

August's Campus Warning

If success in the battle against lawlessness could be measured by the number of arrests, with or without charges, that are made in a given month, then the Ministry of Home Affairs could afford to feel satisfied at the moment. The public at large, however, are not likely to see things that way, even though the police have announced the arrests of 25,000 "miscreants" or "terrorists" during its month-long Operation August '92.

The killings of two activists of the Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the ruling party's student front, in an on-going inter-party feud on Friday, came as yet another reminder that the criminals are not only at large, they are also living too close to the government's own back-yard for comfort. Friday's fatal clash on the Dhaka University campus came within five days of another battle between the same factions of the JCD in which a bystander was killed on Aug. 30.

The question that is bound to exercise people's minds now is: against whom was Operation August '92 conducted? And have the arrests of 25,000 people contributed to the improvement of law and order in any meaningful way? Judging by the incidents on the campus, the answer to the second question would certainly be a negative one. More statistics provided by the police themselves show that reported crimes registered an increase last month, compared to July.

The major flaw in the enforcement of law in this country seems to be the inability of the police to react timely to incidents. Crime detection is sluggish and political interference is to blame in no small part for this. If crimes are not immediately and effectively investigated, then criminal elements can only feel that they would be able to get with their way the next time too.

A Wrong US Deal

The US administration's latest decision to sell as many as 150 F-16 jet fighters to Taiwan has sent diplomatic shockwaves not only from Washington to Beijing but also all across the capitals of different countries. Bush administration's argument that the move will promote peace in the region is simply naive, to say the least.

It is known that the sale proceeds will help create jobs amounting to thousands, but equally true is the fact that the acquisition by Taiwan of such a large number of sophisticated jet fighters will fuel the antagonism between the two uneasy neighbours of Asia, Taiwan and China.

The possibility of China and Taiwan eventually merging together has always been there. With the appearance of the F-16s on Taiwanese soil, the prospect of such a merger will recede further. Everybody knows the inclusion of the F-16s in the country's armed forces will surely strengthen the defence capability of Taiwan.

If it has anything to do with the formal handover of Hong Kong by Britain to China in 1997, the US administration is perhaps taking too long a view of the emerging situation and the possible defence strategy it will have to adopt. By selling the fighters the US also risks the disruption of the ongoing process of arms transfer restraint initiative the five permanent members of the UN Security Council are pursuing.

THE nomination of President Bush by the Republican Party in Houston on 20th August sets the stage finally for the Presidential Election in November. Unlike the last election when Michael Dukakis clearly proved to be no match for George Bush, this time it promises to be a tough fight. The Democratic ticket headed by Governor Clinton and Senator Gore is a formidable one. Clinton has proved himself to be an adroit politician who survived a series of crises which confronted his campaign to get the Democratic nomination.

Running Mate

Despite pressure from certain quarters to drop Quale

American Presidential Election: Issues and Personalities

from his ticket, President Bush has retained him as his running mate. Four years of exposure as the Vice-President has failed to improve Quale's image. He is still perceived by the American people as a laughing stock—a man without the intellectual or other qualities needed to be the President of the country. He will certainly bring no strength to the Bush candidacy. An ultra rightist fringe seem to support Quale but otherwise he is a liability rather than an asset for Bush.

Bleeding Heart

During the 1989 campaign the Republican side successfully painted Dukakis as a "bleeding heart" liberal who would yield to the black and

other pressure groups and who would not be strong enough to govern the country. Dukakis fell for the bait and failed to stand up for his liberal convictions. Clinton has, however, very skillfully taken a middle position on most issues and so far the Republicans have failed to paint him in any particular hue. The campaign will now begin in earnest with Baker in charge of the Bush camp. He is an experienced campaigner and one has to wait and see if he will change the campaign tactics. If past

president will claim that inflation is under control, interest rate is low, exports are booming and productivity has risen. However, all this will sound rather hollow as long as more than 10 million Americans remain unemployed, businesses failures and bankruptcies are on the increase, the poor and the minorities continue to get poorer. President Bush will have to convince the American voters that he will be able to reverse the direction of the economy. He angered the faithful Republicans when he

than Bush whose conservative policies need no further proof. In areas such as managing the fiscal deficit, improving the school system, protecting the environment and in supporting a health system which the American people will enjoy not as a privilege but as a right—Clinton seems to have gained some credibility. Foreign policy is the strong point of President Bush but even there the shine was lost when Saddam Hussein was seen to be able to defy the UN and the American might. The popularity enjoyed by him immediately after the Gulf War is now only a distant memory. The people may, of course, regard him as the more experienced of the two men—certainly in the field of foreign relations but voters cast their vote more on domestic questions involving their economic interests than on international issues.

Major Campaign Issue

Womens' right to have abortion will be a major campaign issue. President Bush opposes abortion under all circumstances. He will naturally enjoy the support of the pro-

life lobby which is campaigning vigorously for the Republican Party. Clinton supports the right of women to have abortion. Vice-President Quale, when questioned about his reaction if his daughter wants an abortion, replied that he would counsel his daughter about it but if she wanted to go ahead with it he would respect her choice and stand by her. Mrs. Barbara Bush also came out with a similar view. This is somewhat different from the ultra conservative position taken by Bush. The emotions on this issue are running so high that many women may not follow the party line and vote on the basis of their position on this issue.

President Bush is still trailing Clinton in the opinion polls though the gap is getting narrower. His recent attacks on Clinton has taken a harsh and strident note. For example, in a recent speech in Dallas Bush said he was struck by the fact that the word "God" was missing from the Democratic Party platform. "My party platform is different," he continued. "We are proud to celebrate our country's Judeo-Christian heritage, unrivaled in the world." Predictably, Clinton characterized these comments as "deeply offensive." In a desperate bid to gain voter support Bush is resorting to the tactics which politicians in our country have often used. Departing from the great tradition established by Jefferson and other founding fathers Bush is seeking to introduce religious sentiments into the fight. It is too early to say if Bush will succeed but the initial press reactions are not favourable. Both the New York Times and the Washington Post in editorial comments criticized Bush for these attacks on his opponents. Despite the inherent advantages that an incumbent president enjoys in American elections it seems that the two candidates are heading towards a photo finish this time.

ON THE RECORD

by Shah AMS Kibria

experience is any guide, one can expect a rough fight—with the Republicans taking the initiative in launching attacks on the challenger. In the final analysis the outcome of the election will be largely determined by the assessment of the American people about the fitness of the two men—George Bush and Bill Clinton. The traditional TV debate between them and their running mates will have a decisive influence on the result. However, the way in which the campaign will be conducted between now and November will also have a significant impact.

Apart from the personalities, the two sides will also debate on the basis of their position on the different problems facing the country. The state of the economy will undoubtedly be the most crucial issue. The longest-lasting recession and the high rate of unemployment has been hurting Bush. The

Most Talked about Word

The most talked about word in the country today is "change". The young Democratic candidate has been able to convey the impression to the electorate that he stands for change and dynamism. As a champion of middle class interests he has so far avoided identification with the radical left or the other left-leaning group interests. Yet his appeal to the blacks and other minorities seem to be pretty strong. In any case the blacks and other minorities have no choice but to support him because he would be far better

Reneged on his promise

to raise taxes. His failure to control budget deficit and reduce balance of payment deficits have created the impression that Bush has neither the capacity nor the interest to deal with the domestic economic issues.

NAM Assumes a Greater Role inspite of Weakness

by Rumi Noman

It is often asked: What is the role of Non-alignment today when the world has so radically changed, when decolonization is almost completed, and when the blocs have lost their old cohesion and militancy in a unipolar world? But in all the previous summits it has been emphatically spoken out by the leaders that Non-alignment is more a movement than an organization, because it can withstand the domineering force of the blocs and the superpowers and exercise influence on the minds of people everywhere, including in the camps of the aligned.

The policy and movement of Non-alignment have given expression to its member states, action trend against military intervention and interference in the internal affairs of other countries, in several mutually interconnected fields: (a) By striving to preserve world peace and the national security of states, as one of the essential conditions for the existence of the human society, and the optimal framework for attaining independence, equality, economic development and social progress for all states and nations.

Within the framework of the anti-colonial revolution, a process of the broadest possible liberation of nations in the history of the mankind, of nations who were the victims of foreign intervention and brutal interference in their internal affairs, as well as within the context of opposing all attempts to establish neo-colonial imperialism and hegemonic domination. (c) By setting in motion a broad range of activities aimed at the establishment of a new International economic order from which all domination and exploitation would be eliminated and which would constitute the foundations for a broader democratization of international political relations. (d) By efforts to have international and other disputed issues settled by peaceful means, without the use of force, by denouncing the use of force regardless of its scale and attempted justification and by insisting that all crisis situations should be dealt with under the auspices of the United Nations. (e) By striving to check the arms race, to achieve general and complete

Contradiction Between Achievements and Aims

The official history of the Non-Aligned Movement begins with the Belgrade Conference in 1961. The Belgrade Summit took place in a period of nuclear testing and increased East-West tensions over Berlin, Laos, Cuba and The Congo. Wars of national liberation continued notably in Vietnam, Algeria and Angola. But from the first summit there were differences in emphasis on the causes of tensions that could lead to war. For Tito, disarmament and peaceful coexistence were essential to ending the East-West conflict. He opened the conference with a discussion of non-bloc policy, and expressed a desire to see the elimination of any blocs.

But many leaders pointed out that colonialism and neo-colonialism were the cause of wars. As Suakarno summarized it — "In every case the root of international tensions in imperialism and colonialism and the forcible division of nations."

But inspite of the different views all the Non-aligned countries established a unity. (a) They adopted principles and criterion for membership; (b) gave concrete support to national liberation in the form of full membership to a provisional government; (c) formulated a global framework for their activities; (d) asserted their right as small and middle sized states to participate in world politics — a concept they called the democratization of international relations and (e) took direct action to bring about international peace and security through their efforts to reduce world tensions.

Position of Bangladesh

Though the late President Ziaur Rahman affirmed in the sixth Non-aligned summit at Havana that the policy of Non-alignment is a cornerstone of our foreign policy and though he played a role of arbitrator in the Gulf war between Iran and Iraq in 1979, but in the Gulf war of 1990 between Iraq and allied forces Bangladesh rather played an opposite role by sending its army against Iraq, for the sake of her national interest. Bangladesh changed her policy of arbitration perhaps because the two major donor countries were in the side of the allied group. So the role of Bangladesh in the Gulf war again showed the Third World's political and economic reality vis-a-vis the moral alliance.

The most successful events of these century are the German reunification and Soviet disintegration. These are suc-

cessful because the events were the outcome of mass people's interest. The breaking of Germany was a super power's interest and the East European communist bloc was also another superpower's strategic interest. So the disintegration of Warsaw Pact with the Soviet Union's demise and the German reunification teach us that the people's power is still alive and also successful while more than a hundred Non-aligned countries are only struggling and holding summits against 'superpower' or 'bloc' dominance year after year.

The Inside Weakness

The Non-Aligned Movement was the product of cold war and with the end of the cold war, the movement is reassessing its position. At a ministerial meeting earlier this year in Larnaca, Cyprus, discussions indicate the inside weakness of Non-alignment. Delegates were aware that Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has failed, particularly over the last decade, to make a significant impact on world affairs. Some of the members had even talked of dissolving the movement. There were three distinct groupings the first led by Egypt and Cyprus, Indonesia and Syria favoured co-operation with the West. The second comprised the countries which would like to confront

CONCLUSION

However, with the leaders calling for ensuring political and economic security for individual member states, blasting Western, and big power domination, at the current summit it is hoped that, NAM has not deviated ideologically. Assuming more of consolidation among its members, as has been envisaged of the crucial summit, NAM may play even a greater role than before in a world that is called unipolar now.

OPINION

Customs Duty

I am an appreciative reader of Mr S A M S Kibria's "On the record", which I find to be a clearheaded, level-headed, and above all operational analysis of the current economic impasse and possible solutions. However, I recently found myself in disagreement with him over one concrete point. In his column published on August 30, Mr Kibria suggests that the reduction in customs duty on finished TV sets from 100% to 75%, and the increase in duties on some imported components from 40% to 45%, were unwise steps which will spell destruction for the local electronics industry.

Now it seems to me that a 75% duty on the finished product and a 45% duty on imported components should still allow a reasonable degree of effective protection to any local industry. Exactly how much would depend on the share of imported components in total costs. As an example, if imported components are the only intermediate inputs, and they amount to 70% of final value, then, compared to a situation where there are no duties on either the finished product or the inputs, the effective rate of protection is 145% (I beg the lay reader's pardon for these technicalities. In simple terms, this means that total value added per unit of output is more than twice what it would be if there were no trade taxes on either output or inputs). Now if a local indus-

try cannot compete with imports even with such high levels of protection, something must be terribly wrong with the industry. What is wrong is probably slack management and low labour productivity. These will not be set right by continued protection — on the contrary, such protection usually encourages slackness. Why bother with efficiency when government policy ensures profitability even to inefficient operations? Another point worth noting is that this sort of cascading tariff structure (higher rates on final output than on intermediate inputs), when it may be inevitable for a while, also discourages backward linkages. Perhaps with a 45% duty on imported components, a few daring people will feel encouraged to try to produce these components locally. From this point of view, indeed, a case could perhaps be made for narrowing the gap still further. One could perhaps find fault with the speed of the reduction in protection — a more gradual phasing might have been advisable. But surely the direction is right. Finally, Mr Kibria is certainly right that there is a powerful import lobby in the country. But there are also protection lobbies, who want to make easy profits in the cosy shelter of government patronage. Abu Abdullah Research Director, BIDS

To the Editor...

Islamic Co-op Commercial Bank Ltd

Sir, The Finance Minister, the Ministry of Finance and the Bangladesh Bank, in particular, deserved highest congratulation for taking pragmatic steps to re-open the BCCI under the new name and style of Eastern Bank Limited, thus resolving the year-long stalemate created owing to closure of the BCCI. The Islamic Co-operative Commercial Bank Ltd at Z Shah House, 120, Motijheel Commercial Area is another bank which had perhaps little

international linkage but has also stepped functioning since long. The affected public are yet to know what step has been taken for re-opening the said bank to remove the difficulties of the account-holders.

The readers, many of whom may well be some account holders will appreciate to know through the columns of your paper, what steps have so far been taken in the matter. Abdur Rahman Motijheel, C/A, Dhaka

our country get one meal in condition of one shift work. If not work, they must starve. The working class, here, usually draw poor salary without medical, educational and other allowances. In this circumstances, they do not make out the meaning of, say, the Private University Bill. And it is nothing to them who become houseless by the constant erosion of the rivers and who are suffering from diarrhoea, malnutrition and other diseases, whether a minister exists or is ousted from the parliament. But such bills and issues not related to the commonman's lot are being prepared and

Away from reality

Sir, Most of the people of passed in the parliament. And the bills are sealed by the parliamentarians as it had achieved the verdict of the common people. How strange! The activities recall us the "Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift. He satires his society inventing a story in it thus: "The Father of the present emperor command his subjects to break their eggs at the smaller end instead of the larger end, because his son cut his finger while he was breaking an egg at the larger end. The political insurgence and chaos begin following this false issue. Shelina Kamrul Bahirgola, Siragari