

## Violation of human rights under scanner

*Call to end RAB impunity needs heeding*

**V**IOLATION of citizens' rights to state protection by its own agencies has become so blatant that it can only be ignored at our own peril. Indeed, it simply does not admit of any relapse into denial mode with prevarications like 'deaths in encounter' or 'what- could- we- do-if -someone-made-himself-disappear'?

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the European Parliament adopted a resolution on Thursday calling upon the Bangladesh government "to bring back the state security forces, including police and the RAB, within the bounds of law." The EP stressed investigation and prosecution in regard to alleged illegal killings by the RAB forces, release of anyone subjected to enforced disappearances unless they can be charged with 'a recognizable criminal offence' and establishing an independent body to investigate such cases.

It is worth noting that we are bringing the embarrassment on us in spite of domestic public outcries for arresting the trends. The media, civil society including rights activist and legal aid groups have been constantly hammering at the violation of human rights, immunity of RAB and police and urging the government to apply a decisive brake on tearing the rule of law apart.

It deserves mention though that in a dramatic instance, largely nudged by court, RAB arrested some of its own officials for their role in the Naryanganj seven murder case and are being put through the full force of law. Although the strike force claims it does not enjoy any impunity the reality on the ground speaks otherwise. There is little doubt in any mind that RAB needs to be made answerable for its conduct, especially where they are in breach.

## Global concern over Ebola

*Bangladesh should keep its antenna high*

**L**ITTLE wonder that the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously passed a resolution terming the outbreak of Ebola a global threat. The disease has gone epidemic killing 5,000 people so far and doubling its number of casualties every three weeks. That there are no proven anti-Ebola shots available in mass form adds to its deadliness. The UNSC has rightly recognised the need for helping African countries worst hit by this new killer as one that could ravage entire nations and undo years of development work.

Although the UN has been encouraging countries in the region to lift cross-border travel restrictions so as to facilitate the transportation of essential medical personnel and medication, the panic of Ebola has led some nations, like Sierra Leone to shut down in an effort to contain it within its borders. With porous borders and lax controls at points of entry and exit, containing this communicable disease through such measures may prove to be difficult.

Bangladesh for its part could mount its vigil at points of entry including land, sea and air, keeping in view the fact that both way travelling has increased manifold in recent times. Since such a malady is no respecter of borders, we need to have screening facilities and trained medical personnel at the ready. We should also raise awareness of our people as to the characteristics of Ebola and how it spreads, so that we can take precautions against any eventuality as far as Ebola goes.

## Scotland's choice: A triumph for democracy

ABDUL MATIN

**T**HE Kingdom of Great Britain was formed in 1707 through the union of England and Scotland. The Congress of the United States of America adopted a unilateral declaration of independence on July 4, 1776 and fought the Revolutionary War against Great Britain. Britain was defeated decisively in Yorktown in 1781 and recognized the independence of the United States in 1783.

Ireland joined with Great Britain in 1801 to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. On January 21, 1919, the vast majority of the Irish members of parliament met in Dublin and passed a declaration of independence. The Irish Republican Army fought the Irish War of Independence. Following a truce declared on July 9, 1921, a treaty was signed on December 6. Irish Free State thus got independence with dominion status like Canada and Australia. Very soon, North Ireland opted out of the Free State and remained as a part of the United Kingdom. Ireland became a republic in 1937.

When former East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, demanded autonomy from the central government, the Pakistan army carried out genocide on the Bengali population. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the leader in the National Assembly, declared independence of Bangladesh on March 26, 1971. Following a bloody war of independence, the Pakistan army surrendered on December 16, 1971. Bangladesh thus emerged as an independent state sacrificing the lives of three million martyrs. These events in history are cited for comparison with the recent referendum in Scotland. Following the formation of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1937, a campaign for home rule started in 1940. Two million people signed a document calling for home rule in 1960. In 1998, the Scotland Act was passed establishing the new Scottish Parliament. In 2011, the SNP obtained an absolute majority in the parliament and got a mandate to hold a referendum on independence. Following an agreement with the UK government, the Scottish Independence Referendum Bill was passed by the Scottish Parliament in November 2013.

A fair and peaceful referendum took place on September 18. With a turnout of 84.6% voters, 55.3% voted against independence. Out of 32 counties, only four opted for independence. Accepting the verdict of the referendum, Alex Salmond who spearheaded the campaign for independence resigned as the leader of the SNP and Scottish First Minister following democratic traditions. Scotland thus remains a part of the United Kingdom.

There was no unilateral declaration of independence, no war, no genocide and no clashes between the supporters and opponents of independence. The manner in which the issue of independence of Scotland was settled is indeed a triumph for democracy.

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

# When Chinese dragon meets the Indian elephant!

## SUNDAY POUCH



ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

**P**RESIDENT Xi Jinping of China just concluded a three day visit to India. The Chinese dragon came to the shores of India to meet the elephant. What has been the outcome of the visit? The world including Bangladesh is assessing this important visit and trying to see what these two giants have gained or lost. The visit itself was much anticipated. President Xi Jinping had recently

come into supreme power in China and India's Prime Minister Modi had also won a whopping majority in the Lok Sabha to become a single party majority in parliament. The two leaders met each other with enough mandate from their people and powers that be within each other's country to change their bilateral relations. Both therefore came with dreams to bring in a new era of peace and prosperity.

Before we analyze the visit, we must dwell on the irritants that have been bedeviling relations between these two giants ever since the short war in 1962 when Chinese soldiers had made inroads into north east part of India and then withdrew to its position. The un demarcated international border between the two countries has been a bone of contention. Do not forget that an India China relation in pre 1962 period was that of a euphoric 'bhai-bhai' phase. But after the 1962 border war it went into a 'bye-bye' mood. But since 1976 both the countries tried 'normalization' of relations. But it did not get off to a flying start. When Indian PM Vajpayee was in China for a 'patch up' visit, China was at that time avowed to teach its another neighbor Vietnam a 'lesson'. This was in line with what China did with India in early sixties. China also conducted a nuclear test during Indian PM Venkataraman's visit to China. In 1988, Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi made a high trajectory visit to China. For a decade relations were better as high level visits from each side brought steady progress. In 1993, there was an agreement between the two countries on the management of the border. This was followed by a seminal agreement in 1996 on military CBMs. In 2005 came the agreement on 'political parameters and guiding principles for settlement of the boundary question' which had accompanied the declaration of India and China to be 'strategic and cooperative' partners.

All these pious moves between the two giants had not in any way relieved the tensions along the border. Why was this so? Analysts say that all politico-diplomatic interaction between China and India as reflected in the documents of bilateral relationship has more to do with generalities and are all short on specifics. So the first difficulty remains the 'tangled web of intangibles' in all the agreements signed. The 2005 'strategic and cooperative partnership', spoke more about atmospherics than substantive content.

The future bilateral relationships therefore need to focus on tangibles. The boundary talks between China

and India which has a 3 stage road map (moving from top down from abstract principles to parameters in specifics of territorial adjustments) will now need to be changed. There has to be a 'bottom up' approach which begins with the specifics of territorial adjustments to eventual boundary alignment.

So when the dragon came to meet the elephant last week and with all bon homie the Chinese President went first to Gujarat, the home state of Indian PM Modi, instead of India's capital Delhi, it was inconceivable to find Chinese and Indian soldiers and civilians facing each other at three points along the disputed Ladakh border. How unbelievable it was that even as the two leaders were dining and conferring about eternal peace between the two, their soldiers were confronting each other. Of course this time there was confusion of the two armies regarding the alignment of the border and the principles of water sharing of Trans Border Rivers at these critical points. The intangibles had prevailed over specifics in this high stake game.

However, both the leaders agreed in their bilateral talks in Delhi that there was urgent need to deal with specifics in the near future. The Chinese President requested Indian PM to agree to 'clarify' some ambiguities prevailing on the ground at the border. The visit however led to a number of substantive agreements on trade, investments (India will invest US\$20 billion in 5 years in India mainly in its railways and infrastructure including setting up industrial parks), technology transfers and in a number of other areas. China envisioned that Chinese industries and Indian back office skills will be able to bring prosperity not only to the two countries but also to the world.

The big question that was left unanswered was the strategic one. India and China although are partners in the grouping called BRICS and India is likely to team up in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, yet how will China look at India when she increasingly tie up with the USA in order to 'contain' the rise of China in Asia? The moot matter is whether India can live with China where she has to be on the side of USA and with China's mortal foe, Japan? As relations become more and more complicated, and the rivalry between China and the US intensify in the Pacific and Indian oceans, where will India be? Will all the economic and investment tie-ups between India and China work smoothly or will remain another tangle of intangible web?

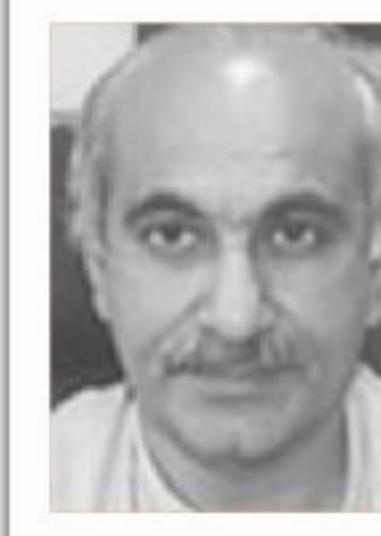
PM Modi once portrayed India-China relations as 'two bodies, but one spirit'. But as things stand today they are not as close as they should be. But what seemed to be missed out by commentators is that India-China relations are based on 'hard realities'. These are alignment of views to 'global affairs', 'development goals' and 'practical needs'. Both India and China have grudged to reach out to each other. But as President Xi Jinping says 'it is candor and sincerity that can build up trust that can lead to close cooperation'.

So the dragon need to now blunt its talons and douse its fiery breadth, while the elephant will have to watch where it is stepping in the future.

The writer is a former Ambassador and a commentator on contemporary

## A toast to strategic health

### BYLINE



M.J. AKBAR

**O**NCE is never enough in the carefully crafted, meticulously guarded language of diplomacy. It is repetition which sets the pace. In his formal address at the banquet hosted by President Pranab Mukherjee, Chinese President Xi Jinping said he was convinced that a "China-India strategic and cooperative partnership will make even bigger progress and contribute to an even brighter future for our two countries and to progress and prosperity of this region and the world at large". And then, in a second mention, he raised a toast to this strategic partnership.

Message from Beijing: we will be serious about this discussion the next time our officials meet. So far, this particular aspect of the India-China dialogue has fluctuated on the assumption that each conversation be deemed successful if both sides manage to agree on a date for the next meeting. Presumably that will change.

So where precisely are the regions for strategic cooperation that will help the world at large? Which parts of this very difficult and acrimonious world are we talking about?

The Himalayas, for starters. Progress begins at home. The boundary has

been a central problem between the distant neighbours since 1948, when Maoist Communists seized power in Beijing and claimed Tibet for China. After the low point of the 1962 war, India and China climbed quietly to a high point in 1988 with a unique solution to an intractable problem. They accepted that what could not be resolved was best left unsaid, and there was much to discuss about more productive subjects, like trade and travel. A piquant phrase established the contours of this new relationship: "peace and tranquillity" along the border irrespective of national claims. And so, while the narrative of incursion and excursion continues, no shot is fired in anger. Contrast this with the India-Pak border, where every few weeks shots are fired in rage.

But an unstable boundary does not become stable simply because two nations have agreed it is unstable. This is what Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed, in his forthright trademark manner, during his talks with President Xi Jinping. His rhetorical analogy was almost Chinese in its nuance: a toothache can immobilise the whole body. There is no significant dispute over half of the Indo-China border, and that section of the line can be settled given minimal will. It is the rest, across Arunachal, Aksai Chin and the part of occupied Kashmir that was gratuitously handed over to China by Pakistan, where the big chill descends. India would like Tibet to gain greater autonomy but has whittled away, over the years, the sovereignty issue. China will have to accept Arunachal as an integral part of India. We cannot predict what the final agreement will be elsewhere, but there is nothing that cannot be settled with a little quid pro quo.

Can there be strategic cooperation elsewhere while such complex debates take their time?

At the moment, eyes and minds are transfixed upon the mountains, coupled with a sustained glance at the Pacific. But an important area of partnership lies in the immediate west of India and China. Both nations are under threat from the shadow armies and theocratic militias that have blossomed dangerously in the war zones of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq and beyond. Al Qaeda, which is only one of numerous malevolent terror machines, has formally declared war against India.

Prime Minister Modi gave one sharp slap across the face of agent provocateurs when he told Al Qaeda to forget its

fantasies about turning Indian Muslims into a fifth column of its illegitimate Jihad. His assertion, to Fareed Zakaria in an interview to CNN, that Indian Muslims are

patriots and will live and die for their nation is powerful affirmation of the PM's faith and convictions, which will reverberate across the world. But there is far more work ahead.

China is also under siege. Beijing, after underplaying this threat for tactical reasons, is beginning to appreciate that self-appointed "Caliphs" in Afpak areas outside the control of Islamabad and Kabul will not rest until they "liberate" Sinkiang. China cannot remain aloof from the world's most dangerous battle zone.

India and China can find common cause because both are impelled by national security. There is no reason more powerful than this. I do not know if Beijing has given any consideration to such cooperation.

India and China can find common cause because both are impelled by national security. There is no reason more powerful than this. I do not know if Beijing has given any consideration to such cooperation; or whether it still believes that relations with Pakistan are worth more than this threat to China's geographical integrity. Some in Beijing will argue that Pakistan can become an ally in this war, but if anyone wants to understand Islamabad's limitations they can put a phone call through to Washington. The Pakistan establishment is beset by too many contradictions for it to be a reliable friend, even if its intentions are honest.

The Chinese, psychologically, may believe in a wall. But no one can be secure behind a wall in an age of communications technology, and militias that dismiss borders as a farce. If we do not move forward, we will be driven back.

The writer is Editor of *The Sunday Guardian*, published from Delhi, India on Sunday, published from London and Editorial Director, *India Today* and *Headlines Today*.

## LETTERS

### TO THE EDITOR

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#### "178-member team to go with PM"!

I was surprised to read the above news published in your daily on September 18. Our PM is going to attend the UN General Assembly with a 178-member delegation at the cost of public money. The report also says that the number of entourage members may rise further. We want to ask the government, is it really necessary to spend this huge amount of money after 178 people? We need an answer.

Md. Shahjahan Mia  
Development Professional  
Satmosjid Road, Dhaka

#### Another whitewash?



PHOTO: AFP

During the West Indies tour, the way our cricketers played was an insult to the entire nation: A 5-0 drubbing by the West Indies. We do not need an opening batsman like Tamim Iqbal who bats senselessly. We need openers like Javed Omar Belim who always saw off the new ball and put a price on his wicket and in more than one occasion, carried the bat for his country.

Mominul seems to bat sensibly; now why can't he be put in the opening position to see off the new ball? We need a captain who knows how to place fielders in correct positions when the situation demands it. For example, during the second Test match, neither did Mushfiq place a third slip, nor a third man, and this caused the ball to race to the boundary many times. Several catches could have been taken in this position. But it never occurred to Mushfiq for once that he could place a 3rd slip and a 3rd man. This sort of poor decision making by Mushfiq is not acceptable. It is also said that Bangladesh has the weakest bowling line up. Why is that?

One thing is for sure, Bangladesh will continue to tour the world and lose matches. As long as they are getting paid, who cares whether they win or lose? It seems that they care the least!

Aminur Rahim  
New DOHS, Mohakhali  
Dhaka

#### Frequent load shedding

These days power outage has become a common problem. We are suffering a lot as it happens five or six times a day. We know load shedding occurs when the demand of electricity is much higher than the generation of power. The present government claims that electricity generation has increased, but we do not see any tangible proof of it. On the other hand, electricity has become costlier.

We hope the authorities will do something to mitigate our sufferings.

Zabed Wali  
Chittagong

#### Comments on news report, "Poisoning Poultry, Fish," published on September 17, 2014

##### Fakhrul Islam

Will the departments concerned act in this regard before the nation becomes physically and mentally ill?

##### Dev Saha

This is simply awful. Knowing the facts, any sane person would be afraid to eat these dangerous delicacies.

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#### "Jailed until death" (September 18, 2014)

##### TruthnLie

Was this whole trial a hoax after all?

##### Kittu

Even if you go by the Shariah law, this guy should be hanged.

##### TruthnLie

Why was then Kader Mollah sentenced to be hanged? Is it that Mollah was a scapegoat for the ruling party to hang on to power?

##### MH Khan

EU and other European partners will accept this verdict as they oppose death penalties. Most of the Bangladeshis will find this punishment too lenient considering the gravity of the crimes he committed. But probably it is also time for us to impose moratorium on death penalties and move ahead with other nations hand in hand.

##### Sayed Rahman

Thank god. Maybe this time we will be able to save some lives.

##### Ibrahim Zaman