

## SUNDAY POUCH

## Honouring 'movers and shakers'

### Business leaders want change

STEPPING into its 12th year, the annual business awards jointly organised by The Daily Star and DHL Express bestowed accolades to business leaders. The primary objective of hosting this annual event is to showcase achievements of business leaders, as ambassadors of good ethical practices in the commercial world. We congratulate this year's winners in all categories, in particular, Mr. Mahbubur Rahman for lifetime achievement in promoting business, Mr. M.A. Samad awarded posthumously for lifetime contribution to the insurance sector, and Mr. Latifur Rahman, Chairman of the Transcom group for bringing a unique honour and recognition to our business community by his being awarded the prestigious Oslo Business for Peace award, whose jury board members are all Nobel Laureates.

The winners of this year's awards did however carry some special messages for the government. Their thoughts, as expressed during the event, revolved around pressing issues in three areas, namely, lack of infrastructure in terms of communication; dearth of gas and electricity; and the rapidly deteriorating political and law and order situation in the country. Businessmen were unanimous in their demand for better roads & highways and overhauling of the long-neglected railway, for it is railway in most other countries that is the carrier of choice when it comes to cost-effective and timely delivery of bulk goods. For any meaningful growth in industry and new investment, whether local or foreign, power is a prerequisite and Bangladesh has been faltering on this issue for many years in a row. Last but not the least, the issue of law and order: the constant state of confrontational politics between the two major political blocs has led to ever-growing unrest leading to 'hartals' and violence resulting in production stoppages and loss of business activity. Added to this, one cannot but emphasise on the ever-present 'extortionist' activities by various political and criminal elements that business entities are subjected to.

The message that the business community has conveyed to policymakers in a nutshell is all that is needed from the government is an improved infrastructure and an enabling environment, and the private sector will do the rest, i.e. it will arrange its own finance for new business ventures and the current rate of GDP can potentially be doubled from the present 6% to nearly 12%.

## Judiciary smarting under pending cases

### ICT holds key to reducing number

WE have it on the authority of no less a person than Chief Justice Md Muzammel Hossain that the massive backlog of cases in all courts and tribunals including the Supreme Court stands at more than 21 lakh.

In other words, dispensation of justice is far outpaced by the inflow and piling up of all kinds of court cases, civil, criminal and appeal-related. This is tantamount to justice delayed being justice denied. In physical terms, this means jails full of under trial prisoners, poor conviction rates and reduced access to justice for the poor, women, children and other vulnerable segments of the people.

Speedy and quality dispensation of justice has as much to do with case management and court administration as with synergies between the Bar and the Bench working towards delivering justice.

Automation can be enormously helpful in the area of case management and court administration including case list preparation, transcription of orders and judgments and their publication on the internet.

Materially, ICT has the potential of making the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, transparent and accountable.

It sounds like a panacea for all ills. The possibilities are tremendous but realising them requires removal of certain impediments: the first one is lack of IT infrastructure and skilled manpower; secondly, habitual indifference, if not an outright reluctance to accepting change in professional culture adapting to IT technology; and thirdly, is the tendency towards repeated date re-fixations which are inherent in our case handling culture.

Above all, there is the question of financing development of IT infrastructure across the whole spectrum of the judiciary.

Mere maintenance of websites, that too constantly requiring updates, cannot take the judiciary too far. What is needed is addressing the problem areas and seriously imbibing automation. Those at the receiving end of the benefit would also have to be familiarised with IT to maxi-

# Our Don Quixotes and their windmills



ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

THOSE of us who were students of English literature are familiar with the story of Don Quixote. The tale is a comedy about

a mentally deranged man who thinks he is a knight in shining armour. Whenever he sees a windmill, he imagines it as a ferocious giant with huge arms, intent on killing him. So he attacks these windmills riding on horseback with his long spear. When he demobilises a windmill he thinks that he has killed a giant. Along with Don Quixote rides his servant Sancho Panza. In the story, Sancho represents "common sense" and keeps telling Don of his mistake. But Don the "giant killer" ignores his advice and repeats the mistake.

The writer of this 16th century tale was Miguel de Cervantes. It was written during Spain's golden age, when chivalry was seen as a great quality in a gentleman. Don Quixote had read so much about chivalry that he became convinced that by attacking the windmills he was being extraordinarily chivalrous.

This story has lessons for us, in the context of present day Bangladesh, and can be related to some shenanigans of a section of our politicians.

These politicians, for unknown reasons, are today "tilting" their verbal spears at imaginary windmills (read windmill as "enemy"). They do not seem to know what they are saying. They think it is "chivalrous" to attack individuals and institutions which do not enjoy high esteem of their leaders. But the people of this country are constantly cautioning them about their behaviour. But they act deaf when such advice is given. Like the wise counsel given by Sancho Panza, the people's advice is ignored.

For these politicians are out to please

their superiors. This is evident when they make these verbal attacks either in the presence, or at least within the hearing or listening distance, of their leaders. These politicians feel that they are likely to be rewarded for their "chivalrous" acts by their mentors, in future.

But what is unforgivable is that by their utterances, which in many ways are irrelevant, they are confusing the common man. He finds that these politicians are leveling various accusations against institutions which for decades served as icons to millions. In the name of correcting inadequacies in these icons, these politicians are designing run-of-the-mill institutions that will perhaps not have the vision and ability to combat poverty, gender inequality and social disharmony, which the icons were wont to do. These politicians may

could bag such a prize. How ridiculous is the proposition. It may be that in the past the Nobel Prize for peace was awarded to persons or institutions that may not have rightly deserved it. But they were more of an exception than the rule. Interestingly, the Prize was never challenged seriously by politicians from the country of the recipient.

The procedures followed by the Nobel Committee to award the Nobel Prize are well laid down and meticulously followed. There is no scope for favoring anyone as they are closely vetted after determining that those awarded do indeed deserve it. This is a world class prize and the Committee does not select casually. We, therefore, feel appalled when we are told that the Nobel Committee has selected an undeserving person or institution for this

cussion on this within the Parliament's hallowed halls. Let evidence be produced and let the public be privy to the accusations. Let the awardees or their representatives appear and give their response. It is not appropriate that these politicians start cleaning their dirty linen in public, outside the parliament.

The world should not get an impression that we squabble over petty matters. Indeed, if there are reasons to feel wronged by this award we must persuade the recipients to give it up. Otherwise, it is best to keep the peace. We wonder what Bangabandhu, if he was alive, would have thought of this.

The story of Don Quixote may seem farcical on the surface. But the novel has a serious message for all. It essentially is a satire on orthodoxy and veracity. It also deals with the serious theme of deception. It moves beyond story-telling and explores the character of individuals. In that sense when these politicians are spouting venom we can see some facets of their character, their political orientation, as well as their priorities.

Today, Bangladesh is face to face with a number of crises. There is still not enough electricity to run our mills and factories. Our roads, railway and waterways are in a state of disrepair. Prices of essentials are high, which is putting the common man under great stress. There is rampant corruption and poor governance. Our government has its hand full. The ruling political party has very little time in hand to resolve these problems before it faces the electorate in one and half years.

In the midst of all this stand our Don Quixotes. They are wasting our nation's time dwelling on peripheral issues or non-issues. This is not the time for practical jokes.

Let these politicians take heed or become the "rubbish" of history.

The writer is a former Ambassador and a regular commentator on contemporary issues. E-mail: ashfaq303@gmail.com

*The story of Don Quixote moves beyond story-telling and explores the character of individuals. In that sense when some politicians are spouting venom we can see some facets of their character, their political orientation, as well as their priorities.*

have forgotten that people have long memory and deep insights. They are unlikely to forgive those who were instrumental in weakening these institutions for their political ends. So when the time comes they are more likely to vote them out of their political positions. The fact is that these politicians are unable to stomach the individual names that have become associated with the successful institutions.

The most recent outburst is about the way people or institutions are chosen for awarding the Nobel Prize for peace. These politicians suggest that if anyone has got the Nobel Prize for peace for building such institutions it is more a fluke instead of the result of hard work. It has been hinted that if you are friendly to the Nobel Committee you

most prestigious prize. Those who say so are only exposing their ignorance.

So why this vilification and why such vicious attack on the institution and the person who have received this ultimate award? Both the person and the institution are ours. In a way it is more of an honour bestowed on our beloved country. It recognises the fact that Bangladesh is really a giant killer as it is now winning the war against poverty, which for centuries has been a scourge in our region.

However, if any person here feels aggrieved or dissatisfied with the work done by the person or the institution and who have been given the Nobel Prize, let these dissatisfied politicians initiate a parliamentary debate on the matter. Let us have an intelligent dis-

# The need for conflict resolution in ending the War on Terror

MARK N. KATZ

THE Obama administration has placed increased emphasis on killing terrorists via drone attacks or other means. But this alone will not end the War on Terror. Terrorist organisations such as al-Qaeda and its many affiliates seem to have no trouble finding new recruits to take the place of those the US kills. Reducing, if not ending, the flow of new terrorist recruits, though, could occur through resolving the various local and regional conflicts that are linked to the overall War on Terror.

The resolution of any particular conflict would reduce the motivation of those to join or support radical Islamic groups for whom that one conflict is the most salient. If, for example, the Kashmir dispute could be resolved, a few Pakistani radicals might then take up arms for the Palestinian, Chechen, or some other cause -- but probably not the majority for whom Kashmir was their primary grievance. Similarly, most Palestinian radicals are primarily concerned about the Israel/Palestine issue, most Chechens are primarily concerned about the Chechen issue, etc. Resolving the component conflicts in the overall War on Terror would reduce the recruitment base for groups like al-Qaeda that want this conflict to continue.

Yet while resolving the local and regional conflicts linked to it would undoubtedly be the best way to defuse the War on Terror, this approach has so far proven to be exceptionally difficult, or even futile in some cases. If resolving all -- or, indeed, any -- of the individual conflicts linked to the War on Terror were simple, this would already have been accomplished. And if this could

have been accomplished in enough cases, what has become the all-consuming War on Terror may have either been a much smaller scale affair, or may not have occurred at all.

The intractability of local and regional conflicts at present, though, is not something new. There were also many such conflicts during the Cold War. Back then, the pervasiveness of the Soviet-American dimension in virtually all of the world's conflicts was so great that their local roots and causes were often overlooked. Thus, when Soviet-American relations dramatically improved at the very end of the Cold War, hope emerged that many of the Third World's hitherto intractable con-

Cambodia. In the Introduction, I noted that there was general agreement among the contributors that, "because each regional conflict is unique, successful methods for fully or partially resolving one conflict will not necessarily work for others."

What is interesting about this volume at present, though, is not what either I or any of the other contributors wrote in it over twenty years ago, but to observe what became of the six cases that we studied. Four of these cases are still not resolved. With North Korea issuing nuclear threats and China having grown more assertive, tension in the Asia Pacific region has only increased. An overall Arab-Israeli peace settlement still has not been achieved, and does

not impossible to resolve them either, though this can take a very long time. Longstanding local and regional conflicts linked to the War on Terror include the Israeli-Palestinian, Iraqi, Afghan, Yemeni, Somali, Indian-Pakistani, Chechen, and many others. Others still may erupt. Past experience suggests that while it may be possible -- with great effort -- to resolve some of them, resolving all or even most of them is highly unlikely any time soon. And those that are not resolved will continue to provide the best opportunities for al-Qaeda and its regional affiliates to attract new recruits into their ranks.

In order to successfully reduce the intensity and scope of the overall War on Terror, the US and its allies (both Muslim and non-Muslim) will need to deal with the many individual problems that compose it. Resolving or otherwise successfully dealing with any one problem will not end the War on Terror, but will serve to reduce its intensity and scope wherever this can be done. But how can each of the component problems that make up the War on Terror be resolved, ameliorated, or just contained?

What my colleagues and I in the US Institute of Peace project observed two decades ago, that "because each regional conflict is unique, successful methods for fully or partially resolving one conflict will not necessarily work for others," is still true today. Each of the individual problems that comprise the War on Terror will have to be dealt with individually; there is, unfortunately, no one magic formula that will resolve them all.

The writer is Professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University, and is the author of *Leaving without Losing: The War on Terror after Iraq and Afghanistan*.

*Each of the individual problems that comprise the War on Terror will have to be dealt with individually; there is, unfortunately, no one magic formula that will resolve them all.*

licts could then be resolved. Needless to say, many of them were not.

A personal anecdote illustrates just how intractable some of these conflicts have proven to be. The United States Institute of Peace commissioned me to organise a series of seminars during the 1989-90 academic year on the opportunities and obstacles for Soviet-American conflict resolution in the Third World. In 1991, the papers for this project were published in a book that I edited entitled, *Soviet-American Conflict Resolution in the Third World*. The chapters in the book discussed several conflicts (or conflict-prone situations): security in Asia and the Pacific, an Arab-Israeli peace settlement, Afghanistan, Southern Africa, the Horn of Africa, and

not appear likely to be any time soon. Afghanistan is still in the midst of a seemingly unending war. And the Horn of Africa is wracked by chronic conflict.

By contrast, conflict resolution did occur in Southern Africa, but fighting in Angola continued from the end of the Cold War until 2002. In addition, conflict resolution in Cambodia was reasonably successful, though implementation of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords required direct United Nations administration of this country in 1992-93.

Comparing the status of these six cases at the end of the Cold War with their status now shows that there is no guarantee that regional and local conflicts can be resolved even after going on for decades. On the other hand, it is

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May 20

**1882**  
The Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy is formed.

**1902**  
Cuba gains independence from the United States. Tomás Estrada Palma becomes the country's first President.

**1927**  
Treaty of Jeddah: the United Kingdom recognizes the sovereignty of King Ibn Saud in the Kingdoms of Hejaz and Nejd, which later merge to become the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**1989**  
The Chinese authorities declare martial law in the face of pro-democracy demonstrations, setting the scene for the Tiananmen Square massacre.

**1990**  
The first post-Communist presidential and parliamentary elections are held in Romania.