

SC verdict against Sayedee

He gets his comeuppance, finally

THE Supreme Court in a verdict on Wednesday sentenced Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delawar Hossain Sayedee to imprisonment till death for his crimes against humanity in 1971. While the victims' families and many others may not find it satisfactory we we accept this judgment which has been pronounced by majority opinion of a full bench of the Appellate Division. It has been delivered at the end of a long process of adjudication during which 48 days of hearings were held by the apex court.

It may be recalled that the International Crimes Tribunal-1 (ICT-1) in February 28, 2013 had awarded death sentence to Sayedee on two counts of crime among other atrocious crimes against humanity during the Liberation War of 1971.

The learned court has come up with its verdict after due diligence following an exhaustive process of disposal of two appeal petitions. Both the defence and the state counsels were allowed adequate latitude and time to make out their respective cases as due process of law has been meticulously followed. Therefore, it will be in the fitness of things that we respect the judgment.

With the disposal of the appeal petition, the process of trial of the war criminals of 1971 takes a significant step forward. We commend all those who have been involved in this arduous process of bringing to justice all those who committed crimes against humanity and fought against our war of independence.

Significant improvement in health sector

Maternal and child healthcare success

AS per a global study, Bangladesh has come out as one of 10 countries that have made commendable progress in improving child and maternal health. With child mortality falling significantly from 151 to 53 per 1,000 live births over a two-decade period, we welcome the continued efforts of primary health services in these areas. And it is not just children who have benefitted from better quality services; maternal mortality rates have also dropped markedly by 66 per cent over the same period. Better immunisation on a national scale has positively impacted on the dual trend. One cannot overlook the fact that making services more readily available to the less privileged segments of the population has reaped benefits for the primary health scenario in Bangladesh. With direct interventions in providing more broad-based health services, evidence has emerged that better education for women has contributed to greater awareness amongst mothers, which in turn has helped bring down mortality rates. Women's education having doubled to 80 per cent over the stated period, it is little wonder that conscious mothers have taken steps to uplift the conditions in which newborns were nurtured. What is evident is that each of the countries that has made to the top-ten list on improved healthcare for maternal and children categories, tailored programmes to fit their respective socio-economic conditions. Bangladesh is no exception. We look forward to replication of such success

Scotland: Yes or no?

ABDUL MATIN

THERE was an old lady in Dhaka in 1950s. She was believed to be over 100 years old! Obviously, she was born during the reign of Queen Victoria and lived a good part of her life during her time. Her favourite possessions included a comb and a bottle of hair oil. She hardly complained about anything unless there was a delay in getting her meals, her bottle of hair oil was empty or her comb got broken or lost! No matter what was the reason, her complaint was very simple and straight forward: "What is happening to the reign of Queen Victoria?"

Even in 1950s, she believed that Queen Victoria had been alive and ruling India and nothing could go wrong under her rule. There was indeed a time when the sun never set on the British Empire. At its heights, it was covering almost a quarter of the Earth's total land area and one-fifth of the world population.

With time things changed. One after another, the British colonies and protectorates became independent and the size of the British Empire shrank. The United States declared independence in 1776. Canada got dominion status after 1867. Australia and New Zealand got similar status after 1900, followed by South Africa in 1910 and the Irish Free State in 1921.

A large-scale decolonization started after the World War II. Though the allied forces emerged victorious, the British practically became bankrupt. They gradually granted independence to most of its colonies in Asia and Africa through peaceful negotiations. Thus India, Pakistan (including Bangladesh) became independent in 1947, Sri Lanka in 1948, Nigeria in 1960 among others. Between 1945 and 1965, the number of people under the British rule outside the UK fell from 700 million to 5 million, three million of whom were in Hong Kong. Most of the former British colonies and protectorates later joined the Commonwealth of Nations, a voluntary association of 53 independent states.

Even though independence was granted to almost all British colonies and protectorates, nobody ever thought that Scotland, a constituent part of the United Kingdom since 1707, would ever seek independence. A referendum is due to be held on September 18 to determine whether Scotland should be an independent state or not. If the Scots vote in favour of independence, it will be a severe blow to the pride of the United Kingdom, a power that dominated the world for several hundred years.

The old lady of Dhaka is no more but many people are echoing the same question she asked more than sixty years ago, "What is happening to the reign of Queen Victoria?"

The writer is a former chief engineer of Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission

Trinamool-Jamaat nexus: A puzzle and a worry



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

Brig Gen SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN ndc, psc (Retd)

VERY action, apart from initiating an equal and opposite reaction also demands a loss and benefit estimation. One may argue that Jamaat might gain by funding Trinamool Congress (TMC), as was reportedly done before 2011 assembly and 2014 Lok Sabha polls. But one is still at a loss to figure out what exactly the TMC and its leader Mamata Banerjee wanted to gain out of the Jamaat's destructive politics in Bangladesh funded by TMC, which it has allegedly done. Or is it that Ahmed Hassan Imran is the maverick in the party who played it singly to orchestrate an anti-AL movement to facilitate a political changeover through violence? Both aspects need deep deliberation, since we are faced with a situation never before encountered.

It was only after the Ananda Bazar Patrika's revelation quoting the CBI, that the TMC had siphoned off a sizeable amount of the chit fund scam money of Saradha Group to fund agitation to destabilise Hasina government, that we have become aware of the matter. In fact it was Bangladesh intelligence that had passed on the information to its Indian counterpart some while back regarding the TMC – Jamaat link.

Two things become very clear from this. Firstly, we can assume that our intelligence is reasonably sanguine about the fact that a political party in Bangladesh had received money from across the border; were it not so it would not have shared the information with its Indian counterpart. Secondly, subject to further investigation, it would be a fair guess that the State government in Paschim Banga was actively involved in the internal politics of Bangladesh in a very detrimental way. And, interestingly, that action was innately linked with the politics, more specifically vote politics, of Paschim Banga.

The matter has turned the tables on India. All these years we have been heaped with accusations by our neighbour, mostly unfounded, about how India has been saturated by religious extremists, working on the behest of a third country and out of the soil of Bangladesh, to destabilise India. And after every unfortunate incident of terrorist action in India the fingers were pointed at Bangladesh, without any substantive evidence

Obama has a "Strategy" now!



STRANGER THAN FICTION

TAJ HASHMI

Planned by retired General Wesley Clark in 2007.

Peace loving people everywhere heaved a sigh of relief at President Obama's earlier declaration about not having a "strategy yet" to counter the ISIS threat, soon after this enigmatic terrorist group captured Mosul and parts of northern Iraq. They hoped Obama would not intervene in Iraq and Syria militarily. However, the hope was dashed. On the eve of the 13th anniversary of 9/11, Obama seemed to have succumbed to the pressure of U.S. warmongers, who consider the rise of ISIS as the prelude to another 9/11.

Obama ordered airstrikes on Syria to rout the ISIS militants. He allocated 500 additional military advisers to Iraq, and simultaneously rejected talks of an all-out war. As of mid-September, the U.S. allocated \$500 million to train 5,000 fighters to fight against the ISIS. We were told, it could take three years or more to defeat the 30,000 ISIS fighters in Iraq and Syria (some sources give the figure of 100,000), who have less than 100 battle tanks and field guns and no air force.

One wonders, if the U.S. is going to spend billions of dollars over the years in just training Iraqis to fight the ISIS as it did in Afghanistan to train Afghans to fight the Taliban! What Thomas Friedman once told about the ridiculous idea of spending billions to train Afghans to fight is relevant to what America is going to repeat in Iraq: "Americans' training Afghan to fight is like someone training Brazilians to play soccer Who are training the Taliban? American involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan may be compared with an unemployed couple's adopting a child". It seems "Who are training the ISIS fighters?" is another taboo of a question to the U.S. Administration.

We know the ISIS or IS (Ad-Dawla ul-Islamiyya) does not pose any security threat to the U.S. or Europe, let alone any existential threat to countries in the region, especially war-torn Syria and Iraq. We also know that as there are various geopolitical factors behind the enigmatic rise of this terror outfit as an "Islamic State", and the "forerunner" of a transnational "Caliphate"; so are there vested interest groups across the region and in distant capitals – Washington, London, Ottawa and Canberra – who have hyped up the ISIS menace as a much bigger security threat than al Qaeda or its ilk ever posed to the West and its allies. The ISIS is no longer a "non-state actor" but a "state actor" in the military sense of the expressions. Since states cannot resort to unconventional methods of warfare, tiny Lebanon is capable of defeating the Islamic State in a conventional war.

America and its allies want the overthrow of the Syrian and Iranian regimes, and are paradoxically fighting the ISIS, which has also been fighting Assad, and all pro-Iranian elements in Syria and Iraq. One wonders why the enemy's enemy is not a friend to the West! This "paradox" looks quite ominous. The American, British, Australian and other Western nations definitely want to go well

to support the claim. Well, we have a situation where an Indian state government is suspected of sponsoring a political party in Bangladesh whose acts of violence, in the past one year in particular, to destabilise the country, add substance to the suspected TMC-Jamat link. The charges are serious and circumstantial evidence suggests that there may be substance in the allegations which warrants a thorough investigation in both the countries on the matter.

One may brush off the allegations against TMC on the grounds that there are no real gains for TMC to support Jamaat's violence inside Bangladesh. Indeed what does TMC gain with an unstable Bangladesh where Jamaat is suspected of not only being a party of terrorist sympathisers but also one that harbours terrorists within its ranks. And why would TMC have sought Jamaat's support to guarantee Muslim votes for it in the last elections? Was Mamata not already guaranteed minority vote given the poor performance of the CPI (M) in Paschim Bangla in the 28 years of its rule vis-à-vis the state of Muslim minority in that state? The Sachar Commission report has vividly brought out the state of the Muslims in that province, as being the worst than the other States of India. That notwithstanding, would the Muslims in Paschim Banga want an unstable Bangladesh? Isn't Mamata aware of the fallout of instability in Bangladesh on her own State? And why would Saradha fund Jamat in Bangladesh? These are all relevant issues which, if factorised in evaluating the situation, would militate strongly against the policy of sponsoring an anti-government party in Bangladesh for the purpose of destabilising the government.

At this stage it is difficult to draw any rational conclusion from a mental exercise on the issue. Saradha money is reported to have gone to the West and the Middle East also. Imran was a member of SIMI that has been proscribed in India since 2001. But he continues to be member of Students Islamic Organisation, the students' wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Hind. Does his commitment to his politico-religious beliefs go beyond that of his party's? At the same time it is difficult to believe that Saradha would dole out huge sums individually to a party member unbeknownst to the party leadership. These are questions that we must seek answers to, particularly in view of the recent statement of Al Zawahiri regarding shifting al-Qaeda's focus on India and Bangladesh.

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beyond crushing the enigmatic and vulnerable ISIS, which Peter Baker thinks is nothing but "Extending a Legacy of War". He believes by ordering a sustained military campaign against the ISIS, President Obama "ensured that he would pass his successor a volatile and incomplete war, much like the one he inherited when he took office". As Baker considers the war against ISIS "the next chapter in a generational struggle", his arguments corroborate this writer's belief that the world is already witnessing another "Hundred-Year War" since the birth of Israel in 1948.

Despite his prior rejection of all-out war in Iraq and Syria, President Obama seems to have yielded to the pressure of the Military Industrial Complex, which wants to drag America to another long war. Apparently, Obama's strategy is about authorizing air attacks on ISIS-held territories in Iraq and Syria without the Congress and UN approval. We do not agree with analysts who believe that Obama's war on ISIS is a distraction from preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon, which is still very important to America, and the first priority for Israel. Interestingly, the ISIS has not yet identified Israel as enemy, and ISIS fighters publicly set fire to the Palestinian flag.

All wars that America fought since the end of World War II, were without Congress approval, hence illegal. Obama's strategy of launching air attacks on Syrian territory, without the permission of Syrian government – purportedly to defeat the ISIS – amounts to a violation of international law. Unfortunately, as terrorist outfits do not



respect international law, so does the U.S., the second largest democracy in the world.

It seems Obama Strategy is not going to accomplish what it purportedly aims at achieving: defeating the ISIS to restore peace, and good governance in Iraq, Syria and throughout the region. Obama's open support for rebels and dissidents to overthrow the Syrian and Iranian regimes, and his unwillingness to collaborate with Syria and Iran to defeat the ISIS are bound to backfire. While Ayatollah Khomeini believes the ISIS was "made-in-the-USA", most Iraqi Sunnis consider their government as a bigger threat than the ISIS. As Syrian rebels are least interested to fight the ISIS, so is the ISIS uninterested in fighting them. Arab leaders' tepid support for the war efforts will not give rich dividends either. They are nervous about domestic backlash from participation in America's war efforts against ISIS.

Again, Obama does not want a replay of Bush's Iraq War of 2003. His strategy is not about launching another "shock-and-awe" like 2003 as he does not want the war on ISIS look like another American war. If the Obama strategy is all about routing the ISIS with ineffective air attacks, it is bound to fail. However, if the real strategy is about regime change operations in Syria and Iran, then it is altogether a different matter.

The writer teaches security studies at Austin Peay State University in Tennessee, U.S. Sage has recently published his latest book, Global Jihad and America: The Hundred-Year War Beyond Iraq and Afghanistan.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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"Solution simple"

The above-titled write-up published in your daily on 16th September tells us that the solution for preserving food in Bangladesh is very simple. We just have to set up some 100 cold storages. It further said that Bangladesh does not have to deal with the problem of formalin anymore if we install the cold chain or cool chain system in our food management process. We thank the writer for his thought provoking propositions.

In Bangladesh we face electricity shortage regularly and if the government sets up cold storages, it would be a problem to constantly supply power to them. So the government has to solve this problem first before installing the cold chain or cool chain system in our food management process.

Humayun Hyder
Zigatola, Dhaka

Reasons for labour unrest in RMG sector

RMG industries are playing a very important role in the economic development of Bangladesh. But this industry is now in crisis due to repetitive labour unrest. The most common reasons for the labour unrest, as alleged by workers, are non-



payment or deferred payment of wages. Despite their claims to the contrary, some garment owners neither give salaries, nor overtime allowances to the workers on time. Small wonder a kind of mistrust between the employers and employees exists in this sector. The core problem behind this unrest is the lack of intra-organisational relationship.

Any healthy working environment involves openness and transparency. When employees consistently deliver, but receive little or no appreciation, it is very easy for them to become disheartened, frustrated, and apathetic about their job, which decreases productivity and cause unrest. A simple 'thank you' is often enough (and this works both ways). Employers may think of rewarding their employees for truly great work.

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Assault on teacher

On September 13 a former DU teacher Professor Mahbubullah was assaulted by some unidentified miscreants on the Supreme Court premises. He was there for attending a book launching ceremony. The perpetrators punched him heavily, hit him on the upper part of eyes and knocked him down.

One couldn't even imagine 20 or 30 years back that a primary school teacher would be assaulted, let alone a university teacher. Teachers had always been respected in our society. A teacher shouldn't and couldn't be treated like this no matter which political camp he belonged. I think Professor Mahbubullah rightly said, "I realise no civilised person can live in this country."

Ani
Panchagarh

Comments on news report, "Too many cooks spoil the broth," published on September 15, 2014

Molla A. Latif

Too many cooks spoil the broth and too many laws spoil the safety. Thank God laws are not corrupt but their enforcers are.

"Amendments hurt judiciary" (September 15, 2014)

Genuine Musafeer

A very few people support the present government's unilateral decision to amend the constitution, leaving others' constructive proposals unattended. Critics say, they are doing this with a hidden objective to get everything under their (government) control.

"BNP learns from its mistakes" (September 14, 2014)

S. M. Iftekhar Ahmed

How can they claim to have learned from their mistakes when they still continue to stubbornly associate themselves with a controversial party like the Jamaat? I find this to be a contradiction in itself.