

Make the judicial inquiry report public

People have a right to know

THE submission of the one-man judicial committee report on August 21 grenade attack to the government has been marked by a press briefing given by Justice Abedin, who headed it.

What has transpired from the briefing session indicates that the report contains several observations and a number of recommendations. Some of the observations like intelligence agencies had no coordination, police incompetence was limitless, photographic evidence was lacking obviously deserve attention.

At the same time, recommendations like police and intelligence officials found negligent of duty should be sacked; video-taking of public rallies by police must be made compulsory; forensic capacity must be radically enhanced with the introduction of latest technology; political parties should have better understanding; and political rallies should be unfailingly held at designated places merit instant attention.

The report purportedly has also dropped hints and given certain indication of who might have been involved. These are important things for the public to know in detail.

There are some very compelling reasons that require the publication of the report. Apart from the people's right to know the contents of the hundred and sixty three-page report to get a full picture of the matter, making the contents public would dispel many reservations, avoid unnecessary speculation and obviate fragmentary reportage in the media. This will also prevent others from embarking on subjective and speculative treatment of the matter. It would, we hope, also help to remove the distrust between the major political parties that this incident had unfortunately engendered.

Inasmuch as the committee has hinted at a foreign linkage with the local elements, it is important that the government release the whole report to put public misgivings at rest and allay any misperception abroad.

We demand that the contents of the present report should be made public immediately in its entirety.

We express our outrage

Israel's butchery must be halted

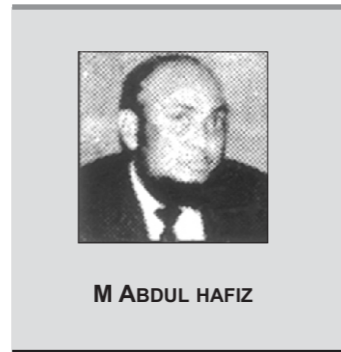
THE ferocious and mindless attack on the Palestinians by Israeli troops in the last few days has been nothing but mass murder in cold blood. Till Saturday, at least 53 Palestinians, a mind-boggling figure, have been killed in only four days in Gaza strip. And why? Because, Israel says, it wants to stop militants firing homemade rockets into their territory. The massive military exercise backed by more than hundred tanks and aircraft against the Palestinians is outright butchery and repugnant to minimal human sensibilities.

Israelis even called this the biggest incursion in recent time, the so-called "Operation Days of Penitence". But we would like to ask them -- who should actually repent for such brutal killing of the Palestinians? There have been claims of militants being killed in the attacks, but who is going to be held responsible for the civilian casualties including innocent children? Many Palestinians were killed, houses were destroyed, but the rockets did not stop. We are disgusted with Sharon's so-called policy of tackling militants which leads to spiralling violence, and consequently, more human miseries.

We are also dismayed by the reaction of the United States to the latest spurt in Israeli violence. Though Washington called for 'restraint' by the Israeli military, it also supported Israel's right to protect its citizens. It is this equivocation that has fuelled Tel Aviv's wanton aggression. It seems that Israeli security is the prime concern for the US foreign policy, Palestinian lives hardly matter. These are being lost in droves at the altar of the so-called security of Israel which is armed to the teeth as it is.

We understand that Sharon probably wants to weaken Hamas before Gaza pullout. But he should realise that violence would only complicate matters. Those among the Israelis opposing the pullout have an upper hand -- thanks to unabated state-sponsored terrorism in Palestinian territories. The world must wake up, especially the big powers, and call a halt, through the UNSC, to this mindless killing of helpless Palestinians, including innocent women and children.

Subversion of justice



M ABDUL HAFIZ

NO discerning observers would miss a subtle pattern in the political victimisation -- so far as it relates to Awami League leadership, which led the country to independence and metamorphosed the course of history of its people in a fundamental way. In the process it could not but clash with the vested interests which was dislodged from their entrenched position. An invisible war that ensued between the two in post-liberation Bangladesh an ire of the defeated force of 1971 fell squarely on the AL and its leadership-vapid by then -- remained vulnerable in the former's line of fire.

The first full blast of that ire and the opening shot of the line of fire could be

heard on 15 August 1975 when the nation's founding father fell to the assassin's bullets. With near precision the marauders moved down the slain president's entire family, narrowly missing two of his daughters. The victims were dispensed with no justice, which was rather blocked by a grotesque indemnity ordinance. When the roadblock to trial was later removed, justice is now moved in a

schemers -- whosoever they were -- expected that the shock and awe of the gruesome killings at Dhanmondi's Road No 32 would simply cover the rest of the AL leadership who would fall in line with the conspirators. Their expectation was partially fulfilled with the bulk of the AL leadership capitulating, but the four stood defiant only to be brutally killed in their prison cells of Dhaka central jail. Again the

yet to be closed. If justice can be subverted continually there is no deterrent left to tame or restrain the criminals who will be tempted to take chances. When justice flounders with or even delayed, it is, in the parlance of judiciary, denial of justice.

Denial of justice has already taken its tremendous toll. With nothing to deter the criminals, who had their field day, it bred crimes beyond any proportion with total impunity.

no clue could as yet be found by the authority for public consumption. The whole polity and society are left in the hand of hardened goons and criminal.

The worst is however yet to come: a divine scourge for denying justice by its custodians. It is bound to descend on us for the Creator Himself is always on the side of the one who is wronged and denied justice. Remember the story of the Mongol traders

actions. An establishment has always that choice. When a government spokesman makes such justification from his pupil taking the whole lot of public as a bunch of morons there are some in the crowd able to read the tale-tell evidences of myriad injustices sweeping the polity. If not now, there can be a terrible backlash of that at some point of time and a period of nemesis will ensue to the misfortune of all of us. No amount of sophistry and wearing of a look of innocence can absolve the authority of its sacred responsibility of dispensing justice.

The British taught the rule of law and we developed an enviable tradition of pursuing it even during the colonial period. They left us an elaborate judicial system to work on. But an aberration in this regard took place surreptitiously, with the growing travesty of democratic rule and the criminalisation politics. The country will continue to be shorn of justice and fairness unless we can build up a united front against the observation. Or else the scores of dissatisfied souls denied justice will be haunting us forever. And we shall only collect the curses of countless such souls.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BISS.

PERSPECTIVES

Denial of justice has already taken its tremendous toll. With nothing to deter the criminals, who had their field day, it bred crimes beyond any proportion with total impunity. Combined with the authority's inefficiency, inability and callousness, the prevailing injustices have given a further boost to revenge or ransom killings. As Ahsanullah Master or Monjurul Imams are killed in broad daylight and Jamal Chowdhury are kidnapped from crowded market area even no clue could as yet be found by the authority for public consumption. The whole polity and society are left in the hand of hardened goons and criminal.

judicial tangle which is apparently not likely to unravel any time soon. It is felt in hindsight that, had the perpetrators of 15 August been brought to book, there wouldn't have been the ghastly killings of the four stalwarts of the liberation war and the closest colleagues of the Sheikh Mujib.

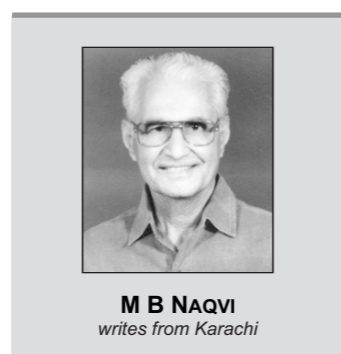
With the surgical operation of 15 August perpetrators of the crime went scot-free in new dispensation and no justice is dispensed till date.

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who were denied justice by none other than the Caliph of Baghdad? The helpless Mongols simply lodged complaint with the Caliph of the Caliphs. What it resulted in was the ignominious fall of Baghdad in 1258.

One may be intoxicated with the power to be arrogant to justify all of his or her

Pressures for proliferation



M B NAQVI
Writes from Karachi

KOREAN peninsula is another flashpoint today with relentless US pressure on North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons programme. The US had named North Korea as a member of the Axis of Evil early in 2002. Although North Korea plays a fiercely independent, almost truculent, role, the initiative in causing a grave international Crisis lies with the sole superpower that has held the initiative in the matter all along.

Although, South Korea too has been found with pants down: its scientists have admitted that they had enriched the uranium in the past without authorization. But they claim they later destroyed it in a scientific manner. There was also reports with its scientists' fiddling with plutonium. This destruction bit of enriched Uranium in South Korea as well as 'unauthorised experiment' cannot fail to generate doubt. Enrichment of uranium or extraction of plutonium from spent reactor fuel would require an unusually big scientific, if not industrial, infrastructure, necessitating time, funds and bureaucratic facilitation. And all that could take place without 'authorisation' strains credulity. As for destruction, even if it happened safely, or completely, what about the acquisition of the knowhow. That is the critical factor. But this knowledge and skill cannot hang in the air. The infrastructure that was used or what enabled the so-called destruction of enriched uranium, because of its several possible functions like fabricating reactor fuel is likely to survive, to be used again.

The point is the South Koreans too have announced their acquisition of the knowhow to enrich ura-

nium. In other words, they say: 'don't ignore us; we too can go nuclear when we so decide'. It is a stunning development. The question is: did US know of this with its omnipresent spook agencies? Did it sound any alarm? This possible inability to find out can actually hide US approval. The region has become some more dangerous and complex.

Indeed the US bears responsibility for actually provoking the current Crisis in the region in two ways. First, there was the cancellation of 1994 agreement with North Korea by Bush Administration which must have been briefed by CIA that the

be to mount another preemptive and largely unilateral invasion. Its reaction was nationalistic and truculent. It withdrew from the NPT and announced it is embarking on a programme to produce atomic weapons again. That infuriated the US further. The world speculates whether the US will actually take military action. And that is the heart of the Crisis.

This writer is among the people who do not think that Americans will again fight a major war in the Korean peninsula; the late 1940s and 1950 experience of such a war was too painful for the US decision-makers. North Korea's army is by no means

especially the countries that were a part of Japanese-sponsored Co-Prosperity Region.

The fact of the matter is that Japan is virtually being urged by the US to go nuclear. It will be child's play for it to fabricate any number of atomic weapons; it has mountains of fissile material. After all full 30 per cent of power in Japan comes from atomic reactors, all yielding high value plutonium, fit for being the core of atomic bombs. It is true that public opinion in Japan, except for the Rightwing of the political spectrum, is solidly against taking to the military path again, much less become a nuclear power. But then

fierce arms race is sure to follow. New tensions and new crises can safely be expected. The question is what is the American game plan in encouraging Japan to become a nuclear power which will also mean building a bigger conventional component of military power. Would the US want the Asians to use nuclear weapons in the Far East for itself to re-emerge as world's supreme power after ensuring the mutual destruction of Asians powers (mainly China and Japan)?

The second pressure for proliferation arises from hard American conduct. It not only retains the near monopoly of nuclear arms but goes

down thanks to the competition from cheap foreign foods. A few years ago natural disasters caused a famine, made worse by American sanctions. The unemployed are heading toward villages where too employment is scarce. N. Koreans would, there are all the indicators, give up their nuclear option if only enough food, fuel and a few other necessities are reliably made available to them after credibly withdrawing the implicit war threats by the US.

The Chinese remain the best mediators. They have Russians' support and both of them have residual affinity with N. Korea. The Chinese think they can broker a deal if the US does not act too high-handedly. So far the Japanese too, despite their understandable apprehensions, would much prefer a deal with N. Korea, obviating furious arms races in the region in the nuclear sphere. It all depends on the US whether there will be a peace-promoting settlement of this Crisis; it only requires some political restraint and some economic aid from America.

Trouble with the US is it uses its political clout to ensure economic benefits for itself. Iraq is an example. All the lucrative contracts have gone to big American companies, often connected with political leaders. It has riled the Europeans. German and French contractors were left out in the cold because their governments had opposed America's War on Iraq.

Americans were insisting until very recently that the six powers the two Koreas, China, Russia, US and Japan meet in September in Beijing; they were against further delays; their eyes were on November's Presidential elections. Even N. Korea is keenly interested in US polls. While the US wants a N. Korean promise of abjuring the nuclear option now, the N. Koreans want to show their cards when it is sure whether Kerry is the new US President or Bush continues. What is wrong with a February 2005 conference in Beijing?

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

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secretive state was involved in proliferation activities, what with US secret services' view of Pak-North Korean dealings and the nuclear bazaar created by Dr. A.Q. Khan. Whether or not there was truth in these part-rumour and part-fact stories, the US must have concluded the worst and walked out of 1994 agreement that Clinton Administration had concluded with North Korea. This accord was working reasonably well and Korea's nuclear programme had remained frozen to the satisfaction of IAEA. Bush Administration tore up the agreement in order to insist upon its totally abjuring all America-suspected nuclear activities as a condition for qualifying for US approval and possible aid. All American aid remains suspended.

The N. Korea's proud communist regime is gravely apprehensive of American intentions. It also acts on a worst case scenario that the US may be planning the mischief of regime change; for the rest, it is its effort to demonise the regime may

a push-over even for the mighty US war machine. But by creating this Crisis the US may have ensured there will be a nuclear-armed North Korea which, in turn, will send South Koreans to their drawing boards. A far bigger part of the Crisis, therefore, lies in the reactions to this development throughout the Far East of Asia.

Although China and Russia, both closely associated with N. Korea throughout the cold war years, will not welcome this proliferation, they look like being resigned to live with the new reality. The question is about how Japan and S. Korea will react. Up to a point, the reactions of Taiwan and Australia will also matter. These are likely to be negative. Most negative will be Japan's. For, Korean nationalism, whether of North or South Korea, is instinct with painful memories of Japanese occupation and its brutalities. Japanese are only too aware of anti-Japanese feelings throughout the Korean peninsula indeed the barely-suppressed anti-Japanese feelings throughout S.E. Asia,

the Rightwing always wins elections and the present Koizumi government is an authentic rightist governments and its disavowal of nuclear ambitions is rich in ambiguity and vagueness and rather weak in being emphatic or precise. But the US attitude counts much in Japan and it clearly leans towards encouraging the Japanese to take the plunge; at least the serious American media gives this message, loud and clear.

But if Japan went nuclear to counter and eventually confront the N. Koreans, all bets regarding Asia should be off. A remilitarized Japan will frighten all SE and FE Asians. The US may, even then, hope to remain supreme in Asia's various regions by virtue of its hard military power. But various equations and expectations (not to forget panic) will create altogether new possibilities, much more unpredictable and dangerous.

The Chinese reaction to Japan's emerging as a big military power, with big nuclear capability, can be predicted: it will be highly adverse. A

on adding to their destructiveness by constant upgradation and invention of new types of weapons, some miniaturised and some related to what it calls Missile Defense. This is vertical proliferation. For most of nuclear have nots mostly in the third world the American ukase is: "don't!"; further proliferation is bad while its own atomic stockpiles are good for humanity. Every self-respecting people is apt to point out America's double standards, as one noted earlier in this space. It is a provocative position: 'I am entitled to have atomic weapons because I am who I am; but you cannot aspire to this status; you are not responsible enough'.

There is enough indication that North Korea has been willing to compromise. It needs one. It is an economy in transition from rigid command economy to letting the market determine prices. It is reducing state's role. But it is passing through a bad patch. There is wide-scale unemployment and many industrial units of this essentially industrial economy are closing

OPINION

What is wrong with this government?

SHAMSHER CHOWDHURY

THE ruling party is on the path of self-destruction. It is my impression that to date it has very little or no major success on record for the people of the country. While the opposition does what it does best, oppose anything and everything, the ruling party is running amuck like an angry bull. Why again the mass arrests of opposition activists? It looks like its lust for mass arrests prior to the April 30 deadline by the opposition has not gone as yet. Harassing people at all costs has become its obsession. Whose government is it anyway? This action of mass arrests is totally uncalled for at a time when we saw some signs of healthy political culture in the making as demonstrated by the human chain of the opposition the other day.

We are today living under extremely stressful conditions. Ramadan is knocking at the door. The recent floods, followed by the heavy untimely monsoon-like downpour, have caused unprecedented miseries to the people all over the country. The shock of the August 21 event is still occupying the minds of the people from which

they are yet to recover.

In the name of bringing discipline in the traffic movement on the streets of the capital much chaos and confusion continue to prevail.

The spiraling prices of essentials are already gagging the lives of the near vanishing middle class and people in the fixed income groups. The honourable minister for finance keeps harping on the need for aggressive revenue collection through enhanced collection of taxes. How can he do so at a time when the people are living in extreme fear and uncertainty?

All this government specialises in is producing excuses. The people are yet to see the commissioning of an Independent Human Rights Commission? What happened to the issue of separating the Judiciary from the Executive? What happened to the appointment of the Ombudsman? What happened to creation of the independent commission on anti-corruption? Every now and then the honourable minister for law comes up with some excuse or the other which is not only unfounded but also extremely illogical and baseless.

The municipal and public services are on the verge of total

collapse. The summer is ending and yet there is regular load shedding. Access to regular water supply is slowly and surely reaching a critical stage even in the capital. The ugly sights of ever rising new high-rise buildings on occupied lands, particularly those through filling of many essential water bodies in and around the city, continue to create havoc on the environment. Look at the state of the Gulshan Lake, whatever is left of it. I happen to pass by that way every other day and almost each time I shut my eyes and avoid looking at the lake. It is disgusting and painful.

The footpaths all around the city with the exception of a few continue to be occupied by all kinds of vendors from tea to clothes sellers to shoe shine boys. Some even serve as housing for the floating population. Surely the DMC does not consider this a part of its beautification programme for the capital?

To top it all we now have a number of special agencies of the police to deal with the rising incidences of terrorism. The Panther, The Rab, is there a Cheetah too? If we need so many extra forces then why have a regular police force?

Why not dismantle it? To my mind there are only two things these agencies are good at, shooting "criminals" on sight and acting as a fear factor in the minds of the general members of the public. Every time one of the agencies kills one criminal, it in effect ends up terrorising hundreds of peace loving innocent citizens of the country. People who are acquainted with the history of the Second World War must have heard of Gestapo, the fearful police faction under Hitler's Germany. Are we seeing the return of the ghosts of Gestapo?

Even the people of Pakistan are not subjected to such harassments at the hands of their police and its various specialised agencies despite the fact that terrorism is its worst form is a regular feature in that country. As much as one hears of wanton killings right inside mosques and frequent assassination attempts on the life of its president, you do not hear of any custodial deaths or such extended form of violation of human rights as exists in Bangladesh. Sad to say, and unbelievable though it may be, the people of Pakistan today enjoy comparatively more social, economic, and political freedom than those of

RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM AND PROGRESSIVE SECULARISM

Two faces of the same coin!

ABDUL MATIN

I am aware that many readers of The Daily Star would find the title of this write-up intriguing, disagreeable, confusing, misleading, contradictory or even an oxymoron. Several years ago, I would also have reacted the same way. But, even without being a believer in either of the cults and after scrutinising the actions and beliefs of the adherents of the two concepts over a long period of time, I have reached the conclusion that they are two species of the same genus. I have become more convinced of it especially after 9/11, when Mullahs and Marxists joined the same bandwagon in their US-bashing spree.

I shall try to elaborate the behavioural (both over and covert) traits of these two groups. Let me first start with the religious fundamentalists of our country. Some of their basic characteristics are: (a) they are intolerant of any opinion with which they do not agree; (b) they pretend to behave in a way as if they are chosen by God to be the sole preacher, practitioner and defender of our religion (a vision not much different from the Zionists); (c) they invoke the name of Hadith to justify whatever they proclaim (but, if

questioned about the authenticity or source of their Hadith, they violently retort that the questioner is *murtaad*); (d) they 'preach' to eliminate all who disagree with them, and would gleefully 'practice' the elimination task if they can establish their rule in the country; (e) they target women as their principal topic for criticism in their sermons accusing them of a Mullah version of modesty-be it a roadside rally or Friday prayer or a chehlum (but never speak of other social evils in offices, business and government, and conveniently forgetting Quranic injunction for men to lower their gaze in front of non-relative women); and (f) they portray themselves to the society in a 'holier than thou' demeanour.

The progressive secularists of our country are comprised of a wide variety of specimens. They include marxists, revolutionaries, communists, atheists, agnostics, anti-Islamists, non-believers because they are ignorant of any religion, escapists, opportunists etc. The basic characteristics of this group of people are generally similar to those of religious fundamentalists. For example, (a) they are also intolerant of others' opinions, especially if they involve religion; (b) they try to behave as if they are genetically

destined to be the sole and best judge of what is good for everyone else; (c) they use the word 'democracy' to justify anything they want to do without, of course, showing any respect for difference of opinion; (d) they -- like the fundamentalists -- would seek to 'eliminate' all who are opposed to them, frequently using the term 'nirmul', just as the religious fundamentalists use the word '*murtaad*' for critics; (e) they always and routinely target (in their speeches and sermons -- roadside or air conditioned seminar halls) anything and anyone related to religion -- especially if it is Islam -- labelling it or the person 'communal', conveniently ignoring the fact that some of their own comrades are engaged in extortion and bribery in parts of the country in the name of 'democracy'; and (f) they also portray themselves to the society in a 'holier than thou' demeanour.

The Oxford dictionary defines a 'bigot' as an intolerant person who holds strongly to a belief in defiance of reason or argument. The dictionary also defines a 'fundamentalist' as someone who believes in literal interpretation of traditional beliefs. On the basis of these definitions, both religious fundamentalists and progressive secularists of our

country qualify to be labelled as bigots and fundamentalists -- except that the secularists (because of their allergy and/or hostility toward religion) deserve a new nomenclature: 'irreligious fundamentalist'. The religious fundamentalists claim themselves as 'religious' because it enables them to get a status of being 'beyond reproach' among the common people, while the progressive secularists enjoy the 'progressive' label because it makes them look modern and forward-looking, even though their methods may be regressive and discriminatory. The common denominator of the arguments of both groups is: "We are right, everyone else is wrong." Although the groups are apparently looked upon as opposed to each other by the common person in the society, yet their covert goal is fascist totalitarianism. The paths of their activities might look different, but their methods, logic and behaviour are similar. That is why I chose to call them as the two faces of the same coin -- a coin that is like a cancer in our society!