

Extortion in transport sector

Mere warning will not do

ALTHOUGH two very important ministers have only now openly acknowledged the pervasive and rampant practice of extortion in the transport sector, their plan to deal with a long running nefarious practice sounds absurd and raises questions about the rationale behind their feather glove approach to the problem. Both the home and shipping minister have prescribed warning to the perpetrators to desist from a very damaging practice which happens to be the preoccupation of apparently some very powerful and well linked people in this country.

One doesn't have to narrate the deleterious consequences of extortion. The most palpable is on the prices of food products carried from the outline districts to the capital particularly. And when the intelligence agencies have identified definitively the people involved in extortion one wonders why such a soft approach. And how long will the last warning last, and what would the likely action be if the last warning went unheeded?

Asking refrain from those that have been engaged in this trade is like asking the devil to listen to the scripture. This will not see any let up in extortion; it will only encourage them to indulge even more vigorously in it. And it will create a perception in the minds of the public that the reason why the authorities are unwilling to take stringent measures is because those involved in it, reportedly, belong to the ruling party, transport workers union, government service and even some in the list are members of the police force and journalists. Extortion is a disease that needs a strong medicine to cure. Warning is surely not the appropriate one.

Cattle breeding shows promise

Develop beef export potential

THIS year, local cattle breeders met 80 percent of the demand for sacrificial animals during Eid-ul-Azha. Over the last two years, local farmers have turned their attention to rearing local breeds as India put restrictions on cattle flow to Bangladesh. This growing trend has benefitted from prudent financing policy introduced by the Bangladesh Bank which launched a soft loan scheme with an interest rate of 5 percent to help boost cattle farming. The cumulative effect of the ban and access to easy loans is that the traditional cattle farming zones of Pabna and Sirjaganj have expanded to other districts. The Bangladesh Meat Mercants' Association allege that in the past oversupply of cattle in the days leading up to the sacrificial festival led to hundreds of thousands of animals remaining unsold, which resulted in loss for the farmers.

While we are happy to see a boost in domestic production of cattle, the supply chain of cattle needs to be looked into, because Eid-ul-Azha cannot be the only reason why farmers should be encouraged to breed cattle. The processed meat export market, especially in the Middle East is a very lucrative place and there is great potential for our cattle breeders if we can successfully tap into the market. This would require policy measures to be put in place allowing for a nascent meat packaging industry to grow alongside greater farmer participation in rearing cattle and could become yet another source of foreign exchange for the country.

A WAR CRIMINAL'S EXECUTION

Saner views from Pakistan

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

READERS may have read an introspective piece on 19th September under the caption 'The hanging of Mir Quasem Ali'. It was indeed refreshing to come across an honest and largely historically correct observation of a Pakistani about the genesis of Bangladesh and particularly about the recent trial of Bangladeshi war criminals and collaborators of 1971. The Pakistani, in question, is Mr. Pervez Hoodbhoy, an educator and no wonder he has been able to take a dispassionate view of men, matter, and moments.

It is undeniable that a distorted version of history that purposely ignores the atrocities committed by the Pakistan Army in 1971 and the continued obstinacy of the Pakistan establishment in not admitting the horrendous mistakes of that period will only serve to create ill feelings in Bangladesh. Doctored textbooks on the happenings of 1971 in the then East Pakistan will further aggravate the process. Sadly, the myopia of Pakistan is disturbingly explicit when even now one sees that the country is "deeply saddened" by the execution in Bangladesh of Mir Quasem Ali. This war criminal was sentenced to death after what Pakistan describes as "a flawed judicial process."

While optimists would hope that in the coming days discerning Pakistanis will come to terms with the realities, it is pertinent to remind that hanging aging war criminals is not intended to draw satisfaction but actually giving the devil its due. The frail looking characters waiting in the docks with drooping posture must not make us forget the gory crimes they committed in full public view in complete disregard of morals and scruples. Their actions turned countless women into widows and scores of children into orphans.

Believers, including Pakistanis, should know full well that patriotism is an inseparable part of faith. That being so, persons accused of crimes against humanity in 1971 have quite manifestly defied and defiled their own faith. They deserve no compassion and consideration, morally or legally.

The fact of the matter is that in 1971, Bangalees, despite clinching an electoral majority were not only denied their due, they also became the unfortunate victims of a regime-sponsored genocide whose gory details and dimensions are yet to be ferreted out.

The recently published book Blood Telegrams, that tells of a forgotten genocide and the Spivac Communications before and after Bangladesh's cruel birth, brings tragically to the fore the monstrous deeds committed by the Pakistan army and its Jamaat collaborators against hapless



VICTIM BY AMINUL ISLAM, OIL ON CANVAS, 61 X 91 CM, 195

Bangalees in 1971. Leaving aside this credible evidence, one could talk to scores of living men and women of Bangladesh who are first-hand witnesses to the horrendous criminality of the Jamaat hirelings against their own countrymen in 1971.

It is, in fact, only a small fraction of the above perpetrators that have been accounted for and are now being charged for crimes against humanity. Let us be very clear on one point: after March 25, 1971, no self-respecting Bangalee could support the Pakistan establishment's action in the then East Pakistan. The Pakistan army was in fact quite unabashedly carrying out what in later days was termed as ethnic cleansing. The racist rage of the 'Brown Sahibs' against the dark skinned Bangalees, despite following the same religion, was manifest. Unspeakable and dastardly crimes were committed in the name of the so-called 'Islamisation drive.'

Let us remember that the tracking of Nazi war criminals has been an unrelenting process. Armenians have not forgotten the extermination campaign against their existence in the early 20th century. Koreans still resent the brutalities committed by the Imperial Japanese Army during WWII. Bangladeshis, despite being subjected to a horrendous genocide, have been more than magnanimous towards their tormentors. So, let the Pakistan establishment atone for its crimes in 1971,

as has been done by the Germans.

It is also worth pondering that only a tiny fraction of those guilty of crimes against humanity in 1971 have been indicted. This is partly because the victors had no stomach for the scale of executions, numbering several thousands, which would have been necessary had strict justice been enforced against every criminal accused of crimes against humanity. Very few retributive executions took place in liberated Bangladesh. Students of history may like to compare this with events of post-World War II in Europe, where nearly a thousand retributive executions took place in the western zones of occupation. Some 920 Japanese were executed, more than three hundred of them by the Dutch, for crimes committed in the East Indies.

Finally, if indeed Bangladeshis are the brotherly people as has often been claimed by the Pakistani authorities then let them respond accordingly and give the brother the due respect. Let them not defile our sentiments and distort history. We owe at least this much to the countless souls who sacrificed for our sovereignty. Let Pakistanis honour themselves by paying tributes to our war heroes of 1971, especially those brave soldiers of East Bengal Regiment who in large measure gallantly defended Lahore in the 1965 war.

The writer is a columnist of *The Daily Star*.

Uri is only a symptom

BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYAR

BALUCHIS-TAN in Pakistan is like our Kashmir, an integral part but still rebellious after almost 70 years of Maharaja Hari Singh's accession to India. However, in India's case first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru gave an undertaking to hold a plebiscite as soon as things had settled in the valley. He could not fulfil the promise.

Nehru found out that things will be reduced to a slogan, Gita versus Koran, and people would be so driven by religious sentiments that they would not be exercising their franchise. When the acclaimed leader Sheikh Abdullah joined the Union, he conceded the point that a popular verdict had been obtained and it amounted to a plebiscite and, with it, the accession was complete.

What happened in Uri is a symptom, not the disease. The disease is that the youth which is now leading a movement want a country of their own. In the same way, Baluchistan wants to secede from Pakistan and have an independent country. That, if

demand from autonomy to an Islamic independent country. The attack on the Indian soldiers on the border is the culmination of their anger. Pakistan, too, has found the climate somewhat suited to it and has increased the number of infiltrators into the valley.

But this is not the first time that Pakistan has sent infiltrators into India. Nor will it be the last occasion. There have been several such instances, including the attacks on Indian Parliament, Mumbai and Pathankot. After every such incident, a war-like cry was heard in the rest of the country to retaliate. So immense was the pressure this time on the government that it had to assure the public that "retaliation would take place at a place and time of our liking."

But people want action on the ground even at the expense of a war. I recall what happened soon after the attacks on Parliament, Mumbai or Pathankot. Our reaction then was in the shape of stationing troops on the borders for almost one year or beyond. This time, the anger is deeper and wider. Yet the government is showing restraint, though Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured that the perpetrators would not go unpunished.

However, we also know the limit to which the

with the hound. Why are they stoking the fires of hatred when people on both sides are surcharged?

France and Germany had fought for more than hundred years. Today they are the best of friends. Qaide-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah gave me this

Qaide-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah gave me this example when I asked him before partition that Hindus and Muslims would jump at each other's throat once the British had left. He said we would be the best of friends.

example when I asked him before partition that Hindus and Muslims would jump at each other's throat once the British had left. He said we would be the best of friends. I have no doubt that one day this would come about. Former Prime Ministers Atal Behari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh have said many a time that the destiny has thrown India and Pakistan together and they cannot but be good neighbours.

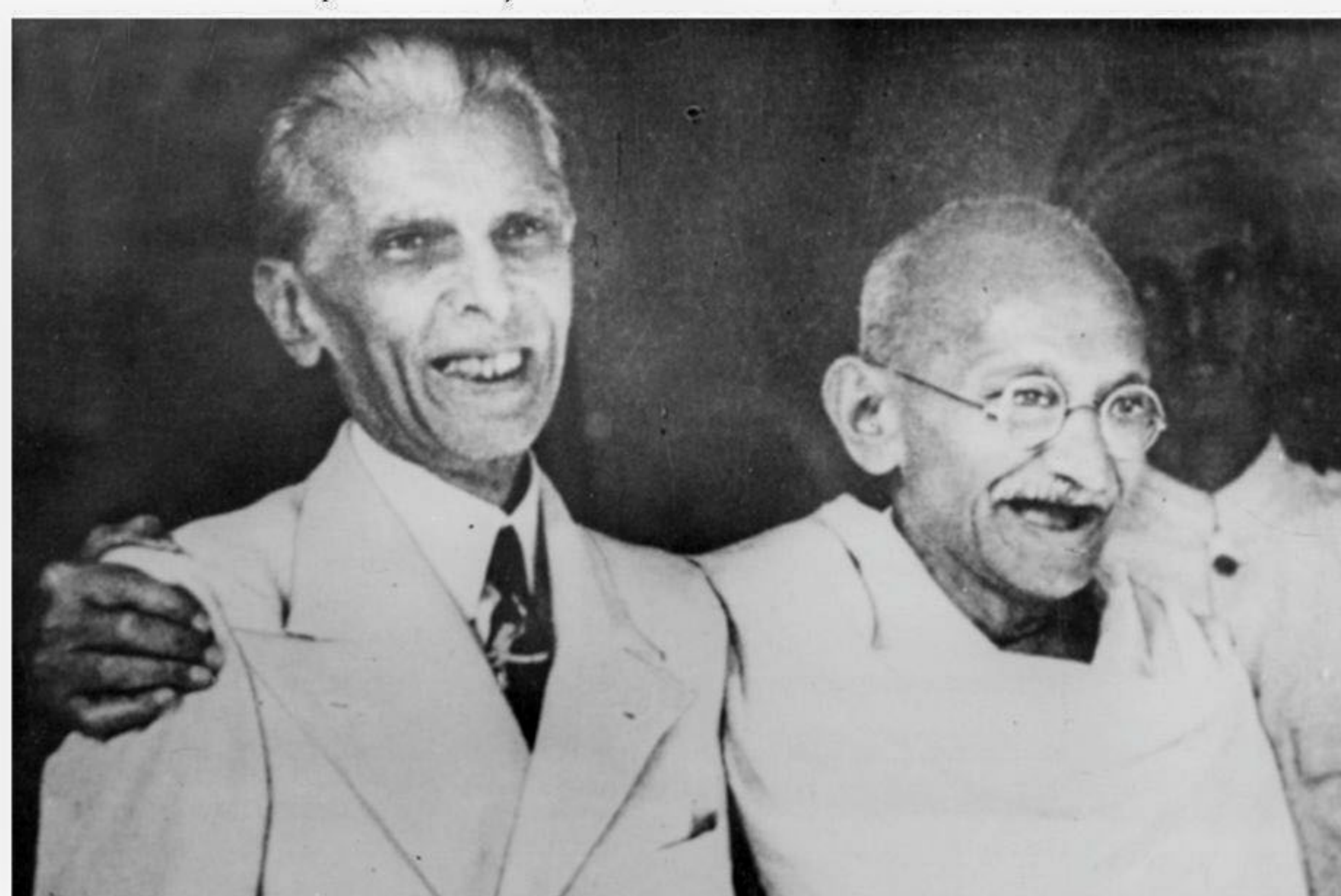
I admired the courage and commitment of people, however small in number, lighting candles at Karachi or taking out a procession at Lahore some years ago in memory of those who had died in the Mumbai attack. This is the time when India needs understanding. This is also the occasion when faith in good relations between India and Pakistan is tested.

But at the same time, Pakistan should understand and appreciate India's anger. Those who attacked Mumbai or Pathankot might be the Al-Qaida and the Taliban who are playing havoc in Pakistan as well. These are the organisations which are helping, training and arming them. Why have such extremists remained beyond the pale of law? Even when some of them were "detained" after the attack on India's Parliament, they were practically free to preach and spread poison. India suspects that those arrested after the Mumbai carnage would have the front door of their house shut while the back door was open.

No world power, except Germany, has directly accused the Pakistan government for the attacks on Mumbai. Investigators believe that all attacks on India are linked to members of one terrorist group or the other in Pakistan. Whatever evidence that had India provided in the past Pakistan has failed to prod Islamabad.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA), which is probing into the recent Uri incident, was set up with a fanfare in 2009 to assuage public anger over a similar series of failure leading up to 26/11. They were entrusted with cases but the result so far has been dismal. What the NIA will do in the present case is to be seen. The nation is waiting for a retaliatory action.

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.



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granted, would be another Islamic country on our border.

I told the Kashmiri students during my recent visit to Srinagar at their invitation that the Lok Sabha would be in no mood to endorse anything like what they wished. They said it was "your problem how you bring about the change." The demand by the youth for an independent sovereign country is in contrast to what leaders like Yasin Malik and Shabbir Shah had wanted some years ago. It is another matter that Yasin has now joined the chorus.

Pakistan has now become relevant for the people in the valley because they, too, have changed their

elected rulers can go in the two countries since both possess nuclear weapons. But what I fail to understand is why Islamabad had been reluctant to take action against terrorists who have been identified living in Pakistan. Whatever it has done so far against the terrorists, it is not on India's request but on Washington's word.

In India, except for a few warmongers, there is a realisation that there is no option to peace. It is also time for the politicians of the two countries to introspect their conduct. Even if they do not talk about war, their speeches and the body language is far from friendly. They appear to run with the hare and hunt

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Economic public transport

Bangladesh's narrow roads were developed in an unplanned manner, with the construction of houses and commercial ventures leaving no space for roads - a major cause for its perpetual traffic gridlock. The 4 million middle and lower-income population of Dhaka are inconvenienced in light of the increased personal vehicles, scarce availability of CNG driven auto-rickshaws and the barring of cycle rickshaws in some areas. While taxis are unaffordable for many, public buses are not a viable option for a lot of commuting women.

A venture for CNG or electric run auto-rickshaws in Bangladesh, similar to that of Japan, would largely benefit these people. A suitable industrial unit may be engaged for the job. It would enable cheaper prices of auto-rickshaws and reduce large vehicle congestion in the streets.
Md. Ashraf Hossain
Ramna

WB Country Director, leader in private education sector

It was disappointing that the Star Business report on Dr. Junaid Ahmad's new appointment at World Bank did not mention his active involvement in founding North South University.

NSU has recently received a lot of hostility, with current students bearing the brunt of public antagonism. The horrid actions of a few have condemned the many. A well-informed media can correct such irrational impulses by presenting positive, neutral information.

Dr. Junaid Ahmad is one of NSU's Founding Presidents and Life Members of the Board of Trustees. It would have been wonderful to read about his role in implementing international standard curricula in the private education sector of the country.

Nakibuddin Haider Navid
North South University