

A Matter of Journalistic Ethics

One of the fallouts of the recent killings in Chittagong — resulting from the attempt by Jamaat to hold a public rally with Gulam Azam in Chittagong — is a decision by the journalists in that city to boycott all news connected with the police. It is alleged that during the rally of APSU, police attacked the journalists, and prevented them from carrying out their professional duties. Journalists have decided not to cover any activities of the Chittagong police, — till the Commissioner apologises and punishes those who are responsible.

Without going into the merit of the allegations made, we would like to raise the question as to whether journalistic ethics permit us to boycott a news source? Being fully sympathetic to the feelings of our colleagues in Chittagong, and expressing our outrage at the indignity suffered by them, we are forced to express a dissenting view as far as the decision to boycott police news in Chittagong is concerned. We feel that as journalists we have no right to desist from covering any news or event that is of public interest. We cannot forget, even for a moment, that our commitment is to our readers, and it is to them that we are accountable. We must ask the question as to what gives us our acceptability to our readers? Why should readers pay hard-earned money to buy a newspaper? It is because we, the working journalists, have pledged to them that we will publish everything of public interest, in the most authentic and unbiased manner possible. It is to this pledge that our ultimate loyalty must lie. If the police have been brutal and highhanded on the working journalists, that is news. Let us report that as objectively and fairly as our professional ethics make us duty-bound to do. Then let the public be the judge of that incident. We can also complain to the Press Council, or even go to court. Let us take legal action, if necessary. But as journalists, we cannot be the accuser and the judge, at the same time. Let us not forget, police is a public institution supported by the tax-payers' money and we have an obligation to report on them.

This paper decided to comment on this incident because we sense that a certain tendency to forget our obligation to our readers, is developing among the media professionals. On a less significant scale, but from the point of view of ethics, equally important, a similar incident occurred a few months back with our photo journalists. Because of the alleged ill manner of a senior member, photographers of Dhaka newspapers decided not to cover any future function of Chhayanaut, a renowned cultural institution of the country. We often hear reporters or photographers complain that they were not given proper places to sit, or that arrangements were not appropriate or convenient enough for them, and hence editors should boycott such events. We can, at best, complain. But how can we boycott?

Please, let us not forget that our supreme obligation is to our readers who pay good money to receive our service. They will not forgive us if we fail to keep our pledge, whatever may be the reason. Hence we call upon our esteemed colleagues of Chittagong to reconsider their boycott decision, and think of other means — which will not hurt the interest of our readers — to highlight police brutality on journalists.

Haiti's Hour of Reckoning

Haiti is one-fifth the size of Bangladesh, having slightly more than one-twentieth of her population. Making bold to defy US sanctions against military rule and denial of power to elected president Aristide, for months, the tiny republic has provoked a UN Security Council authorisation for use of force against her. The Security Council resolution green signals formation of, and action by, a multinational coalition force, led by the US, of the type we had seen operate against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1989.

It looks like a Goliath-Liliput scenario, close to being re-enacted — strictly comparative size-wise, not rally in terms of the outcome. For, military might is no fiction, it is a tangible reality. In international parlance, principles are important to fight for, regardless of the size of the country involved that seems to be the US' line of thinking. Explaining the essence of the Security Council resolution adopted by a 12-0 vote, with China and Brazil abstaining, the US spokesperson said it meant either they left 'soon and voluntarily' or 'soon and involuntarily'. What is intended here is a threat to use force but without any ultimatum given. This sets it apart from the deadline pressure which was mounted on Iraq. Evidently, the two situations differ, both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Haiti is still trying to put up a brave face playing on nationalist sentiments. Her military junta-sponsored octogenarian President Emile Jonassaint, who combines in himself the role of prime minister as well, has declared a state of siege within hours of the Security Council resolution. The suspension of fundamental rights, and the rule by decree for the ostensible purpose of fighting a terribly unequal war if it ever came to that, make matters worse in terms of the civil rights situation. The sealing of the borders on the eastern side with the Dominican Republic which kept things barely going in Haiti with gasoline and some other supplies as an oxygen of support, spells further danger to her civic life.

For a country which had emerged independent, and that too as a republic, from French colonial rule, as far back as in 1804, Haiti's democratic management should have been much better. For a stretch of time, it had a life president and even presidents from the same family. Elitist rule has been its bane most often than not. Following political violence, early in the century, the country went under US occupation from 1915 to 1934. It remains one of the poorest nations in the western hemisphere, although its mineral resource base, given the size of the population, is quite well-endowed. And, with all the sanctions coming hard on the economy it collapsed face-down, inducing, in the process, attempted exodus of Haitian citizens to the USA, which complicated things further down the road with the superpower.

Haiti, by her own acts, lately seems to have invited the toughening of international stance on herself, but we prize the non-use of force in the conduct of relations between states, especially when a new world order is to be built on the ashes of the old one. We are hoping matters in Haiti would improve without application of force by way of allaying fears of intervention that may have arisen in Latin America.

A Recognition of Asia's Importance in the Future World

EU's Strategy Paper on Asia

by Munim Kumar Barai

ALL of a sudden the First World or the developed countries have awakened to the fact that Asia is rising, and rising with such a quick pace that none of them could even imagine a decade ago. Whatever racist view Mr Winston Churchill once had on the Chinese, Indians or the Japanese, his inheritors of different European Union (EU) countries cannot be swayed by that any more. They have come to realise that Asia, particularly China, the ASEAN countries, India, not to mention Japan and Korea, are developing fast. If these countries put their resources to proper use and concentrate on their economic power, by the turn of the century Asia would be a power to reckon with and in the twenty-first century, Asia may be the new centre of the world. Realising this potential, EU wants to place itself in a proper position vis-a-vis Asia and its 'Strategy Paper on Asia' is a timely and bold initiative on its part to give due recognition to the growing importance of the Asian countries.

This powerhouse of resources, when properly used, could pose a challenge to the United States, Europe and Japan to a certain extent. The paper underlines that the emerging power of China, India and ASEAN countries would be as mighty as to reckon with. Mr Wittebrood, a Cabinet Member of EU Commissioner and who is closely involved in the preparation of the strategy paper, expresses EU's view. 'We have to invest, take part in the economic growth of Asia.' The paper broadly spells out a strategy of equal partnership with Asia for the future.

Nature of Relations

'Strategy of equal partnership' — that is the relation EU wants to establish with Asia. Would it be out of place to recall here that EU combines most of the imperial powers which for centuries ruled and exploited these Asian countries with their military might

and technological powers? Then the nature of relationship between them was simply of master and slave or victor and vanquished type. Now the Asian 'natives' are free and up in arms to conquer the world by their economic power. Thus the desire for a relationship of partnership status makes a major departure in the EU states' foreign policy. A question, therefore, becomes very much relevant — does the policy of the EU for a equal partnership with Asia come from only the consideration of economics or, is there any other factor which underlines this shift? No doubt, it is the economy of Asia that is calling the shots at present; Asia as a military power may come into consideration for designing a future relationship. Because a positive correlation is always being followed between a country's progress in economic sector and its advancement in military hardware and skill of use.

Economic Might of Asia

Presently, Asia is housing most of the dynamic economies of the world. China is by far the most exciting economy with a GDP growth of over 12 per cent for three consecutive years. Let us for our discussion take the China of 1997 when

Hong Kong also merges with it. This unified China has every potential to surpass the US by the beginning of the next century if the present trend of growth is sustained. The other Asian Tigers, viz. Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are marching ahead. Vietnam is the latest addition to the South-East Asian economic inventory. India is a giant in waiting. The Americans and the Europeans are eyeing India with great interest. The smaller economies of this region are also not to be discounted upon. Together, they have the remarkable growth potentials once their development processes are put on a right track. Physically being in the periphery of the growth zone, they are expected to feather well in the future.

The impressive economic show of Asian countries have led the investors of the developed countries to channel their funds towards this part of the world. In 1993, Asia drew nearly one-third of the FDI flows recorded in the world. Along with the confidence, another important factor that has substantiated the idea of a stronger Asia is that the economies here are now more capable of absorbing and withstanding external shocks. It is

evident from the fact that the recent slowdown in the global economic activities could not dampen their growth of GDP.

Military Power of Asia

Military power is still the grey area of Asia, at least of the Asian countries we are talking about. Till now, most of them are having a military doctrine defensive in nature. Though China has the biggest army in the world and has few hundred intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) with nuclear warheads in its arsenal, yet it cannot afford to wage an extra-territorial war. Japan has the third largest military budget in the world but since its defeat in the Second World War, it has a military posture mostly defensive. India is the other military power in this area. But, even together, they do not represent a major modern defence power. Individually, the smaller countries are not capable of defending themselves if an external aggression, say in a scale of Gulf War type formation, occurs.

But it is to be kept in mind that there is a positive correlation between economic progress and modernisation of defence forces through more investment in R&D and direct purchase of advanced weapons and know-how. So the present Asian economic development may not remain confined to economic line only. Asian

countries could be more attentive to defence development in the future. In fact, the recent trend of arms build-up in Asia supports this argument. A sense of insecurity, need to safeguarding the vital economic installations and trade routes, offsetting territorial disputes etc will force the Asian economies to build strong military bases. So a future strong Asia in economics would also be strong militarily.

Conclusion

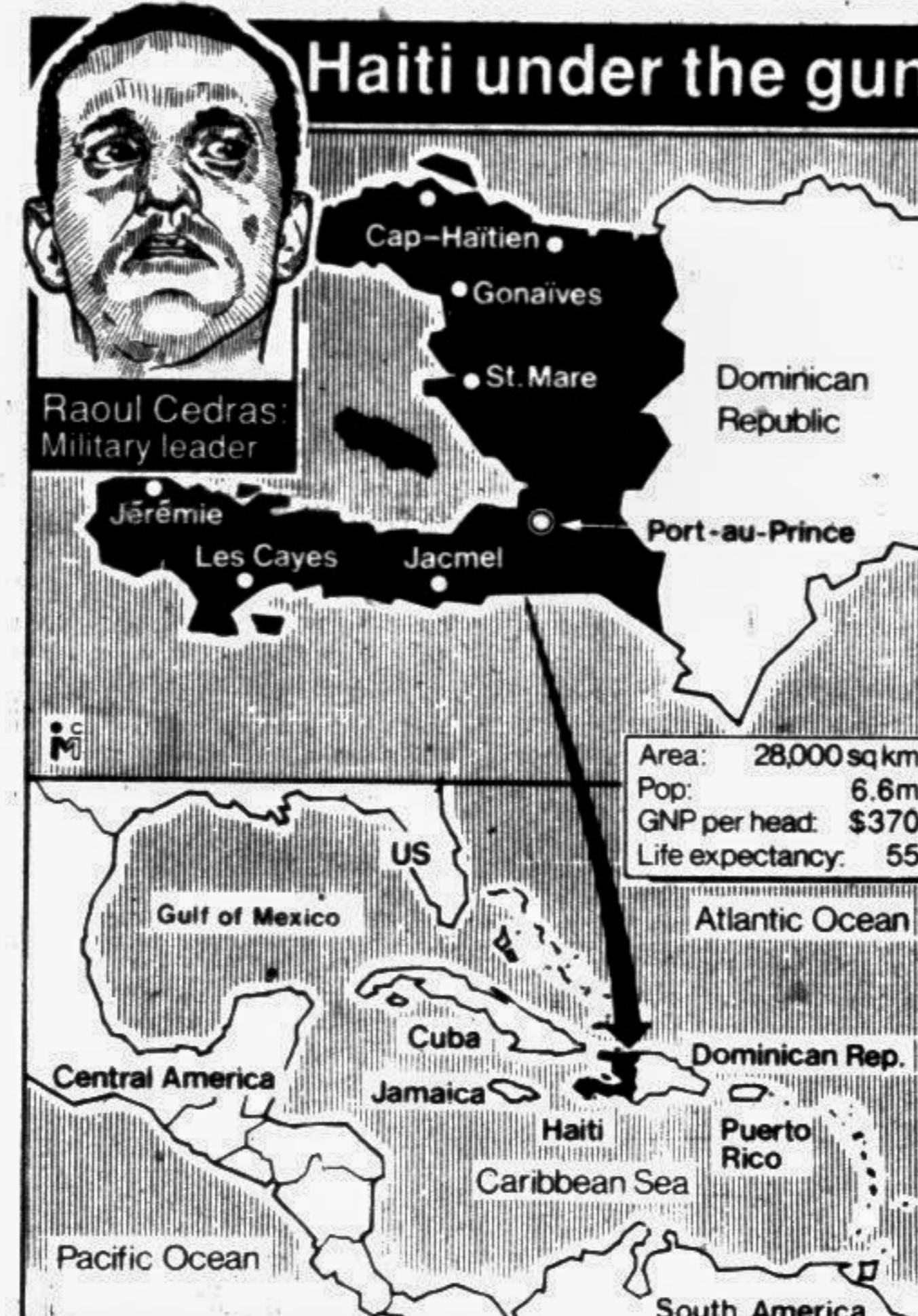
Thus, Asia is rising up economically as well as militarily. The present impressive show of Asian economic progress has also re-imposed the fact that no nation can influence and dominate the world for ever. It is rule of the evolution of human civilization. Everything changes with the change of time. Time is turning for the Asians again. The American desire to create an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) with the Asian countries and the congregation at Seattle in USA for that marked a new beginning of Asia's growing influence on world affair. The EU's strategy paper on Asia is the continuation of the process, or it is to reassess the importance the Europeans are attaching to Asian countries.

And their strategy to develop a relationship of partnership with Asia is a timely move.

Haiti: Critics Urge a 'Clinton Doctrine' to Halt the Flip-flops

Kevin J Kelley writes from Washington

Speculation is rising about an imminent US invasion of Haiti, after the military rulers recently expelled a group of United Nations human rights observers and now when Security Council has okayed it should President Clinton decide so. Gemini New Service looks at the arguments being voiced for and against military intervention and finds that the isolationists have switched sides with the interventionists.



Washington should make military commitments abroad, these conservative anti-interventionists add, only when its interests are seriously threatened in 'core' regions of the world. That generally refers to Europe, East Asia and oil-producing parts of the middle East.

At the same time, the removal of the Soviet threat has caused many conservatives to return to the quasi-isolationist outlook that, before the Cold War, had often characterised Republican foreign-policy thinking.

According to this view, the UN must not squander its military resources in 'peripheral' countries such as Bosnia, Rwanda and Haiti — regardless of how deplorable their internal situations may be.

That logic is leading many right-wingers to counsel a hard line over North Korea. They say that pre-emptive US military action may become necessary if Washington concludes that North Korea poses a nuclear threat to neighbours.

In the case of Haiti, advocates of military action sometimes point, ironically, to the 1983 invasion of Grenada and the 1989 intervention in Panama, both of which were opposed at the time by many of these same individuals. They note that the overwhelming

superiority of US forces resulted in the quick removal of regimes in both cases. The same speedy outcome can be achieved in Haiti, they contend.

Opponents of military intervention to oust the Haitian dictatorship often point, with an equal measure of irony, to the 1993 Somalia incursion, which many of the same figures initially supported. Even the noblest intentions do not necessarily lead to the desired results, they say. Because the unexpected often occurs, they reason, it is usually much easier to enter a Third World country forcibly than to withdraw from it gracefully.

For its part, the Clinton administration seems generally more sympathetic to the conservative position on Haiti — just as it has also been in regard to Bosnia, Rwanda and wherever else on the 'periphery' that military action has been proposed.

Despite withering criticism — largely from the Left — the Democratic president has refrained from large-scale military moves on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims. Intervention to halt the Hutu's slaughter of Tutsis in Rwanda — suggested by a few African-American politicians — was never seriously considered by Clinton. Up to now he has appeared reluctant to dispatch troops in order to restore ousted Haitian President Jean-Bertrand Aristide, even though many more US black leaders favour such action.

The views of African-American politicians matter to Clinton since blacks comprise a key element of his electoral base. He has been forced to liberalise US immigration policy on Haitian refugees and to toughen sanctions against the junta mainly as a result of pressure from the 40-strong Congressional Black Caucus and from African-American ac-

tivists.

But the President's hand has so far been stayed in Haiti as well as in Bosnia partly by his, inability to construct a broad international coalition in support of a US-led intervention. Clinton will not act unilaterally except in the most extreme cases. And even then he prefers others to lead. His move to supply humanitarian relief to Rwandan refugees came weeks after France's intervention.

In addition, Clinton is determined to stay focused on domestic initiatives such as creation of a national health insurance system. Unless it went entirely according to plan, military strike against the Haitian junta would only undercut Clinton's already precarious political standing, making success on the health care issue virtually impossible.

As a result of public reaction to the killing of 18 US soldiers in Somalia last year, Clinton is now well aware of the continued virulence of the 'Vietnam syndrome.' That outcry showed that a majority of the electorate will react with horror to any indication that US forces are being drawn into another Vietnam-type disaster. Recalling how the Vietnam war destroyed an earlier democratic presidency, that of Lyndon B Johnson, Clinton moved rapidly to withdraw US troops from Somalia, and he remains reluctant to insert them into a similarly dangerous situation elsewhere.

But public sentiment can also act as a powerful catalyst for US military intervention. Some Bush administration policymakers admit that the late-1992 decision to enter Somalia was spurred by public opinion he should enunciate.

Without the clear policy framework provided by the global competition with the Soviets, Washington is tentatively feeling its way and sometimes stumbling. What is clearly emerging, through, is a consistent US unwillingness to undertake 'humanitarian interventions' unless public opinion leaves it with no other option.

KEVIN J KELLEY is an American freelance journalist and former editor of the international affairs journal *Toward Freedom*.

OPINION

Household Refuse for Power

Much have been written and many are the suggestions for hygienic disposal of household rubbish and other commercial waste in our megacity. The present system of landfill only for the disposal of city wastes is both an eyesore and health hazard for city dwellers. Some experts calculate that the atmospheric impact of landfill-emitted methane is as damaging as the carbon-dioxide produced by all the vehicles on the roads.

Nothing is cheaper than tipping waste in a hole in the ground. And the city is running short of landfill sites and when the cost of transportation is added to the problem, long distance waste disposal may not be feasible at all. However, pollution-free power does not come cheap. Any modern disposal is costly, like the rubbish-fuelled power station in UK which will meet all current environmental standards, being commissioned this month, has been estimated to cost £85m, making it an expensive facility in terms of both waste disposal and power generation.

Considering the pros and cons, the DCC might like to study the system for government approval for funds. As the plant will meet very high environmental standards, the international agencies dealing with greenhouse effects could be involved. We understand the DCC, under its previous mayor, had planned to install such plant for the metropolis. As the matter is rather an urgent one for Dhaka which only scores 32 points in its rating of living standards (with Melbourne and Atlanta getting 86 points), the authorities must get out of the present situation by bold planning.

Col Mirza Shafi (rttd), Banani, Dhaka

To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

"Bully"

Sir, These days letters by Col Mirza Shafi (rttd), published in your esteemed daily, create a curiosity in the minds of the serious readers. Special thanks are due to him for his excellent view of bully in educational institutions now seems to be existing without much endeavour to eliminate its bad influences over young students (both girls and boys).

The uneducated parents of the boys and girls attending schools never bother about bullies who use their power and strength to frighten or hurt the students for deriving pleasure out of their cruel practice. Even teachers are also victimised in spite of being intellectual superior.

The growing strength of bullies in our educational institutions is a threat to the security and safety of our young

learners too. Some sort of checking has to be initiated in every institution to end the threat of bullies.

Law-enforcing agencies should come forward to rescue the physically weaker students from being harassed by the so-called bullies in schools and colleges, if necessary.

Again, thanks to Col Mirza Shafi (rttd) for the thought provoking and timely letter.

Prof Abul Ashraf Noor
Pabna

It is not right

Sir, We understand that quite a number of foreign dignitaries have expressed their concern over Taslima Nasreen, the controversial writer, and foreign press and TV are also making a big issue of it.

Taslima Nasreen, with her remarks, dared to hurt the religious sentiments of Muslims and to avoid a major upheaval

nestman and a few others the referee and started gesticulating in a disagreeable manner. A few minutes later another player pushed an opponent when none had the possession of the ball. For a lesser offense the Dutch captain got the marching order. In the field the referee was quite accommodating, though a big contingent of police was near at hand.

Unless rules are enforced, following the footstep of FIFA, what is the use of playing football and participating in international tournaments? Though not being a player or an organiser one feels that the quality of our game will improve only when discipline is installed in a dedicated manner. Lack of discipline seems to permeate all levels of national life from the play ground for the other way round?

While there is some improvement in telecasting, the commentary is substandard. The commentators should be chosen from people who recognise the players. Whomever you choose the quality is not likely to go down!

M A Haq
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