# POINT \*COUNTERPOINT

### Administration shouldn't remain indifferent

#### Kibria's killing is a blot on our national psyche



MD. ASADULLAH KHAN

HE grisly killing of SAMS Kibria -- a top intellectual, a high profile diplomat, a statesman-cum-politician, an ex-Finance Minister of Bangladesh and most notably an ardent advocate of human rights -- by grenade attack in a tranguil town of Habigani magnified a terrifying truth: men driven by hate extremist ideology and intolerance are there to set the Bangladesh civil society on fire. Ostensibly, Mr. Kibria's liberal views of the statecraft social structure and welfare of the people at large regardless of religion and sect made him the target of the savage act on January 26 last. There is no point overlooking the fact that the perpetrators of this dastardly killing -- and several others in the

past one year -- had an agenda. The unprecedented violence and killing that the country witnessed through repeated grenade and bomb attacks in meetings and rallies, attack on opposition AL namely, leader Sk Hasina on August 21, last year preceded by attack on Mr. Anwar Chaudhury, British High Commissioner in Bandladesh have turned the country in to a dangerous place in the world. It is sad that Bangladesh till recently a veritable crucible of intellectualism is now in the grip of barbaric and uncivilised forces. Unquestionably true, Kibria had no enemy and he was not involved in any feud. But there are certain attributes in Kibria that a group belonging to an extremist ideology could not countenance. Kibria was a staunch advocate of human rights, a voice against oppression and terrorism and virulent form of fundamentalism that might shape up as threat to liberal democracy.

Terrorism and intolerance of others views, religion and action are the two scourges that afflicted him most. And his writings and columns spoke valiantly against persons,

groups and political parties fanning hatred and unstable situation in the country through portrayal of religion and extremes philosophy as the core issue. When the news Kibria's killing by grenade attack was broadcast over the electronic media, a chill ran up the nation's spine. The spurt of violence and killing of men of name and fame through such dastardly attack is more than alarming.

Shockingly true, as of now, government machinery's have not been able to figure out any motive. These are critical times for Bangladesh. As this coalition government struggles to address a range of social and economic ills, the last thing we need

is further tension. Seldom in the past

few decades has this country

needed a leadership to steer clear of

crises, doldrums and chaos as it is

now. Political intrigue, bickerings, in-

fighting and bankruptcy have almost

Belying all expectations of a settle-

ment, our divisive politics is headed

towards a chaotic disaster for the

country already threatened by unem-

ployment, production cut in the mills

and factories and crop-losses in the

fields due to severe flood last year

Food prices are soaring, adding to

the daily misery of millions who live in

abysmal poverty. People in the

country do not know how long they

will have to wait for the kind of leader-

ship the country now desperately

last few years witnessed a disastrous

upsurge of violence that cost hun-

dreds of lives, a steady worsening of

the economy and an unprecedented

polarisation of the society on extrem-

ist lines. The message of all these

ominous developments is clear:

democratic norms is rapidly loosing

its grip over the society at large

Unable to withstand the surge of

crimes and the increased responsi-

bility for the crises, the grandiose

structure of the reform measures of

the administration have proved to be

a futile effort. It will not take long to

collapse altogether burying most of

the development projects that are on

Because of non-governance, the

ecome norms in Bangladesh.

the anvil. Liberal minded people are wary of the dangerous consequences of the social breakdown marking a growing ideological void. At present, this void is often filled with the destructive ideas of militant nationalism, religious intolerance. violent greed, and cynicism. The result is partisan clashes, social alienation, and rise of crime that has let loose a terrible wave of turmoil in different parts of the country.

To check the maladies from taking the shape of catastrophe a brave new leadership is needed. This must be backed by a massive educational campaign that can fill the minds of millions of disillusioned

is serious about doing the things that would make a real difference.

Bangladeshis with the values and

ideals that helped nations of the

world to survive and prosper through

the primacy of human rights, the rule

of law and ideological tolerance --

must be enshrined in the society. To

be sure, in the state of affairs as it is

these days in the country, efforts to

make these pristine values accept-

able in a society torn apart by eco-

nomic, political and behavioural

crisis is not an easy task. But the bulk

of the initiative for the revival of the

society will definitely have to come

form within the society itself, from its

leaders and intelligentsia who are till

The most prominent casualty of

now at logger heads with each other.

the present political crisis is the

country's badly needed economic

expansion programme. As it

appears, foreign investors and

donors grow wary of venturing into

an inflammable area, a conflict-

ridden site that has largely been

made so by the politicians them-

selves, to the utter disregard of

people's torments and sufferings. In

their quest for public office and the

payoffs of power, they have inflamed

passions and used every trick to

promote personal gain. They have

exploited and manipulated all the

weaknesses inherent in a developing

society. Social fissures which states

men would normally attempt to

bridge have been deepened by some

of us seeking short term advantages.

their days of turmoil. These ideals -

For a while after January 27 it had seemed as if our political leaders in the ruling alliance had

been jolted into recognising the urgency of bringing about changes and taking steps that would

Shockingly, government and law enforcement agency stood by silently watching these dastardly acts to occur and rise to such a menacing proportion. Crime breeds crime and inevitably more criminal act plunge the society into chaos and disarray. These dastardly criminal activities of a microscopic section of the populace should have alerted the politicians and administrators to reevaluate and guard the goals of democratic society. The sooner this reality is understood, the better. It is in this light that our leaders, politicians and custodians of the society must take appropriate measure to curb terrorism.

measures that would enable us to

fair in love, war and politics. The

in the country are now deeply dis-

fulfil their expectations of good

of despair, cynicism, fear and para-

lysing consequences, one can see

the biggest danger of muscle-manry

and terrorism creeping into the

society and overtaking state power.

People learnt with shock and trepida-

tion that a list of godfathers prepared

at the behest of the law enforcing

agency could not be published not to

speak of arresting them, for reasons

once take pride of being peaceful and

tranquil now appear to be heading

also towards a chaos. Politics has not

gone beyond the narrow limits of petty

self-interest and extremist lines even

in the districts and thanas. It is time the

administration recognised the dan-

gers of letting the extremist political

groups take control of things and ride

roughshod over the principle of sacri-

In the quagmire of dirty politics,

fice and spirit of liberation war.

The rural surroundings that could

best known to the administration.

those who suffer now are the country's hapless millions. The portents are grim but the end results could be apocalyptic. People only wonder it the rot that has started setting in can be stopped from spreading further. Only those countries and people who had something to gain (!) from such overtures encouraged it. It is time that danger from such intolerance is realised and our energy, resources, pragmatism and wisdom are channeled to much-needed development programmes. Only then can usher in any peace and prosperity.

It should be brought home to those self-centred politicians and zealots that this is not only undermining the

really help us with the fight against rampant terrorism. Now, it is beginning to seem as if nobody Most people now say that the government but also the state and country is faced with a crisis of goverthis is very adversely affecting fornance the root cause of which is the eign investment vis-à-vis national 'flawed design" of our democracy. development. People also think that,

While committing ourselves to the apparently, the administration has dictum of development, taking flip-flopped on major policy decisions allowing the divisive forces to gain ensure law, order and stability, we ground. History teaches that discardalso tend to think that everything is ing reason and critical thinking in favour of fanaticism, and extremist resulting situation is that most people lines, leads only to misery. In recent times, Khulna, Jessore, tressed with the failure of the state to governance. In such an atmosphere

Jhenidah, Narail, Kushtia in the south western part of the country to Raishahi, Natore and Dinaipur on the northern side have during the last few years featured as the nation's most crime-prone zone marked by murders committed frequently. Many iournalists and freedom fighters have been brutally assassinated in broad day light by the extremists on both the lines of the political divide. The ruling alliance speaks in the Parliament and in the media of the good work done by the police but the multipronged strategy launched to combat crime draws only jeers from the unconvinced citizenry. Alleged patronage of criminals by politicians and a demoralised police force have pushed up crime in the country Precisely true, Dhaka, Sylhet, Chittagong, Rajshahi and Khulna have attained the dubious distinction of being a criminal's paradise where most of the heinous crimes are committed at will with alarming

The administration apparently has been obliged to play second fiddle to Bangla Bhai group in the northern part of Bangladesh. Having committed the most atrocious crimes including about fifteen murders, Bangla Bhai and his operatives are virtually running a parallel empire. Why were they so emboldened to behave so recklessly? The answer is obvious, there is no rule of law in the country! It seems the country operates on a very simple principle: show me the person and I'll show you the law. There is no equality before the law. Consequently, there is no deterrence either. SAMS Kibria, a high profile diplomat

and a crusader in the Bangladesh liberation movement turned to politics after retirement from govt. service to serve the interest of the country and emancipate people from the depths of despair and poverty. His brutal killing has taken away from us a patriot whose effort to bolster the image of the country outside the borders of Bangladesh had always been admirable. Mr. Saifur Rahman, the Finance Minister of Bangladesh, while expressing his deep shock at the killing of SAMS Kibria, a meritorious son from his own area and the same school he studied in, admitted that this clandestine incident would greatly dent the image of the country and credibility of the government as well. The LGED minister and a stalwart of the ruling BNP also admitted that there might be serious lapses in the investigative machinery that has encouraged terrorists to operate so freely. True, our seemingly incept policing and justice system have became the most favoured alibi of the terrorists operating on Bangladesh soil and their sponsors inside and across the borders. Puzzlingly, our politicians in the ruling party still refuse to admit that until our justice system and policing start functioning properly criminals and terrorists will continue to treat the government's so-called fight against terrorism with disdain. Ironically, our articulate law minister waste so much time explaining the virtues of Rab Chita and Cobra.

For a while after January 27 it had seemed as if our political leaders in the ruling alliance had been jolted into recognising the urgency of bringing about changes and taking steps that would really help us with the fight against rampant terrorism. Now, it is beginning to seem as if nobody is serious about doing the things that would make a real difference.

Md Asadullah Khan is a former teacher and Controller of Examinations, BUET.



#### All health information to keep you up to date

When backache returns

ANY people at some stage in their life suffer from back pain. Back pain can be just an uncomfortable annoyance in the beginning but eventually can become excruciatingly painful within minutes. In general causes of back pain can be quite ill defined and complex. Back

pain can be a symptom of a myriad of underlying problems or diseases

including abdominal, renal (kidney) and spinal problems. Back pain onset can be sudden linked to trauma or slow linked to disease. Overweight people have greater risk for certain back conditions as their extra weight puts extra pressure on their frames.

Even an office chair can play a big role in causing backache. Sitting in an office chair without enough back support can create a great deal of pressure on the lower back. Many low back conditions can cause a suffering called

An exact diagnosis of the low back problem is the most important thing in order to make a decision on the best course of treatment. Sciatica is a set of symptoms caused by nerve compression in the lower back. Back pain is So if your parents suffered then take extra precautions. If you have severe

or chronic pain you should consult with a specialist doctor and a thorough screening will be essential. Sometimes diagnosing back pain can be very difficult. You need to go for

-rays or even an MRI scan to identify the cause Unfortunately there are lots of misconceptions about back pain treatment

Bed rest is NOT the best way to cure back pain. May be in the beginning, when the back is so painful, Nothing other than bed rest can be tolerated. However, eventually when the really acute phase

s over, mobility is extremely important. According to some studies if backache remains after rest. an inflammaory cause is likely.

So what's the good news for back pain sufferers? There are a number of useful guidelines when selecting a chair especially for the office or a bed mattress as well as suggestions for sleep positions.

Contact a qualified orthopedic/spinal surgeon for proper guidelines which can be important to help you with your particular back problem Learn qualified physiotherapist's safe lifting skills. During lifting always bend your knees and keep your back straight.

There are also roles for rehabilitation exercises. Although it's true that leep/sitting position can aggravate the back pain if the chair/mattress isn't a

For instance, a lumbar back support is important for an office chair. It helps promote good posture by simply filling in the gap between the lumbar spine and the seat supporting the natural inward curve of the lower back. There are many causes of back problems and different back conditions

may respond better to specific types of beds, mattresses and sleep positions. There is very little research in general about what types of mattresses and beds are best for the back. Similarly, there is no unique sleep position known to be best for all people.

Pain management also known as pain medicine can play a useful role in evaluation, diagnosis and treatment as well as the rehabilitation of painful disorders like backache.

Pain management aims also help to identify the source of neck and back pain, and if necessary may determine areas to be addressed surgically. Pain Management is a well established and defined subject specialty in many countries but still relatively new in our country.

In many cases, back pain is temporary and will naturally heal itself otherwise other simple measures like physiotherapy may help. Most back pain, ultimately does not require surgery

Less weight + good posture + regular exercise usually result in NO MORE BACK PAIN

## Quebec, Bangladesh and UDI

**LUTFUL HAIDER** 

HE quide's voice quivered as he pointed out from the 31st floor of the observation centre to the Plains of Abraham in Quebec City on the banks of the river St. Laurent and said, "there, in the Plains of Abraham in 1759, (two years after the defeat of Bengal's Nawab in 1757 in the Plains of Plassey) the British ed the French f was the end of New France." It was the evening of an icy cold day and we were about to wrap up our visit to Quebec City and return to Montreal about 300 kilometers away. Around forty of us were invited as members of joint Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan delegation from two cultural communities by the Speaker of the provincial parliament (in Quebec, the parliament is called the National Assembly and the Speaker is called President of the National Assembly) to witness the parliamentary proceedings and attend an informal reception and lunch with the speaker and members of the parliament.

This unique policy of inviting the new immigrants to observe the

proceedings and intermingle with parliamentarians of all the parties has been initiated ostensibly to make the newcomers feel welcomed in their new home. The policy demonstrates indivisible commitment of the people and government of Quebec to form a just, inclusive, humane society. There can perhaps never be a perfect society but Canadian society especially that of Quebec is perhaps the best that human society ever evolved into.

When we reached the parliament, we were ushered into the observers' gallery to witness the proceedings of question period. The Speaker at the onset introduced us saying that it was his pleasure and pride to welcome the delegations from Bangladeshi and Sri Lankan cultural communities. All the members of 125-seat parliament including the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition rose up to applaud. As the language of communication was in French, the debates seemed a bit dreary, as most of us failed to comprehend French. Though a parliament was created in Quebec by Royal Proclamation in 1763, the

Everywhere in Quebec city and Quebec, the phrase Je me souvien (I remember the past) can be institution remained nonrepresentative because the province's 90 percent of population who participation. Responding to petition of loyalists and the French subjects, a bicameral parliament

> Canada -- as Quebec was then called. In 1792, the first session of the parliament was held. Both English and French were accepted as official languages respecting the languages of both the communities. In 1968, the upper house was abolished. Since Quebec is the only Canadian province with French majority, its parliament and the government wields wider power than other provincial parliaments. The government of Quebec reserves the right to call for referen-

was created in 1791 for Lower

dum in the province of Quebec and can adopt the result of the referendum to secede from Canada: a ratist party, Party Quebecois, in 1976 and 1995, when it was in power in Quebec.

In fact, before the referendum of 1995, the case of Bangladesh independence was cited as the basis in international law to secede from Canada by dint of Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). Though the French people of Québec were never subjected to atrocities that was inflicted on the people of Bangladesh, the dream of independence and formation of a French speaking country in North America is cherished by majority of French Canadians. But due to overwhelming opposition of the cultural communities and the English Canadians living in Quebec that dream is yet to become reality, a fact intensely despised by passion-French referendum held in 1995, the separatist side lost by only 50,000 votes. The separatist side was winning with a handsome margin till the vote counts of Montreal ridings were finally tallied.

Canada in fact owes its very existence to the votes of the cultural communities living in Montreal, especially to 80.000 south Asians. The recent by-election win in Dorion-Laurier riding of Montreal by twenty-five-year old Party Quebecois MP, Elsie Lefebvre, is being viewed by PQ analysts as changing of attitude of the cultural communities. Only a rise of 25001 votes in their favour would mean the fulfilment of their long cherished dream. It is in this riding, most of the members of 12000 strong Bangladeshi community in Montreal live, hence one can hardly overstate their disproportionate influence in keeping the integrity of present Canadian federation.

Though it is true that the cultural communities finds more resonance of their aspirations in the social democratic values espoused the Party Quebecois rather than the fiscally conservative liberal democratic policies of ruling antiseparatist Liberal Party, yet they have so far extended their support to Liberal Party to counter the separatist movement. A shift in their allegiance may mean the end of Canada. I am afraid the Federal government is perhaps not fully cognisant of this reality. The traumatic memories of separation of their native lands are the only motivating factor in resisting the idea of dismemberment of Canada.

An independent Quebec can be economically prosperous and vibrant as the land is blessed with huge natural resources and world class infrastructure and extremely competent labour force. Quebec is the largest of the ten provinces of Canada and has an area of 17000,000 square kilometers inhabited by 7 million people. Quebec is bordered to the north by the Arctic Ocean, to the south by the United States and New Brunswick, to the east by the Atlantic Ocean and the Gulf of the St. Lawrence, and to the west by James Bay, Hudson Bay and Ontario.

Following 45-minute-long question period we were welcomed to the reception hall for drinks. Here the Speaker and the members of the parliament came to engage in informal chat. The Speaker, Monsieur Michel Bissonnet, a very jovial man fondly remembered his recent visit to Bangladesh during the meeting of Commonwealth Parlia-

seen. In every number plate in Quebec this phrase is inscribed on the top; an ominous reminder to the rest of English Canada that French Canadian nationalism is very much alive. mentarians in Dhaka. He recalled

> Sarkar. He highly praised the quality of the table linens and bags that he brought from Dhaka. It was interesting to see the Leader of the Opposition, Monsieur Landry of separatist Party Quebecois and Ms. Elsie, MP of Laurier-Dorion riding enthusiastically socialising with the members of the delegation; a sign of importance that PQ is presently attaching

> with fondness courtesy extended to

him by the Speaker Mr. Zamiruddin

to win over the votes of new immi-During the process of introducing

the leader of the Sri Lankan delegation, introduced Amudan, a reputed singer whose recent CDs were great hit in Sri Lankan community. Mr. Bissonnet urged him to sing. Though we did not understand the wordings of his Tamil rendition, it was not hard to guess that he was a movement as he invoked the names of Allah, Rama, Buddha, Jessus in his song. Following lunch, during the photo session on the stairs of the parliament the Speaker again egged on Amudan to sing. He began with Allah Huakbar, Lai Ilaha... It was almost absurd -- a Hindu chanting Allah Huakbar, in the foyer of a purely Christian parliament to the

discernable disdain of perhaps an atheist cameraman. God works in mysterious ways. Only Ian Martel (booker winning author of Life of Pi Patel) could conjure up such a surrealist scene. We bade good bye with happy feeling and wondering how long we could remain citizens of Canada. Everywhere in Quebec city and Quebec, the phrase Je me souvien (I remember the past) can be seen. In every number plate in Quebec this phrase is inscribed on the top: an ominous reminder to the rest of English Canada that French Canadian nationalism is very much alive and one day, unless innovative solution is found, Canada may regrettably disintegrate.

**7X3**