

Bangla Bhai staged a massive

showdown. With his armed cadres

and supporters numbering about

three thousand riding trucks,

buses, motorcycles, cars etc. wield-

ing openly sticks, swords, spears

etc. Bangla Bhai led a resounding

procession through a long route

from Bagmara to Rajshahi city

accompanied by police escorts on

motor van at the front and rear of

the procession. Bangla Bhai met

Rajshahi DC, SP and handed over

his memoranda. To sanctify that

order of the highest body of the

government Bangla Bhai was

required to be tracked down and captured forthwith by the law enforcement agency. Surprisingly when that most wanted accused came all the way to meet the police officials at their offices what he received were warmth and niceties from their end. This news hit the headlines of national dailies. The PM must have read it.

However, Bangla Bhai's stay as a

parallel government not only

under the nose of the police but

actually under their patronage had

to make a respite. Believably under

directives from above he pulled out

from Rajshahi and went under-

ground for the time being declaring that irrespective of his presence in

the locality his war on the

sarbaharas would continue to be

waged. Further the government

has of late declared a price of Taka

fifty thousand on his head. Critics

say these are all rotten brands of

eye wash. Meaningfully it coin-

cided with the US Defence Secre-

tary Donald Rumsfeld's visit to

Bangladesh

On the heels of the magic tale of Bangla Bhai came on May 21, 2004 the bomb blast at Sylhet Shahjalal shrine on British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury, a proud son of Sylhet, just after a couple of days into his office in Dhaka, to the shock and bewilderment of the entire nation and to the wrath and exasperation of the West. Though

wounded the High Commissioner

was luckily saved and had left for

UK for treatment. In the mayhem

three were killed and about one

hundred injured, including Sylhet

Bangladesh a Moderate Muslim

State. But the idea failed to sell well

to the western countries. 'A cocoon

of terror' was how Bangladesh got

painted in a section of western

media. Bangladesh protested

loudly against these damaging

remarks without any positive

result. It is alleged that under the

The former US President called

Deputy Commissioner.

try. Further, allegedly trained Islamist terrorists from Pakistan and Afghanistan have landed in our country. These developments have broken social equilibrium, political order and pushed the country to the brink of lawlessness. In the process its economy has suffered greatly and foreign invest-ment remained elusive. The western media have humiliated the country with more negative epithets like "a country of disgrace", "a failed state," etc. In a new world of war on terror dissociating from and destroying terrorist networks is not known. The whole nation fervently prays let not our

patronage of this alliance govern-

spread their networks in the coun-

ushered in by the US, Bangladesh is getting marginalised. The western powers have looked, with growing concern, at the increasing activities of the religious fundamentalists in our society that they (western powers) possibly believe to have been linked to international terrorist networks. The recent bomb attack on the British High Commissioner at Shah Jalal Shrine may come to cap the situation. The High Commissioner himself told, as reported in the media, that the religious terrorists might be involved in the bomb attack. To probe the incident the British detectives of Scotland Yard had already arrived in Bangladesh. The US counterparts may follow the suit.

During the recent visit of US

ment the religious terrorists have South Asia Christina Rocca. Bangladesh government, in the name of border security, is learnt to have put signature to an agreement called PISCES (Personal Identification Secure Comparison & Evolution System) which stipulates that without any invitation or permission of Bangladesh government the American intelligence agency is authorised to enter Bangladesh to investigate any terror incident. The other day when Christina Rocca asked a heavyweight Minister of Begum Khaleda Zia cabinet about Bangla Bhai the inner message was too emphatic to leave The hard core US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld has just

Assistant Secretary of State for

paid a short visit to Dhaka reportedly for obtaining Bangladesh army in the peacekeeping force in Iraq. What tell-tale he whispered into the ear of the PM and FM on dissociating from and destroying terrorist networks is not known. Γhe whole nation fervently prays let not our administration allow things to come to such a pass as may ultimately 'necessitate' Uncle Sam's interventions!

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of Home to arrest Bangla Bhai went shelved without causing any conof the criminal acts committed by