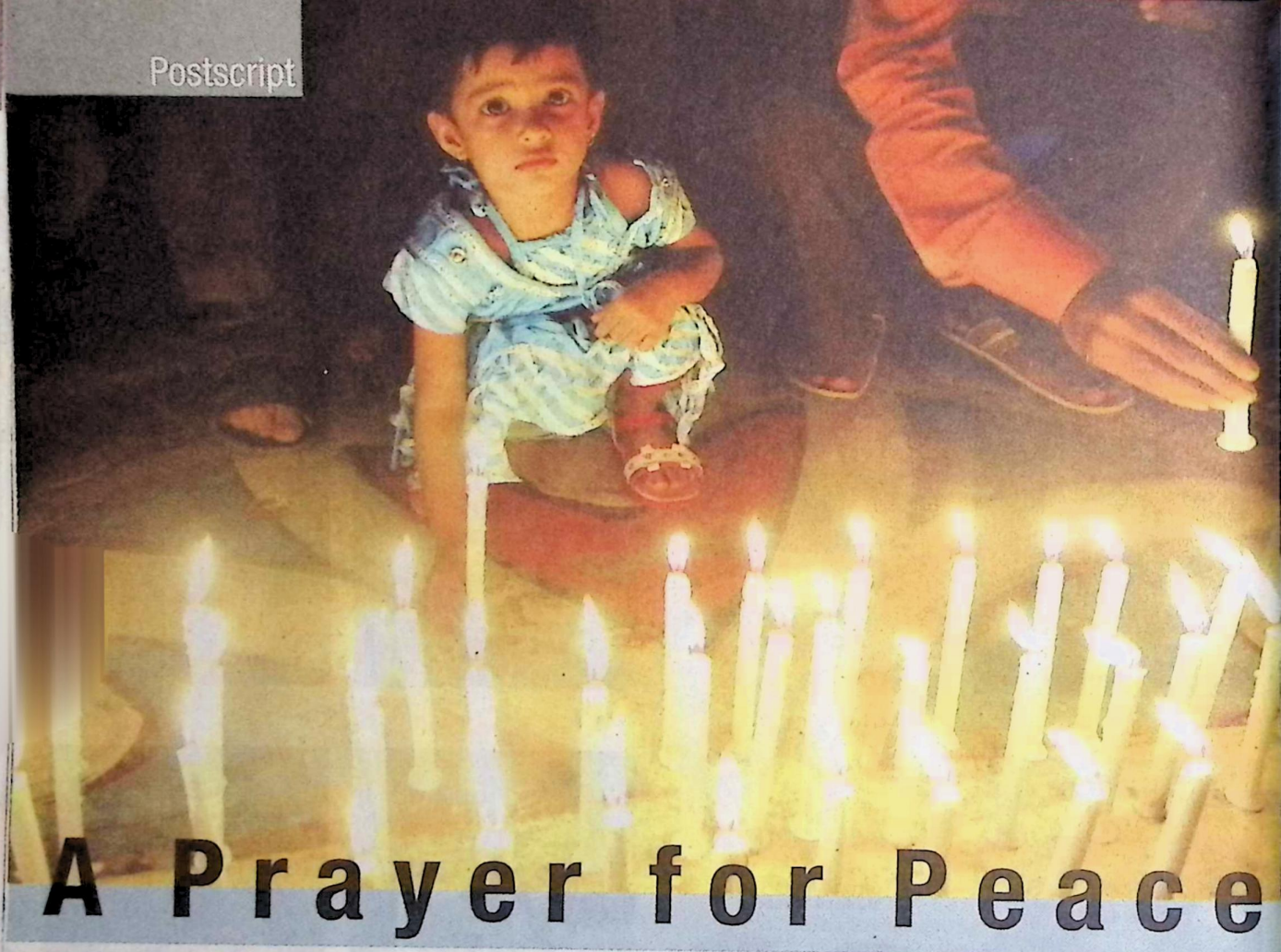


A Prayer for Peace

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

The crowds have thinned out before the gate that once gave hope only to take it away a few hours later. We are no longer glued to the screen, frenziedly changing channels to find some new information, some good news about the missing.

By now it is almost over. Most of the missing have been found. The evidence of the gory mayhem has been exposed, dissected and analysed. Conspiracy theories abound and the blame game goes on.

The shops are open again, the kids back in school. We go about our business, but nothing is the same. We are still in mourning and will continue to be for a long time. For it is impossible to let go of the grotesque images, to forget the ricochet of incessant bullets right in our neighbourhood, reminding us of our vulnerability as ordinary citizens. We cannot forget scenes of a residential area being turned into a battlefield where tanks plied in place of cars, buses and rickshaws. We cannot forget the faces of men, women and children, shell-shocked as they emerged from that fateful gate. Frozen with shock and disbelief that their loved ones had been murdered only a few feet away. Numbed by untold tortures and fear.

The air is unbearable with the weight of grief that this nation must now bear. It is the burden of guilt, yet another dark chapter that will probably never be fully unravelled.

For those who have been left behind with memories of last second phone calls and text messages it will be long before the sounds of bullets, shattered glass and smell of burning will fade out. It will be an eternity before they can forget those last, precious moments before their lives turned into a living hell.

But life does go on, no matter how incongruous its mundaneness in the wake of such tragedy. While we try to heal the wounds of this terrible injury and offer our deepest sympathy for the bereaved and victimised, we must remain united in our condemnation of these heinous crimes, in our search for the truth. We are angry and humiliated, anguished and demoralised, but it is not the time to seek vengeance but justice through the law of the land. We must learn to trust again, our own people, pick up the pieces and go on. We must promise ourselves that we will not let this black day, that echoes many other dark days of our history, is ever repeated again.

We pray for the souls of all those men women and children whose lives were so brutally snatched away. May they rest in peace.