

## Good that some in BNP are speaking up

*The government must listen and act urgently*

WE are not surprised to find some government party members going public in expressing their apprehension about the nexus between some within the ruling coalition and the religious extremists. Although it might be difficult for the government to digest the allegations, the party men's compulsions in articulating their concerns must be seen in its proper perspective.

So long the government was in denial mode, brushing aside out of hand all suggestions of the festering religious extremism in the country. Subsequently, this was followed by a tacit admission of the presence of these elements when the phenomenon became too obvious to admit of any further denial.

However, if the government had thought that it had done enough by proscribing two extremist religious parties and could sit pretty on its 'laurels', the events of August 17 must have come as a rude shock. Now that some of the BNP party members have thought it fit to go public about the poor handling of the situation by the government and about the fact that these elements have festered due to the implicit support of some members in the ruling coalition, it reinforces our call to look within and purge these elements. If there is a link it must be unearthed and corrective measures taken. It must be done since it strikes at the very roots of our nation's security.

Not only must the government listen to what the party men say by purging the party of the nefarious nexus, it must also pursue the extremists relentlessly. Sometimes it appears that a dead end has been reached, in the investigations and follow up of the cases, that forces one to presume a lack of commitment on the part of the government to root out extremism. It is highly disconcerting that the masterminds are yet to be nabbed, even more so when we find some of these wanted men slip through the government dragnet.

The government has its work cut out. It must take the statements of its own party men, that no doubt goes against the grain of its own view, but that may be closer to the truth than the government might care to think.

It is a wake up call that the government will ignore only at the peril of the state.

## BCS question paper leak

*Demand for scrapping it is worth considering*

THIS is not for the first time that an allegation of leakage of BCS question paper has been made; it has been made before, and we are concerned. BCS examination is one of our most high profile examinations. It is of vital importance that this examination is held in an absolutely genuine manner. It is a serious allegation, which must be investigated.

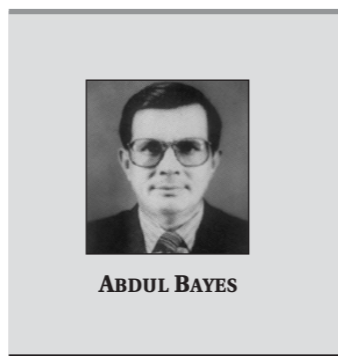
There is no denying the fact that with the retirement of most of our CSP cadre civil servants there has been a serious vacuum in our civil administration. Bureaucracy is and will continue to be one of the primary tools of state administration. It is therefore imperative that the process of recruitment for this cadre be transparent, highly competitive and above reproach. In this regard there is much to be said about the PSC and the Ministry of Education who are responsible for upholding the secrecy of the question paper and conducting the examination without any flaw. It is one of the most important functions, particularly of the PSC. The government should therefore seriously review the overall working of the PSC.

A careful assessment of the situation also warrants a serious consideration of the demand for scrapping of the question paper of the preliminary test, as raised by many of the candidates and various other members of the public representing a number of civil societies.

Every time there was a demand for enquiry into such allegations to the authorities concerned, the reaction has been one of either total denial or pushing the matter under the carpet. We strongly recommend that a vigorous enquiry be undertaken, the culprits brought to book and the results made known to the public. If such an action is not taken it will only keep the doors wide open for possible repetition of the same vice and encourage the perpetrators.

Inaction will also raise serious questions about the Administration's transparency of operations. Mere denial without going into the allegations is indicative of possible guilt and attempt to hide facts. This attitude damages the image of the government and none else.

# Saarc, sufferings and successes



ABDUL BAYES

THE 13th Saarc summit in Dhaka ended very recently. Dhaka always boasts of holding international conferences or seminars, and more so perhaps, when it comes to a Saarc summit. People of this country always embrace or welcome such gatherings as they are meant to mitigate the sufferings of the people. But this time, things took a different turn. According to the critics, the attended sufferings of the people -- on account of the security for the seven heads of states and governments -- produced more pains to the population than the pleasure the summit aimed to generate.

A quasi-curfew like situation was imposed in the city to deter the free movement of people and goods and services across several pockets of the city. Educational institutions were closed down during the summit and normal life remained disrupted for a week or so. There was no transaction in the largest wholesale market of the city as the market stands very close to the Sonargaon Hotel. The govern-

ment and its supporters are, of course, happy to note that the success came "at any cost" and at long last. But the sample of people we met in the aftermath of the summit aired their anguish on the grounds of the heavy costs, in their opinion, outweighing the benefits from such a summit.

In the earlier meetings in Dhaka -- and also elsewhere -- we noticed how students stayed on the road sides to greet the guests of honour upon their arrivals to this city. This time we saw

were, thus, obvious as the same summit was postponed once due to security reasons, especially from the Indian side. But whether the successes of the summit were worth the sufferings of the people is a million dollar question to the commoners.

Saarc summits have often been sarcastically called "fashion shows" or "Saarc-circuses". Truly speaking, since its inception in the 1980s, Saarc could never emerge as an institution of regional cooperation to bring some

making it functional also contributed a lot to the concerns.

This time in Dhaka, for this summit to succeed, the economy had to incur enormous costs not only in terms of the amount spent on the overall arrangements for the Saarc summit, but also in terms of the forgone economic opportunities during the period. As noted before, the government had to impose a quasi-curfew in the city for three days, thus paralyzing the mobility of people and movement

should be more trade and investment within the Saarc countries. Political rivalry should be replaced with economic complementarities to pull the economies out of the perilous poverty trap. The successes should outweigh the sufferings inflicted upon people in holding the summit.

It is true that the summit generated a few more meaningful words from the Saarc leaders. For example, the agenda pertaining to poverty reduction and free trade -- albeit a reitera-

of Saarc in the realm of poverty reduction and free trade. Let us bury religious, linguistic and other barriers to form a regional forum with free movement of goods and services so that South Asia writes off its identity as a pocket of the poorest people on earth. That needs more dynamism in leadership, farsightedness, and commitment to the cause of the poor people. That also demands democracy and good governance within the countries concerned.

A permanent secretariat for Saarc with required resources is a must in facing the goals. The invitations extended to China and Japan as observers would also help Saarc in enhancing its frontiers of perceptions on regional blocks. The poverty reduction fund, unless spent on repetitive researches and unproductive projects, could help poverty reduction in the region. All said and not done, the issue of mutual suspicion among some of the members might also stand in the way towards fulfilling the dreams. Our humble suggestion would be to restore the friendship first and start the business second. We hope that Saarc would succeed in mitigating the sufferings of the people of this region, first by promoting friendship and fraternity and second by the expansion of trade, business, and investment across the region.

Abdul Bayes is a Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University.

**BENEATH THE SURFACE**  
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how people were pushed inside their houses to make safe the high-sounding summit. The Saarc leaders might be surprised to have noticed that one of the most populous cities of the world was turned into a barren city in the wake of the summit.

We share the concern that Saarc leaders needed more security this time than ever before because of the growing attacks and threats of the terrorists in this part of the world. In fact, almost all the countries of the region have been hit by gruesome blasts that tend to kill innocent people and destroy the valuable assets and wealth. The imperatives of a tight security net

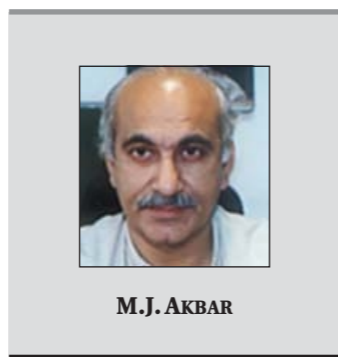
good to the most populous as well as the most pervasively poverty-stricken part of the world, South Asia. The reasons are not far to seek. First, economic issues per se never dominated the initial deliberations of the summits. It is, perhaps, only from the 10th or so round that the solutions of economic crisis in the region got prominence. Second, political tensions between Pakistan and India mounted over the years to make Saarc almost non-functional as a body of regional cooperation. And finally, the alleged lukewarm attitude of the largest partner of Saarc, India, in

of goods and services to and from the city. Based on some crude assumptions, the output loss could be as high as Tk.300 crores in three days! The amount might sound meager as far as the Saarc summit is concerned, but the same amount, if spent to tackle the munga-menace in Rangpur, would probably sound like a considerable sum!

The purpose of this note is not to negate the role of a regional cooperation body like Saarc. We fully support the view that in this age of regional blocks, Saarc should emerge as a bargaining bank for this region. There

tion -- seems to be a call of the hour. But what had been missing in the past years is the act of turning words into actions. For example, the issue of Safta dominated the Islamabad summit, but regarding the rules of origin, negative lists, compensation, etc not much headway could be in evidence over the years. Given the political tensions prevailing and mistrust created among some members of Saarc, how far the words will translate into actions is an important question to ponder with. We can only hope that the sufferings from the summit would be duly compensated by the successes

# Vice President of Torture



M.J. AKBAR

MEDIA used to be merely the message. But that was once upon a time, when a Canadian professor of literature, Marshall McLuhan, coined the phrase, and a laconic British poet, Philip Larkin, announced the birth of sex in 1963. We have moved on from the sixties. A new dictum rules. History is media.

I do not offer that proposition to suggest that modern media compiles the data that will comprise the history waiting to be written. That is too passive a role, and if only this were true it would not be worth writing about. Modern media is not just an accumulation of dormant technology, a data bank called Google -- the latest avatar of HAL, Stanley Kubrick's memorably sinister computer in Space Odyssey. Media is now an active ingredient and vital instigator of events. Information is the new mother of invention. Media disseminates information, triggers reaction, further shapes response, and creates new facts. Media thereby becomes the vehicle of change and procreator of history. Truth was never a simple fact, but it could be hidden in an establishment cupboard till the time of accountability, at least in this world, had passed. Now, truth can evolve almost on a daily basis, once it is out; the genes of this evolution lie in

media.

Dictators, and manipulative democrats, would prefer it the other way around. They would like media to become history. They want media to return, at best, to the fundamentally obedient, if not corrupt, state in which it existed during socially progressive but nevertheless brutal regimes like those of Josef Stalin and Mao Zedong; and nihilistic, suppressive and genocidal regimes like the one of Adolf Hitler. Media did exist in Soviet

rectly.)

Nuclear weapons are a Weapon of Mass Perception (WMP) rather than a WMD. They are victims of the ultimate paradox: nuclear weapons are too destructive to be destructive. Generals who want to bomb the enemy back to Stone Age are going to achieve precisely what they want, except that the stones will be found back home as well when the nuclear cloud clears. And since you won't get hamburgers or SUVs in the Stone Age,

into bloody combat, as could have happened over Hungary in 1956, Berlin in 1962, and even Czechoslovakia in 1968. Today, they are extremely useful in preventing a fourth full-scale war between India and Pakistan. Thank you, Dr Einstein, Dr Raja Ramanna, President Kalam, Dr A.Q. Khan and all your mentors.

How do we know that America has used chemical weapons in Iraq, during the Fallujah operations? Well, I can safely report that Donald

Murdoch, owner of Fox TV in the United States and choice properties elsewhere. Bush seems oblivious of Abu Ghraib. Or that John McCain, a Republican ally who helped him remain in the White House, is author of the legislation that would ban torture by the American administration and is being opposed by Dick Cheney. This is what, according to AFP, Admiral Stansfield Turner, has to say: "We have crossed the line into dangerous territory. I am embar-

questioned, he dismissed this as a consequence of weakness due to fasting. Thaksin Shinawatra was Prime Minister and did nothing. He later won a landslide victory by gently fanning prejudice against Muslims. How do we know about this "nerve-moment"? Because of media. Otherwise it would have remained a shadowy rumour, regularly dismissed as "preposterous" in genteel Thailand.

Predictably, France has given a whole new meaning to our subject. We have heard of the Internet revolution. Silicon Valley and Bangalore must find a new term for what they do after the French Revolution of Autumn 2005 in which minorities, primarily but not uniformly Muslim, rose against the quasi-racism of Nicolas Sarkozy, France's long-tongued interior minister. This was a revolt planned and implemented on the Internet. They've finally stopped counting, after 9,071 vehicles were torched and 126 police officers injured.

Modern media's greatest service to contemporary civilisation is that it has made injustice that much more difficult to hide. Obviously I wish I could say that all media lived by this creed. I cannot. Most media is still conformist and obedient. Almost every government in the world has its own channel (Bush has Fox). State-owned channels, almost without exception, are propaganda platforms for their governments. But this does not matter. All you need is one television station or newspaper to report the truth. Once facts emerge they develop a life and power of their own and create new facts. Reaction overpowers action.

As the President and Vice President of Torture are beginning to discover.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

**BYLINE**  
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Union, China and Germany but it was blind to mass murder of peasants, mass starvation of citizens and mass extermination by Nazis.

Even the most repressive governments today cannot quite hope to survive behind an unliftable curtain of ignorance. It is now almost impossible for brutality to remain an archival fact, to be discovered only after their perpetrators have enjoyed a lifetime of power. Today accountability is increasingly around the corner.

The governments of superpowers publicly worry about Weapons of Mass destruction: WMD, or nuclear weapons, in Iraq yesterday and Iran today. I suspect that privately they are far more worried about real modern WMD, media. The exhilarating part is that media destroys what needs to be destroyed, the lie, the evasion -- not wholly, nor in full measure, but substantially. (Those who hear an echo of Jawaharlal Nehru, albeit in another context, have their ears tuned cor-

that option is unrealistic for even a hyperpower like George Bush's America. (Important: we must always make a distinction between America and Bush's America.)

The only time America used nuclear bombs was in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. That was enough. Even when America is at its most desperate, as in Vietnam or in Iraq, it might resort to chemical killers but has not found the will to use nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union was a mighty nuclear power, but that arsenal was impotent when the Soviet state imploded. Israel has at least a hundred nuclear bombs. Not one of them is useful against a Palestinian struggling for self-respect and freedom.

Nuclear weapons are useful only as a strategic reality, not as a tactical option. They did enormous service to the world during the long decades of the Cold War, when they successfully prevented that war from boiling over

Rumsfeld did not hold a series of press conferences on the subject, and the Pentagon did not issue a news bulletin. Italian television found out before it was confirmed, lips very tight and eyes wide shut, by the Pentagon. Nor did the Pentagon call editors over for an illuminating chat on Abu Ghraib. It was only the severest pressure that forced it to convict a couple of underlings on its payroll as token punishment for images that shocked the world and stirred more than one heart to who knows what depths of anger. It might, in passing, interest you to know that since Abu Ghraib, the Pentagon has sacked one general for adultery, but found absolutely no evidence of any culpability against any senior officer for the scandal at Abu Ghraib. But of course, in Bush's immortal words, America doesn't do torture. I often wonder what Bush would have tried to get away with if media did not exist, or if all the world's media were controlled by Rupert

rassed that the US has a Vice President for torture. I think it is just reprehensible. He (Cheney) advocates torture, what else is it? I just don't understand how a man in that position can take such a stance."

Stansfield Turner is not a Sunni-Wahabi-Baathist-mullah from Baghdad. He is a former chief of CIA. He also reaffirms my early comment that we should not confuse the Bush Brigade with America.

It is not just America that is affected by the syndrome. Cross over to the other side of the world. Thailand is mired in a virtual insurgency in its Muslim-majority provinces; more than a thousand people have died since January 2004. If there was one moment that turned disaffection into active war -- a "nerve moment" -- then it was surely the incident during Ramzan when a Thai general packed Muslim suspects into a "black hole" in which about 80 suffocated to death. When

## OPINION

# Who is this Daniel Pipes?

MASHIUL ALAM

DOES poverty cause militant Islam? American 'thinker' Daniel Pipes does not think so, and Bangladeshi banker-columnist Mohammad Badrul Ahsan seems to agree with him. In his article 'Militant Islam' (The Daily Star, October 28, 2005), Mr. Ahsan tells us that Mr. Pipes denied that socio-economic distress alone drove Muslims to their extremist path. Poverty did not do it because militant Islam took off in the 1970s, just about the time oil-exporting Muslim states started enjoying extraordinary growth rates. He cited the example of Iran, where per capita income plummeted by nearly 90 per cent since 1980, causing 'alienation from Islam...' and, one of Pipes' conclusions was that Bangladesh was the living proof amongst few other countries that poverty could not generate militant Islam.

It was 2002 when Daniel Pipes gave his theory that not poverty but wealth or affluence was the cause of militancy in Islam. And within three years he has been disproved, at least by the example of Bangladesh, where, in Mr. Ahsan's words, "if you dig a hole anywhere (in Bangladesh), some Islamic militant is likely to pop out."

How could it happen? The socio-economic condition has not improved, poor Bangladesh has not become rich in last three years. Neither Iranian people, Iraqi insurgents, the Sudanese, the Indonesians, the Pakistanis, or the Chechens became richer over the last few years. Then why the rise of militant Islam around the world?

Mr. Ahsan's article did not provoke me to argue with Daniel Pipes' claim that poverty does not cause militant Islam but affluence does. I only intend to look into the context of his thesis. But before that we should know a little about the person's background who seemed to be so convincing to our fellow columnist.

Daniel Pipes is that notorious American 'Middle East expert' who maintains that the only solution to Middle East conflict is the final military victory of Israel over the Palestinian people. He wrote in April 1990: "There can be either Israel or a Palestine, but not both. To think that two states can stably and peacefully coexist in the small territory between Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea is to be either naive or duplicitous. If the last seventy years teach anything, it is that there can be only one state west of the Jordan River.

**Whether poverty causes militancy in Islam or affluence does it might be a very pertinent question in this age of growing 'Islamic terrorism', and one might of course find some arguments to spare poverty and blame affluence. But Daniel Pipes is not a right source of reference or scholastic evidence because he is a Hater.**

Therefore, to those who ask why the Palestinians must be deprived of a state, the answer is simple: grant them one and you set in motion a chain of events that will lead either to its extinction or the extinction of Israel.'

Daniel Pipes is director of the 'Middle East Forum', a Philadelphia-based pro-Israel think tank, and well known as an anti-Arab propagandist. His personal web site www.danielpipes.org is maintained by an Israeli settler named Grayson Levy, and this Grayson Levy has a personal media project called YeashaNews, where he writes and circulates such words: 'The time has come to formally recognise that there is no Palestinian people, they have never existed, they are a figment of our imagination, the fruit of years of Arafat deceit. The so-called Palestinians are Arabs, who have nothing more in common than their language and religion. They have never had a homeland, and certainly not in Eretz Yisrael. Search in history books from the

1940s, 50s, 60s, even 70s and fine references to the Palestinian people. They will not be found, because they do not exist.'

In addition to running Middle East Forum Daniel Pipes started an Internet site called Campus Watch, and this Campus Watch posted what it calls 'dossiers' on eight American professors and scholars who criticised US foreign policy and the Israeli occupation. In fact, Daniel's Campus Watch is a 'witch hunter' in American academic world and is a showcase for the signature distortions on which Pipes built his twenty-five-year career. Daniel Pipes twists words, quotes people out of context and stretches the truth to suit his purpose. Known as one of the most notorious Muslim-haters and Islamophobe, Daniel Pipes claimed in an article in 2002 that more than half of all rapists in Denmark were Muslims, and Danish politicians Elisabeth Arnold Elisabeth Gerner protested him in the *National Post*, 9/6/02 saying that it was a baseless

claim, as criminal registers in Denmark did not record religious identity.

Daniel's hatred for Arabs and Muslims is surpassed by his hatred for the religion of Islam. He even questioned the origins of Quran, and questioned whether Prophet Mohammad ever existed. He wrote in 2000 in the *Jerusalem Post*, "The Quran is not a product of Mohammad or even of Arabia" but a collection of the earlier Judeo-Christian liturgical stitched together to meet the needs of later age... A few scholars go even further, doubting even the existence of Mohammad."

According to Pipes, the journey of Prophet Mohammad from Mecca to Jerusalem at the night of Miraj never occurred. In an article in *Los Angeles Times* he wrote, The Prophet Mohammad never went to the city, nor did he have ties to it" (7.21.2000). Pipes claims that Muslims have no real religious attachments to the city of Jerusalem.

Pipes in fact goes further to advocate ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians. He is a ferocious contributor to the web site of Gamla, an organisation founded by former Israeli military officers and settlers that endorses the ethnic cleansing of every Palestinian as 'the only solution' to Arab-Israel conflict. He wrote in 2001 in *The National Post*: "Israel needs to take more active steps. Bury suicide bombers in potter's fields rather than deliver their bodies to relatives (who turn their funerals into frenzied demonstrations)... permit no transportation of people or goods beyond basic necessities. Shut off utilities to the Palestine Authority... Raze the PA's illegal offices in Jerusalem, its security infrastructure and villages from which attacks are launched."

A bigot Muslim-hater and a cruel Zionist like Daniel Pipes "cannot make any objective analysis of the Muslim mind and its behaviour. Daniel's theory that not poverty but wealth

causes militancy in Islam is not a dispassionate, aloof scientific assumption. Rather he seems to have a hidden agenda behind it. His main target is the American Muslim population who, unlike Asian Muslims, enjoy a kind of socio-economic solvency, if not affluence. He has been trying to persuade American policy makers that the Muslim community living and growing in America is a real threat to the Jewish community. On a radical pro-Israel web site, Pipes claimed that 'as the population of Muslims in the United States grows, so does anti-Semitism.' (<http://freeman.io.com/m-online/jan98/pipes.htm>)

Pipes does not limit this claim to Arab Muslim alone. He wrote that 'Iranians and Pakistanis, to take two groups of non-Arabs, are at least as widely conspiracy-minded and as anti-Semitic as, say, Tunisians and Kuwaitis.' (Commentary, 9.1.99). Pipes' hatred for the African-American Muslims is even stronger; he wrote, "black converts tend to hold vehemently anti-American, anti-Christian, and anti-Semitic attitudes." (Commentary, 6.1.2000).

Daniel Pipes believes that there is an international Islamist conspiracy, which aims not to destroy America but

to subjugate it. He has no doubt that the Islamists want to create a Muslim state in America. They can be successful to do so by growing in number and by sharing the material affluence of American society. Daniel Pipes spoke before the convention of the American Jewish Congress in 2001: "I worry very much from the Jewish point of view that the presence and increased stature and affluence and enfranchisement of American Muslims... will present true dangers to American Jews."

Whether poverty causes militancy in Islam or affluence does it might be a very pertinent question in this age of growing 'Islamic terrorism', and one might of course find some arguments to spare poverty and blame affluence. But Daniel Pipes is not a right source of reference or scholastic evidence because he is a Hater. Hatred is bad because it destroys intellectual judgment. American policy makers do not seem to be convinced by Daniel Pipes either because they are well aware of the people like him, whose views are considered dangerous not only for the ethnic harmony of American society, but for Israel also.

Mashiul Alam is a journalist and fiction writer.