

## Dealing with unlawful arrest

*The DMP move is praiseworthy*

THE decision of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to address the issue of "unlawful arrests," which really amount to police excess of the most objectionable kind, is a commendable one. It is a good disciplinary move that the DMP will henceforth punish police personnel guilty of arresting people in violation of the law.

Obviously, the greatest merit of the DMP decision is that it reflects a realisation, belated though, among the police high-ups that there are glaring flaws in the way the law enforcers are operating today, particularly when it comes to dealing with the members of the public. We believe the DMP has assigned itself a task that has a great bearing on the police-people relation, not considered to be anywhere near what it ideally should be. Unfortunately, police are known for abuse of power -- something that has greatly eroded the public confidence in the law enforcement agency. The DMP has rightly identified the methods that are used by the police to harass and intimidate the citizens. The abuse ranges from issuing threats to arresting people, often for squeezing out pecuniary benefits. This is a situation, which runs counter to the whole concept of the rule of law. Evidently, justice cannot be meted out when the law enforcers themselves indulge in all sorts of illegal activities. One must not also miss the point here that only the influential and affluent people are benefited in a situation where money becomes the sole determinant of what course the law will take.

So, the need for eliminating the possibility of police harassing people cannot be overemphasised. And an internal inspection mechanism should come in handy in this respect.

The DMP has decided to heal an age-old malady and its success will depend on the sincerity and honesty of the police bosses who will be in charge of making sure that policemen do not any longer use threats and coercion against people. It is a positive development that the victims of unlawful arrests will now be permitted to lodge complaints against the policemen responsible for their sufferings. However, it must be seen that the victims do not become exposed to any kind of retaliatory actions by their tormentors. In short, the police have to rise above their traditional mode of thinking and work for our collective welfare in the spirit of establishing the rule of law.

## Benazir under siege

*Terrorism is the real destroyer of democracy*

WITHIN a week of her celebrative homecoming turning bloody with a heinous carnage, Benazir Bhutto has received death threats from a female suicide squad suspected to be linked to terrorists groups like al-Qaeda. In the thicket of allegations about three senior government officials, or Jihadi loyalists of ex-president Ziaul Haq or extremists from Pakistan's restive tribal areas being behind the last week's suicide bomber attacks, investigations into them have got nowhere near identifying the culprits. As a result, the security risk on the life of former Pakistan prime minister and now chairperson Pakistan People's Party aggravates by the day.

She finds herself virtually under siege. With her movements restricted under security considerations, she is thinking of campaigning by phone to avoid violence, a fitter that does not bode well for the mass contact she needs to lead her party through the January elections regarded as key to restoration of democracy in Pakistan. Government has drawn a flak for their reported plan to ban large rallies in the run up to the forthcoming general elections.

Despite all the volatility of the political scenario before her, hopes are pinned on Benazir Bhutto's return to Pakistan after eight years of self-exile to give some direction to Pakistan politics. The period of her and Nawaz Sharif's exile saw military dictator Musharraf's grounds under his feet slipping away with the popular urge for return to democracy receiving a fillip through judicial intervention. The validity of Musharraf's election to presidency in uniform awaits adjudication at the Supreme Court. At a time like this, Pakistan needs congenial pre-election atmosphere for transition to democracy, more so when obscurantist forces and armed extremists are out to subvert any semblance of normalcy and order.

Ms Bhutto must be given all kinds of state security to pursue her political agenda and play her due role in bringing democracy back to Pakistan at this critical juncture of Pakistan's history.

## Stalin, Mao and ... Ahmadinejad?



FAREED ZAKARIA

writes from Washington

Here is the reality. Iran has an economy the size of Finland's and an annual defense budget of around \$4.8 billion. It has not invaded a country since the late 18th century. The United States has a GDP that is 68 times larger and defense expenditures that are 110 times greater. Israel and every Arab country (except Syria and Iraq) are quietly or actively allied against Iran. And yet we are to believe that Tehran is about to overturn the international system and replace it with an Islamofascist order? What planet are we on?

needed to make a nuclear weapon.

The American discussion about Iran has lost all connection to reality. Norman Podhoretz, the neoconservative ideologist whom Bush has consulted on this topic, has written that Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is "like Hitler ... a revolutionary whose objective is to overturn the going international system and to replace it in the fullness of time with a new order dominated by Iran and ruled by the religious political culture of Islamofascism." For this stagger-

ing proposition Podhoretz provides not a scintilla of evidence.

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When the relatively moderate Mohammed Khatami was elected president in Iran, American conservatives pointed out that he was just a figurehead. Real power, they said (correctly), especially control of the military and police, was wielded by the unelected "Supreme Leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Now that Ahmadinejad is president, they claim his finger is on the button. (Oh wait, Iran doesn't have a nuclear button yet and won't for at least three to eight

years, according to the CIA, by which point Ahmadinejad may not be president anymore. But these are just facts.)

In a speech last week, Rudy Giuliani said that while the Soviet Union and China could be deterred during the cold war, Iran can't be. The Soviet and Chinese regimes had a "residual rationality," he explained. Hmm.

Stalin and Mao -- who casually ordered the deaths of millions of their own people, fomented insurrections and revolutions, and starved whole regions that opposed them -- were rational folk. But not Ahmadinejad, who has done what that compares?

One of the bizarre twists of the current Iran hysteria is that conservatives have become surprisingly charitable about two of history's greatest mass murderers.

If I had to choose whom to describe as a madman, North Korea's Kim Jong Il or Ahmadinejad, I do not think there

is really any contest. A decade ago Kim Jong Il allowed a famine to kill 2 million of his own people, forcing the others to survive by eating grass, while he imported gallons of expensive French wine.

He has sold nuclear technology to other rogue states and threatened his neighbors with test-firings of rockets and missiles. Yet the United States will be participating in international relief efforts to Pyongyang worth billions of dollars.

We're on a path to irreversible confrontation with a country we know almost nothing about. The United States government has had no diplomats in Iran for almost 30 years.

American officials have barely met with any senior Iranian politicians or officials. We have no contact with the country's vibrant civil society. Iran is a black hole to us -- just as Iraq had become in 2003.

The one time we seriously

negotiated with Tehran was in the closing days of the war in Afghanistan, in order to create a new political order in the country.

Bush's representative to the Bonn conference, James Dobbins, says that "the Iranians were very professional, straightforward, reliable and helpful. They were also critical to our success. They persuaded the Northern Alliance to make the final concessions that we asked for."

Dobbins says the Iranians made overtures to have better relations with the United States through him and others in 2001 and later, but got no reply. Even after the Axis of Evil speech, he recalls, they offered to cooperate in Afghanistan.

Dobbins took the proposal to a principals meeting in Washington only to have it met with dead silence. The then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, he says, "looked down and rustled his papers." No reply was ever sent

back to the Iranians. Why bother? They're mad.

Last year, the Princeton scholar, Bernard Lewis, a close adviser to Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, wrote an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal predicting that on Aug. 22, 2006, President Ahmadinejad was going to end the world.

The date, he explained, "is the night when many Muslims commemorate the night flight of the Prophet Muhammad on the winged horse Buraq, first to the farthest mosque," usually identified with Jerusalem, and then to heaven and back. This might well be deemed an appropriate date for the apocalyptic ending of Israel and if necessary of the world" (my emphasis). This would all be funny if it weren't so dangerous.

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## How far is peace in the land of serendipity?



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### STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

In recent times, the LTTE has been on the defensive, particularly after the military's victory in the East in an offensive that started in July 2006. The army moved against the LTTE's remaining strongholds in the North in September this year, and the situation remains fluid as of now. Given the background, the government of Mr. Rajapakse has really two options open to it. One is to go whole-hog militarily and seek the complete annihilation of the LTTE, and two, seek a political solution of the problem.

April 2006, have brought it in the limelight once again.

The most recent attack was on the air force base in Anuradhapura, the ancient capital, far removed from the LTTE operational base. Yet, the LTTE was able to carry out an air/ground operation where its ground elements infiltrated inside a very well protected military base.

The attacks bear out the fact that the LTTE, as an ethnic group fighting for an autonomous region in the north and the east of SL (the demand for a separate homeland for the SL Tamils has been dropped by the LTTE since the peace accord of 2001, that fell through in 2005), no longer depends on terrorism as a strategic tool in pursuit of its political goal, although terrorism is still used as a tactical expedient, like attacking soft targets like public transports, farmers etc.

The LTTE has graduated to a sizeable force, particularly over the last three decades, to a point where it has come to possess aerial platforms for weapons delivery on military targets with a degree of

impunity (the planes involved in the attack got away, as they did after three air raids earlier this year), although the Anuradhapura operation has cost it in terms of manpower casualty.

Not only does the LTTE possess conventional weapons including medium artillery and several Czech-made two-seater, propeller driven, aircraft which it managed to smuggle in knockdown condition, it has also managed to acquire sea vessels of both military and civil descriptions to conduct operations against the SL navy.

Reportedly, it had attempted to acquire a submarine, but the idea was scuttled eventually. In recent times, the SL navy has taken a heavy toll of the LTTE naval resources. All these actions indicate that the LTTE is resuming its posture of open hostility i.e. taking on the SL state machinery including its armed forces in conventional warfare, a capability it had acquired only a decade after it emerged as a terrorist group, and employed quite successfully against the IPKF. The Indians lost almost 1500 men.

It might surprise many that, as the situation currently stands, the LTTE is not really a terrorism problem for Sri Lanka (SL). Neither is it a military option the only strategy open to the government in addressing the LTTE threat.

If this reality is not comprehended properly there is a good chance that strategy formulation and operational plans would both be faulty, and the prospect of resolution of the conflict would recede further.

A brief background will help explain my assertion. The LTTE is a classic case of transformation of an insurrectionary group moving through the various phases of a revolutionary warfare starting with insurgency, right up to the point where it acquired enough military strength to confront the state and its military machine in open hostility.

It had resorted to terrorist acts to announce its presence to start with, going for soft targets and gradually making the military its target. Eventually, the SL military was confronted on the battlefield, and the two were involved in many

battles for real estate.

Territories exchanged hands and, after a brief stalemate, the SL military was able to wrest a large portion of the Eastern region from the LTTE. However, the LTTE remains a terrorist organisation since it still resorts to terrorist acts against unarmed civilians.

Much of the Tamil held areas were no-go areas for the government forces at one time, and although they were actually under the control of the LTTE it was the SL government that provided food and other supplies to these areas; a remarkable act of fulfilling state responsibility even under most trying circumstances.

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Given the background, the government of Mr. Rajapakse has really two options open to it. One is to go whole-hog militarily and seek the complete annihilation of the LTTE, and two, seek a political solution of the problem.

The former is very tempting because a military provides the urge for more military operations without realising its political ramifications. On the other hand,

the political option may involve treading on tortuous paths and, therefore, appear less attractive.

The redeeming part is that there is tremendous awareness among both the civilian and military leadership in SL of the dangers of

an exclusively military solution. The LTTE problem needs to be detached from the issue of genuine Tamil grievances and their demands.

End of the LTTE as an armed entity will not automatically address the underlying causes of Tamil grievances and resolve the Tamil issue. And there is great resistance to yielding to LTTE demands and their claim to be fighting for Tamil rights on the grounds that it is itself a most repressive and fascists organisation that does not brook any opposition, and has seen to it that all prospective opposition from within the LTTE and Tamil ranks in general are done away with.

There is also consensus that the LTTE must be pursued vigorously militarily so that its capacity to perpetrate violence is reduced.

That tackling the LTTE will tackle terrorism there is little doubt. But there is no alternative to a political solution of the present unrest in Sri Lanka. And this realisation is encapsulated in a recent remark of President Rajapakse that: "While we are trying to find a negotiated political solution so that all the communities could live in harmony, the government will not tolerate terrorism and it would be fought until total elimination."

One would like to wish the people of Sri Lanka and its leadership the very best in their peace venture. No one has got so little of peace in the last three decades and no one deserves it more.

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time TV that "human shields" were her prime protection, was extremely insensitive and reflects the intelligence's fear that Ms. Benazir is surrounded by callous aides with a reputation for "dirty tricks," with no qualms about sacrificing lives (human shields indeed) as long as it is not theirs.

Hopefully, the blood of those killed and the sufferings of those injured will not be in vain, and lessons will have been learnt about the mostly South Asian political practice (and culture) of rallies and processions.

Who the perpetrators of this outrage are is anybody's guess, the blame game can go on and on, and be directed anywhere. It could have been Al-Qaeda or late brother Murtaza's boys burning with vengeance, or even someone in the regime's hierarchy acting on "who will rid me of this meddlesome priest (a la Becket)" -- type instructions. Can we count out elements within the PPP wanting to highlight her Joan of Arc stance in western eyes in the "war against terrorism," on the other hand to play on her insecurity and make her more dependent on them, etc?

warning to duck down after the first blast (2), people could be seen jumping off the truck and others climbing down the stairs after the blasts, suggesting that no one on top was seriously injured, confirming that the shrapnel and force/shockwave of the blast stayed closer to the ground. Typically, a well-directed shockwave generated by 14-15 kgs RDX from such close proximity can turn the internal organs into gel (3), before the second blast the left door of the truck was in open position. Scant minutes before the blasts the truck was stopped to switch drivers; did the driver vacate the truck before the second blast? The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to drive away as fast as possible to escape from the place of incident, why did the 'BB mobile' not take off in the 30-40 seconds after the first blast? (4), a vehicle engulfed in flames can be seen on the front-left side (9-10 o'clock) of the truck, exactly in front of a white Suzuki Alto that some reports allege carried the bomb. Still camera shots from other angles show that its front was ripped open. A spare wheel could be seen intact on the backside of the burning vehicle, could this be the vehicle that carried the shaped charge?" Unquote.

The first blast being of a relatively low-intensity, and the second blast of much higher-intensity, Adnan Gill analyses that "the initial blast did not trigger (what demolition experts call) a sympathetic blast or the second explosion, most probably due to the stable nature of RDX explosives." This suggests that the second explosive was a shaped-charge from which shrapnel spread in an arc-pattern away from the truck. Suicide bombers have no control over the direction of the explosion.

As by sheer luck (or was it deliberate) the trajectory of the blast was directed away from the truck in a cone-shape that spread (relative to the truck) from seven o'clock to one o'clock and so, viz "(1) virtually everyone and everything stayed upright on the armoured truck (despite Rahman Malik's

warning to duck down after the first blast (2), people could be seen jumping off the truck and others climbing down the stairs after the blasts, suggesting that no one on top was seriously injured, confirming that the shrapnel and force/shockwave of the blast stayed closer to the ground. Typically, a well-directed shockwave generated by 14-15 kgs RDX from such close proximity can turn the internal organs into gel (3), before the second blast the left door of the truck was in open position. Scant minutes before the blasts the truck was stopped to switch drivers; did the driver vacate the truck before the second blast? The Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is to drive away as fast as possible to escape from the place of incident, why did the 'BB mobile' not take off in the 30-40 seconds after the first blast? (4), a vehicle engulfed in flames can be seen on the front-left side (9-10 o'clock) of the truck, exactly in front of a white Suzuki Alto that some reports allege carried the bomb. Still camera shots from other angles show that its front was ripped open. A spare wheel could be seen intact on the backside of the burning vehicle, could this be the vehicle that carried the shaped charge?" Unquote.

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While the number of coincidences are too many to ignore, the attack could well have pre-empted others waiting down the road. Ms. Benazir is a political asset who needs the best possible protection one can give her. Is it possible? It is, by avoiding histrionics and dealing in a mature manner with hard facts, and than letting security professionals do the task being handled presently by amateurs.

While one is grateful that Ms. Benazir escaped unscathed, Rahman Malik, stating on prime

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