

Cancun debacle

New issues keep results at bay

WORLD trade talks in Cancun, which began on a high note of expectations have collapsed, with the developed countries imposing a new set of agenda, and the LDCs making no secret of the fact that they were not in a position to pay a price for the concessions and liberalisation of trade policies on the part of the world leaders.

Bangladesh's focus on quota- and duty-free access of LDCs' products to the markets in the developed world appeared to centre around non-agricultural products. Then the issue of movement of semi-skilled workers, which Bangladesh raised so ardently as the coordinator of the LDCs, failed to evoke the desired response.

The prime reason behind the Cancun talks failing to achieve the desired results is the tough bargain that the developed nations resorted to over farm subsidy. They backtracked on the pledge made in Doha two years ago that subsidies worth \$300 billion would be slashed. Obviously, the developing countries went to Cancun hoping that the Doha pledge would be lived up to. But in reality, they had to confront some new questions raised by the rich countries.

Singapore issues, as they are known, were, in a way, placing fresh burdens on the poor countries. Its contents primarily deal with the facilities and services that foreign investors should get. The treatment of foreign investors by developing countries is the leading clause of Singapore issues. Clearly, the rich countries are looking for more favourable conditions in this area. The second point relates to rules of competition. The third and fourth elements of Singapore issues are transparency in government procurement and trade facilitation. Obviously, as well as retaining control over trade, the rich countries are aiming to have sway over investment in the developing countries.

The issues were tabled when a breakthrough on reduction of farm subsidies looked like an achievable target. The situation changed completely when the world trade leaders were apparently asking for a price, through implementation of Singapore agenda, for the concessions demanded by the poor nations.

The LDCs are believed to have shown a greater degree of solidarity on the whole. But formation of the G-16 and G-21 groups suggests that their approach might have been influenced by special interests in some areas.

Senior officials of the governments will meet in Geneva on December 15 with the purpose of reducing the hiatus between rich and poor countries.

It was agreed to by the parties that new trade guidelines must be in place by January 1, 2004. But it looks like a tall order given the host of complexities, including the tendency to introduce new issues into the negotiation process.

Abduction, order of the day in Ctg

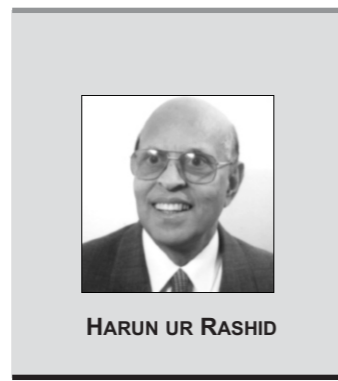
People feeling extremely vulnerable

KIDNAPPERS in the port city of Chittagong are having a field-day. For reasons that are quite explicable, criminals are resorting to abduction with reckless abandon. It has become the prime tool for extorting money or satisfying vendetta against somebody. The latest case in point centres around the abduction and subsequent rescue of four forest department employees. Just a few days back, a young boy tried to kidnap four youngsters but his plan was foiled due to timely intervention by the police. Yet, we are alarmed at the spate in kidnapping incidence, the last one being the tenth incident in a row in 52 days.

Taking people hostage for money is nothing new in Chittagong. There had been abductions in the past; some cases were solved by successful rescue efforts and some settled amicably since families of most victims did not feel safe to involve law enforcers. But the highly publicised and talked about abduction of business magnate Jamal Uddin Ahmed Choudhury highlighted the intractability of the phenomenon against the backdrop of abortive rescue operations. Failure to rescue him despite innumerable assurances and efforts by the authorities probably inspired others to use the tactic with impunity.

Yes, we should give credit to the law enforcers for capturing some of the abductors, but their failure to rescue Jamal Uddin remains a highly negative reference point for them. The kidnapers or the criminal groups that operate in the region seem to have gadgets that help them outsmart the police. Earlier, it was mainly for money, but now we are witnessing with dismay that kidnapping is also being employed to take revenge against people. There may be yet another motive tomorrow for the criminal to abduct somebody else. It is time the police re-equipped themselves and used their dossier on criminals and kidnapers to book them.

Why did Vajpayee play host to Sharon



HARUN UR RASHID

ISRAEL'S hard-line Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited India from 8-10 September at the invitation of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The visit has been the first for an Israeli Prime Minister since both countries established diplomatic relations in 1992.

Sharon had cut short his trip after suicide bombing killed 15 persons in Israel on 9th September. In a joint communiqué, India and Israel declared themselves partners in the "war against terrorism" after bilateral talks at New Delhi. The two sides reportedly signed six agreements which included accords on fighting drug trafficking and environmental protection. India's Prime Minister would pay a visit to Israel in the near future.

Ariel Sharon (son of a Russian Jewish immigrant) has been a controversial politician whose strong headedness and ruthless conduct against Palestinians are well-known. He had to resign as a Defence Minister in 1982 after an Israeli judicial enquiry held him responsible for the massacre of Palestinian women and children refugees in Sabra and Chatilla in Lebanon.

The visit was marked by angry protests by Indian Muslims and left-wing parties who opposed to Sharon's hard line policies that have aggravated the violent confrontation with the Palestinians. There were some unflattering editorials as well in India. On 10 September BBC reported that protesters in Kolkata burnt the Israeli flag and an effigy of Israeli Prime Minister.

Although diplomatic relations were set up 11 years ago, the relations between them were discreet and kept in a low profile. However when the BJP-led government under Vajpayee took power in 1999, bilateral relations have gradually warmed up, although maintained at a low key. India's BJP leaders are well aware

of political and economic ramifications of closer ties with Israel because of possible negative reaction from Muslim world including Pakistan. China may also consider the visit as a potential destabilising development in the sub-continent.

The question is: Why did Vajpayee play host to Israel's Prime Minister? There are many possible reasons for it and some of them are described below.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, India felt vulnerable in its security against two countries China and Pakistan. Soon it aligned itself with the US, the lone superpower. The US quickly embraced it

India's Parliament in New Delhi came under attack from militants in December 2001 leaving 13 dead. Pakistan-based militant groups Jaish-e-Mohammed and Laskar-e-Taiba were allegedly held responsible for the attack. India attempted the US to call the militants in Pakistan terrorists. The US hesitated and distinguished the Kashmiri militants from other terrorists because of Pakistan's possible adverse reaction. The Bush administration did not want to undermine the strategic alliance with Pakistan at a time when its war on terrorism in Afghanistan would continue. India was disappointed at the stance of the US.

for supply of Phalcon early warning airborne radar system (last month the US lifted its objections to Israel selling India its Phalcon warning system). Israeli radars reportedly will be used on India's Russian-made Ilyushins.

The Phalcon deal, according to BBC, has added weight to what some analysts are describing as a developing three-way axis between the US, India and Israel. Sharon's spokesman, Raanan Gissin reportedly said: "Our contacts with India are definitely a triangular strategic relationship, in line with the US stance on terror".

In the domestic context, next year India's Prime Minister will face general election. The situation in India-administered Kashmir appears to be a big embarrassment for the Vajpayee government. If Israel can change the US policy towards Pakistan, it will bring great political dividends for the BJP-led government in election. It is a gamble worth taken by BJP-led government in New Delhi.

China and Pakistan have been watching closely the developments. It was reported that President Musharraf wanted an internal debate whether it should recognise Israel. This move is seen to counter-act consequences of growing close Indo-Israeli relations. Pakistan's Foreign Minister Kasuri told reporters in Dhaka where he was on a visit that

"India and Israel are trying to change the strategic balance in the region by pouring in a wide range of sophisticated weapons and strategic defence system". The statement means that Pakistan will not be a silent spectator to the imbalance in the region. In other words Pakistan will ensure that strategic balance is restored as early as possible.

Israeli Prime Minister's visit to India has added another complication in dynamics of South Asian political and strategic architecture. Arms race is likely to follow in the region if India buys sophisticated radars from Israel. Already South Asia is a troubled region because of animosity between India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. The visit could have been avoided at a time when relations with Pakistan were improving but India's BJP-led government thought it otherwise. Only future will tell how far India's strategic interests have been served through this visit.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

BOTTOM LINE

because India could be used as a counter-weight to China whenever needed for strategic reasons. The climax of US-India relations rose to its peak when President Clinton visited India in 2000 for almost five days while he had a brief stop-over in Pakistan. Clinton gave a simple message to international community that India was a regional power and it commanded respect and due recognition from all.

After the September 11 attacks, the Pakistan-US relations took a dramatic positive turn when President General Musharraf of Pakistan ditched its support for the Taliban regime and supported the US in its war against Afghanistan in 2001. To the US Pakistan is strategically more important than India in its war to remove the Taliban regime and the network of Al-Qaeda terrorists in Afghanistan. Pakistan became very close to the US and received handsome dividends. President Musharraf who came to power in a coup in October 1999 replacing the then constitutional government headed by Mian Nawaz Sharif (now in exile in Saudi Arabia for 10 years) got a political life line and Pakistan's isolation from the West disappeared.

Meanwhile the Kashmiri militants have been waging an armed struggle with Indian security forces since 1989 for their self-determination. Since then about 70,000 persons were killed in Kashmir. India accuses Pakistan of lending its armed support to the Kashmiri militants while Pakistan strongly denied its role except its moral and diplomatic support to them.

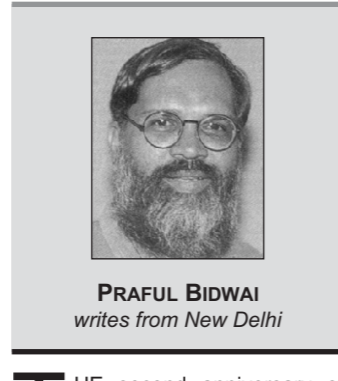
Political observers believe that both India and Israel face Islamic militancy for their policy of stubbornness. However they do not see anything wrong in pursuing this policy and both feel sympathy for each other. Israel has occupied Palestinian lands since 1967 war while India keeps major a part of Kashmir within India, contrary to UN Security Council resolution calling for a plebiscite to decide its fate.

India is well aware that American foreign policy is being disproportionately influenced by strong Jewish lobby in the US. Furthermore President Bush's close advisers are ardent supporters of Israel at the cost of Arabs. It is possible to argue that the strategy for India to placate the Jewish lobby is to cultivate close relations with Israel. If Israel is pleased with India, it will help India in changing US policy in strategic and political terms.

In other words, when India failed to convince the Bush administration to exert pressure on Pakistan not to provide material assistance to the Kashmiri militants, Israel's lobby is likely to do that job splendidly on India's behalf. In return, it is believed that Israel wants India to change its voting pattern in the UN and international forums and that India should no longer initiate anti-Israeli resolutions in these forums.

Relations between the two countries have been underpinned by burgeoning Israeli armaments sales. It is reported that India spends as much as US\$ 2 billion a year on Israeli ordnance and military technology exports. During the visit it is reported that Israel may negotiate a deal worth US\$ 1 billion

Breaking the terror cycle: Tackle causes, not symptoms



PRAFUL BIDWAI writes from New Delhi

THE second anniversary of the September 11 attacks should occasion sober reflection, serious contemplation, and brutally candid analysis, not the tub-thumping macho rhetoric about "fighting terrorism by whatever means" that we're all being treated to. The attacks shockingly highlighted the menace of terrorism, the vulnerability of the world's mightiest nation, and the weakness of its security doctrines, including deterrence. They inflicted enormous damage upon those ultimate symbols of US power, the Pentagon and Wall Street, and left America shaken. Yet, they were by no means history's most destructive instances of terrorism, as is often claimed. Even going by the operative part of the US State Department's definition of terrorism as "premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against non-combatant targets", 9/11 pales into insignificance beside the World War-II fire-bombings of Dresden and Tokyo, and, above all, the nuclear strikes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, history's most horrific acts of terrorism. All these were directed at non-combatants too, but by states, not "groups or clandestine agents".

In Hiroshima, a single Bomb killed 140,000 people in unspeakably gruesome ways -- a number that is 40 times higher than the total killed on 9/11. A qualitatively new weapon was demonstrated on August 6, 1945, which spews out a unique poison, radiation, and has the capacity to snuff out all life itself. Seen in perspective, 9/11 was the

worst attack on the US, but *not* the world. Yet, President Bush's first response was to declare an open-ended, all-out, unending war against "global terrorism". Only something ambitiously global could challenge the world's Hyperpower! The "war on terror" would encompass 60 or more countries; America would not rest until it had wiped out the menace of global terrorism.

Two years, and two wars later, the world has become more skewed, more restless, more disorderly, and *more* vulnerable to

Second Superpower -- global public opinion. The multiple layers of deception and overwhelming military force, on which Washington has relied, with all its arrogance, has antagonised Muslims everywhere, who see anti-Islamic prejudice at work in American plans.

This has further fuelled the forces of Islamic extremism. The US military machine, although gigantic, is ill-equipped to vanquish this dispersed, decentralised, "amorphous" enemy. In any case, as Gabriel Kolko, one of the world's greatest historians of war and

this very example that the Indian government wishes to emulate -- and not merely to curry favour with the US and build a "strategic partnership" with it at Pakistan's expense. Our official thinking is increasingly skewed in favour of *purely military* approaches to terrorism. This is reflected in the perverse solidarity demonstrated by the government with Mr Ariel Sharon as he scales up his insanely repressive methods and says Hamas leaders are now "marked for death". India's struggle against terrorism has nothing in common

He said three terrorists came from Pakistan a week before the attack.

However, the Kashmir police have an altogether different story. They have arrested Chand Khan, a car mechanic, who says he was ordered by the Lashkar to purchase an Ambassador car for use in a suicide-squad mission and to transport two terrorists to Gujarat. Their target of choice was a Garav Yatra planned by Mr Narendra Modi. On learning that the yatra won't be held, they decided to attack Akshardham. The Gujarat police have also interrogated Chand Khan

humiliation, and when avenues for redressing their grievances close down, and when even elementary fairness, leave alone justice, seems impossible. Terrorism's ranks swell when innocent people are harassed and their spirit is crushed. *The lesson is stark: Terror begets terror.* State terrorism eventually fuels militant-group terrorism.

A truly viable, practical, solution to terrorism must simultaneously use humane policing, accurate intelligence, and *political* approaches that will let people vent their grievances and which will reform justice delivery and public institutions so they become responsive to the marginalised. Many among India's ethnic-religious minorities feel discriminated against, but have consciously chosen not to use violent methods. Until recently, our Muslims kept out of entanglement with global *jehadi* "causes". Not a single Indian Muslim joined Al-Qaeda or other *jehadi* forces, even in Kashmir.

Then came Gujarat. Last year's barbaric violence produced a new kind of despair, anger and humiliation. With the Best Bakery judgment, it became apparent that the possibility of bringing the guilty to account could be non-existent. Regrettably, extreme despair is driving some educated Muslim youths to extremism. This is alarming. It speaks of a *grave failure* of our political system and its inability to induce security and a sense of belonging among our citizens. The turn to terrorism will be horrendously counter-productive, indeed suicidal, for all concerned. Indiscriminate violence against innocent civilians will not bring justice. It will only invite ferocious state repression. All citizens then will live in greater fear and insecurity. We cannot break out of this vicious cycle of terror-counter-terror unless we deal with its root-causes, not just symptoms.

Praful Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist.

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terrorism. The US and its allies swiftly defeated the Taliban militarily. But more than two-thirds of its key leaders and sources of inspiration, including Osama bin Laden, Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Mullah Omar remain at large. Al-Qaeda is furiously regrouping. Afghanistan remains hopelessly ungovernable. Mr Hamid Karzai has been called the Mayor of Kabul -- not inaccurately. Afghanistan's sole state-level military force remains under the control of the Panjshiris, while warlords rule its remaining territory. The US has failed to make the minimal financial or political-military commitment necessary to stabilise Afghanistan's society and state. Instability in Afghanistan has only strengthened anti-US forces in a huge new Arc of Crisis extending from the Middle East to South and Southeast Asia, including Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

In Iraq, the US waged an unjust war based on fabricated and "sexed up" evidence about weapons of mass destruction. It took over a country that was patently *not* a terrorist threat (however repulsive its regime might have been) and turned it into one -- witness the numerous suicide bombings, above all, on the UN. The war pitted America against countless nations, including its strategic allies, and more crucially, against the world's

diplomacy, argues, "military success bears scant relationship to political solutions that end wars and greatly reduce the risk of their recurring. But this dichotomy between military power and political success has existed for most of the past century. The US has always been ready to use its superior military strength even though employing that power often creates many more problems than it solves".

America's celebration of military solutions to political problems has become pathological. One of the most unpopular examples of this is its codding of Israel under an extreme-right leadership which hysterically opposes a just solution to the Palestinian question, and which practises barbaric extrajudicial assassination and torture against Palestinian civilians. The festering of the Palestinian question, and Israel's continuing repressive occupation of its territories, are a potent source of global Muslim discontent which has all but scuppered America's plans for the Middle East.

America's obsession with security, now bordering on paranoia, is leading to draconian domestic restrictions on civil liberties, and the stereotyping of its ethnic minorities. The US is setting an extremely negative example. It is

with Mr Sharon's *colonial*-militarist fight against Palestine's liberation, including its terrorist front. Yet, the militarist approach was explicitly commended by National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra during his infamous July speech to the American Jewish Committee in Washington. He dismissed as "nonsense" the view that one must address the root-causes of terrorism to combat it effectively; militaristic approaches alone will work.

Today, growing numbers of Indian politicians and policemen too exhibit the same impatience with the task of understanding that the roots of terrorism lie in cesspools of injustice and grievance, and of appreciating the importance of minimising hurt to innocent people in anti-terrorist operations, besides painstakingly gathering evidence before damning specific groups. The worst irresponsibility in this regard is found in two of our most tragic recent incidents, each with over 30 people dead: Akshardham in Gujarat last September, and the August 25 Mumbai blasts. Last fortnight, Ahmedabad Police Commissioner K.R. Kaushik said the Akshardham attack was planned in Saudi Arabia to avenge the post-Godhra violence; Jaish-e-Mohammed played a key role in it, with inspiration from Pakistan's ISI.

and corroborated the details he cited of his own activities in Gujarat. Their arrests of five Gujarati Muslims thus seem based on concocted evidence.

In the Mumbai case, the authorities have given out four *mutually incompatible* versions of who was behind the explosions: Jaish-e-Mohammed; Students' Islamic Movement of India and Lashkar-a-Tayyaba (L.K. Advani); the Dukhtar-e-Millat women's group from Kashmir; and finally, Ahle-Hadees, a religious organisation with "no known history of terrorist violence". These contradictory accounts seriously weaken the government's credibility and cast doubt upon its sincerity in investigating, leave alone fighting, terrorism. They betray reckless disregard for accuracy and caution in dealing with life-and-death issues. The official haste to claim success, score points, and rush to judgment can only distract from the struggle against terrorism, and make us blind to its causes.

Yet, we should know that terrorism cannot possibly thrive in a minimally just and participatory society. It wins popular approval -- so essential for it -- only when certain groups are systematically marginalised, excluded, brutalised or subjected to pain, insult and

OPINION

Promotion of university teachers

DR. M. S. HAQ writes from New York

RECENTLY the Government of Bangladesh has promoted several of its deputy secretaries and joint secretaries to the next higher positions, that is, joint secretaries and additional secretaries, respectively. It is expected that the secretaries will do their utmost to enhance productivity in governmental operations and contribute, in a positive manner, to quality, quantity and per unit cost of

public services. There exists a relationship between employee promotion and job accountability. A failure on the part of the promotees to discharge properly their higher level accountability to the people of Bangladesh and others in pertinent areas could result inter alia in wastage of national resources, especially the taxpayers' money.

Many of the candidates, who were not promoted this time, might have felt strongly about their candidacy both in terms of merit and time-in-grade. Employee promotion is

inter alia a sensitive career matter and a crucial factor for on-the-job motivation. It has bearing, among other things, on an employee's physical, mental, social and performance-related behaviour, as well as well-being, in varying degrees though, and relative to time and space. Further, its initial thrust has the potential to affect, either positively or negatively, the employee's own family and others.

Any administration in Bangladesh cannot give promotion to each and every government employee (used in a wider sense) at

the same time nor should it do that. What it can do now is, to accelerate its effort towards making pertinent selection and decision-making processes for promotion more transparent, objective, forward-looking and competitive. Promoting the right employee at the right time is one of the core conditions for the development of a more reliable, neutral and competent public service.

Bangladesh's existing public policy on promotion should be reviewed, updated (as required) and the resultant policy imple-

mented in a more comprehensive and coherent manner during the pre and the post promotion phases -- all in light of the requirements such as: individual and team performance outcomes, as well as competitiveness which are considered as key bases for promotion or demotion of an employee; an employee's promotion to a higher position or grade or level of responsibility does not automatically guarantee his or her continuity in that position or grade or level of responsibility; and promotion should not only be earned but also protected through a

higher level self as well as team performance, among others. The government's post-promotion employee performance appraisal and analysis system should be more effective and efficient in identifying poor performance(s) and poorly performing promotee(s), to mention a few.

Closely related to the above, is the need for the establishment of measurable and achievable performance goals (for government position holders and others) that are consistent with the accountability of the respective positions. A proper

use of a yearly work plan for each and every government employee and others inter alia as a basis for performance assessment could help improve objectivity, transparency and dynamism in the employee promotion processes.

Finally, against the backdrop of recent promotion in the country's public service, it is hoped that the government would lift soon the current embargo on the promotion of university teachers. A delay say, in promoting a deserving teacher to the next available higher position due to avoidable or unavoid-

able reasons or circumstances (or both) can hurt his or her prime time career related expectations and that might, in effect, deprive the nation of the teacher's best of potential in real times and beyond. In other words: a continuous capturing, harnessing and sustaining prime time motivation of teachers and other nation builders is essential for boosting their efforts towards achieving excellence in their respective fields of work. Bangladesh at this juncture of its development cannot simply afford to ignore that.