

## Garment leaders' call for calm

*The two parties must heed*

THE call by the leaders of the garment industry on the political leaders to shun confrontational politics reflects the general feeling of the people too. The country, unhappily, is being led towards a state of political unrest with the inevitable harmful impact on the economy, and the garment industries as well as the country stand to lose enormously as a consequence. The fact that Bangladesh is poised to make significant gains in the RMG sector and may lose out because of political conflict is worth serious consideration by our political leaders.

Our RMG industry is the most prospective foreign exchange source for the country, and going by the McKinsey report published in December last year, it is likely to fetch around \$36 - \$42 billion in the next ten years. But that will depend on how well the most severe issues can be managed.

After a tumultuous time which had witnessed severe unrest in the sector during the period of the 4-party regime, the period of calm in the last three years was very helpful in achieving the export figure of \$13 billion in 2010-11. That accounted for around 80 percent of national exports and 13 percent of the GNP.

One of the serious issues implied in the report relates to the political situation obtaining in the country. And we feel that unless the two major parties come together to end the standoff, the ensuing unrest will be suicidal for our economy. And in this regard we are alarmed by the positions taken by the AL and the BNP. The mutual blame game will do very little to resolve the contentious issues.

We feel that as the major party leading the coalition it behoves the AL to temper their statements and actions with sobriety and avoid any programme that might compound the situation. By the same token, the BNP should act with equal responsibility as the opposition. It cannot be lost on the BNP that their responsibility towards the people is as immense out of power as it is while in power. It is our hope that sanity will prevail on both.

## An accident is an accident is an accident

*But it kills too*

WE are surprised that the minister for local government has taken umbrage at the media for describing the deaths in road accidents as “killings.” He would rather we called these fatalities as mere accidents. Implied in his annoyance is the statement that accidents can occur and do occur. And that is exactly for what we want to take issue with him.

We have to disagree with the minister. The deaths in road accidents, and there are nearly 12000 deaths every year, whether on the highways or on the streets of the capital, have been due to, on the majority, the result of reckless driving, unfit vehicles, untrained drivers and faulty road configuration. Thus they were not victims of accidents but were rather “killed”. Take for example the death of the little girl run over by a bus whose driver, reportedly, did not even possess a license. If that is not killing then what is?

Semantics do not change facts or the realities on the ground. What will however improve the situation on the streets and save the lives of the pedestrians and motorists are corrective measures that need to be put in place immediately by the government.

It is hard to explain why it takes inordinate time to undertake road safety measures. For example, as reported in this newspaper, it is only now, after two years of taking the decision, that the BRTA has moved to prohibit human haulers and remove illegal structures from the highways to reduce the risk of accidents. There is not a single zebra crossing marking in any of the major inter-sections in this capital city of an independent country. If this is not neglect then what is?

However, it is also true that pedestrians often disregard their own safety by cutting corners. And again it is for the police to ensure that the pedestrians are made conscious of the need to follow traffic rules and encouraged to do so.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

February 4

**1789**

George Washington is unanimously elected as the first President of the United States by the U.S. Electoral College.

**1859**

The Codex Sinaiticus is discovered in Egypt.

**1945**

World War II: The Yalta Conference between the "Big Three" (Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin) opens at the Livadia Palace in the Crimea.

**1969**

Yasser Arafat takes over as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

**1980**

Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini names Abolhassan Banisadr as president of Iran.

**1997**

After at first contesting the results, Serbian President Slobodan Milošević recognizes opposition victories in the November 1996 elections.

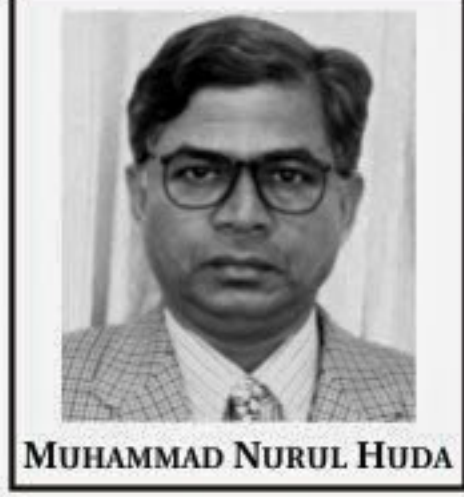
**2003**

The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is officially renamed to Serbia and Montenegro and adopts a new constitution.

**2004**

Facebook, a mainstream online social network is founded by Mark Zuckerberg.

### STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

The fearsome postures of the actors and the operatives inject a sense of helplessness in the minds of the ordinary people and no wonder the disorder and inconvenience caused by political confrontation could breed public apathy towards political protest. That, without doubt, is an unwelcome scenario.

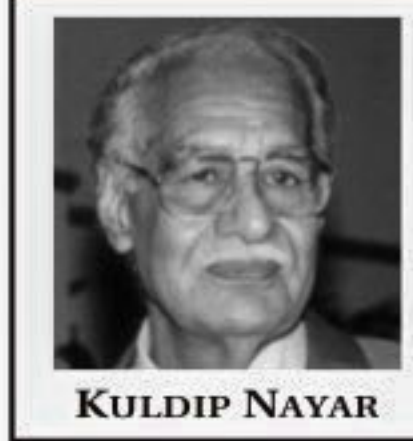
The 2005 Human Development Report devotes special attention to the analysis of violent conflict and brings the real threat into focus. It identifies violent conflict as the most brutal suppression of human development. Every civilian death linked to conflict is a violation of human rights. The risk is heavily weighted against people living in least developed countries like ours.

Humanity cannot enjoy security without development or development without order and security. The framework for security calls for safety from chronic threats and protection from sudden disruptions in the patterns of daily life. Violent conflict undermines human security in both dimensions.

There is a strong association between violent conflict and low human development. Therefore, there is a need of security framework which recognises poverty, social breakdown and civil conflict as the core components of the security threat. Logically, the prevention of conflict must be at the centre of planning for poverty reduction. Consequently, comprehensive risk assessments must be taken up to evaluate how specific conflicts affect policies.

Structural weaknesses in countries prone to conflict and disorder range

### BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

which has arisen in India after the three speeches, one by Vice-President Hamid Ansari, another by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and yet another by Justice Markandey Katju, chief of Press Council. The right to say has assumed all the more importance after Salman Rushdie's non-participation at the Jaipur Literary Festival because of threats. In Pune, screening of a documentary on Kashmir was stopped following protests by the students' wing of the BJP.

Talking of the first two speeches, both the vice-president and the prime minister have asked the media to introspect their role because of sensationalism that has crept into their dissemination. There was not even a hint of direct or indirect control of the media in their speeches. However, Justice Katju has warned the media that some regulation may have to be imposed as self-regulation is no regulation.

Since independence, New Delhi's record has been clean except when censorship was imposed during the emergency (1975-77). Governments have followed Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who assured the All India Newspaper Editors' Conference as back as on December 3, 1950: "I would have a completely free press with all the dangers involved in the wrong use of that freedom than a suppressed or regulated press."

Justice Katju appears to be on a different pitch. He should know that the Press Council was constituted to safeguard press freedom. Unfortunately, his speeches reflect little understanding of the media's nitty-gritty or its culture. To dub journalists illiterate within a day of becoming the Press Council chief has

from weak capacity to provide basic services, to contested legitimacy and deep horizontal inequalities. Threats to security and order arise from civil violence, terrorism, organised crime and also from poverty. While there is no necessary link between poverty and civil conflict, the violence that we see are outcomes caused by deep polarisation, weak institutions and chronic poverty. The fight against terror and disorder cannot be won unless human security is extended and strengthened. The deficit comes from underdeveloped human security response.

A considered view is that human security in developing countries like Bangladesh must occupy the centre of the international agenda for the achievement of Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

Despite the fact that disorder and the

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accompanying lawlessness have a significant impact on economic development, a rigorous analysis of the linkages between the two remains conspicuous by its absence in the general economic literature. However, of late, some studies have come to focus on the relationship between political instability, one obvious manifestation of law and order situation, and economic growth. Paradoxically, the issue of the linkage between law and order and economic development has generally remained neglected both in theoretical and empirical literature concerned with the identification of sources of development.

There is a strong suspicion that Bangladesh could not reap adequate

benefits from global economic linkage possibly owing to its internal political turmoil and disorder. No in-depth and systematic study of the impact of disorder and lawlessness on our economy has been undertaken so far. The problem has not been examined in any coherent way from the standpoint of national economy as a whole.

There is no denying that certain forms of disorder and crime can hamper the political, economic, social and cultural development of people and threaten human rights, fundamental freedoms, peace, stability and security. Therefore, crime prevention and criminal justice should be considered in the context of economic development, political systems, social and cultural values and social change. The system is expected to be fully responsive to the diversity of political, economic and

social systems and to the constantly evolving conditions of society.

Disorders are now being fomented and created by organisations, quite distinct from individual responsibility for individual acts. Traditional law enforcement approach will not be able to adequately face the challenge. One has to be cognisant of the nationally harmful crimes including economic crimes, environmental offences, illegal drug trafficking and terrorism that affect development.

Disorderly situation as a sequel to confrontational politics creates a favourable environment for terrorism, which is a form of low intensity war; and such terrorism is a political act. The terrorist's objective is to adversely alter

them and one can be created for the media alone. But the purpose of constituting the Council is to leave it to the Council members -- editors, journalists and proprietors -- to decide how to improve the erring publication.

The slide began when the paper which the Council censured would not even publish the judgment against it. Even when the paper was told where it violated the ethics it did not bother. I think it should be made obligatory for the papers to print the Council's decision, however unfavourable.

Justice Katju should see the record of the Council which has been invariably an extension of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry. The Council was

at its worst during the emergency when the chairman was at the end of a telephone call by Information Minister V.C. Shukla who played havoc with the press. George Verghese was wrongly dismissed by The Hindustan Times but before the Council could give its verdict in his

favour, it was abolished.

Even lately, the Council did not live up to its independent status. There were many complaints against the press on what came to be recognised as "paid news." News columns, considered sacrosanct, were used to campaign for a candidate who paid money. The Council's original report had to be watered down because of the pressure exerted by proprietors of newspapers and television channels. Justice Katju's warning against paid news is all right but he may find the Council itself divided on the subject.

As regards Salman Rushdie, he had to cancel his visit because of threat to his life. Probably, the government was

the political calculus of the country.

It is pertinent to point out that no development can take place without the protection of life, liberty and property. For providing order it is necessary to adhere to the rule of law. This is important to appreciate the significance of disorder and lawlessness in impeding economic development.

When a society suffers from a law and order situation, the basic propensities such as to develop science to economic ends or to accept innovations are blunted and the society is deprived of the important stimuli and catalysis of growth, which have greater effectiveness and impact in the long-term perspective.

The imperatives of security, welfare and the constitutional order will clash among themselves but each involves potential conflict and choice: war versus the possible costs of not fighting; welfare versus growth including individual freedom versus order.

The execution of security, welfare and constitutional tasks requires resources. Resources are inherently scarce and must be drawn away from private consumption and private investment. One has to appreciate the critical role that the rule of law and equitable enforcement of legislation play in effecting lasting economic reforms and building democratic institutions.

Economies function within a broad institutional setting and one has to focus on the role institutional settings play in determining the character of economic performance.

The government being an indivisible entity, its developmental and administrative roles cannot be separated. It is now being widely recognised that without maintaining rule of law and creating conditions of peace, no developmental activity can take place in either the public or the private sector.

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equivocal in providing him security. But this is not the point. The democratic polity that India is guarantees the freedom of speech. Some fundamentalists, who had taken umbrage against his book, *The Satanic Verses*, made the entire Muslim community a hostage. Liberal Muslims never speak out although they are vociferous in condemning Hindus on any act of omission or commission.

The Supreme Court has said: "The personal liberty of an individual is the most precious and prized right guaranteed under the constitution." The Deoband seminary should realise if it has not so far, that in a secular society the constitution is above fatwa. M.F. Husain met more or less the same fate at the hands of Hindu fanatics. All such voices are marginal and do not represent the majority.

Free expression was violated at the Symbiosis College of Arts and Commerce which cancelled the screening of a documentary on Kashmir. The institute had received a notice from the Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) which objected to the screening of the documentary, calling it "separatist." The documentary -- *Jashn-e-Azadi* by Sanjay Kak -- spoke against the army and in a way justified terrorists' functioning in the Valley. (In protest, I am resigning from the position of Professor Emeritus in Journalism at Symbiosis).

No doubt, the space for free expression is shrinking all over the world. Yet I always thought that India would be an oasis in the desert of suppression and restriction on free expression. The fanatics and a weak government have proved me wrong. In Rushdie's case, the UP election aggravated the problem because the state has nearly 15% of Muslim electorate while the screening of Kashmir documentary had to be cancelled to placate the Hindutva crowd.

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# The political economy of disorder

# The right to say

HOW free is the media or, for that matter, how free is the right to express one-self? This is the question

My worry is that the media is becoming a part of the establishment. In a free society, the press has a duty to inform the public without fear or favour. At times it is an unpleasant job, but it has to be performed because a free society is founded on free information. If the press were to publish only government handouts or official statements, there would be nothing to pinpoint lapses, deficiencies or mistakes. In fact, the

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Somewhat those who occupy high positions labour under the belief that they -- and they alone -- know what the nation should be told and when. And they get annoyed if any news which they do not like appears in print. Their first attempt is to contradict it and dub it mischievous. Later, when it is realised that a mere denial will not convince even the most gullible, a lame explanation is offered that things have not been put "in proper perspective."

I served the first Press Council. Every member felt that the Press Council should be without teeth. It was founded as a body of peers who should judge peers. Justice Katju's argument that it should have powers to penalise defeats the very purpose of the Council. It is not a court. There are already enough of