

## Verdict on jail killings

All suspicions must be removed

WE are surprised by the turn of events on Tuesday at Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge Court when the delivery of verdict on the historic Jail Killing Case was suddenly postponed by a fortnight. It was a news we, like the rest of the nation, were least expecting since the verdict was long overdue. The whole nation was waiting with bated breath to find out what the judgment would be for those accused of masterminding the highly condemnable and brutal murder of the four national leaders inside the jail 29 years ago. That is why the sudden shift of the date turned out to be even more disappointing.

Inability of a judge to turn up on the day of delivery of the judgement for reasons of illness is, if not unprecedented, extremely rare, especially for a sensitive and high profile case like this. If the verdict was to be delayed, why wait till the last minute? According to some newspaper reports, the judge was feeling indisposed since the night before that kept him from taking his place in the court.

While there is probably nothing dubious about the whole matter, but given the uncertain and unexpected circumstances that we have been passing through, even the most normal of things look abnormal. And that is the tragedy of the moment.

Also, taking the gravity and significance of the case into account, shifting of the date of delivering the judgement may easily generate speculations. We are very concerned at the unexpected turn of events. We hope the authorities would be able to quell all kinds of suspicions in the public mind there might be.

We hope for the judge's quick recovery, but is there no alternative mechanism that could prevent delivery of the judgement from further delay in the future? What if the judge fails to recover or falls sick again before 21 September, the next date announced to deliver the verdict? As the saying goes "Justice delayed is justice denied." A verdict delayed is in actual sense dispensation of justice denied. Let us hope we do not have a repetition of it.

## Bomb scare at school

It should have been managed in a better way

THE bomb scare at the Willes Little Flower School on Tuesday, which thankfully turned out to be a hoax, underlined the sense of insecurity that people are suffering from these days. There is no way to take the news or threat of a bomb blast lightly after all that we have been through over the last few weeks. The nerves of students and their guardians took a terrible hammering, following the news of the discovery of a bomb on the school premises. It must be noted here that five people were injured in two bomb blasts in the city on the same day.

Bomb blasts are taking place almost regularly. But it seems the law enforcers have not acquired the desired level of efficiency or expertise to deal with them. What happened at the school was nothing short of total chaos, as the students were kept inside the school while their anxious parents waited for hours to know what was going on. There was absolutely no communication and neither the law enforcers nor the school authorities felt the need for informing the parents that their wards were safe. Then, the way the suspected bomb was carried by a policeman was also indicative of their acute methodological ineptness in handling a situation like this. The students should have been evacuated before removing the suspected object from where it was lying. It is not clear why the police took the grave risk of carrying it through a crowded place.

The school incident ended on a happy note since the bomb was not a real one. Regrettably, in most cases people have been exposed to genuine threats. The bomb attackers, whose identity is yet to be discovered, have succeeded in killing innocent people and disrupting life. They have also attained the capability to create panic among people. Obviously, the subversive potential of these elements is enormous.

Bomb scare has unsettled matters in some other institutions as well over the last two weeks. Now, the law enforcers' prime duty is to identify the groups and individuals who are behind these anti-people activities and bring them to justice. Public security is too precious a thing to be left at the mercy of wanton killers and scare mongers.

## Virtues of intervention



**Brig Gen  
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN  
ncd, psc (Retd)**

CERTAIN comments in a section of the Indian press and writings on recent developments in their neighboring countries by certain Indian strategic analysts engage our interest, most of all because these appear to appropriate the 'Bushian' philosophy of intervention in a third country.

Of particular interest are two articles namely, "India's options in Nepal are not many" and "Ending the regional shift" by C. Raja Mohan, that appeared recently in the Gulf News and the Hindu respectively, focus on Nepal but mainly on the author's concern at recent developments in India's neighbourhood including Bangladesh and Maldives.

What is of interest to us, as India's neighbours, are the options that the author offers for tackling the possible security scenario that is likely to stem from the recent political developments in these countries.

Rajamohan suggestions that it is for India to take upon itself to provide solutions to the problems that ails its neighbours, quite like what the lone super power feels in respect of the rest of the world, and

that the use of force should be a part of its 'diplomatic toolkit' smacks of 'Bushian' predilection of playing the world's policeman. Such pronouncements simply cannot be acceptable to India's neighbours.

Those familiar with the writings of the above school of thought in India should not be surprised at such utterances that propound the full use of the 'stick'. These writings only validate a fifteen chapter treatise, written almost two decades and five hundred years ago that

recent Indian foreign policy tended to be not wise," with Dixit's description of the IPKF's role in Sri Lanka which reads, "It is an external projection of our influence to tell our neighbours that if, because of your compulsions or your aberrations, you pose a threat to us, we are capable of or we have a political will to project ourselves within your territorial jurisdiction for the limited purpose of bringing you back", spoken to the United Services of India almost two decades ago.

predominance in South Asia diluted, it would do well not to stick to soft options only but go for the more direct (and the dangerous) option of physically chastising its neighbours, so the author avers.

The concerns of Rajamohan stem from the recent blockade of Katmandu by the Maoists, which, he feels, could cause a state collapse in Nepal. He feels alarmed at India's three pronged Nepal policies being put under stress and so is India's security continuum, and therefore, diplomacy alone would

Nepal Treaty?

For India's part it may be true that the prospect of Maoists' coming to power in Nepal may hold dangerous potential for India's internal political dynamics, but, the fact remains that the sole determinant of Nepal's political future are the people of Nepal themselves. It is for the people of Nepal to choose the type of government they want. To suggest that externally infused changes are more efficacious is misleading to say the least.

The other cause for concern is

**While one cannot deny that there are genuine problems in South Asia that give rise to security concerns, not only of India's but of other countries of the region as well, these cannot be mitigated by unilateral actions to either change the government or physically intervene to 'bring them back'. There is a vast scope of mutual cooperation between Bangladesh and India. Not all avenues have been fully explored. It is mutual cooperation and cooperative relationship that ensure a state of amity, which is the best means of security and peace.**

advocates the concept of the 'mandala' and the 'danda'.

Interestingly, there is a continuity of thought in the enunciations, from that of Panikkar, to Dixit and now to Raja Mohan. Not only do his suggestions mirror Kautilya's, Raja Mohan's comments echo Panikkar's characterisation of South Asia as being under India's security orbit, and Dixit's power projection ethos. These are rights, that, according to these scholars, India should arrogate to itself.

Compare the similarity of the author's statement, "The Nepal crisis has brought back into focus the question of India's use of force in the neighbourhood. ... Prudence on use of force is always a sensible policy. But to suggest it will not be considered at all, as the

The essential elements that prop up the remarks, and which capture our interest are, that there is wisdom in projecting power internationally; that power projection, i.e., use of force, is necessary in the neighbouring countries, especially when the political developments there are not in accord with the scheme of things at home, and which in the long run might affect India's security. Thus, power projection becomes an inevitability to physically intervene to effect government-change in India's neighbourhood.

Although not in so many words, the author also pegs his argument on the now commonly touted rationale of President Bush the principle of preemption. If India's interest is threatened, and its

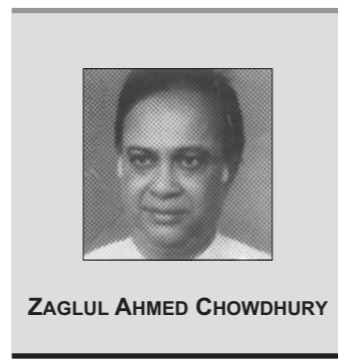
not be enough to address the resultant threats to India's national interests.

The fact is that the Nepalese Maoists were never in the good books of the South Block. Their anti-Indian policy, manifested in their targeting of the Indian business establishment in Nepal, as well as their opposition to free movement of people across the Indo-Nepal border, were a matter of concern for the Indian government. But if the Maoists' blockade causes collapse of Nepal's state structure how does one explain the fact that Nepal was practically cutoff when India slapped a virtual blockade on it in 1988 because of Nepal's military cooperation with China, which India considered to be in violation of the 1950 Indo-

the apprehension that the anti-Indian activities are being helped by its neighbours, if not directly then at least by turning a blind eye to these. Bangladesh have been particularly singled out in the past, almost to the point of suggesting that all that is happening in the Indian Northeast are of its making.

Again, it is well to remember that a greater part of Indo-Bangladesh border has been fenced and are manned regularly. It is difficult to see how large-scale infiltration is possible under these circumstances. But more importantly, the scholars conveniently overlook the fact that the situation in the Northeast has historical roots predating the British rule in India, certainly it goes beyond the partition of 1947, and is fomented by India's internal dynamics. It also does not help the

## 100 days of new Indian government



**ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY**

INDEED, many eyes were fixed on the performance of a new Indian government, which took the reins from principal political rivals, who were at the helm for nearly seven years. The interests were mainly for three reasons. First, the new united progressive alliance (UPA) government won the last general elections rather unexpectedly dislodging favourite ruling national democratic alliance (NDA) and expectations are high from the new coalition. Second, the victory for the UPA was not absolute in the sense that it could not muster enough majority for forming a government of its own and had to depend on the outside support of the like minded parties and hence the stability of the new government remains a matter of speculation. Thirdly and importantly, whether the UPA will be able to reconcile differences within its ranks on one hand and adjust for long on the other with the leftists whose support from outside is so critical for the alliance its very survival hinges on the attitude of the left parties which do not see eye to eye on many matters with the Congress-led UPA authority. These three main aspects of India's current political scenario make the conditions worth watching for the analysts and the first 100 days for the coalition in power sends mixed signals about the performance of

the new government as far as the issues related to both domestic and foreign policy matters are concerned.

The government led by Dr. Manmohan Singh did not have a comfortable period during the first 100 days normally seen for a new set up in a democracy particularly in the Westminster system even though there was no serious threat from the opposition which is quite sizeable considering its strength in both houses of the parliament. The opposition NDA, shocked and somewhat stunned by the reversal

and the NDA is trying to press further after its own chief minister of the Madhya Pradesh state Ms. Uma Bharati, a fire-brand BJP leader, relinquished her position following a non-bailable warrant from a Karnataka court for a communally sensitive case.

The opposition asks if she can quit, why the "tainted" ministers in the central government cannot? But the government says the "tainted ministers" in question are not morally bound to resign as their situation is qualitatively different but this issue continues to confront

ministership when this position of most powerful person in world's largest democracy was just on the platter. This unique gesture emboldened the image of the Congress and its allies even before the new government took over and gave it a huge advantage that the opponents find difficult to match in any form. Sonia in this respect eclipsed even the main figure of the BJP, and for that matter the entire NDA, charismatic Atal Bihari Vajpayee, prime minister for three times. Congress asserts that Vajpayee could not resist his lust

by some alliance partners. The apparent faux pas was sharply amended. The handling of the crisis stemming from some

Indians taken hostages by Iraqi insurgents was not also free from criticism. However, this government seems more keen compared to the NDA in improving ties with the neighbours. Talks at different levels are continuing with Pakistan. Arguably, the previous government initiated the dialogue with Pakistan during the last days of its rule but most part of NDA rule was marked by unfavourable ties and

opponents, is often causing some strain in the understanding. However, the UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and elder CPM leaders Hari Kishan Singh Surjeet and Jyoti Basu are keen to see that the broad understanding is not ruptured to an extent that the existence of the government is threatened.

Another positive factor for the ruling UPA is the continuing squabbles in some form within the main opposition BJP between the liberals and the hardliners which accentuated in the aftermath of polls debacle. This had come to the fore centering chief minister of BJP-ruled Gujarat state as former prime minister Vajpayee had taken a position disapproving of Narendra Modi, a communal zealot, but powerful leader L.K. Advani and party president Venkaiah Naidu were favouring Modi. The BJP later sought to put up a face of unity on the issue but the undercurrent of differences is palpable.

The UPA government did not face any major problem during the 100 days but there are several thorns in the bed of roses. The opposition does not seem to be creating big obstacles but definitely is doing enough to keep the government somewhat restless. However, the unity and cohesion among the UPA partners is of paramount importance for the government to last long and deliver the goods. The ties with the leftists, whose support is more than essential for the government for its survival, may come for severe test in the future and so far both have demonstrated acumen in maintaining the broad amity since both are willing to prevent the common political foes from gaining ascendancy.

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury is a senior journalist.

### MATTERS AROUND US

**The UPA government did not face any major problem during the 100 days but there are several thorns in the bed of roses. The opposition does not seem to be creating big obstacles but definitely is doing enough to keep the government somewhat restless. However, the unity and cohesion among the UPA partners is of paramount importance for the government to last long and deliver the goods.**

in the polls, is still smarting under soul search and seeking to find scapegoats for the defeat some who managed to keep anti-government pot boiling both in and outside the parliament.

The government has been embarrassed by the opposition demand of removal of the "tainted ministers" and finally, it came as a big blow when Shibu Soren, a cabinet minister from the JMM (Jharkhand Mukti Morcha), a component of the UPA, had to quit facing warrant of arrest over an old criminal case. But opposition's main target is railway minister and heavyweight Laloo Prasad Yadav and also some others, who are "tainted" by criminal cases. The UPA is refusing to ask these ministers to quit as their matter is different from Shibu Soren but there has been no let up in the opposition demand. The parliament witnessed noisy scenes on this issue

the government as a major political weapon. The UPA is unlikely to ask particularly Laloo Prasad Yadav to quit as his stature is high and his Rastriya Janata Dal in Bihar is a strong force in the ruling alliance probably only after the Congress. The government also faces opposition onslaught on price hike of the energy related products, decision of the profits of provided funds and some other issues directly affecting people at large. However, there was not much commotion on the price hike of the petrol and other products which the new government did soon after coming to power as it said decision in principle was taken by the previous government since the rise was unavoidable.

In the political front, the opposition is still reeling under the setbacks inflicted by Congress president and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi, who rejected the prime

for power while Sonia has written a different story. But the opposition is not relenting as it seeks to give the impression that Dr. Singh, although a respected person, is the "Puppet PM" while Sonia is the "Super PM", meaning she wields real power. However, this accusation could not cut much ice since the Congress chief voluntarily distanced from official position while performing her expected political role. The new government is taking measures to benefit the rural economy, an area believed to have been ignored by the previous NDA government which cost it heavily in the elections.

On foreign policy matters, a comment by the external affairs minister K. Natwar Singh, an experienced diplomat-turned politician, that India might send troops to Iraq while he was in Washington came in for criticism not only by the opposition but also

even belligerent postures from both sides. Mr. Natwar Singh received his counterparts from Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in New Delhi and paid a visit to Nepal. The Indian people seem to favour good relations with the neighbours and the new government appears to be mindful of this factor.

The influence of the leftists, who favour a congenial political environment in the South Asia and are eager to see that more money is spent for welfare-oriented programmes, is casting a sobering effect in this direction. However, the UPA-leftist understanding is not fully trouble free even though they came closer on the broad belief of secularism in a bid to keep the BJP, widely seen as communal, away from power. The political milieu particularly in the leftist stronghold West Bengal and Kerala, where the Congress and leftists are long time main political

## 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.

### About "Freedom of belief in Islam"

I express my thanks to the writer for such a thoughtful article as well as you for publishing that. There are several fields in which Islam is greatly misunderstood. One of which is freedom of belief. The writer has nicely clarified the fact before us. She distinguished between punishable and non punishable apostasy and has quoted examples from history. She has also mentioned the reasons of misunderstanding and at finally suggested what is to be done. We expect more articles on such topics.

**A Nesa**  
On e-mail

### Imperialist conspiracy

There is no doubt that the culprits behind the recent bombing must be

found and be given exemplary punishment. But the question is -- will it really happen? The answer is "No." A series of bomb blasts have taken place around the country recently in places like cinema halls, mazars, political rallies etc. Countries like the US are very worried about the latest developments in our country. However, I believe that US policy on international terrorism is responsible for further spread of the malady.

**Faizur Mirpur, Dhaka**

### Vanishing parks

Life in Dhaka is becoming more hectic day by day and open spaces are being considered a luxury. The residents are always on the lookout for free open spaces to get away from the din and bustle and relax a bit. Though such spaces are rare, their availability is important in

maintaining a proper balance of life in the city.

Like most of the areas of the city, there has been scarcity of parks for the residents of Gulshan. The large public park in front of the National Shooting Club in Gulshan-1 has been converted into a sweepers colony to accommodate several hundred families. Those people do not have proper access to safe water and sanitation facilities. As a result, the illegal occupants have constructed several dozens of open-air latrines by the side of the Gulshan Lake. The latrines have become a serious threat to public health for the city inhabitants. The authorities are yet to act against this illegal move.

Dhaka is progressively converting itself to a jungle of concrete and garbage. The suffocated residents of this overpopulated city will have no place to have some fresh air to breathe if timely and appropriate

actions are not taken to save the parks.

**Mozibur Rahman**  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Death in RAB custody

It is mysterious that 11 persons have so far died in crossfire after RAB had taken criminals into custody (DS September 7). As a citizen, I have doubt about the real nature of such deaths! I think important clues about their crimes, their godfathers as well as illegal arms could be found if they were not killed. Why is RAB not careful in dealing with the criminals? What's their responsibility? To whom are these RAB personnel accountable?

**MS Uddin**  
Kyoto, Japan

### We are so incapable!

A couple of months back Shah

Amanat International Airport at Chittagong was handed over to a small private airlines of Thailand (Phuket Air Ltd.) for its management. Recently, advertisement appeared in the national dailies inviting international tenders for leasing out China-Bangladesh Friendship International Conference Hall (Bangabandhu Int. Conference Hall) at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar to private firm(s) for its management. Toll collection of some modern highway bridges has already been leased out to foreign companies in Bangladesh. I simply wonder and feel shocked as a citizen of an independent country that are we so incapable/incompetent/bankrupt that our private companies/ government agencies cannot run an airport, or a conference hall, or a bridge. Where are we heading for with such incompetence a s a

nation? Are we really not competent to govern ourselves?

**Prof SAM**  
Moniripara, Dhaka

### Pensioners Savings Scheme

As promised in the last budget the government has finally introduced pensioners saving scheme but the eligibility conditions laid down have almost excluded the pensioners of the armed forces from the benefit of the scheme. For example, to be eligible a pensioner must be minimum 55 years of age. How many Armed Forces retirees will fulfil this condition? Because a Major General retires at the age of 55 years. The number of major-generals and equivalent are extremely limited. The bulk of three services officers retire well below this age. So in order to be eligible they have to wait for at least 4 to 5 years after retire-

ment. The second condition of eligibility is that a retiree must have served twenty years. In the case of the armed forces many earn pension and retire before serving twenty years.

Therefore, I request that the rules of eligibility may be modified to remove all discriminations as to the length of service and age. A person who has earned pension irrespective of his length of service and age should be eligible. Those retiring voluntarily may be excluded. Unless this is done a vast majority of military pensioners will remain out of the benefit of this scheme.

**Major QS Ahmed psc, (retd)**  
Boro Bagh, Mirpur, Dhaka

### Nizami's stand

A few days ago, Industries Minister Mr. Nizami organised a press conference. I want to draw the attention of conscious people of our country

to some of his remarks. First, he commented that he feels safe in this country. That is very natural. Only they can feel safe in this Death Valley. They are exempted from any type of legal action by this government. Secondly, and most importantly, though he appealed to everyone not to blame anybody before investigation is complete, he blamed Partho Saha for issuing an email threat, though the police of their government are yet to find anything against him. All the pro-government newspapers are publishing various reports in their conscious effort to make Partho a villain.

I hope I am wrong, but I am afraid we are watching a prospective life being ruined to safeguard the booming fundamentalism in our country.

**Tareq**  
Chittagong