

## STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

## Limon's continuing woes

These must end, with justice for the victim

**A**FTER over a year and a half -- a lifetime for the then 16-year-old -- in which he was shot by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), his leg amputated, dragged to the courts, the case filed by his mother shot down, Limon Hossain is now being advised to seek clemency. Clemency, in the two cases filed by Rab -- one for possessing firearms, another for obstructing the duties of law enforcers -- after they shot and maimed him in a case of mistaken identity. Cases which, based on their being baseless, should have been withdrawn. In fact, the cases against him are progressing at greater speed than the attempt-to-murder case filed by his mother against Rab personnel -- a case, if clemency is to be considered for Limon, that has to be withdrawn.

The incidents surrounding Limon are baffling, to say the least. Rab's position, and the government's tacit acceptance of it, is shocking. Baffling, because the obvious is being ignored. The fact that Limon was and is the victim, the fact that Limon is the one seeking justice, seems to be eluding those in authority. Shocking, because the case has been turned around not to deliver justice to the victim but to justify and vindicate the wanton actions of the perpetrators.

Only if Limon withdraws the case filed by his mother against those who attempted to kill her son, only if he seeks clemency in the false cases he has been charged with, will he be able to continue his studies, to go on with his life -- with his one leg and the memories of the mental and physical torture to which he was subjected. This is not the justice being sought by Limon, or which every conscientious citizen of the country is hoping he will get. We cannot stress enough to the government, that it is past high time that those responsible face the consequences of their actions and that Limon be relieved of this endless persecution by those in positions of power.

## Helplessness before Sandy's full fury

We stand by American people

**W**E express our deepest feeling and sympathy for the hurricane ravaged people of the US states along its eastern coast.

The death toll reaching as high as 40, New York alone is counting its dead at 18. But for timely evacuation in many places the casualties would have been much higher.

No stranger to frequent natural calamities, we Bangladeshis can feel what millions of people dislocated by the superstorm Sandy are going through.

What unprecedented havoc Sandy with its 90 mph winds has wreaked, given the fact that even a tropical storm of 74 mph can release energy equivalent to 10,000 nuclear bombs!

Compounding the rescue work the storm has also been accompanied by a mix of blizzard and fire in places.

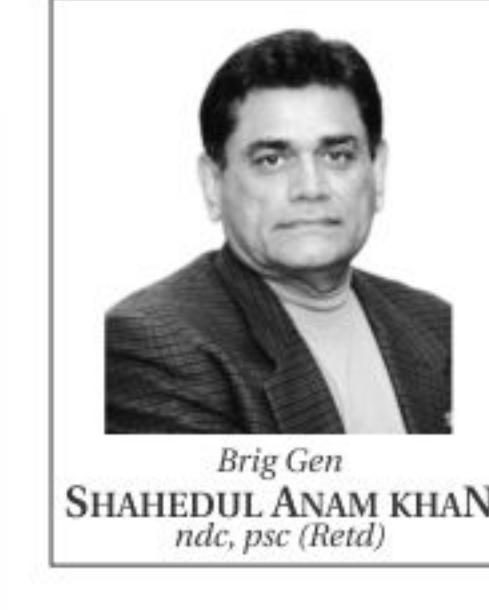
Transportation across New York, New Jersey and elsewhere has been crippled, and some eight million people remained without power. Businesses were suspended and the New York Stock Exchange resumed operation after two days' closure, unprecedented since 1888.

The economic loss from the hurricane may exceed \$20 billion while the cost of post-storm clean-up operation may come to astronomical proportions.

Little wonder, with the presidential election hardly a week away, incumbent President Obama and his Republican rival Mitt Romney have suspended polls campaign to concentrate more on post-storm relief activities.

From our own experience in fighting natural calamities through the ages, we greatly come to appreciate the American people who have shown great solidarity and resilience in facing the monster hurricane.

Climatologists should put their heads together to assess if this hurricane has added any new dimension to



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**L**IMON'S case has brought our legal system under scrutiny. Regrettably, much of the common man's sufferings stem from the distorted (I was

about to say flawed) legal system. But if one were to look at the system deeply, a system which we have inherited, but which nonetheless has served us fairly well except when we tried to keep some people above the law, and perhaps some people below it, it will be difficult to find too many flaws in it.

What we have managed to do with our (dis)ingenuity is to bend the rules and skirt the laws to suit our need. In spite of the need to keep up with the changing times, one finds little compulsion for newer ones, only the need for implementing the laws impartially across the board. And nowhere more than in this country is the proverb, "Show me the man and I'll show you the law" more valid.

One might even wonder, reviewing some sensational cases in recent times in Bangladesh, whether we are not coming to a stage where we are faced with a situation that renders Beria's (head of Stalin's most dreaded secret police) saying: "Show me the man, and I'll show you the crime," almost relevant. Reportedly, Beria could find some law that his intended victim had broken. Just for the statistics, and I quote: "Stalin 'legally' executed nearly a million people that way." In Bangladesh the reverse is also true. There are always ways to keep someone out of the reach of law.

Let us examine Limon's case and see whether or not we are justified in our assertion. Limon is the unfortunate young man from Jhalakathi who is suffering because of a case of mistaken identity; or perhaps it was deliberately done as a vendetta of the



ing party toting guns in front of the police not arrested, some of them were also seen with the DC Police in a public place.

But perhaps I am nitpicking on details. Let us instead look at the irony that has been added to the already painful episode in the young man's life.

Limon has been advised by none other than the DC of Jhalakathi to apply for clemency in the two cases he is facing. And he has been assured, again by the DC, that he would recommend Limon's case to the home ministry. But, and here is the ironic twist, Limon's mother has to withdraw the case she had filed with Rajapur Police Station, accusing six Rab personnel of attempting to murder her son.

While there are instances in recent times of convicted murderers in death row being given the reprieve not only from the rope but also let off completely from jail, one has not come across a more ludicrous situation of an innocent person being asked to beg for mercy for an alleged crime he has not committed. If anything, it is the state that should offer Limon an unconditional apology for the wrong that has been done to him and compensate him.

There is no harm in owning up the mistake. If there has been a criminal negligence or intention on the part of some members of Rab they must be dealt with as per law. Why should a state agency malign itself for the act of a few of its members? No individual can be bigger than the institution he or she belongs to. And no institution can be bigger than the state it is a part of. And unless the basic right of a man to be considered equal before law is guaranteed, we cannot rejoice, unlike Macaulay, "in a merciful age, in an age in which cruelty is abhorred, and in which pain, even when deserved, is inflicted reluctantly and from a sense of duty."

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so-called "informer" who identified Limon as the man that Rab was after that day on March 23, 2011.

We have the words of Rab boss that Limon was innocent and he was shot accidentally. In spite of that, the wrath of the state has descended on the poor man. He even doesn't feel safe to stay in his own house and has moved out elsewhere. He has been charged on March 23 last year, on two counts, of possessing fire arms and obstructing the law enforcing agencies from performing their duty. And to rub the matter in, murder charges against Limon's family were filed on August 30 this year with the police by one Ibrahim Howlader, reportedly the Rab source. Thankfully, the Jhalakathi Senior Judicial Magistrate ordered the

police not to record the murder charges.

One does not know whether the police found Limon in possession of illegal firearms, and we have not heard the description of the firearm, it can mean many things, when they shot him while he was tending to his cattle in a field near his home. One seldom hears of Bangladeshi "cowboys" rearing their stocks with firearms at hand. And one does not know how much obstruction a man with a bullet injury to his leg can offer to a well armed contingent of law enforcing agencies.

Simply juxtapose Limon's case with the shootings in Rajshai University early this month. Not only were the student leaders belonging to the rul-

## | The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

## Time to get tough on Iraq

NUSSAIYAH YOUNIS

**T**HE next president of the United States must fundamentally reassess America's broken relationship with Iraq.

Under two American presidents now, the regime of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has operated in an atmosphere of immunity while the US government focused on pacifying Iraq and finding its way to leave. Fearful of how criticisms of Iraq reflect on American policy, and now resolutely opposing any re-entanglement in Iraqi affairs, Washington's approach has been simply to look the other way while Iraq runs roughshod over America's strategic interests in the region.

The current clash of interests is over Syria. It is both right and in the interests of the US that Bashar Assad's brutal reign there comes to an end. And at the very least, the US should be able to prevent its own allies from aiding the transfer of arms to the Assad regime.

An intelligence report cited by Reuters last month said that Iraq has been allowing Iran to funnel "personnel and tens of tons of weapons" through Iraqi airspace and into Syria "on almost a daily basis." And according to The New York Times, buses carrying pilgrims to a Shiite shrine in Syria are reported to have also carried weapons, supplies and fighters to aid the Assad regime.

Of course, the Obama administration is beseeching Iraq to give up this practice, but the response should have been ferocious. There ought to have been an unequivocal condemnation of Iraq's behavior and a demand for the Iraqis to desist immediately or to face the loss of their country's friendship with the US. That

would include losing the \$1.7 billion of American aid now destined for Iraq and an end to arms dealings with the US.

By enabling the rearming of the Assad regime, the Maliki government is responsible for prolonging a conflict that has already exacted a devastating human toll, destabilising Lebanon and is threatening to draw in Turkey and Jordan.

Iraq could have helped more. The pressure Iran has sustained over its nuclear programme is destabilising its economy, and Iran cannot afford to alienate its next-door neighbour. So if Iraq had seriously objected to such

regime that brokered his own return to power, while also guarding against the possibility that the rise of a Sunni government in Syria could reignite the Iraqi civil war. So it is up to the US to change Maliki's calculations to bring them in line with American interests.

To do that, the next American president needs to increase the costs to Iraq of pursuing its current activities. He can, and should, threaten imminent financial sanction and public humiliation of the Maliki government.

Even apart from the Syrian crisis, the US should be getting tough on the Maliki regime to prevent Iraq's descent into authoritarianism.

*By whatever methods, the next American president must start holding Maliki's government to account for its appalling abuse of power inside Iraq and for its morally bankrupt role in enabling the rearming of Bashar Assad next door.*

uses of its airspace, it is difficult to imagine that Iran would not have complied. And although signs of rising Iranian influence in Iraqi politics were evident almost immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein, pan-Shiite solidarity is not the only thought that animates the country. Iraqi nationalism is there too, often expressing itself in virulent anti-Iranian rhetoric. Maliki's government may be happy to play the sectarian card when it suits him, but he is ultimately driven by a single-minded commitment to ensuring the survival of his own regime.

With that in mind, Maliki is not making an irrational choice in allowing assistance for the Assad regime next door. He is supporting an Iranian

Although Maliki's first term had its successes, including the "Charge of the Knights" attack against Shiite militias in Basra in 2008, Prime Minister Maliki has become increasingly consumed by his own dictatorial ambitions. And a number of his actions have heightened sectarian tensions in Iraq. He cut a deal with the extremist Shiite party led by Moktada al-Sadr. He reneged on a promise to meaningfully include the Sunnis-dominated Iraqiya list in government. He presided over what's being seen as a witch hunt against leading Sunni politicians, culminating in the sentencing to death in absentia of Iraq's vice president, Tariq al-Hashemi.

In addition, Maliki's government is plagued by incompetence, corruption

and contempt for human rights; ordinary citizens are fast losing confidence in the power of the democratic system. Maliki has further undermined Iraq's independent institutions, such as the electoral commission and the Iraqi central bank, by bringing them under his direct custodianship. And, most dangerously of all, he is concentrating power over Iraq's entire security apparatus in his hands by refusing to appoint permanent ministers to lead the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of the Interior and National Security Council.

Maliki is, in short, presiding over a disintegration of Iraq's representative political system, and the US is doing nothing about it. In 2011, in his speech marking the end of the Iraq War, President Obama promised to "help Iraqis strengthen institutions that are just, representative and accountable." The US only stands to gain by honouring that promise, and it has many options at its disposal that do not require an extensive re-entanglement in Iraqi affairs. The US has the power to discredit the Maliki regime on the world stage. In addition to restricting aid, it could bolster its support for legitimate Iraqi opposition parties.

By whatever methods, the next American president must start holding Maliki's government to account for its appalling abuse of power inside Iraq and for its morally bankrupt role in enabling the rearming of Bashar Assad next door.

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## THE DAILY STAR THIS DAY IN HISTORY

November 1

1814 Congress of Vienna opens to re-draw the European political map after the defeat of France, in the Napoleonic Wars.

1922 The last sultan of the Ottoman Empire, Mehmed VI, abdicates.

1953 Andhra Pradesh attained statehood on 1 November 1953, with Kurnool as its capital.

1954 The Front de Libération Nationale fires the first shots of the Algerian War of Independence.

1956 The Indian states Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Mysore state are formally created under the States Reorganisation Act.

1973 The Indian state of Mysore is renamed as Karnataka to represent all the regions within Karunadu.

1993 The Maastricht Treaty takes effect, formally establishing the European Union.