

## Contradictory signals?

**BJP govt. better stop stereotyping Bangladesh**

WE are surprised by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's reported remark that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was using "terrorists of Bangladesh and Nepal to pursue its anti-India agenda." Although delivered at an internal security conference in New Delhi, the comment spread like wild fire because of the harsh message it contained and its timing. Coming from the highest political level in India when a Yaswant-Morshed meet is on the cards to discuss the so-called 'illegal immigrants' issue in New Delhi, this may be construed as a contradictory signal much that we would like to believe to the contrary. For, it is on the Indian external affairs minister Yaswant Singh's sagacious invitation that his Bangladesh counterpart Morshed Khan's visit to the Indian capital is taking place to thrash out the problem. We do hope that the forthcoming Delhi initiative would yield some positive results.

Even though the wording of Vajpayee's comment is different than that of others in the Indian leadership on the alleged ISI nexus, it is basically in character with the same propaganda offensive the BJP has launched against Bangladesh for quite sometime now. Such remarks have been notional, sweeping and unsubstantiated. That they cannot be helpful in building an ambience conducive to a mutually rewarding bilateral relationship cannot be in doubt; yet the line is being pursued by the present Indian leadership turning a blind eye to the broader and durable aspects of our neighbourly relations.

Why is Bangladesh being profiled like this by the BJP? One wonders, echoing the views of some reputed Indian observers, whether the 'Gujarat formula' is still being played out with the 2004 Indian general election and some forthcoming state elections, in mind. Let communal polarisation be not the voters' diet in India. We are for good neighbourly relations with India based on equity, reciprocal respect and mutual benefit within the overall framework of the SAARC spirit.

## Beware of extortionists

**Some measures in place, greater vigil needed**

AS it always happens, extortionists, and criminals of some other denominations, take full advantage of the hectic days before a major festival. With just a day to go before the Eid-ul Azha holidays, reports from around the country indicated that people were being victimised by organised gangs of extortionists or looters.

It is welcome news that the army, police and ansar have been deployed at appropriate points to ward off extortionists' forays. We took note of the fact that the criminals, most of whom went into hiding during the joint drive against crime, have tried to regroup themselves. So it was necessary to beef up the security arrangements.

Law and order has a direct bearing on market behaviour. For example, cattle traders were forced to pay tolls at different points on their way to the cities and towns and finally at the cattle bazaars. Hopefully this is not happening as before. The traders try to recover the costs by charging an extra amount of money from the buyers. So in the ultimate analysis, it is the ordinary citizens who have to bear the brunt.

People planning to go out of the capital during the Eid vacation find themselves in deep trouble as bus or launch tickets, for the crucial two days before Eid, were reportedly to have been sold out. Bringing the Eid holidays forward by one day has complicated matters. The known way of fleeing home-bound people in desperate need of tickets has taken on a new dimension.

It seems that any major festival creates some extra opportunities for the professional criminals to ruthlessly exploit the vulnerability of people. They succeed because enforcement of the law has had gaps. We need to fill in those voids on a durable basis, not by taking recourse to ad-hoc measures.

Now it is time to mount vigil on the transportation routes and the various market places.

# South Asia: The imperative of fresh outlook



M ABDUL HAFIZ

AS Indo-Pakistan relations dip to a new low as a result of the ouster of diplomats from each other's country there is also a sudden chill in Pakistan's alliance with the United States following a rather sour remark made by Nancy Powell, the US envoy to Pakistan as she was speaking recently to the businessmen in Karachi. She asked Pakistan "to stop cross-LoC of infiltration" and "use of Pakistan as a platform for terrorism" before a stunned audience who found it oddly out of context. Notwithstanding new-found US-Pakistan bonhomie in the wake of US-led war on terror of which Pakistan is the frontline state the perceptual gap between them persisted and more often than not the cracks appeared in the relations. Those were however promptly repaired without a fuss and letting them come to light. It was for the first time that their differences were so blatantly made public to the embarrassment of Pakistan and its baffled people. It was as if the US was now trying to wield a big stick after holding out carrots for months when she needed Pakistan the most.

That Ms Powell's remarks were not just casual was soon confirmed by Richard Boucher, the State Department's spokesman through a similar message for Pakistan in way of clarifying Ambassador Powell's

tense remarks. He said that Ambassador Nancy was only echoing the pledge General Musharraf had made. Boucher observed: "that has been a pledge (by General Musharraf) that we have taken seriously and as something we have to continue to work with Pakistan on". Whatever might have prompted Ms Powell to take on Pakistan in a manner which does not quite fit in diplomatic nuances. Her comments were intriguingly in conformity with India's old refrain to which Prime Minister Vajpayee has, of late, resorted to. Only very recently

semblance of atleast a displeasure. In the mean time obviously a great majority of Pakistanis appear askance if it is what for which Pakistan abandoned its Taliban compatriots, helped killing thousands of Afghans through ruthless US bombing by providing military facilities, allowed the FBI agents and US special forces to hunt down fugitive Taliban and al-Qaeda on Pakistan soil, handed over 400 'terrorists' to the US authority -- as revealed by Christina Rocca, the Assistant Secretary of State in December last - and even, the other day, Pakistan

gle and terrorism is indeed blurred. While the freedom fighters are now conveniently branded terrorists the state-sponsored terrorism is hypocritically condoned. As India in its zeal to finish off Kashmiri resistance took full advantage of the prevailing anti-terrorist mood, it is an irony that the US after having achieved its objective of drafting Pakistan into its self-defined anti-terror crusade, showed little sensitivity to Pakistani aspirations and Musharraf's constraint with regard to Kashmir issue. Instead, she pressurised Pakistan into cracking down on militancy and

concerned they have their own dynamics over which Musharraf or any other Pakistani ruler has little or no control. Musharraf's willy-nilly attempt to take on the militancy has so far only resulted in the rise of religious right in the country's mainstream politics.

In the light of US' long-term game plan in South Asia one must understand which side of the divide in the subcontinent is the US' sympathetic, although Pakistan with its proximity to both Central Asia and Gulf region where America has vital economic and geopolitical interests, can con-

total end if, at all, it is within its capability. By now Kashmiri freedom struggle is a full blown as well as homegrown movement bearing the stamp of UN approval. The Kashmiris waited for four long decades to exercise their right of self determination as provided in UNSL resolution of 13 August 1948 and 5 January 1949. Earlier India with its enormous diplomatic resources managed to wriggle out of its commitment for plebiscite under UN auspices to decide the fate of Kashmir. At long last they took up arms against Indian rule and embarked on a liberation struggle confronting half a million Indian troops garrisoned in Kashmir. While Pakistan may in its expression of solidarity with the Kashmiris lend its moral, political and diplomatic supports but it must remove the irritant of 'crossborder terrorism' once for all. Because Kashmiri freedom struggle is a self-sustaining movement and no freedom struggle ever failed in history.

India also must see reason to benefit from an early dialogue on whole set of bilateral issues including Kashmir which she has been evading. India is great country with its vibrant democracy, multiculturalism and scientific progress has few parallels in the region. It must not punish its 500 million poor to build an awesome military arsenal and be belligerent to its neighbours who wish it all the greatness it deserves except an unwanted attempt of its domination.

The US also has no less crucial role to play in the imbroglio. The US - the world's moral arbiter of sorts - must ensure "the reign of terror let loose by the Indian forces in Kashmir. Blackballing the resistance obliterates the real context of the unequal struggle in Kashmir and allows India to evade the real issue. To have Pakistan on side the US must persuade India to restart dialogue to resolve all pending bilateral issues.

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## PERSPECTIVES

**While Pakistan may in its expression of solidarity with the Kashmiris lend its moral, political and diplomatic supports but it must remove the irritant of 'crossborder terrorism' once for all. Because Kashmiri freedom struggle is a self-sustaining movement... India also must see reason to benefit from an early dialogue on whole set of bilateral issues including Kashmir...**

Vajpayee repeated the charge of Pakistan "being the centre of terrorist activity". In a sharp contrast to how Nancy dealt Pakistan with a crack of whip her counterpart in New Delhi, Robert Blackwell not only patted on India's back -- he had declared earlier that Indo-US war on terror cannot be won until terrorism against India is ended and once for all. And the statement of Ms Powell in Karachi completes the pattern. An American predilection for India inherent in the events and pronouncements can be traced back to the US' long standing policies towards South Asia.

Nevertheless Ms Powell's remarks, not surprisingly, provoked a sharp reaction among a wide range of opinion makers, especially the religious right who demanded the ambassador's expulsion and forced Pakistani officials to show a

used her own forces in cooperating with the FBI agents, to apprehend Dr Khawja Ahmed Javed, a reputed gastroenterologist, along with nine others in Lahore for their alleged al-Qaeda links?

It is no secret now that Pakistan's post 9/11 decision to board Bush's band wagon was motivated by its declared desire primarily to save Pakistan's Kashmir cause and nuclear 'assets'. But Pakistan to its utter disappointment remains -- after all what it contributed to the US' war on terror -- "a platform for terrorism" in US' perception. Out of Pakistan's declared desires let's take Kashmir first. What to talk of promoting Pakistan's Kashmir cause in exchange of her services rendered to the US-led anti-terror war there has hardly been its Kashmir policy in place during the post 9/11 milieu when the subtle difference between freedom strug-

in a way coerced Musharraf to his commitment to permanently stop the cross-border infiltration and prevent Pakistan (and Azad Kashmir) from being used for terrorism.

Even if Musharraf vowed to accomplish something impossible in his widely acclaimed speech last year when the Indian troops were amassed along the line of control and international border and a relentless pressure from the US administration mounted on Pakistan, can Musharraf do it? His assurances to crack down on the militancy might have saved him his seat of power, but given the country's historical experience vis-a-vis its archrival and ideological inclination, however much suppressed now, it was beyond Musharraf's capability. So far as infiltration, if any, across then line of control as well as insurgency within the India-held Kashmir are

tribute to peace and stability and would then continue to enjoy its geo-strategic clout. But in Kashmir, by all appearance, the US seems inclined to let India consolidate its possession hold. Musharraf has for sometimes past talked of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence which he claimed had driven off Indian troops from attacking Pakistan; but if situation can be stabilised in Kashmir and it would cease to be a flash point of nuclear confrontation, to what use would Pakistan put its nuclear arsenal to? A redundant nuclear arsenal can only be the source of further proliferation. It is therefore, feared in Pakistan that it may as well be branded as a proliferator -- rendering the fate of its nuclear arsenal uncertain.

Both India and the US have conceded a fall in infiltration, they also insist it has not ended. It will be in Pakistan's interest to ensure its

# Double standard diplomacy: Signals for nuclearisation?



DILARA CHOUDHURY

A full scale war preparation against Iraq is underway in the United States while the UN weapons inspectors continue reporting to UN Security Council about their findings. So far, no 'smoking guns' have been found but there are issues, like questions about Iraq's full list of weapons in possession, its refusal to allow high-altitude reconnaissance flights by U-2 aircraft and to facilitate private interviews with Iraqi weapons scientists, which need to be resolved before Baghdad can expect any clean bill of health. The inspectors want more time to make sure that Saddam indeed does not have any weapons of mass destruction. America's allies like France, Germany, and Russia are all in favour of such proposition so that a war can be averted. Even Britain's Tony Blair, known for his unquestionable support for President Bush, is willing to exploit all avenues before a war that most likely will have catastrophic consequences, could be started. Everybody wants to give peace a chance. But President Bush remains far from convinced. He is tirelessly lecturing the world about Saddam's intent, his capabilities, his deceptiveness, and his threats to American interest in the region. As far as Washington is concerned Saddam has already violated the November Security Council Resolution by not complying with U-2 flights and allowing private interviews of the Iraqi weapons scientists by the UN weapons inspectors. It firmly believes that Saddam cannot be disarmed through any other means but war.

However, Washington, without withdrawing the pressure on Iraq, seems to have reluctantly agreed to allow Security Council to work on the agenda. To make US's intentions for a multilateral approach plausible Bush in his State of the Union address revealed that Secretary of State Colin Powell would place the full list of weapons of mass destruction, which Saddam is allegedly hiding, before Security Council on February 5, 2003. US hopes that its

'patience' in the face of Iraq's 'material breach' of Council's demand would help garner support of the Council even though it may not authorize a military action. In the same token, Washington seems convinced about the existence of weapons of mass destruction by Iraq. Analysts believe that Bush would go to war even it means unilateral action and he is, thus, trying to build a case for war against Iraq at home. Why such an urgent need for a war against Iraq? According to Bush administration, Iraq poses grave threats to its national security.

Threats to national security are compelling reasons for waging a war. Any state worth its name would

with modern and sophisticated weapons. He has in his possession both biological and chemical weapons. The country has developed sophisticated missile technology. It has, at present, 200 medium range missiles that can reach South Korea in a matter of minutes, and has already launched long-range missile capable of hitting Japan. It has, by its own admission, a secret uranium-enrichment nuclear programme in violation of its 1994 agreement. Arms control analysts indicate that Pyongyang may have enough plutonium, if not triggering devices, for one to two nuclear bombs. Further by reactivating the Soviet-supplied reactor and completing work on other two it can start stock-

Treaty; kicking out the UN weapons inspectors; disabling the surveillance cameras and breaking the seal of 8,000 spent fuel rods. Pyongyang feels such behaviours are quite appropriate in the context of banning of oil shipment by the US, Japan, South Korea and the European Union.

From the discussion above, can there be any doubts that the regime of Kim Jong Il indeed poses threats to US National Security when it comes to its capabilities, intent and behavioural patterns? Obviously not, as he can be menacing threats to US National Security in multifarious ways. First, it can, with its military might, seriously jeopardise US interest in the Pacific by destabilising

using nuclear weapons in case of a war, makes him a desperate man. And desperate men are capable of doing despicable and unimaginable things.

However, despite all these pointers, Washington is not talking about war (good news, and is welcomed) against North Korea and instead has taken a different route than its dealings with Iraq. It has been all along, since the beginning of the crisis, calling for a peaceful and diplomatic solution to the crisis. It is urging its allies like South Korea and Japan to find a diplomatic solution to the problem. China, only country said to have influence on the regime of Kim Jong Il, is being consulted, which offered to act as a venue for talks

and irreversible steps" to end its weapons development programme. Steps Pyongyang is unlikely to take. Even putting the case before the UN Security Council is being considered cautiously as any sanctions by UN Security Council would be considered as an act of war by Pyongyang.

Actually, playing safe and resorting to diplomacy are better options than going to war. The world is happy that the United States is taking diplomatic measures in order to defuse the North Korean situation. Now the relevant question is: Why is Washington treating North Korea in different veins than Iraq since both are guilty of the same crimes -- Pyongyang more so than Baghdad? Is it because North Korea has now nuclear bombs, besides the chemical and biological weapons, and is willing to use them in case of an attack by US with catastrophic regional consequences -- capabilities that Saddam Hussain does not have? Is it then the nuclear capability of North Korea that is providing the shield it desperately needs? Is it then not a double standard on the part of Washington? Some analysts disagree. They argue that it is not a double standard but it is a different situation. It is argued that North Korea may have developed the weapons of mass destruction but it has not used them whereas Saddam Hussain already has. But these arguments really do not hold water in the context of North Korea's intent, capabilities, behavioural patterns and its preparedness to kill millions, especially when North Korea has already begun transporting its 8,000 spent fuel rod for reprocessing obviously for making nuclear bombs.

It is not, thus, far-fetched to assume that it is North Korea's nuclear capabilities that are actually preventing Washington to take any stern actions against it, including war. Factors that prevent war are always welcome. Diplomatic solutions to any crisis are better than any kind of war. Similar attempts, like those that are used to defuse Korean peninsula crisis, should then be made by Washington to avert another desert war. But if North Korea is getting a different treatment due to its nuclear capability, then Washington, unfortunately is sending wrong signals around the world. It seems plausible, in this context, that having nuclear weapons is one of the surest ways to safeguard one's National Security! That indeed is a chilling thought. Hopefully, other countries would not try to follow the footsteps of North Korea.

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## PANORAMA

**Diplomatic solutions to any crisis are better than any kind of war. Similar attempts, like those that are used to defuse Korean peninsula crisis, should then be made by Washington to avert another desert war. But if North Korea is getting a different treatment due to its nuclear capability, then Washington, unfortunately is sending wrong signals around the world. It seems plausible, in this context, that having nuclear weapons is one of the surest ways to safeguard one's National Security!**

declare war i.e. failing other options, against threats to its national security. Even a pre-emptive attack against countries suspected of making weapons of mass destruction is now justified as spelled out by Washington's September National Security Strategy. And the factors like Iraq having chemical and biological weapons and not fully complying with UN Security Council resolution, thus, make it a target for US's pre-emptive attack. The logic is fully comprehended. But should not then other countries that are suspected of doing the same, if not more, prepare themselves for a similar fate? In particular, does not the development in Korean Peninsula i.e. North Korea's recently discovered nuclear programme require similar responses from Washington? If not, then the relevant question is: are its intent, capabilities and behavioural pattern less threatening to US National Security interest than Baghdad does?

Not really. On all counts, the regime of Kim Jong Il is capable of scoring equal, if not more, points than Iraq. First, with regard to its capability in terms of weaponry the possibilities are limitless. North Korea is one of the most isolated and fortified nations in the world. The leader of this Stalinist regime has one million strong ideologically motivated military that is equipped

with modern and sophisticated weapons. He has in his possession both biological and chemical weapons. The country has developed sophisticated missile technology. It has, at present, 200 medium range missiles that can reach South Korea in a matter of minutes, and has already launched long-range missile capable of hitting Japan. It has, by its own admission, a secret uranium-enrichment nuclear programme in violation of its 1994 agreement. Arms control analysts indicate that Pyongyang may have enough plutonium, if not triggering devices, for one to two nuclear bombs. Further by reactivating the Soviet-supplied reactor and completing work on other two it can start stock-

pile fuel for several more nuclear warheads within six months to a year -- a possibility that can turn North Korea into a virtual plutonium factory. As a result, CIA analysts predict that in such eventualities North Korea may become capable of building 100 nuclear bombs by year 2009, and improving its already sophisticated missile delivery system at its command.

Second, when it comes to intent, its past records demonstrate that it has no regards for human lives. It has resorted to terrorism in intimidating South Korea on numerous occasions. It's other neighbour Japan is still reeling from its history of kidnapping Japanese nationals in 1970s and treatment towards them. Kim Jong Il has, without any remorse, kept majority of his population in virtual bondage. Two-thirds of nation's population face starvation in the coming months and are desperate but that does not cut any ice in Stalinist dictator's own mischievous programmes. Lastly, history shows that its irrational, erratic and irresponsible behaviour has brought the country and international community on brinkmanship on numerous occasions. Most recently, it has demonstrated its flagrant disregard to international consensus by violating the 1994 agreement through its secret nuclear programme; unilaterally walking out of Non Proliferation

South Korea and Japan and threatening the lives of nearly 100,000 US soldiers stationed in those countries. Second, North Korea is the greatest proliferator of ballistic missiles. The export of missile technology is its major source of foreign exchange earnings. It has reportedly sold missile technology to countries suspected of harbouring and sponsoring terrorists. Now that it is no longer abided by the NPT Pyongyang's intent in this regard may be limitless. Third, its nuclear programme, if continued, holds the possibilities of igniting a nuclear arms race in Asia by bringing China and Japan into the fray and consequently having ominous impacts on South Asia. In such eventualities, we may have a full-blown nuclear race in Asia at the cost of much needed human development and poverty alleviation. Fourth, Kim Jong Il is more than capable of making Washington's nightmare come true by selling weapons of mass destruction to even non-state actors like Al-Qaeda groups. And lastly, the fact that Kim Jong Il knows that his country may be US's next target after Iraq, especially being part of Bush propagated 'axis of evil' and in the context of Defence Secretary Rumsfeld's request in a "nuclear posture review" to add North Korea to the list of seven other states against whom US may consider

between Washington and North Korea. Russians were contacted and they have recently come up with a three-point plan to defuse the tension in Korean Peninsula. And now Washington is being urged by South Korea to give time to Russian-brokered diplomacy, which calls for North Korea's commitment to keep Korean Peninsula nuclear free in exchange of economic and humanitarian aid as well as a written guarantee from Washington not to attack Pyongyang. Speculations are that the US would give such a guarantee since a non-aggression pact is not possible without the approval of the Congress. These are indicative of a definitive downplay of the situation, and absence of sabre-rattling makes it more poignant as well.

So far, the sticks that might be used by Washington can be considered meagre compared to what it wants to resort to in order to deal with the other evil -- namely Saddam Hussain. Till now, Washington has refused to have direct talks with North Korea and has threatened to take the matter to UN Security Council and its action to counter North Korea's nuclear programme though the US knows that Pyongyang cannot be trusted because the uranium-enrichment programme "was a fundamental breach" of 1994 agreement and it cannot be put back together unless it takes "verifiable

India. This proves what cowards they are. They are only bullies against unarmed civilians. Confronted with superior armed and legal forces, all they can do is flee. Since their true colours have now been revealed, it is unlikely that they will regain their former clout once they return.

One hopes that our police forces will be retrained to act as people's police. That may take a little time. In the meantime, hopefully, the mere threat of the army returning will keep the criminals off the streets. If the army is to be redeployed in the future, which is very likely, it should be for a shorter period of time, under a specific clause of the constitution, with clearly defined modus operandi and with no indemnity for transgressors.

# "Operation Clean Heart" and "Indemnity Ordinance" through the eyes of an expatriate

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED  
writes from Princeton

DURING the writer's recent visit to Bangladesh, he saw "Operation Clean Heart" in operation, its consequences, its withdrawal and the promulgation of the Indemnity Ordinance. Each of the above stage was mercilessly criticized in the Press. Yet, in my own conversation with ordinary Bangladeshis, they all seemed to be grateful for the operation, which improved their safety, even if they did not agree entirely with the tactics employed.

Let us back up. Every one agrees that the law and order situation in the country before the army intervention was intolerable. Mastans, hijackers and extortionists

were taking over the country. Chandabaz was everywhere and a simple trip by a rickshaw could be life-threatening experience. Drastic actions were clearly called for. And the government took it by not only calling in the army, but also by forbidding the ministers to bail out the criminals.

The first criticism leveled was that the army should not do the police's job. That is true. But the army had to be called in precisely because the police had failed in their job. I hope that in the independent Bangladesh police is not trained as a colonial police. The police's reputation, however, is not good. People have very little confidence in the police. The criminals, better armed than the police, have no fear of them.

The government's first mistake

was not to cite the specific clause of the constitution by which army was being deployed. This would have been easy if they had bothered to consult the constitution. Respect for the law is binding on everyone, including the government, other-

wise what empowers them to fight the criminals, who break the law? The second and the bigger mistake was not to define the parameters within which the army was to operate. The army is trained for battlefield conditions, where one kills or is

killed. Without proper reorientation, throwing the army on the civilians is like encouraging a bull to shop in a china shop.

The final mistake was the Indemnity Ordinance. No crime can be indemnified. An unacceptably large

number of "terrorists" died in army custody. Unless a criminal dies while fighting capture, death after he is apprehended reeks of vengeance, or is at least suspicious. Once again, the problem was not defining the limits within which the

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

The result of the "Operation Clean Heart" was a remarkable improvement in the law and order situation throughout the country. As the writer headed for his ancestral village from Dhaka, surprisingly no Chandabaz was to be seen anywhere. The writer spent a night at his ancestral village home without a worry in the world. He was told that all the terrorists were in hiding and that many had crossed over into India. This proves what cowards they are. They are only bullies against unarmed civilians. Confronted with superior armed and legal forces, all they can do is flee.