

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

O the Rule, O the Law!

Khaleda's invitation

The PM should reciprocate

BEGUM Khaleda Zia has invited the Prime Minister to an iftar party for political leaders on August 4. We hope the Prime Minister would seriously consider responding to the opposition leader's invitation. Given the background of personal and political bitterness between them lately ratcheted up, as everybody knows, the invitation to the PM offers an opportunity to break the ice.

Anywhere in the world, especially at the highest levels, if the leader of the opposition officially invites the head of the government, or vice versa, it would certainly be reciprocated. Courtesy begets courtesy.

But that we have to write an editorial urging the PM to respond to an iftar invitation which she should be doing of her own accord without any need for persuasion is something extraordinary but perhaps unavoidable.

It says a lot.

It appears to us that a good deal of thought has gone into the making of the Khaleda's overture coming more than a week before the appointed date. There is no element of last minute rush here, and the PM has ample time to weigh the pros and cons of accepting the invitation.

Advisers might suggest to the PM that the invitation is nothing but a political stunt aimed to gain mileage over her. They could even see in this a political trap she would be better advised not to walk into. She needn't be misled. The fundamental consideration should be people's wish. We think public opinion would greatly favour a positive response from the PM, and conversely, rejection of the invitation would greatly disappoint them.

If the two leaders can meet on the Armed Forces Day why can't they meet out of their own initiatives, especially in a holy month?

Better ranking on FDI

Focus should be on real growth

ACCORDING to United Nations Conference on Trade and Commerce (Unctad)'s World Investment Report (WIR) for 2011, in 2010, the index of FDI in Bangladesh has moved six notches up from what it was in 2009. Its ranking has risen from 120th to 114th position. Calculated in percentage terms, compared to 2009, the FDI inflow grew by 30 per cent in 2010.

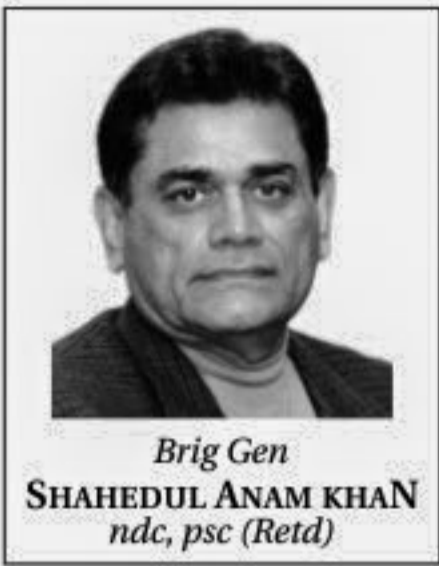
Comparisons are often deceptive. For if we compared the FDI figure of 2008 at \$ 1.086 billion with those of 2009 at \$ 700.16 million and 2010 at \$ 913.32 million, the negative trend in FDI inflow would become obvious. However, the comparisons between 2009 and 2010 undeniably demonstrate that the FDI curve has made some positive gains. Given the dichotomy, it would then be wiser to look at the growth trends in a more critical light.

In the regional context, the WIR report shows that Bangladesh has fared better compared to other South Asian countries like India and Pakistan. But in absolute terms, the amount of FDI that flowed into Pakistan in 2010 was \$ 2.016 billion. And it was lower than the 2009's figure at \$ 2.387 billion. On the other hand, the same for India was \$ 24.640 billion and \$ 34.613 billion respectively.

Whether on a falling or a rising curve, the sheer sizes of the FDIs they could attract hardly make any comparisons with those of ours.

The comparisons should actually provide us with the arguments for bolstering our efforts towards attaining a quantum leap in FDI flow in absolute terms.

And as it is with local investment, which have reportedly been very upbeat in years in question, FDI's further growth will necessitate removing the existing infrastructural constraints in the areas like land, power, gas and so on.



Brig Gen
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
ndc, psc (Retd)

ONE could very easily have entitled today's topic as mis(rule) of law and the state of dis(order) or misuse of presidential prerogative. I have deliberately (mis)appropriated an old saying that laments the death of values and mores.

This particular piece is prompted by observation varying from mild censure to friendly suggestions of my previous column dealing with the decay of the society. I must admit that I was very pleasantly surprised by extremely constructive but very critical comments from some of the readers for not going deeper into the underlying causes of why the society is becoming morally impoverished by the day.

And we can only utter words of helplessness, and that too at the risk of being described as blind for not being able to see the so many "good things" happening around us. The bad pervades the good in such a manner that the good becomes completely inobtrusive.

Frankly, the focus of my said article was on the unavoidable deaths in the country which could have been avoided but for the callousness of those that are entrusted to run the state machinery, and I had touched, very perfunctorily, on some of the causative factors responsible for the dismal state of the society. But indeed, the prevailing situation does call for a deeper look in to the "why" of whatever is happening.

And primarily whatever is happening is due to lack of the rule of law that breeds bad governance. And rule of law and state of governance have been once again brought into the acute focus of the public by the recent exercise of presidential prerogative to clemency, which has in its wake caused more than few eyebrows to be

raised apart from bringing at issue a very fundamental question, that of considering the legal as well as the moral aspect of the issues involved, because, what is legal may not necessarily be moral. Regrettably, the presidential pardon has, like in the previous instances, made the office of the president a subject of criticism.

One cannot but disagree with those that aver that the office of the president is above criticism. It is the people only that are sovereign and, as a collective entity, accountable to none. Everyone else must subject himself or herself to public scrutiny, particularly those that adorn public office, and account for his or her actions to the people in the manner prescribed by the highest law of the land, the Constitution.

But what is most amusing is the way the two major parties have gone about defending their respective positions in getting the president's seal on amnesty. It is double standards manifested in its worst form, made even more shocking by attempts to defend indefensible positions.

The recent presidential pardon granted to a convicted killer, he is a killer according to the judgment of the court, has naturally called to question the use or misuse of the prerogative mercy granted to the president, with the understanding that it would strengthen the cause of justice and the rule of law, not otherwise.

Regrettably, misuse of Article 49 of the Constitution has become a tradition. Not long ago it had been used to pardon a fugitive of 23 years in 2005, during BNP's tenure in office. And many of those protesting the grave miscarriage of justice by the president

then have gone one step better, they have preempted the course of justice by putting up the case for the consideration of the president without letting the legal process run its course, the case being still with the Appellate Division for disposal. And not surprisingly, those who are up in arms protesting the pardon now seem to have made it convenient to forget their unprincipled position of the past.

ing the verdict "commanded verdict," of ministers defending the atrocious treatment of an MP by the police.

When such is the respect for law on the part of the holder of high offices, when the chief executive justifies pardon by terming the killer a victim of politics, when listed criminals are appointed head of local law and order committees, should one be surprised

We can only utter words of helplessness, and that too at the risk of being described as blind for not being able to see the so many "good things" happening around us. The bad pervades the good in such a manner that the good becomes completely inobtrusive.

For the BNP it was a case of injustice, since it was a martial law court that had sentenced the BNP apparatchik to death in 1982 in a double murder case. And plans to review that pardon by the parliamentary committee in 2010 was discarded, less it exposed the disingenuous act of the AL related to the presidential pardon of the son of the Deputy Leader of the House in 2009.

These are instances of disregard for law, of the lofty position of the office of the president being repeatedly defiled to set free murderers whose crimes have been proved beyond doubt, of serving ministers unhesitatingly call-

that the common person, on his part, do not show the scantiest of respect for law, and take up law in their hands to dispense justice, or if teachers turn rapists?

The rot has started from the top, and that is from where the healings should start.

The author is Editor, Defense and Strategic Affairs, The Daily Star



| The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

Murdoch's Shakespearean tragedy

STEPHEN MARCHE

At the hearing into the News of the World phone hacking scandal in London on Tuesday, the commissioner of Scotland Yard did something unusual for a policeman. He quoted Shakespeare. Explaining the swiftness of his resignation, he mangled a bit of Macbeth: "If 'twere best it were done, 'twere well it were done quickly." The reference was perfectly fitting for a scandal whose defining adjective is coming to be "Shakespearean."

Many have noted superficial similarities between the scandal and Shakespearean tragedy: overheard messages, hired thugs. There's a hashtag sprawling through Twitter: #shakespeare4murdoch. (My favorite so far: "remorse, remorse, my kingdom for remorse.")

Usually comparisons between events in the news and Shakespeare are strained, cropping up with each downfall of a prominent public figure. Eliot Spitzer slept with a hooker. He is not Marc Antony. Tony Hayward, formerly of BP, is not Julius Caesar. Neither is Dominique Strauss-Kahn an aging version of Prince Hal. But in the case of Rupert Murdoch, the comparison is, for once, accurate: The scandal is exactly like a Shakespearean tragedy, in specific and profound ways.

The great Shakespeare tragedies fuse crises in families and in states, connecting the most significant historical events with the most delicate psychological realities. In "King Lear," a family squabble about a retiree can be rectified only by a full-scale invasion by France. In "Antony and Cleopatra," the fate of the Roman Empire hinges on a man who likes his Egyptian mistress more than his family. In "Hamlet," Shakespeare makes it

clear that Claudius is a capable ruler, but because he has killed his brother and married his brother's wife, the state must fall. The corruption within a family matters more to the health or disease of government than any policy matter.

The domestic has always mingled with the political for the Murdochs as well. The children have occupied different outposts of the empire. Rupert Murdoch's marriage to Wendi Deng Murdoch was supposed to open access to Chinese media markets. (On Tuesday, defending her husband against a pie-wielding protester, she

The corrupting power of such connections is one of the core anxieties in Shakespeare's great tragedies. "Lear" shows a king dividing his kingdom on the basis of his daughters' love. Goneril and Regan are happy to play the game, but Cordelia refuses to exaggerate her love for her father in order to procure power. Later, the bastard Edmund, after betraying his father in an attempt to take his title, seduces both Goneril and Regan (euro) the ultimate incestuous political order. Family should not act like politicians, and vice versa.

The Murdoch drama is entering its

destroyed for his lust for power, Othello for his jealousy, Antony for his passion, Lear for the incompleteness of his renunciation.

They are tragic precisely because their flaws are all too human. We do not yet know how far Murdoch is implicated in the crimes of his company, so we do not know which of Shakespeare's tragic heroes he resembles most. If he didn't know the extent of the phone hacking, then he's most like the bungling Richard II, who fails to spot the decay within his kingdom. If he did know, then he's more like the conniving Richard III, whose love of the machinations of power eventually grinds him into the machinery he's created.

Regardless, Murdoch's distinguishing flaw is common ambition (euro) "an outsider's desire to force his way into the establishment. He has been singled out because his flaw is so ordinary, so widespread. Putting aside for a moment the complicity of every single reader of News of the World, nearly all journalists and politicians played the same game, only Murdoch played it better.

One of the most profound feelings that follows watching a Shakespearean tragedy, once we have witnessed the destruction we crave, is how empty the world seems. The tension of tragedy lays bare a part of our hypocrisy that we should at least recognize in the case of Rupert Murdoch: Maybe he is a monster. Maybe he needs to be punished. But he is being destroyed because we cannot stand seeing ourselves, whether on stage or before Parliament.

The writer is the author of "How Shakespeare Changed Everything."

©The New York Times. Distributed by the New York Times Syndicate.

One of the most profound feelings that follows watching a Shakespearean tragedy, once we have witnessed the destruction we crave, is how empty the world seems. The tension of tragedy lays bare a part of our hypocrisy that we should at least recognize in the case of Rupert Murdoch: Maybe he is a monster.

provided instead a sweet right hook.)

But the real scandal in Britain is how far a modern democracy came to resemble a family. Hacking into a murdered girl's voice mail is grotesque, but the coziness of everyone involved is the bigger danger to society. Perhaps the most damaging revelation about Prime Minister David Cameron is that he had dinner over the Christmas holiday last year at the home of former News of the World Editor Rebekah Brooks (often described as another Murdoch daughter) along with Murdoch's son James.

fifth act, the part when the bodies start to pile up. At the hearing before a parliamentary committee, Murdoch interrupted his son near the beginning of the proceedings to say: "This is the most humble day of my life."

His native Australian optimism may be misleading him, however. The mood in Britain seems to desire nothing less than his complete destruction. Everything he cherishes must be sacrificed. The paper. The BSkyB deal. Rebekah Brooks. Possibly his son's takeover of the company.

We go to tragedy to watch a man be destroyed. Macbeth must be

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

July 28

1914

World War I: Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia after Serbia rejects the conditions of an ultimatum sent by Austria on July 23 following the assassination of Archduke Francis Ferdinand.

1933

Diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Spain are established.

1942

World War II: Soviet leader Joseph Stalin issues Order No. 227 in response to alarming German advances into the Soviet Union.

1943

World War II: Operation Gomorrah The British bomb Hamburg causing a firestorm that kills 42,000 German civilians.

1965

Vietnam War: U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson announces his order to increase the number of United States troops in South Vietnam from 75,000 to 125,000.

1976

The Tangshan earthquake measuring between 7.8 and 8.2 moment magnitude flattens Tangshan in the People's Republic of China, killing 242,769 and injuring 164,851.

2005

The Provisional Irish Republican Army calls an end to its thirty year long armed campaign in Northern Ireland.