

## Misuse of project cars by high-ups

### Hold probe, stop wastage of public money

**T**HURSDAY'S exclusive report in this paper has been a shocking revelation of how the LGED-owned expensive project cars are being used with careless abandon by LGRD ministers, PM's advisers, secretaries, House committee heads and PMO officials. It is worthwhile to note that these government high-ups are using the project cars in addition to the government-allotted ones they have already been enjoying.

Misuse of vehicles by government officials, often done in the name of field visits, is, however, nothing new. But what baffles us is the sheer scale of such malpractice in this particular case.

We fail to understand what kind of projects are we talking about that need such luxury cars? Why have we to buy vehicles worth crores of taka spending public as well as donor money whenever there is a project? Under what criteria have those vehicles been bought? More importantly, under what authority do the public representatives use these expensive cars? This is highly reprehensible for public leaders of a poor nation.

In the LGED project under consideration, there was neither any provision for buying cars, nor was the purpose of their use specified. One wonders for what other purpose those cars are being used, if not for pleasure ride?

We want immediate auditing of vehicle use under development projects, with particular emphasis on LGED projects in question.

Now that the scandal has come to light, there should be a thoroughgoing investigation into the money being used in development projects. The government, it is hoped, will take necessary measures to plug the holes proving to be a drain on the public resources.

## Manipulation with advance tickets

### Annual ordeal awaiting effective approach

**W**ITH the Eid-ul-Fitr still more than a week and a half away, most tickets, on various inter-district bus routes appear to have been sold out. The launch operators had, even before formally starting the sale of advance tickets announced that these were exhausted. At the time of writing, tickets for long distance travelling were only available for the evening of July 28, meaning with a little, if any, lead time for the Eid.

These have given rise to a number of allegations: First, tickets were held back at the behest of syndicates to be sold at the black market at exorbitant rates; second, slow issue of tickets was observed by intending purchasers with the alleged motive of "keeping these for VIPs"; and third, higher fares were charged on the pretext that the transports will have few or no passengers on the return journeys.

Then consider the conditions of the highways and the inevitable long tailbacks in prospect which make reaching home for Eid uncertain. You thus realise that advance booking must be brought forward by three weeks at least, in addition to the two weeks' window offered for sale of tickets. Clearly, the timing has to be linked to an expansion in the number of transports and an increase in frequency of trips. In catering for such contingencies, the concerned authorities must think and plan ahead to put things in place in good time for the festivals.

## World's indifference

EDITORIAL: DAWN (PAKISTAN)

**G**AZA is no more the open-air prison it has often been described as; it is virtually a charnel house, thanks to a world that is utterly indifferent to the massacre of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli government. With naval bombardment added to the cornucopia of weapons pouring fire into the Mediterranean strip, observers fear a dramatic rise in civilian fatalities, besides the damage to homes, hospitals and places of worship. Should the hardline Likud government also choose to launch a ground assault, the all-round destruction could overshadow that seen in the Israeli attacks on Gaza in 2008 and 2012. What encourages Israel in its depredations is its firm belief that it can get away with any crime. Notice the routine pleas for restraint by the UN, America, the European Union and the world at large, forgetting that 'even-handedness' here puts the criminal and the victim of criminality at the same level. As for the lame duck Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the Arab League, even the mere thought that the two bodies could act in concert and meaningfully appears laughable, given the fratricide within the Muslim world, especially in Israel's neighbourhood.

The truth is that Israel finds in the unipolar world an ideal geopolitical environment in which to operate with impunity. Even though it always enjoyed the Western world's—especially America's—unqualified support for all its plans since its founding in 1948, the existence till the late 1980s of a countervailing power like the Soviet Union and the communist world at large circumscribed Israel's limitless greed for Lebensraum backed by an ideology fixated on war. The collapse of the Soviet system of states removed whatever little stood between Israel and its desire for more land, with its political leadership frustrating every attempt at a deal visualising the Jewish state's peaceful existence with an independent Palestinian state. Supported by a powerful lobby inside the US, successive Israeli governments have snubbed American presidents and have consistently nibbled at Palestinian land by building new settlements and expanding the existing ones on the West Bank. It made President Barack Obama stand on his head within 24 hours and made him repudiate his plan for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 border. There is now vague talk in Israel about territorial swaps and population transfer as the final solution to the Palestinian problem.

As for Gaza, the 'pullout' in 2005 was hardly that, for Israel continues to control the strip's land, air and sea exits and has imposed a blockade that has as a matter of policy denied normal life to the Gazans. Hamas's isolation, in part due to its own rigid policies, also encouraged Israel to go for the kill. It is an unequal battle in which the Gazans are the losers. To save casualties, the international community should intensify efforts to effect an immediate ceasefire.

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## STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

# Enforcement excesses

**T**HAT the passionate appeals of a five year old child to the police to stop beating her father fell on deaf and insensitive ears must have shaken all right-thinking persons including those in the law enforcement apparatus. The sad part of our public life is that there is no authoritative condemnation of the fact that whatever be the justification of the offending lawman's acts, the conspicuously brutal physical action cannot be legally tenable under

any conceivable circumstances. However, the assuring development in a dark transaction is the prompt arrest of the delinquent lawman responsible for the dastardly act.

Some lawmen forget that nothing is more cowardly and unconscionable than a person in police custody being beaten or shot to death, and nothing inflicts deeper wound on our constitutional culture than a public servant running berserk regardless of human rights. The policy of killing suspected dacoits and terrorists in the so-called 'crossfire' is inherently messy, involving as it must an inordinate amount of lying about matters of life and death. This is downright insulting for a professional body of public servants dedicated to the upholding of law.

While the above is the bitter reality, misguided policemen and other enforcers feel that they have a divine right to crush the self-respect of individuals they come in contact with. They do not realise that their overt actions indulged in brazen disregard for the principles of the rule of law and civilised conduct adversely affect police discipline and make a mockery of the signs boards "Police is the friend of people" displayed at the gates of police stations.

Unfortunately, the police, who are supposed to be protectors of the citizens, have themselves been indulging in not only dubious and deplorable but also criminal activities. Since the image of the police reflected by the mirror of public opinion conforms to what the police and police culture are, both the police image and police culture are tarnished despite the very good work done by many. By resorting to practicing lawless law enforcement, which obviously is a contradiction in terms, the police inevitably further tarnish their already much tarnished image. Paradoxically, lawless police officers are in demand in the affected area. They produce short-term spectacular results that prove illusory.

A people whose consciousness of the rights is poor, a land where legal services at the initial stages are rare and investigative personnel often resort to third degree methods—these and a host of other realistic factors must come into the consideration of the court while

interpreting and effectuating the fundamental rights of the suspect accused. On the subject of alleged offence of bodily injury to a person while in police custody, if there is evidence that the injury was caused during the period when the person was in police custody the court may presume that the injury was caused by the police officer having custody of that person during that period, unless the police officer proves to the contrary. There is logic in this assumption because the experience of concerned persons has shown that the atrocities within the precincts of the police station are often left without direct evidence to prove who the offenders are. Such stance on the part of the court is expected to put an effective brake on the criminal proclivities of delinquent police officers.

In our situation, the policemen must be made to justify the arrest apart from his power to do so. It has to be impressed upon him that the existence of power to arrest is one thing and justification for it is quite another. While disciplining the deviant policemen has to be done from within the department, the selective activism of the apex court will hopefully have a healthy deterrent effect on the potential law-breaking enforcement personnel.

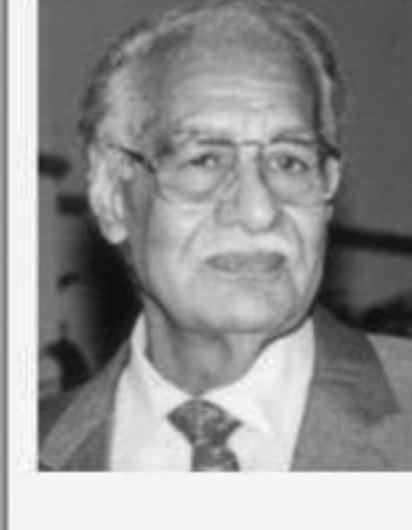
Legal aid, sincere in nature, must come along almost the time a member of the weaker section of the society is arrested. Such a step will reduce the possibility of wrongful confinement, false incrimination in offences and the pangs of torture and possible physical deformity, if not death, in police custody. Another preventive measure would be aggressive investigative journalism to expose the gross misuse of power by police. This will, hopefully, substantially deter the wayward lawmen.

The bad hats in law enforcement must be dealt with an iron hand at the very first instance of criminality. The unholy alliance between criminal policemen and corrupt public figures must be broken and the performance of both should be under constant scrutiny. The recruitment process of subordinate police functionaries has to be sanitised to prevent the entry of undesirable elements, and drastic disciplinary actions relating to delinquent police officers must not be interfered with. These are not tall orders. We need them to bring sanity in our governance scenario.

Finally, let all concerned remember that the police are vested with the authority to use legitimate force against the citizens and this mandate to use force to curb violence raises the key issue that the police themselves should not indulge in unnecessary violence or excessive use of force. The task before the supervisors should be to ensure that the police use force and authority with restraint and only in unavoidable circumstances. While the ultimate accountability of the police is to the people, the police must respect the law of the land. They are not licensed to become law-breakers themselves. Let the most visible symbol of government authority be a helping arm for the public instead of being a coercive arm of the state.

# Defeat Talibanisation

## BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

**I** find it strange that New Delhi is not seriously considering the pros and cons of what happens once the American and Nato forces reduce their presence in Afghanistan only by a few thousand troops. US Secretary of State Kerry has visited Kabul to devise the policy after the withdrawal. But New Delhi is not in the picture.

No doubt, the Afghans have the best goodwill towards India because it has helped them to set up hospitals, schools and build roads. Yet Islamabad, which considers Afghanistan its "strategic depth," wants the country to be its satellite. New Delhi has tried to persuade Islamabad to let Kabul be independent and sovereign, but Pakistan has not bitten the bullet.

It all started when the Soviet Union sent its forces to Afghanistan to impose its ideology on a state which was saturated with Islamic ideas. America used the opportunity to bleed the Soviet Union by training the fundamentalists in Pakistan to make inroads into Afghanistan without considering the long-term repercussions. And once the Soviet Union started retreating from Afghanistan, leaving behind arms and other equipment in the field itself, Washington lost all interest in the territory. The fundamentalists used those weapons to propagate their strict and disciplinarian interpretation of Islam.

Islamabad had in its mind to use the armed and trained Taliban against India and there are numerous examples to testify that insurgency in Kashmir was nothing but a byproduct of a bigoted stance to shut out the participation of non-Muslims in governance, however unwittingly demanded. I recall when I met in Kabul a leader from the Masud group, anti-Taliban in ideology and pro-India in its approach, he told me that the road to Kabul goes through Islamabad and if New Delhi was really interested in stopping the tide of fundamentalists, it should have a serious dialogue with Pakistan.

It is a pity that India refused to have any truck with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who was Pakistan's confidante. No doubt, he is a nasty person to deal with, but if we had fixed our eyes on the situation a decade later, we should have swallowed some of his anti-India rhetoric. But all this is now history. The two countries, particularly India, should formulate some strategy to thwart the Taliban onslaught, which is bound to take place once they are sure that the Western forces are not in a position to match their weapons.

The most disconcerting aspect is the birth of Tehrik-e-Pakistan Taliban (TPT), an indigenous growth which is in a position to strike wherever it wants and whenever it wants. It has proved it again and again. The recent attack on Karachi airport is an example. However, the Karachi happening is only the symptom, not the disease. The disease is fundamentalism which, to the horror of even middle-of-the-road Pakistanis, is spreading rapidly.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has opted for an easy

path. He has been negotiating with the Taliban to interpret their aspirations. The reason why the talks have not gone very far is that the Taliban's insistence on Pakistan giving proof of their sincerity of taking measures like closing institutions for female literacy and making hijab (veil) a compulsory outfit for women in Pakistan. No doubt the next step they will demand is a ban on women car drivers, just like in Saudi Arabia. Music has already been sacrificed on the altar of extremism. The old time singers or instrument players have no market in Pakistan. How ironic that they come to India to earn a livelihood.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, otherwise liberal, was the person who began placating the fanatics. He is the one who started a government stipend for the head maulvis in mosques and declared Ahmediyas as non-Muslims. Today, the graves of Ahmediyas are being dug and the remains thrown out. The Pakistan establishment did not think even for a minute in humiliating Sir Zafrullah Khan, a prominent Ahmediya who turned the tables against India at the UN on Kashmir. In fact, the complaint which Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made at the UN about "Pakistan's aggression" in Kashmir went against New Delhi largely because of his efforts, blessed by Britain.

The past, however bitter, should not now be recalled at a time when both India and Pakistan have few options except to organise a joint front to defeat the Taliban. New Delhi should not forget that the Taliban would be at the Attari (Amritsar) border if they are not defeated in Afghanistan itself. If it is embarrassing for the two countries to talk about their strategy in the open, they can establish a back channel as they have done in the case of Kashmir.

The repercussions of Taliban gaining an upper hand, first in Afghanistan and then in Pakistan, are so inimical to the defence and development of India that it should go out of the way to befriend Pakistan on a joint approach towards Afghanistan. Since no serious talk takes place between the two because of Kashmir, they should keep this problem aside and allow the two army chiefs to sit across the table and devise a long-term strategy which would enable Afghanistan to stay independent.

Of course, this means that Islamabad would have to change its policy and not consider Afghanistan their "strategic depth." This is in Pakistan's own interest. The manner in which the Taliban have begun to count in the affairs of Pakistan should be a warning that they would not allow Pakistan to be a liberal Islamic state.

New Delhi should take the initiative to get America on board regarding anti-Taliban policy. If and when they are defeated in their designs both in Afghanistan and Pakistan, they would cease to be a force which is beginning to loom large in other Islamic countries where the Taliban-like thoughts have begun to assert themselves.

It is a pity that India is not seeing the writing on the wall. At least Prime Minister Narendra Modi, said to be a strong ruler, should pick up the threads with Nawaz Sharif on his matter. Both hit it off well when they met in Delhi. Nawaz Sharif has even said so in a letter to Modi. Can things go ahead in the same vein in the interest of policy to contain the Talibanisation, already quite assertive in Pakistan?

He writes an eminent Indian columnist.

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

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#### Do people really count?

In the valedictory speech of the budget session on July 3, 2014, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, in response to BNP's threat to stage anti-government movement after Eid, warned that the government would not tolerate people's suffering in the name of movement. She further said that "No one will be allowed to play with people's fates."

How happy we would be if we could accept her concern about the suffering of the people as meaningful; because we have not forgotten how we suffered during the Awami League's movement for a caretaker government. It was nightmarish.

And talking about fate, it is ironical that PM Sheikh Hasina herself is playing with it. With utter helplessness we watched the election of January 5 and forming of a government without people's mandate. People did not count. So, reference to people's sufferings by the prime minister is hard to digest.

Nur Jahan  
Chittagong

#### Where have those online train tickets gone?

I was trying to buy Bangladesh Railways' online ticket from esheba.cnsbd.com. It opens at 9 am. Strangely enough, I could not buy any "SNIGDHA" ticket for Turna train, neither for Dhaka-Chittagong route, nor for Chittagong-Dhaka route, just 2 minutes after the opening of ticket sale.

Where have all the tickets gone just within two minutes? The government must have taken steps to stop black marketing of tickets. I believe if the media investigate the issue and publish reports on it, it would put government under pressure and eventually the government would do something about it.

Ahmed Mayeen  
Uttara Model Town, Dhaka

#### Cheap, low quality clothes for zakat!

Payment of zakat is a must in our religion. Now-a-days, some traders are selling zakat clothes at cheaper prices. The quality of these clothes is extremely bad. The purpose of zakat will not be served if we distribute these bad quality clothes to the poor.

Shafkat Rahman  
BIAM Laboratory School  
New Eskaton, Dhaka

Comments on news report,  
"Behind the perilous nexus,"  
published on July 12, 2014

#### Nds

Yes, we need to attract educated and intelligent people to politics but do they at all feel any need to do politics? I don't think so. They need lucrative jobs in USA, UK and such other foreign lands as the first option. As the less intelligent ones have no scope there, they have opted for politics and business. So it is hunky-dory for all. Where is the problem?

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**"Govt to be forced to hold polls: Khaleda" (July 12, 2014)**

#### Dr. Ahsan Habib

Power greedy AL is now planning to stay in office for five years. The massive irregularities in all elections prove that BNP was right in asking for a CTG. So now, going to the street is the option remaining. But BNP should do this not just for going to power for their own gains.

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**"Pope seeks advice from Yunus" (July 14, 2014)**

#### Deep Purple Blue

Wow! Thanks to Dr. Yunus for making us proud by making recommendations for establishing a more inclusive global economy devoid of poverty. Only we, Bangladeshis, can't use his talent for our development.

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**"Traders forced to pay Tk 64.7 lakh bribe a day: TIB" (July 14, 2014)**

#### An Observer

Is it not a well known fact that everyone in the customs department is a rich man?

#### MH Khan

TIB should disclose more facts. It is alleged that customs officials pay hefty bribes to get postings at sea ports, airports and land ports.

#### Shamim Ashraf

This is very alarming and should not happen at all.

#### Nasirullah Mridha, USA

Very soon Chittagong port authority will protest this report and claim that no brokers exist there.