

Why the Atomic Race Reeks of Racism

by Daya Kishan Thussu

The threat of sanctions against North Korea for pulling out of the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty has brought the issue of nuclear proliferation to the fore once again. The world's atomic club wants to maintain its exclusive status, arguing new members are not "responsible" enough to have nuclear technology. The attitude of the nuclear powers towards developing countries smacks of a holier-than-thou attitude, bordering on racism.

JS off to a Rocky Start

For the Jatiya Sangsad, it was far from an ideal start to its current session. For those who counted on the press reports that were pouring in for a few days prior to the session on an understanding between the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and the largest opposition party Awami League (AL) along with its alliance partners, this was a huge disappointment and an unnerving rude shock. What has happened at Bangla Motor involving the sit-in demonstration of the Nirmul Samannaya Committee will perhaps remain shrouded in the mist so long as the ruling party and the opposition continue to contradict each other's claims only with the motive of reaping political dividends from the muddle. But following this incident on the street, what was enacted in the House — and that too on the first day of a session — should be considered most unfortunate. The promise of a fruitful long session of deliberations has received a serious jolt — if not brought to a premature conclusion — by this unhealthy development. It is no longer important whether the police excesses and brutalities were let loose to the extent the opposition has complained about, for the police already have had to its credit far worse records in the meantime. What is really important is the fact that nobody seems to have learnt any lesson from the past mistakes. The ruling party had the responsibility to set the tone of the sombre occasion by demonstrating restraint, a task they have not carried out in any satisfactory manner. The opposition, in their over anxious and impetuous drive for political gains, also seems to have blown up the incident out of all proportion. Under the circumstances, it was only natural that the two shall never meet. And that exactly is the worst fear we have time and again expressed through this column. When in power, a party is bound to be constricted by compelling circumstances and obligations and, therefore, at times, has to go back on its promises. This, however, does not mean that it should drift dangerously away from the fundamental principles and spirits. Unless the position of the present government on this contentious issue changes, it will indeed be difficult to conduct the JS business in a reasonably smooth way. The Indemnity Repeal Bill and the trial of Golam Azam are issues that can be settled if both the ruling party and the opposition come to a consensus on these matters. Deferment of the decision on the former for the umpteenth time, leaving the Parliamentary Committee in the cold, will give people enough cause for misgivings and in the process it will create further confusion. It is time the government came out clean on both the issues. The needless controversies must come to a rest and the sooner it happens the better. The priority areas then will inexorably emerge before them to demand their full concentration. Economy will certainly top the order of the list but a very close second will be the law and order situation of the country. If these figure prominently, the relations between them and the pressing problems of population boom and the mess in the education sector will be easier to handle. The members of parliament (MPs) may argue over the finer points of JS proceedings and rules, but for the common people what matters most is their MPs' performance that gets translated into practical measures in changing their lot.

TWO events in March brought the issue of nuclear proliferation in the developing world onto the top of global agenda. North Korea became the first country to announce that it is withdrawing from the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) on the grounds that it was discriminatory. And at last South Africa admitted that it had developed six Hiroshima-type bombs, which it had now destroyed. This is the first time that a nuclear power has decided to part with its nuclear armory without attempting to negotiate any advantages in return. The attitude of the nuclear powers to these two developments once again underlines the double standards in the nuclear debate. While North Korea was issued with threats for daring to defend its nuclear programme, Pretoria was commended for coming clean on its nuclear capacity. The North Korean decision to withdraw from the NPT, which it joined in 1985, follows on from refusal to let the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) visit the country's sole nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, north of Pyongyang. North Korea has repeatedly denied it is pursuing any nuclear weapons programme and insisted that the military facility was non-nuclear and hence not open for international inspection. The statement announcing the withdrawal also cited the joint United States-South Korean army manoeuvre, *Team Spirit*, as "threatening our country's national sovereignty and security... a nuclear exercise against our republic." Pressure has been mounting on North Korea to reconsider its decision to pull out of the 154-member agreement, especially from the US. The IAEA referred Pyongyang's decision not to allow international inspection of its nuclear facilities to the United Nations Security Council. Significantly, India and Pakistan, both with nuclear ambitions, abstained from the



vote, while China, the only Third World nuclear power, voted against the resolution to invite the Security Council to intervene. Talk of sanctions has been enthusiastically followed up by the Western media, calling North Korea a "renegade" and "rogue" state. A BBC interviewer was not amused to hear North Korea's ambassador to the UN retort that the US should instead face sanctions because it still had more than 1,000 nuclear warheads in South Korea. The coverage of the South African decision has been rather different. President F W de Klerk's revelation that the atomic weapons programme began in 1974 under then prime minister John Vorster, received a favourable response in the Western press. De Klerk disclosed on March 25 that the aim of the nuclear programme had been to deter the Soviet "expansionist threat in southern Africa," which had now been removed. Pretoria's nuclear policy has changed with moves towards real democracy in South Africa. In 1991 it finally signed the NPT. The timing of this announcement is not without significance, given that in a year's time the power is expected to begin to change hands from the white minority to black majority rule. Many would see it as an effort to deny a black power a nuclear capability. The international community — read the US — would have found it difficult to accept a black African country with such a dangerous capacity. Washington was particularly concerned that the African National Congress, which might come to power under majority rule, could be well-disposed towards US adversaries such as Libya. It is widely believed that Israel collaborated in Pretoria's nuclear programme. The American journalist Seymour Hersh, in his 1991 book, *The Sampson Option*, discussed nuclear cooperation between Pretoria and Tel Aviv. The treatment of these issues, especially in the US, suggests that non-white people are less responsible and cannot be trusted with nuclear weapons. Critics in the Third World say they do not want to be lectured on nuclear responsibilities by the only

stopped nuclear testing, banned under the NPT. In addition, the treaty ensures that the nuclear facilities of a member country will not be attacked. But nuclear facilities in Iraq, a signatory of the NPT, were bombed by Israel in 1981 and again during the Gulf War by the US. The West's double standards on nuclear issues are easy to detect. While Israel's nuclear programme does not merit much discussion in the Western media, any Arab or Islamic country with nuclear ambition is seen as dangerous and as presenting a threat to world peace. Israel's ostensible reason for maintaining a nuclear capability is to deter hostile Arab neighbours. But as the Gulf War showed, its inventory of more than 100 nuclear warheads did not deter Iraq from firing Scud missiles into Israeli territory. Critics also point out that while India's nuclear programme is not subjected to the same strict scrutiny, Pakistan's atomic activities are seen as contributing to a so-called "Islamic bomb," which, the theory goes, could end up in the hands of anti-Western countries. The US has cut its aid to Islamabad and threatened to declare it a terrorist state unless it halts its nuclear programme. India, which exploded what it disingenuously termed a peaceful nuclear device in 1974, insists that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes only. But critics say it is immoral for a poor country to spend billions on nuclear research when the majority of its population continues to live in appalling poverty. Moreover, they point out that, despite its high cost, nuclear energy accounts for merely two per cent of the country's energy needs. To many observers in the developing world, the Western reaction to North Korea's announcement smacks at the least of hypocrisy, at the worst as a form of racism. — GEMINI NEWS

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The Use and Misuse of the World Body

by Mohammad Amjad Hossain

THE primary responsibility of the Security Council of the United Nations, which consists of fifteen members, including five permanent members, of the world body, is to maintain international peace and security. The specific powers granted to Security Council for the discharge of duties are dealt in Articles 33-54. Of these, Article 43 merits attention. According to this, all members of the UN, in order to contribute to the maintenance of international peace and security, undertake to make available to the Security Council, on its call and in accordance with a special agreement or agreements, armed forces etc. As a result of the ambiguity of the article it was not possible to negotiate the agreements with big or small powers to dispatch troops under UN command for containing threats and punishing breaches of peace and acts of aggression in the past barring the Gulf War between Iraq and Kuwait in 1990 when the United States, the Great Britain and France decided to drive out Iraq from Kuwait territory apparently to safeguard the interests of the big powers in the region. At the behest of the US, the Security Council adopted resolution No 678 by a 12-2 vote, with one abstention, authorising use of force. It may not be out of place to mention that the world body was practically used by the United States to resist the Korean aggression in 1950. It was possible because of fortuitous absence of the Soviet Union from the Security Council in 1950. Since 1964 the UN has been experiencing series of setbacks which have considerably reduced its effectiveness. By far the most serious of these has been the failure to implement peace keeping resolution No 242 of November 1967 following six-day war between Israel and Arab states. This resolution

was in fact adopted with promptness by the Security Council followed by another recent resolution No 799 adopted on 18 December 1992 with remarkable swiftness following deportation of 415 Palestinians from the occupied Arab territories by the Government of Israel on 17 December 1992. This resolution has not yet been implemented. Meanwhile, Arab League criticized the role of the United Nations for adopting double standard citing an example of bombing Iraq for violating UN resolutions while Israel remains unpunished. The decision of the Security Council declaring 'no fly zone' in Bosnia-Herzegovina remains on white paper. On 26 March the Council voted unanimously to enforce it while UN peace keeping force (without US participation) in Bosnia is watching massacres of Bosnian Muslims and Croats by Serbs. The Security Council, however, voted on 19 February 1993 allowing UN troops to fight back only if they are attacked. But the fact is that they are equipped with light arms. It is ridiculous to fight with light arms. By now hundreds of Bosnian Muslims and Croats have died by mortar attack, machine gun bullets, bombing and starvation. While enough blood has flown in Bosnia and Miljacka rivers along the Adriatic Sea, Serbs are buying time on the pretext of peace negotiation to grab as much territories as possible by driving out Muslims from their enclaves. Attacks on Muslim villages in Bosnia have continued unabated since the UN declared 'no fly zone' in October 1992. Finally it was voted on 31st March to use force if the Serbs violate the resolution. It took five months by the members to take a stand. A number of resolutions were passed by the Security Council but hardly any resolution was strongly ap-

plied on Serb aggressors. I feel tempted to quote what the former Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher has said. She said that "the failure of the European Community, NATO or the UN to halt human suffering in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina is a slur on civilisation". I also take the liberty to reproduce the letter written by Rafiq A. Tschannen from Bangkok which appeared in the Newsweek of 15th March 1993: "Should one fear Islam? No, what one should fear is injustice. Peace in the world can only be achieved with justice. Peace will never be achieved if there is one standard for Iraq and another for Serbs; one standard for the Palestinians and another for Christian nations and another for Muslim nations; one standard for the remaining superpower and another standard for the rest of the world." This is exactly what is happening in the Security Council. As we have seen developments around the world: The world body is brought into the picture when practically the situation has reached a point of no return. The Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Falkland crisis between Argentina and Britain in 1982 and conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992 are such cases in point. From all relevant evidences it is clear that members, particularly five permanent members, who are privileged to cast veto power, are responsible for failure of the world body to contain threat to peace. According to some articles of the Security Council, any action or any recommendation would not be implemented unless a qualified majority of the membership of the Security Council, particularly five permanent members, have agreed to do so. The Secretary General, without

mandate from the General Assembly or the Security Council cannot act but the Secretary General, using Article 99 of the charter, can bring to the attention of the Security Council, any matter which in his opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. The Secretary General should bring such matter to the Security Council to take preemptive action before the situation reaches a point of no return. The world body was set up to maintain peace and security. The people will gradually lose confidence in the world body if it failed as an instrument of last resort in a crisis.

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So Much Water, So Early!

The ferocity of both the shower— 90 mm or 3.5 inches in a couple of hours — and the storm hitting velocities of around 154 km/hour on early Sunday night was an unusual fare. Living with world's heaviest downpours and fiercest cyclones for thousands of years, we have hardly seen both happening at a time. On Friday, only a day apart that is, Dhaka was swamped in a snap downpour spell— and there was not much of a storm. Throughout the country, however, that rainy spell came as stormy visitation killing at least 24 and injuring 300. If those were disquieting information, one should better keep one's worries for a more fearsome development— flood waters are already licking vast tracts of land. And Baishakh is yet with us and this is no season for the waters to come down from the catchment areas beyond our eastern borders. First it was Habiganj and Moulvibazar to be hit with the rivers Khowai, Sonai and Sutang in spate and 14 unions of Kulaura, Rajanagar and Kamalganj losing standing crops extensively— all due to continuous downpour and downrush of rainwater from the hills of Tripura. Then it was the turn of Brahmanbaria, Comilla and Feni. It is flood all over these places and so early. What can we do, indeed what's in our power to do, to diminish the ravages the waters wreak on our precious crops and our scanty housing and suffering that is caused to our people most of whom are in no position to take another spell of hard time? We can only repeat the Boy Scouts motto— Be Prepared— and pray to government and society that this be done in all earnest. Too little water and resulting siltation are the root cause of an excess of water enveloping ever-new areas of our small landmass. We must have not only more water but water flowing at velocities that can flush the silt out to sea. Water can harness by going for catching and keeping the excessive rainwater in reservoirs called *pukurs* and *dighies*. Where can we get the all important rush of water if it doesn't come down our great rivers? As the water debate impasse continues, so continues the dying process of these rivers at their mouth. And this is, sure enough, not going to be helpful to our big neighbour either—in the end. One very pertinent thing is in our power to do. We must not ever go for blocking our rivers' run to sea, in the name of development or whatever. Ever since the partition of the subcontinent we have crazily gone forward to hinder the rivers' rush to the sea. Let's be through with that suicidal mixture of ignorance and foolishness. The Bengalees were once a seafaring people. Their vessels carried wonderful argosy to distant shores of the old world. By a tragic twist of history they forgot their home-sea and tried unsuccessfully to become a wholly land-people. The unfortunate mistake continues in our overly interest in roads rather than in waterways. We have in the past decades contributed capitolly to the aridisation of one of the best watered paradises on earth. It is time we understood and gave up our bad hell-bent ways.

To the Editor...

'Movie of the week' Sir, Movie of the week in BTV is shown at 3-45 pm on Friday. This timing is very inconvenient— Friday afternoon is the only free afternoon for the working people to take rest. Female members of the family also become exhausted after household work. Children are normally busy with their studies. On the other hand, Friday is a suitable day for outing. It is a convenient day for marriage ceremony, *milad mahfil* etc. Earlier, 'movie of the week' was shown on Thursday after news in Bangla. Shifting this programme by BTV from Thursday evening to Friday afternoon has caused many changes. Series drama and weekly drama have become very close with a gap of one day only. If special drama for special occasions is added in between, it may be felt monotonous. The weekly drama should be shown on Friday in the evening as it used to be before. A gap of two days from series drama will offer a better taste to enjoy the weekly drama in a relaxed mood. It may be mentioned here that in many countries of the Gulf, movie of the week is shown at the weekend i.e. on Thursday at 8-30 pm and continues till midnight with a break for news in English. Considering the above facts, I suggest BTV to return to the

previous timing of the movie of the week. Zafar Shaheen, Elephant Road, Dhaka. Jamuna levy refund Sir, Why the authorities are silent about the refund of Jamuna Levy? Some one somewhere should speak to clarify the position. Are they not accountable to the people for taking tons of public money? Let them clear their position if they are not trying to hoodwink the payers of Jamuna Levy. What will be its ultimate fate nobody knows. Abu M Faiz, Dhaka-1207

OPINION

State of the Nation

A Mawaz

The Star has lately published some powerful commentaries on the state of the nation, which are relevant and topical. These signals were mainly directed towards the political leaders of the country, for two reasons: they are the most influential at the national level; and for their failure to come up to the expectations of the influential group of citizens whose views count. The two angles exposed in these commentaries were the regenerative and degenerative cycles of history, and the growing insulation of the political machines (machines have no feeling) from the pulse of the nation. The possible dying out of the Awami League has now become an academic issue for research. The hibernating national politicians, who were denied a playing field for decades, are now engaged in activities which are obvious and predictable, namely, insulating themselves from public opinion, with policies and styles which do not help towards combined national effort. In fact, the extreme view is that their loud contributions are more negative than positive. With their influence and status, they hold sway over the average voters, the vast majority of whom are illiterate, and at the same time too poor to control the politicians or have any sway over them. It is an ideal and effortless situation, but deadly for the country. While miniature heavens are being created, the political image can go to hell. The deterrent used, and imitated lower down, is 'greater physical disruptive movements' to put a spanner in the wheel. The ingrained priorities will take a long time to change: first the party, then the individual, and lastly, the country (if at all, regardless of the lip service). The two main parties, one in power, and the other in opposition, are playing directly opposite games: one is making issues of the non-issues, while the other is treating issues as non-issues, and trying to sweep the same under the carpet, especially the issues which are too hot to handle politically and need hard, unpleasant and decisive actions. Keeping an urgent issue pending is not facing the issue. We hear that a large number of national policies are still being drafted after a generous period