

# Bill Clinton Pledges to Maintain the Momentum

by Trude B. Feldman

**It is now one year since the opening session in Madrid of the Middle East peace talks, one of President Bush's major foreign policy achievements. Bill Clinton says that when he succeeds George Bush in the Oval Office, he will work to make sure that the momentum of the negotiations is maintained.**

## Preston's Advice

Our Government would obviously have preferred a more forthcoming attitude on the part of the World Bank president. A clearer pronouncement on the Jamuna bridge, an immediate release of the energy sector credit, a more positive view of the success of the adjustment process, and such other comments would have endeared Lewis Preston a lot more to the government. However, the seasoned professional preferred the less pleasant option and left us with some very serious issues to ponder over. There are two ways of looking at the just concluded three-day trip of the World Bank chief. One way is to feel let down and disappointed at not getting the World Bank chief to back our prestige projects or fret over his lack of understanding about the difficulties we face in implementing the undertakings that we gave to the donors last April in Paris. The other, and a far more serious, way of looking at his trip is to reflect over some of the hard facts that he brought into the open during his discussions with our leaders. To that extent perhaps a pat on his back would not be out of place for preferring a frank exchange over diplomatic niceties.

On the specific question of the Bank's support for the Jamuna bridge Mr. Preston expressed the view that it has acquired "a very symbolic importance to the country." Why did he choose to emphasize the "symbolic" aspect and not the economic? Are we then to understand that the World Bank is yet to be convinced about the economic importance and the priority of the bridge as against the alternatives available to us to achieve the same objectives? Knowing the Bank's fondness for funding such massive projects as the Jamuna bridge, its continued hesitancy to come forward more forthrightly should perhaps force our own planners to do some rethinking.

Obviously the World Bank does not consider the decrease in our energy sector's systems loss to be enough to agree to release the US \$ 300 million for modernising and rehabilitating the existing plants. Systems loss is a totally unacceptable waste of national resource and an unbearable burden on the economy. We should not need the World Bank to tell us that. Why can't we reduce this haemorrhage? However, a case can be made that withholding funding for renovation and modernisation is in effect holding back our efforts to cut the systems loss. Therefore the World Bank should withdraw its freeze on this credit and release the fund. We think that a commitment by Mr. Preston to this effect should have come about. About macro-economic reforms, he was right in warning us that it is a continuous process. It has been felt by this newspaper that we have not gone far enough and fast enough compared to other countries who have undertaken similar reforms, namely Pakistan and India.

Mr. Preston's comment about the aid environment getting tougher and more and more aid claimants crowding the field, should push us to do some soul searching about our implementation rate. A total of 6.8 billion US dollars undisbursed fund makes for a very weak case, when it comes to pleading for continued aid commitment by the donors. It boggles the mind to think that with so much to be done in the country, and with so much credit available, we choose to live in a cocoon of bureaucratic maze and cry foul when people refuse to continue to give us aid for development. In a recent interview to this paper the ADB's Resident Representative expressed the same fear of reduced donor commitment if the back-log of projects, and the slow process of implementation is not changed.

So what we had from the World Bank's President is a series of warning instead of a set of praises, as the government might have hoped for. To overcome the development morass, and solve many of the problems highlighted by Mr. Preston, this newspaper had pleaded for a national consensus on numerous occasions. We repeat it now. The consensus should not only be at the political level but also among the parties directly linked with the productive sector, namely labour, entrepreneurs, professionals, and managers. The question of a national consensus for development becomes all the more urgent with signs of labour militancy on the rise and demands for reversing the macro-economic reforms finding echoes in important political quarters.

## Bus Commandeering by Students

Like goodness, something cuts across party differences and rivalries, personal enmities and whatever sets man against man. This all transcending mighty thing is badness. Currently in Bangladesh badness is finding a new expression in bullying or, more communally, mastani.

In a land notorious for 'chandabazi' or extortion through sheer musclepower, students have proved their mettle in schools, colleges and universities as hardly less dangerous and irresponsible bullies. There was one saving grace however — they were all fighters and hardly ever made society at large their hostage.

In a serious departure from that 1500 students of all colours, forgetting the thousand contentions dividing them, rose on Tuesday, against the Dhaka University itself. Giving a damn to the Vice-chancellor's ardent entreaties, they commandeered all twelve university buses to take them to the Mymensingh stadium to witness the Sher-e-Bangla Cup final between their university and Khulna DSA. Rules do not permit taking University buses outside Dhaka city. The VC repeatedly offered the students to hire as many buses from outside as was required and in fact three had already been collected. The recalcitrant students committed a series of unfortunate offences in taking all the buses out of route and out of Dhaka. The worst of these was their total disregard for the inconvenience this created for the thousands of their fellow students who use the service of these buses for coming to classes from over great distances.

On top of being a very eminently punishable offence, this was a most foolish thing to do. The soccer-mad ones be knew from before where and when to travel to witness the final. They could sort out the transportation logistics with the university top brass in their own good time. That they opted to make a mess of the whole thing only shows to what depths of idiocy a pervasive atmosphere of mastani can push the decidedly enlightened section of our society. The subsequent victory at Mymensingh did not help lessen the seriousness of the offence. This must not be allowed to be made a fashion of.

**L**AUNCHED by the United States and the former Soviet Union, the unprecedented negotiations mark the first time in the 44-year history of the Arab-Israeli conflict that the Israelis are formally talking face-to-face with their Arab neighbours (beside Egypt) and the Palestinians. Moreover, the parties are discussing with each other the core issues of land, peace, and security.

During an exclusive interview, Bill Clinton, who has been thoroughly briefed on the negotiations, showed an impressive knowledge of recent developments in the peace process as well as of the overall situation in the Middle East.

Excerpts of the one-on-one interview in Washington's grand Hyatt Hotel:

**Feldman:** We are now marking the first-year anniversary of the convening of the Middle East peace talks in Madrid. In your view, how has the regional landscape changed in the past 12 months?

**Clinton:** The most noticeable change is the election in Israel of Prime Minister (Yitzhak) Rabin, who has wasted no time in breathing new life into the negotiations. Israel has reaffirmed its recognition of those United Nations resolutions that are the foundations of the peace process, and has specifically applied them to the negotiations with Syria.

The Rabin government has also curbed settlements and taken other measures to build confidence in relations with the Palestinians and other Arab parties. Now I think it's time for the Arabs to make more moves toward Israel.

**Q:** You mean a move like Egypt's President Sadat made in 1977 when he journeyed to Jerusalem?

**A:** Or something else that would have that kind of dramatic effect. For example, at least one of the Arab countries should break the ice and end the boycott against Israel. That would be the best thing they could do. If several Arab countries decide to do that, in response to some of the moves Israel has made, then I think we'd be well on our way to negotiating agreement consistent with United Nations Resolution 242 and the Camp David Accords.

**Q:** Do you foresee another Camp David Conference?

**A:** That's possible, at some point. Right now, it would be premature. But I think the framework agreed upon at Camp David, in many ways, is shaping what is now being discussed. It's still a pretty good framework.

**Q:** As president, what American policies in the Mideast will you change?

**A:** I will act more vigorously to stop the spread of dangerous missiles in the Mideast, and insist on a strong international effort to keep weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of nations like Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Libya. Our policy must include not only an effort to reduce this spread, but a reaffirmation of our strong commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge over its potential adversaries.

Also, a Clinton administration will treat the Arab-Israeli conflict as one in which the survival of Israel is at stake.

**Q:** What role should the United States now play in the peace process?

**A:** Our role is to serve as an honest broker and, at times as a catalyst. The Bush administration deserves credit for bringing Israelis and Arabs to the negotiating table. But I can't think of away that the US could ever impose its own will, and wind up with a durable peace settlement. We need to support the current process, but we must also maintain our special commitment to our democratic partner, Israel, and its overall security.

**Q:** How will you win the trust of the Arabs, as well as the Israelis, so that in a Clinton administration there will be no loss of momentum in the

peace process?

**A:** As president, I will give a continuing high priority to ensuring that the process is maintained and that progress is made toward a peace that secures Israel and meets the legitimate requirements of the Arabs.

No side should be expected to make unilateral concessions. The Palestinians ought to have the right to determine their own future within the guidelines set out in the Camp David Accords. On the other hand, they should not have the right to determine Israel's future.

We need to give this process a chance to work. We have to nourish it and maintain its continuity. Any future course has to be charted within the context of the present negotiations by maintaining the ground rules.

**Q:** Syria's President Assad is calling for a "peace of the brave" and Prime Minister Rabin speaks favourably about reaching an historic agreement with Syria. What will you do to boost the chances between Syria and Israel for a complete peace?

**A:** Also, how will you respond to request like one from Syria for US intervention in the peace talks?



**A:** As I just said, I believe the US role in the talks is primarily to serve as an honest broker. I don't think the US should pressure one side or the other to make unilateral concessions, because it is up to Israel, Syria, the other Arab nations and the Palestinians to make lasting peace with one another.

**Q:** In your view, how does Lebanon fit into the new Mideast equation?

**A:** Lebanon is a complicated problem because different factions within Lebanon are influenced by other Mideast governments that obviously have used Lebanon as a battleground for their ideas and politics. While some progress has occurred, I believe that the problems in Lebanon will only be solved as part of a total Mideast peace settlement. I also believe, however, that we can and must work with others to build a free and more democratic Lebanon.

**Q:** Upon reflection, what do you think is the real key to peace in the Mideast?

**A:** I am convinced that the key for a lasting peace is to create the conditions in which all parties believe it is in their interest to make peace conditions under which they can trust each other enough to make agreements, and to have some assurance that the agreements will be kept.

I think that peace between Arabs and Israelis should be more solid than a hostile truce. Genuine peace can only be achieved on the foundation of trust among former enemies. Lasting peace has to include an end to the illegal Arab boycott of Israel, the establishment of normal economic and trade relations between Israel and its neighbours and the creation of multilateral agreements to protect the area's environment and ensure that every nation has an adequate supply of water.

There is no easy answer to

the problem, but I believe it essential to do everything possible to keep an ongoing dialogue. And the United States must play a supportive role. So I think we're now pursuing the best strategy with the current negotiations. They are the best chance for peace in a decade.

**Q:** Do you support the creation of an independent Palestinian state?

**A:** No, I oppose that. But the precise political arrangements under which Palestinian rights should be exercised is an issue on which the US should not take a position during the negotiations.

**Q:** What should be done that hasn't yet been done by the United States to end the Arab boycott?

**A:** The Arab boycott is economic warfare and the US should make it clear that we will no longer turn a blind eye to this practice. That's why I support Senator Al Gore's initiative to prohibit Defense Department contracts with companies which participate in the Arab League's boycott against Israel. Beyond that, I am determined to do everything I can to see that the Arab states end this boycott.

**Q:** Do Israeli settlements in the West Bank and Gaza still present an obstacle to peace?

**A:** Yes, they do. But so does the Arab boycott, the widespread Arab non-recognition of Israel and Arab military build-ups. The Rabin government has reversed course on Israel's settlement policy, and this issue should now be left to the parties themselves to negotiate.

**Q:** Did you support the Gulf War?

**A:** Yes, I did. But as Senator Gore articulated in a recent speech, the Gulf War should not have been necessary. The Bush administration appeased Saddam Hussein too long when it shared intelligence with him, awarded him credits, and opposed sanctions against him — right up to the eve of his invasion of Kuwait.

A Clinton administration will not forge such strategic relationships with dangerous despotic regimes. The Bush administration still has not learned from that appeasement of Saddam and continues to ignore the link between democracy and stability.

**Q:** How do you view President Bush's policy toward Iraq?

**A:** I don't agree with his policy toward Iraq before and after the Gulf War. For instance, he made a basic mistake in being so friendly toward Saddam, extending agricultural credits that will never be paid, providing technology which Saddam used in his weapons program, and sending signals that must have given Saddam the impression that he had a good chance to be able to invade Kuwait and get away with it because of the way we coddled him. That was the mistake. Then as soon as the war was over, out of fear that Iraq would break up, we watched Saddam attack, the Kurds in the north and the Shi'ites in the south, until finally the international press and our allies forced us to partially get back in and try to change it.

For the first year after the war, we were not nearly as insistent as we are now that the terms of the ceasefire resolution be observed.

**Q:** Do you believe that the ceasefire resolution is now being enforced?

**A:** Saddam Hussein continues to violate the terms of the agreement and UN resolution. The Kurdish areas in the north are still suffering from an embargo. Saddam refuses to accept the demarcation by the UN of Iraq's border with

Kuwait and its status as a sovereign country. In addition, UN personnel are the target of violence.

I agree with our allied decision to establish a "no fly" zone in southern Iraq. We assisted the Kurds and we need also to assist the Shi'ites. On this issue, Saddam should not be mistaken about the resolve of all Americans and he needs to comprehend that we are strongly united to ensure his total compliance with the UN resolutions.

**Q:** Now that we know Iraq was close to getting nuclear weapons, do you think the Israeli strike on the Baghdad reactor in 1980 was justified?

**A:** Let me put it this way — at that time, if Israel had not conducted a surgical strike on Iraq's nuclear reactor, our forces might well have confronted a Saddam with nuclear weapons ten years later — in 1991. Now, what we need to do is make every effort to ensure that countries like Iraq and Iran are denied the means to produce nuclear weapons.

**Q:** What role should Saudi Arabia play in terms of US national security policy in the Gulf region?

**A:** I recently met with Prince Bandar (Saudi Arabia's ambassador to Washington) and we had a warm conversation in which we explored ideas that, hopefully, would reduce the tensions in the Gulf area, and that would continue to enable the US and Saudi Arabia to work in partnership toward a greater Mideast peace.

The US has historically supported Saudi Arabia because it has acted as a balance of power in the Persian Gulf. The US has a continuing vital interest in Saudi Arabia. A Clinton administration will pursue the promotion of human rights there, and in other countries in the Middle East.

**Q:** As president, how will you approach US-Iranian relations?

**A:** I will continue to do what I have already advocated — and that is to take a position with Iran which would allow the US to resume normal relations at such a time as the Iranian government decides it is ready to halt its extremist political rhetoric and realistically joins with the US and Iran's neighbours toward establishing peace and goodwill.

**Q:** How will you deal more effectively with international terrorism?

**A:** In our diplomacy, the US must not ignore any country's human rights or its support for terrorism. We also need strong special operations forces in our military to deal with terrorist threats, and we need better intelligence. Our intelligence agencies should be shifted from military bean-counting to a more sophisticated understanding of political, economic, and cultural conditions.

In addition, we need to work with our allies to enhance intelligence and anti-terrorism cooperation.

**Q:** Do you concur with the Bush administration's approach to strategic cooperation with Israel?

**A:** I concur that we need a strong strategic relationship and I support the recent White House statement about US readiness to strengthen it. Unfortunately, however, excessive arms sales to certain Arab states have weakened Israel's overall security. Such sales force Israel to divert more resources to its defensive needs.

**Q:** Do you concur with the agreement on the "set aside" amount which Israel must pay to obtain the loan guarantees?

**A:** I opposed the Bush administration's putting conditions on loan guarantees to Israel, especially while it granted over \$12 billion in

loan guarantees to Arab nations, including Iraq — without one single condition. Now that President Bush has made the decision to finally grant Israel's request for the loan guarantees, I support the agreement reached.

**Q:** Under what circumstances, if any, would you consider moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem?

**A:** I do recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and Jerusalem ought to remain an undivided city. But I think that timing is the real issue. Moving our embassy there while negotiations are in progress could disrupt the peace process in a way which could undermine the very objective we seek.

**Q:** What signal does the F-15 sale to Saudi Arabia and the F-16 sale to Taiwan send to other countries about fighting arms proliferation?

**A:** We do need a more aggressive effort among the major arms sellers of the world to try to reduce arms sales in volatile regions like the Mideast.

Since the Gulf War, the Mideast has been an arms merchant's bonanza. Many nations realize that if they don't sell the weapons, others will. And when our steady allies ask for such weapons systems, they have a legitimate need to replenish their armed services. But we ought to ensure that such sales are not destabilizing. I will make every effort to limit the sale of arms and of dual-use technologies to unsta-

ble, or to potentially hostile regimes in the area as well as stress the need to preserve Israel's qualitative military edge.

**Q:** What specific conditions should be placed on the F-15 sale in order to preserve that "qualitative military edge"?

**A:** I believe we can, and should provide for the adequate defenses of our coalition partners in the region in away that doesn't threaten Israel's security. I support the sale of the F-15's to Saudi Arabia, but there may have to be some limitations on the technology of those F-15's because our commitment to Israel is not to do anything which alters the qualitative military balance in the Mideast.

We need to enhance our military and technical cooperation with Israel so that it can better meet the growing threat from unconventional weapons as well as sophisticated conventional weapons. In this context, I have always supported funding for the development of Israel's Arrow anti-ballistic missile.

**Q:** Finally, will your foreign policy give priority to economic or to political and military concerns?

**A:** My first priority both in foreign and domestic policy will be one and the same. Our economy must be revived. We need to regain our economic strength in order to play a significant role in the new world, and to compete and win in the global economy.

Yet we still live in dangerous times, and so I am committed to maintaining the world's foremost military.

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### OPINION

## Kidney Disease and Treatment

**Badrul Alam**

**T**HANKS to The Daily Star for highlighting the cause of the poor victims of kidney diseases especially those suffering from Acute Renal Failure, in its 7th November issue. Prof Muazzem Hussain has asked for creating public awareness about the fatality of this disease through TV and other mass media. He emphasizes the need for training the doctors and the health workers (on the subject of managing the patients in imparting the treatment); and also pointed out that administration of wrong medicines precipitates kidney damage.

The only treatment for acute renal failure that is now available is the peritoneal dialysis that is available in the PG Hospital and the Shishu Hospital. As the government has not yet taken the responsibility of the Dialysis Unit of PG Hospital, as reported, the plea to open more units at district and thana levels seems to be an untenable proposition. Prof Hussain singles out 'ignorance' as the number one cause for the spread of this fatal disease but cannot find out the real cause for the occurrence of the disease. Unless we are sure what the cause of the disease is, how it does spread and how it can be prevented, what do we propose to publicize to create awareness about the disease? Will that not create a sort of panic among the public?

On 9th November The Daily Star published a photo of a peritoneal dialysis fluid bag made by the Institute of Public Health, Mohakhali, without a batch number but with dirty fluid inside. This indicates the unscrupulousness of the people who are connected with the manufacture of the product, who sneaked out the rejected samples for the consumption of the panicky patients, because, good or bad, any such fluid is now a very good profit-yielding business.

By an editorial on 10th November The Daily Star made a clarion call to harness resources to fight out this scourge on an epidemic basis and pointed out that lapses in this regard "are crimes that deserve no amnesty whatsoever". To fight out you need to have in-depth study of the whole situation for a strategy and have a thorough training of the fighting soldiers.

Prof Hussain asks for training of medical and paramedical people for kidney disease. We had such cries for training for heart disease, lung and liver disease. Now we should go for a thorough training for the basic doctor. I wish to address the problem in a comprehensive way. May I advise that the basic medical education for medical graduates and health personnel should be put on a sound base and the Health Service Delivery System should be geared up on army footing so that the moral of the health personnel remain unstooped, uncorrupted, undaunted in the face of any odds? A doctor must learn to prescribe for the

good of the patient, not to cause a drug disease. Such wrong prescribing, as hinted by Prof Hussain, costs the life of a child and the parents lose their (may be the only) valuable progeny, urges the citizens of the country, as reported in the paper, to cross the border of the country. Medical training should be to raise the 'army of life' to fight out the 'disease-enemy'. No indiscipline should be encouraged to creep in this sort of training.

Health to all is our national as well as an international commitment. So all avenues to fulfill the commitment should be tapped. When you do not have the accommodation at the PG Hospital in the heart of the city, please look out at the outskirts of the city and you will see a hospital at Mirpur where all the logistic are available minus political will of the authority that-be to start functioning and that is Sarkari Homeopathic Hospital. The unfortunate kidney patients who cannot be accommodated in the towers of modern medicine may safely try their luck at this treatment centre. This homeopathic method of treatment has been treating cases like the fatal kidney disease since long. But this aspect of treatment has no news value, apparently, and there is no system to monitor such happenings by some study circle.

Homeopathic system of medicine treats only by natural processes and advocates for rapid, gentle, clean and convenient way of treatment, and also it suits the pocket of the poor man. Homeopathy looks not for the organ of kidney, lung or liver or heart only, but it does look for the organism as a whole and tries to bring out the harmony that is grossly disturbed — it is a holistic approach.

When the kidney victims are doomed to death and they have no place to go they may try their luck for a new lease of life under the homeopathic treatment (by experienced and qualified doctors, of course) that are available not very far from their doorsteps and well within the country. (Bangladesh Homeopathic Board keeps are registrar of the homeopaths and should be able to supply their addresses when asked for. Born in 1790 Homeopathy is going stronger by over two hundred years and the records of its achievements are ignored by those elite who do not care for any principle to follow in the practice of medicine. Let us see what our imporation and ventilation of an idea brings to these victims of medical suffering. I say from my forty years of experience in the medical field to have a trial of the system; if the star smiles on you please do write to the press so that public awareness is created about this fatal kidney disease and its treatment.

(Prof (Dr) Badrul Alam is a Homeopathy specialist)

## To the Editor...

### Not emotion, pragmatism helps

Sir, Bangladesh Prime Minister's presentation upon her return home from Italy sounded like a conqueror of the Roman Empire. Like her recent visit to the White House on an invitation worth two million dollars as fees of a US lobbyist, this special trip to the Caesar's land was also "fruitful" with strengthened relations between these two "ancient civilizations".

the courtesy meeting with Pope John Paul II in the Vatican City was definitely a blessed one apart from diplomatic extravaganzas and religious overtones.

Her disclosure of food security reserve within SAARC framework stocked optimism in the FAO as a positive step toward confronting food crisis in South Asia; but, still, popular, not merely "political", will is needed more "to banish hunger and poverty".

M Rahman  
Zila School Road, Mymensingh.

### Beautifying Dhaka?

Sir, A few months back, the pavements of the VIP (Old Airport) Road, though in good condition, were broken to re-make with red-brick lining. Now again the same are under demolishing, possibly to beautify further in connection with the forthcoming SAARC summit. Does it make sense? Do we want to hide the fact that we are the poorest nation in the world? What impression are we trying to convey to the

VVIPs by putting up a rich facade in a few streets when poverty exists everywhere else?

All we need for staging the summit is a thorough clean-up and providing public toilet facilities for as many people as possible with the fund that are being spent in erecting fountains and reconstructing passable footpaths. Domestic priorities must not be neglected for fancy ideals. The last regime learned their lesson.

A taxpayer  
Green Road, Dhaka.

### Diabetic Center

Sir, Ibrahim Diabetic Centre, Dhaka, is doing a commendable job in providing free outdoor treatment to more than a lakh of diabetic patients. From a modest beginning it has grown into a big organization at the initiative and imagination of late Dr Ibrahim and, of course with considerable government pa-

tronage. But of late the centre has become overcrowded and doctors and other attending staff cannot pay proper attention to the outdoor patients due to heavy rush. Hence it is suggested that, to reduce rush in the outdoor department and for better treatment, two more outdoor centres, one in either Mirpur or Mohammadpur and the other in old Dhaka area should be set up. This will be a much better investment from social angle than setting up publicity prone new medical colleges.

At the moment, outdoor patients are getting completely free treatment. A nominal fee of Tk. twenty five may be charged from every outdoor patient on each visit. The amount will not be burdensome on the patients but will enhance the revenue of the diabetic centre substantially and help them to improve quality of service.

Saleh Ahmed Chowdhury  
Dhaka Cantt.