

## BASIC Bank chairman resigning

### He should face prosecution

GIVEN the ruinous state a successful specialized state-run bank -- the BASIC Bank -- has been brought into, submission of resignation by its chairman Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu appears somewhat diversionary having regard to an outcry among knowledgeable circles for his dismissal and prosecution. There is no way one can trifle with the irregularities that sent the bank on a tailspin with a loss upwards of Tk.4,500 crore, as estimated by Bangladesh Bank.

This scandal has the familiar ring of the other scams that preceded it, which only means that the government has failed to learn any lesson from the past blunders in the financial sector. The serious pitfall has been in the appointment of chairmen and members of the boards. The selection was tainted by opaque choices, based more on political loyalty than on professional integrity and competence.

BASIC Bank is a glaring case in point. It was one of the best-run banks until 2009. With Sheikh Abdul Hye assuming office in that year, the bank in less than five years got itself mired in financial irregularities. The types of malpractice under his allegedly single-handed control included grant of loans overriding recommendations of the credit committee, inflating mortgage prices as collateral, and even issuing loans to clients before opening an account.

What appears particularly indefensible was granting him second term on the back of his irregularities-ridden first term.

The finance minister appears seized with the issue. He has said: "Resignation does not give a solution-the prosecution will go on." Indeed, this discredited chairman must be held to account and made to face the full force of the law.

## Attack on Int'l CHT Commission

### Violence must be condemned

TWO officials of the International Chittagong Hill Tracts Commission and a police officer were injured in Rangamati yesterday during their visit to the hill region. The attack was allegedly carried out by Bangalee settlers in the region. We condemn the attack on the commission and hope that law enforcement looks into the matter and punishes the perpetrators accordingly. Although the organizations of Bangalee settlers who oppose the commission's work have denied their involvement in the attack, it is seen as an impediment towards bringing peace and inclusivity in the region.

The International CHT Commission has been working from 2008 with a mandate to "promote respect for human rights, democracy and for restoration of civil and political rights, participatory development and land rights in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh." The committee's activities have been termed 'controversial' and 'partisan' by the Bangalee settlers organizations, when in fact they are working towards a collective harmony for the region. The commission has been following the implementation of the CHT Peace Accord of 1997 and it is regrettable to see resistance to their moves. Illegal land grabbing and wealth amassing by vested quarters has threatened to create anarchy in the hill tracts, according to the committee and we hope the authorities will place the matter under scrutiny to unravel the elements behind the violence and persuade them to see the wisdom of dialogue. We hope the necessary steps are taken in order for the commission to continue their work unabated.

## Arrogant Shakib

MUHAMMAD ZEESHAN MOHSEN

SHAKIB al Hasan has threatened to pull out of international cricket. Why? Because his arrogance and his newly found wealth seem to have overpowered his senses -- sense of nationalism, decency and of honouring the rules of the body that employs him, which is the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

This behaviour of Shakib hasn't come as a shock to me, because the malady of arrogance, self-entitlement and being above the law and protesting everything that goes against personal convenience plagues every rung of our society. The culture of threat and intimidation is nothing new to us, we have mastered the art of creating unnecessary bedlam. This is the biggest gift of the kind of democracy that the leaders of this country have preached and practiced in the past twenty odd years. Such arrogance and act of defiance is the biggest impediment to governance by rule of law, establishing peace and security for the people and, most importantly, self-discipline.

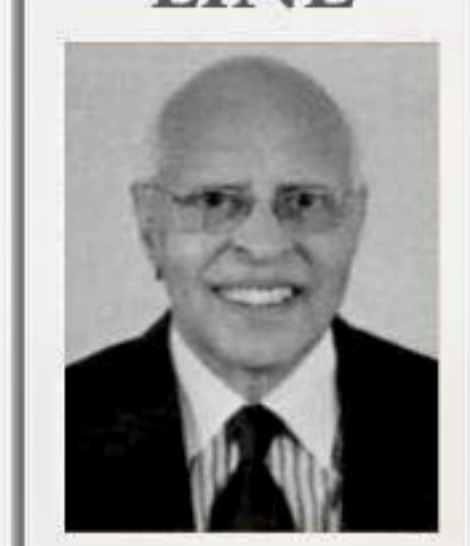
Shakib is earning a lot more money playing in the leagues, county cricket and from endorsements, but what he fails to realise is that the provenance of his fame and his popularity comes from his Bangladeshi fans. If such attitude persists then soon the wells of fame and money will dry up for Shakib, he will be a wasted talent. The BCB should take whatever stern measure it is mandated to under its rules and set an example. We need superstar cricketers and role models such as Sachin Tendulkar, and not a wannabe Bollywood superstar performing for himself alone at the expense of the team. This incident, along with a surfeit of other controversies in which Shakib has lately found himself, exposes the self-individualistic aspirations of this man -- which is not a bad thing, but when it brings disrepute to the nation I believe the wings of those flying high should be hemmed.

Other rising stars within our team should take notice of this and learn to keep their heads on their shoulders. They should learn to be humble and ensure that their humility equals their fame. Cricketing talent alone did not make Sachin Tendulkar, what made him was his sense of belonging, his love for the game, his deep sense of gratitude to his national team, including the selectors and managers, and the pride that he took whenever he wore that blue shirt. Shakib needs to learn the same.

Muhammad Zeeshan Mohsen, Barrister Inner Temple.

# Strange bedfellows: US-Iran cooperate on crisis in Iraq

## BOTTOM LINE



BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

When national interests are at stake, states are not hesitant to cooperate with adversaries, and this has been amply illustrated by the recent joint diplomatic efforts between Washington and Tehran over the chaos in Iraq. It represents a dramatic turnaround for the two opponents whose relations, frozen for several decades, have only begun to thaw over the past year.

The US and Iranian officials reportedly held talks on June 16 in Vienna over the advance of Islamist insurgents in Iraq on the sidelines of separate negotiations about Iran's nuclear programme. "We are open to engaging the Iranians," said a senior State Department official, who characterised the discussions as brief. "These engagements will not include military coordination or strategic determinations about Iraq's future over the heads of the Iraqi people," the US official said, on condition of anonymity.

Since June 9, Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham/Syria (ISIS) is capitalising on a wave of Sunni discontent with the Shiite-dominated governments that have ruled Iraq since Hussein's ouster in 2003. The group aims to set up a Caliphate in a continuous stretch of territory from Sunni-dominated Anbar province in Iraq to Raqqa province in northeast Syria. After capturing Iraq's second-largest city, Mosul, it had advanced south along the Tigris River toward Baghdad but in recent days their march has been halted by the Iraqi army.

After the US invasion in 2003, the Sunni-administered secular Iraq has turned into a Shi'a-dominated Iraq which has come under the influence of Iran as most of the current rulers of Iraq took refuge in Iran during the regime of Saddam Hussain. Thus, most importantly, the dynamics of the region has changed and the power of Iran has increased in the region. Syria, Iraq and Iran have been described as "Shi'ite Crescent" by the Sunni Arab World led by Saudi Arabia.

The sectarian warfare between Shi'as and Sunnis has gone unabated in Iraq because of the reluctance of Maliki to share power with Sunnis. Even the Sunni vice president had to flee from Iraq when he was being arrested on reportedly politically motivated crimes.

Meanwhile, faced with the threat of Sunni extremists in Iraq, Iran sprang into action to aid its besieged Arab ally. It reportedly deployed Revolutionary Guards units to Iraq, Iranian security officials said. At least three battalions of the Quds Forces, the overseas branch of the Guards, were dispatched, the security officials said. Moreover, Iran has reportedly sent drones and arms to Iraq to prop up Baghdad.

On June 24, when the US Secretary of State John Kerry requested the Kurdish regional government to back Baghdad to support the formation of a new national government, the Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani reportedly said that Kurds were not willing to support tyrannical rule from Baghdad. Recently he announced that it could hold a referendum to declare an independent Kurdistan on the northern and northeastern borders of Iraq.

Under Iraq's political system, the prime minister is a Shiite, the speaker of the parliament a Sunni and the president a Kurd. All three blocs have said that they want to know who the other will nominate before naming its own candidate. Sunnis and Kurds walked out of the Iraqi Parliament's first session, jeopardising efforts at putting together a unity government to stop Iraq from breaking up.

Meanwhile, Iraq's highest Shia authority Ayatollah Sistani, avoided criticising Maliki directly, but called for new and 'effective' government. Increasingly, Maliki's former allies believe he cannot lead an inclusive government that can draw minority Sunnis away from support for the fighters as they head toward the capital, Baghdad.

Embattled Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki defied a wave of opposition to his Shiite-led government and declared he would not go. In a statement read on Iraqi state TV, a day after the autonomous Kurds in the north virtually bid goodbye to Iraq, Maliki said he would remain faithful to voters who chose his State of Law Shiite coalition in elections that were held in April.

"The voters have shown that the premiership is for me, on no account will I relinquish it," said Maliki, who is trying for a third term. Maliki's defiance came even after his greatest political foe, former parliament chief Osama al-Nujaifi, a Sunni, withdrew his candidacy for another term, saying he was doing so in hopes Maliki would do the same. The premier has blamed Sunni Saudi Arabia for backing jihadi fighters.

The Obama administration has signaled that it wants a new government in Iraq without Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, convinced that the Shiite leader is unable to reconcile with the nation's Sunni minority and stabilise a volatile political landscape. A growing number of US Arab allies, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, are reportedly pressing the White House to pull out its support for Maliki.

Any US military action in support of Maliki in Iraq will be seen as cooperating with Iran and it could also alienate Washington's allies in Sunni-dominated countries like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Jordan. Furthermore, US allies in Israel and the Middle East are also concerned that any cooperation between Washington and Tehran on Iraq could compromise the negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme.

to placate Islamabad by giving it both military and economic aid. But Islamabad's suspicion that it has some ulterior motive to serve is responsible for anti-US sentiments in the country. Had India and Pakistan been on better terms they could have jointly influenced the events in West Asia and thwarted Washington's ambition to be an arbiter.

In politics or in other fields the vacuum is filled sooner than later. Al-Qaeda guiding the Taliban movement has plugged the gap. The whole region faces the danger of fundamentalism spreading and even influencing the youth as is happening in Pakistan where young boys are growing beards to confirm their Islamic identity.

This poses a threat to India in the sense that 15-16 crore Muslims in the country are beginning to draw their inspiration from what is happening to Afghanistan and northern parts of Pakistan. And since India has taken a turn ideologically to the right, as the parliamentary elections have shown, the distance between democratic India and the al-Qaeda inspired areas to its north will look unbridgeable as the days go by. Not only that, Hindu fundamentalism will become more assertive than it is today.

The idea of India, a democratic, pluralistic and egalitarian society will be endangered. Leaders and governments will mix religion with politics, something which it has successfully resisted all these years since independence, even though Partition was on the basis of religion.

That necessitates greater strengthening of secularism to stall fundamentalism, however limited it may be at this time. New Delhi's lack of initiative in West Asia to ensure better and democratic governance has weakened movements like the Arab Spring, which were against autocratic rule in most West Asian countries.

The call by Anjum-an-e-Haideri for volunteers to help defend the centres of Shia Islam in Iraq may invite a similar response among the Sunnis to get together to fight against the Shia consolidation. That may come later, but in the meanwhile the Shi'as' assertiveness for identity will set into motion a process which may strengthen religious appeals and their leaders.

It is ironic that even the radical Hindus are volunteering themselves to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Shi'as who say they want to form a human chain to protect the holy shrines of Karbala and Najaf in Iraq. The Shi'as, always feeling as if they were the underdog, should take heart from the example of such Hindus and try to influence New Delhi to take more interest in the problem than it has done so far.

New Delhi's say will help the Indians economically. There are two million of them occupying different jobs in the area. Any tension may jeopardise their future. This had happened before when Israel was resisting pressure of the US and the UK not to settle the Jews at Golden Heights or such other areas. This is the time when India can become proactive and send a special envoy to bring about rapprochement among the different leaders of both Shi'as and Sunnis. Otherwise, the radicals may win.

It did not vanish, it changed hands and maybe deposited to Swiss Bank. By the way, don't ask Mr. Muihith anything about it. He will dismiss it by terming it 'rubbish'!

Keep digging and mining, there are many more gold ingots to be found.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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### Ramadan price hike a shame for us

The holy month of Ramadan has begun. I think Bangladesh is the only country in the world where security has to be beefed up to contain crimes like mugging, kidnapping, robbery, etc, which strangely show a rising trend this month. Prices of essentials also go up, making life difficult for the common people, as businessmen want to make profits as much as possible.

What a shame! In this month people are supposed to purify themselves from all sorts of greed, pray to Almighty Allah for forgiveness for their wrongdoings, and reform themselves to become better persons, but what we see here is totally opposite. This attitude of ours must be changed.

NurJahan Chittagong

### Pvt. varsity students more privileged?

More than 3.14 lakh students are taking their degrees from the private universities. Most of the public university teachers also teach in the private universities and give those students higher marks. As a result, private university students have an average CGPA of 3.50 to 3.75. On the other hand, the same teachers give less marks to the students of public universities, which result in lower CGPA. It seems that teachers are more concerned about the private university students.

A recent report of TIB has also brought the matter to light. The report says private universities are involved in illegal transaction of money, from taking approval for setting up a university to awarding certificates to students. Ministry of education and UGC must look into the matters for public interest.

Misbah Uddin Sumon  
 Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management

### Comments on news report, "Fears over rise of extremism in Muslim nations," published on July 3, 2014

#### Hafeejul Alam

The strange riddle is that albeit all religious faiths preach peace and brotherhood for mankind, sinful minds hardly pay heed to that. Therefore, it's the moral obligation of the saner section of society, not just the religious leaders, to come forward and prevail upon those who usually averse to moral teachings.

#### Hardreality

If we separate religion from state and leave it as a private matter, we don't have to worry about this too much.

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### "Chaos from construction" (July 3, 2014)

#### Mohammad Rahman

The communications minister should be held responsible for the public sufferings on roads. We demand immediate respite from such sufferings.

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### "Nahid asks TIB to prove its findings" (July 4, 2014)

#### Hardreality

We know very well that investigators will not find anything negative. The minister is desperately trying to save his face, but at the cost of what?

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### "When protocol is cast aside . . ." (July 2, 2014)

#### Akhtar Shah

Sheer ignorance of these protocol-breakers leaves one numb! These people are as dark as an eclipse!

#### Molla A. Latif

And the Indian foreign minister maintained it hard.

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### "Tk 134 crore vanishes" (July 4, 2014)

#### Hardreality

Here is my prediction: ACC will not find any involvement of Mr. Haroon; some petty bank officials will be found guilty, of course, after a lengthy and time-consuming process. That's the way it goes, as almost every lawmaker's wealth has increased out of proportion and ACC does not even consider launching an investigation.

#### Aasfisarwar

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#### Snr Citizen

Keep digging and mining, there are many more gold ingots to be found.