

## Mind-boggling police outrage

*Culprit must face exemplary punishment*

THE horrifying narrative of a Mirpur police sub-inspector (SI) torturing a garment waste (jhut) trader to death has outraged the public. As reported, the police after raiding the victim's house perpetrated the extreme brutality in full view of his family members, including his five-year-old son. The child's entreaties to spare his father's life fell on deaf ears. The police went on with their ruthless treatment of Sujon from the house on their way to the police station and then in custody, until he breathed his last. Evidently, this is an abominable case of excesses committed by the police.

The sickening incident leaves one wondering if it was lawmen dealing with a citizen suspected of defaulting on law, or some thugs torturing a defenseless citizen. So far as the report goes, the victim was not a law-breaker. But even if he was one, does law permit the police to behave with a citizen in such diabolical manner? This is unabashed abuse of power by the police and a highly condemnable act.

The barbaric incident is also not a simple case of power abuse by the police, but one of serious violation of law as well as human rights by lawmen. When the police's job is to provide the constitutionally granted security to the citizens, what we have witnessed here is quite the reverse. This presents a very scary prospect before the people—erosion in the state's capacity to protect its citizens.

There is no room for taking the Mirpur police brutality and murder lightly. The government must institute an independent probe into the matter and ensure that responsible for the tragedy get exemplary punishment.

## We condemn the atrocity in Gaza

*World should move to stop it*

ACCORDING to the UN, the ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza has cost 177 lives so far and the number of injured has crossed 1,400. With more than three quarters of those having died being civilians, we are forced to ask what propels such barbarity against a largely unarmed populace? Though the Israeli cabinet has apparently proposed a unilateral ceasefire, the Hamas has reacted saying that Israel must lift its eight-year blockade and release hundreds of its people who have been jailed during the current conflict.

Pitting sophisticated weaponry on a defenceless people may go down well with the Israeli electorate but it wreaks disaster on innocent Palestinian civilians including women and children. PM Netanyahu's intention is clearly to destroy whatever little infrastructure Gaza has. Are we to assume that the Western world which claims itself as the guardian of human rights and dignity will sit idle as an overwhelmingly superior military force obliterates the Palestinians?

That it took the UN's Security Council three days to come up with a statement to address the humanitarian disaster in Gaza was little more than an apologetic statement, which is hugely disappointing. The time for collective action is now and the UN must speak with one voice and move decisively

## German football: Re-defined

SHAHRIAR FEROZE

GARY Lineker, the once prolific England striker, had defined football as: "a simple game: twenty-two men chase a ball for ninety minutes and at the end which the Germans win." Germany doesn't need your help; they'll probably win without it. The definition may not be true under all circumstances but at least in this World Cup it held out. It took around 24 years of painstaking wait to see my favourite team lifting the world cup. The wait was worth it?

Germany and German football both are understood differently in this part of the world. Most would say they are machines and have added only mechanical aspects to modern football which is not true. In Bangladesh, however, this perception of German football has been prevailing over a span of 3 decades. What happened concurrently during the over two decades of wait was I finished my school, college and university and experienced a team evolving out of the shadows of Matthauss and Klinsmann gradually reaching the heights for restoring their pride as world champions. And not only through sheer teamwork but passion which seemed controlled and disciplined. German football is a blend of a good number of ingredients, which apart from system and discipline are: patience, passion, skills, passing, scoring, and foremost playing so that others play and win it. Also to be noted is that German or European football never got branded in the sub-continent like the Latin football. It's because the frenetic Bangladeshi fans have always fancied the individual techniques, glamour and goal scoring success stories of a Maradona or a Messi. Undeniably where the star himself gets bigger than the team and it's this idol worship, which to a greater extent keeps the fans supporting either Brazil or Argentina.

It was just depressing to see what agony failing to score by an individual could inflict upon the Latin teams in the just concluded World Cup. And it's exactly this 'individual' factor that becomes more nakedly expressive in our country. You either explode in frenzy or indulge in everlasting grief for at least the next four years. Well this time the scene is moderate as Germany is not that admired and as the Latin shocks are too hard to absorb by their fans.

However, defining the German type of football still requires a bit more of explaining. From the lenses of a fan-cum-analyst this is the first time that the Germans have evidently experimented with Tiki-taka football (a style of play in football characterised by short passing and movement, working the ball through various channels for maintaining possession) and gave the style an added flavour of discipline, rhythm and tenacity. What makes a great game even greater is how you can make it more amusing by adding newer dimensions. The Germans have innovated and displayed their version of Tiki-taka football and the rest is as Lineker said, 'a game which the Germans win'.

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# A brief history of foreign ministers

## GROUND REALITIES



Syed Badrul Ahsan

Secretary of State William Rogers was to find in the Nixon era. He was studiously ignored. It was national security advisor Henry Kissinger who dominated foreign policy. At one point, Kissinger succeeded Rogers and went on to make his mark on global diplomacy.

There have been some long-serving foreign ministers who may not have been known for originality but whose sheer longevity in office made them somewhat a symbol of diplomacy. Andrei Gromyko became part of the Soviet foreign policy establishment in the 1940s and by 1957 was foreign minister under Nikita Khrushchev. He went on to serve a whole range of Soviet leaders --- Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko and Gorbachev. In his final years, he was pushed upstairs by Gorbachev, to serve as president of the Soviet Union. In China, there was Marshal Chen Yi, who became rather ubiquitous through his forays into Asia and Africa in the tumultuous 1960s. Not much, though, is known of his contributions, if any, to the making of Chinese foreign policy in the years of Mao Zedong and Zhou En-lai. Those were the years of the Cultural Revolution.

India has had quite a good number of foreign ministers, though for a very long period Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru kept charge of the portfolio. By and large, Indian foreign policy has been a collective affair, despite the fact that men like Sardar Swaran Singh, M.C. Chagla, Dinesh Singh, Atal Behari Vajpayee, K. Natwar Singh and Jaswant Singh had their own periods in the sun. Compared to the Indians, Pakistan's Z.A. Bhutto was more fortunate. In the Ayub Khan era, soon after the death of Mohammad Ali Bogra, Bhutto ascended to office as foreign minister and swiftly and surely redefined Pakistan's foreign policy options. Under his influence, President Ayub Khan went for closer relations with China, a move which obviously left the Kennedy and Johnson administrations in Washington considerably disturbed. Bhutto left government in bitterness in 1966. He was succeeded, first, by Syed Sharifuddin Pirzada and then by Mian Arshad Husain.

Men and women unsuccessful in their drive to be president of the United States have ended up being foreign ministers. Edmund Muskie, once considered presidential material, served Jimmy Carter as secretary of state. In more recent times, Hillary Clinton lost the race for the Democratic presidential nomination to Barack Obama but went on to work under him as secretary of state. In Britain, Sir Alec Douglas Home, having served as prime minister for a year before his Tories lost the general election to Harold Wilson's Labour Party in 1964, became foreign secretary in the government of Edward Heath in 1970. In what was then West Germany, Willy Brandt served as foreign minister in the CDU-SPD grand coalition which

governed the country from 1966 to 1969. As chancellor, Brandt made his famous trip to Jerusalem, where he knelt before the Wailing Wall in atonement for the sufferings inflicted on Jews by Nazi Germany. It was again Brandt who took the first tentative steps toward a thawing of the Cold War when he travelled to East Germany for talks with the communist country's leader Willi Stoph in 1970. The Brandt opening became known as Ostpolitik, a first stepping stone toward changing the world.

Israel's Abba Eban was a scholar who served his country with distinction as foreign minister. Unlike the more conservative of his colleagues in government --- Levi Eshkol, Golda Meyer, Moshe Dayan --- he came across as suave and willing to engage his adversaries in civilized dialogue. Israel has had other foreign ministers, Shimon Peres for instance. But none of them has been able to emulate Eban in the range of his reading and understanding of international conflict resolution.

There are the tales of foreign ministers whose reputations have rested largely on glamour. In Iran, Ardeshir Zahedi, handsome, cosmopolitan and related to the Shah by marriage, served the monarch as foreign minister. In more recent times, the young, extremely good-looking Hina Rabbani Khar was Pakistan's face to the world in her position as foreign minister. Her trips abroad, especially in India, were occasions for the media to dwell on her glamour and sex appeal. Her impact on diplomacy is, however, a different matter. In Idi Amin's Uganda, a beautiful young woman who served as foreign minister was eventually dismissed and killed because Amin thought she had been having sex in a toilet with someone. That was typical, brutal Amin, of course!

Britain has had some influential foreign ministers. Douglas Hurd was a capable foreign secretary. You cannot say the same about Alexander Haig in the United States. A former general, he joined the Reagan administration as secretary of state in 1981. Haig raised many eyebrows when, after Reagan was shot within weeks of assuming the presidency, he told the press in Washington, 'I am in charge here'. That was a blunder, considering that Vice President George Bush was very much around. Indonesia's Subandrio, a physician by profession, was President Sukarno's foreign minister until the Suharto regime put him in prison, had him tried and sentenced to death. He was never hanged, but spent decades in jail before he was let out. He never let the world know of his experience in incarceration. France's Charles de Gaulle had his Maurice Couve d' Murville.

There are foreign ministers we remember because of the times they inhabited. Gromyko was succeeded by Eduard Shevardnadze, who later became president of independent Georgia and even later was compelled to flee in an uprising led by Mikhail Saakashvili. America's Dean Rusk was once spat upon on a visit to Latin America at the height of the Vietnam War. Tariq Aziz was for a very long time deputy prime minister and foreign minister under Saddam Hussein. The Philippines' Carlos P. Romulo, as his country's foreign minister, was to turn into a much respected figure on the global stage. And who can forget Hitler's harassed foreign minister von Ribbentrop?

The bottom line: foreign ministers come in various shapes and forms and packages. Some even brood a lot. Read here Britain's Lord Grey in the sad twilight preceding the outbreak of the First World War. Some take their own lives. Remember Viscount Castlereagh?

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# US in South Asia: Declining influence

CHINTAMANI MAHAPATRA

THE US' influence in South Asia is fast diminishing and this trend is likely to continue deep into the future. In the aftermath of World War II, South Asia was considered a strategic backwater by the US policymakers. Additionally, South Asia offered little economic opportunities to the US corporate sector. With the solitary exception of turning Pakistan into an alliance partner, the US cared little about this region.

Even in the realm of alliance politics, the US had little to offer Pakistan. Pakistan's membership in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Central Treaty Organization, and the US' military assistance to Pakistan was ineffective during Pakistan's military misadventures against India. It was only after the late 1970s' Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan that Washington got critically involved in South Asia.

The US' interest in South Asia deepened in the post-Cold War era in view of Indian economic reforms, nuclearisation of the region and the pivotal role Afghanistan played in the terrorist attack on the US in September 2001. As the US once again turned Pakistan into an alliance partner in the war against terrorism and established an extraordinary strategic understanding with India, South Asia occupied substantial priority in the US national security agenda.

The US' war in Afghanistan that began in 2001 is about to come to a close. The US troop withdrawal from this country is indisputable. Irrespective of debates over the probable level of US engagement in Afghan affairs post 2014, it is almost certain that the closure of billions of dollars worth of war in Afghanistan will trim Washington's influence in South Asia. The resilience of the Afghan Taliban and limitation of a superpower's abilities to confront non-state-actors will question the US' credibility in the region.

Secondly, the US leverage over Pakistan in the post-Afghan war phase will dry down with an almost automatic cut in the US military and economic assistance to Islamabad. History will unquestionably repeat and the US-Pakistan alliance will terminate, as was the case after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989.

Thirdly, the US' influence over India, resulting from an innovative "strategic partnership" project during former US President George Bush's era may not survive his successor Barack Obama's administration. The enthusiasm of the first Obama administration to further elevate this partnership was short-lived and the second Obama administration has paid less than modest attention to India.

There is no doubt that the election victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party under the leadership of now Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with a strong popular

mandate, has generated sizeable excitement in Washington. Hope of revival of the earlier impetus in the Indo-US strategic partnership has been rekindled. Obama's invitation to Modi to visit Washington, Assistant Secretary of State Nisha Biswal Desai's trip to India soon after the new government assumed office, visits by influential Senator John McCain and Deputy Secretary of State William J Burns to prepare the ground for the Indo-US strategic dialogue between Secretary of State John Kerry and Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj are all signals of Obama's renewed interest in India.

But Prime Minister Modi appears less animated to visit the US, more involved in constructing a peaceful neighbourhood, more focused on reviving the national economy and less enthralled to project India as a global leader. About ten months have passed since the Devyani Khobragade episode begot a psychological divide in the New Delhi-Washington bond. Repairing the mind-set is not going to be easy even for the new Indian government.

The Obama administration's relationships with other smaller South Asian countries --- especially Bangladesh and Sri Lanka --- have also soured in the recent years. Washington was hesitant to do business with the Awami League government after the January 2014 elections, criticised Dhaka's handling of human trafficking problems, and reduced import of garments after a deadly fire in a garment factory.

The US' efforts to hold the Sri Lankan government responsible for severe human rights violations during the closing weeks of anti-Liberation Tigers of the Tamil Eelam operations have widened the political divide between Colombo and Washington. The Sri Lankan government has demonstrated bitterness over the US double standard in combating terrorism---one standard for itself and another for other countries.

Significantly, India's smaller South Asian neighbours are fast moving towards developing closer relationships with China. Although this is generally perceived as an anti-India phenomenon, the reality is that Bangladesh and Sri Lanka are looking up to China as a new guarantor of help in the face of the US' heavy-handed approach towards them.

It is also a fact that the US has enhanced its engagement with Nepal in response to fast growing Chinese economic presence and political influence in that country. But compared to China, Washington's influence in Nepal is minimal. It is almost certain that the drop in Washington's political weight will further augment Chinese leverage over Islamabad as well. It is time to ponder over the diminished US and rising Chinese profile in the region.

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Chinese embassy clarifies

I have noticed that an article titled "We have grown indeed..." written by Rubana Huq was published in *The Daily Star* on July 14 on page 7 (OP-ED). In this article it is said that "China banned Xinjiang Party members, students and teachers from Ramadan fasting." The Embassy would like to make clearance as follows:

According to China's Constitution, Chinese citizens enjoy the freedom of religious belief and the state safeguards normal religious activities. The Chinese government respects and protects the freedom of religious belief and customs of China's 20 million Muslims by law and policy. In Xinjiang, there are more than 23,000 mosques and nearly 30,000 religious workers, and the Muslims enjoy full freedom of religious belief.

Like their Muslim brothers and sisters in Bangladesh, Chinese Muslims also take Ramadan as a sacred festival and are now enjoying the Ramadan in peace and serenity.

The practices of fasting and other normal activities by religious believers are protected by law in China. At the same time, the law stipulates that religion must not interfere with the judiciary, the executive administration, education and other state functions. Fasting is an individual choice, local administrations in Xinjiang never intervene in the Muslims' religious freedom and encourage halal restaurants and food shops to better serve Muslims during Ramadan. Minors are the future of a country and are in a critical stage of physical growth and knowledge attainment. For the protection of the minors' health, we don't encourage them to fast.

China and Bangladesh are good brothers, good partners and good neighbours. We welcome more Bangladeshi friends to visit China, develop a deeper understanding of China and Chinese Muslim communities and strengthen our mutual understanding and friendship.

Ye Wei

Political Attache of the Embassy of the P.R. of China in Bangladesh

## Will world only watch Israeli atrocities in Gaza?

Israeli forces are continuing their attacks on Gaza which have already killed many civilians including children and women. Thousands fled their homes. Israel is intensifying its brutal bombing in defenseless Gaza with the silent support of the western world. The merciless attack of the Israeli forces against the Palestinians in the holy month of Ramadan is so disdainful.

Protests are taking place in different parts of the world in solidarity with the people of Gaza. But we didn't see any news of protest in the wealthy Arab countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, etc. OIC or Arab League nations -- none has come forward to take any concrete steps to save the Palestinians from Israeli atrocities. It's a shame for all the Muslims around the world.

Now, where are the so-called international human rights organisations whose duty is to protect and uphold human rights regardless of religion, nationality, gender or class? Why are they silent now?

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## Comments on news report, "Buses beyond traffic laws," published on July 12, 2014

Asif

If one just travels for an hour in Dhaka city, one will notice the haphazard situation of traffic and piles of rubbish on roads. I don't understand why the government doesn't take any steps to clean the city?

Shamsi Uzair

Thank you, *The Daily Star*, for highlighting this issue. In fact, the same situation can be seen on every street of Dhaka.

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## "The terrible price Gaza kids pay" (July 13, 2014)

Aed

Israel thinks it can do anything; it is behaving like a mad elephant, but it should know that world is now recognising who the real terrorist is and Israel is hated by the same people who are still sending it aid.

Asif

Israel never wants peace.

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## "Almost another Bangladesh, second liberation" (July 11, 2014)

Akhtar Shah

It's really hard to be too enthused about such news in BD these days. Those who can make a real, sustained difference are patrioteers and full of self-importance.

They don't either consult home grown experts in the field or some of them with a smidgen of knowledge on the subject don't go out and hire overseas experts, who could help fully exploit resources that are there or becoming available to BD.

The reason? Their inadequacy may be exposed or their 'control' might be diminished. Whatever happens the people of the country lose out!

Deep Purple Blue

Our rulers have finished squandering whatever was on the land and underneath; now they will focus their attention on stealing sea resources -- a new sector. Hurray!