

Despicable

The venue of political terrorism has perhaps temporarily shifted from the campus to the railway stations and even beyond...

But where was the provocation for all these to happen? The opposition leader Sheikh Hasina was obviously within her rights to propagate her views so long as she did it peacefully...

The Ishurdi incident, in some accounts, has been put down to an alleged attack by Awami League supporters on a public meeting held by a BNP state minister earlier on...

On the national level we have been imploring upon the major political parties to pull themselves back from the brink they have gotten to over their differences centering on the caretaker government issue...

It devolves upon the top leaders of the major political parties to abide by the basic rule of being cognizant and tolerant of each other's views without which the nascent democratic structure is bound to crumble into pieces...

What we need most today are instructive political tolerance percolating the lower levels of political parties and administrative neutrality in governance.

Dhaka, Thimpu Focus on Trade

Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia's two-day visit to Bhutan marks yet another step towards forging warmer relations and further co-operation between the tiny Himalayan country and Bangladesh...

Reports on her trip and the joint communique issued from the capitals of the two countries are categorical that the prime minister's visit has been able to provide a fresh impetus in the wide-ranging co-operation between them...

Both the countries have some basis of complementarity to go for a few ventures of joint economic collaboration. Although poverty alleviation is an onus for an individual nation, in today's reality bilateral and regional efforts have been recognised as an effective strategy for survival...

The forum's planning and finance ministers' meeting, the 14th session of the Council of Ministers and the ministerial meetings on the youth, the disabled and the women and family health, have made some headway in areas of common concern but not much in concrete terms...

Another Handshake at Oslo Agreement Anniversary

EVEN after one year of signing of the Oslo Agreement, the peace process in the Middle East faces many obstacles. The implementation of the agreement has been extremely slow...

World Bank and other donor agencies must move fast and just not blame Arafat for inaction. If necessary, they should have their own offices in Jericho and Gaza to disburse funds in collaboration with Palestinian Economic Authority and oversee their use...

So far Israel has only handed over the problems under self rule, namely education, health care, tourism infrastructure development, etc. All these require funds and this is what is not there...

Success of Self-rule The success of self-rule is Israel's concern too as this was largely Israel's idea as Palestinians wanted Palestinian State, not self-rule...

structure. This is why election in occupied territories is extremely important. Israel should also be seriously interested in the Palestinian election as this will establish another democracy in the desert...

SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST Muslehuddin Ahmad

whether PLO is performing self-rule function in Jericho and Gaza and running some civilian affairs in rest of West Bank as an agent of Israel. This could never be the spirit of Oslo agreement...

Moreover, if the alleged personal style of Arafat's rule (some amount of personal authority is initially needed to bring order in a chaotic situation) is to be brought to an end...

as they will elect their own people. Such an election will also determine the size and the strength of Hamas and its supporters in the area and obviously bring them through the election into the Normal stream of Palestinian politics...

For these and many other valid reasons, Israel should agree to the present schedule of November 1, 1994 for holding election of the Palestinian National Council and make all preparations for withdrawing the Israeli army before election...

groups which are very active in East Jerusalem, Hebron, Kiryat Arba and some other Jewish settlement areas in the occupied territories. It is encouraging that Israeli Government has already arrested some of the Jewish terrorist leaders...

tion will only complicate situation and add to the existing crisis.

Another sensitive political issue for Rabin is — whether Israeli settlements should be dismantled and settlers resettled within Israel proper. There are only about 120,000 settlers in West Bank and Gaza occupying about 20% of the occupied territories...

It is the time now, after one year of Oslo Agreement, for Rabin Govt to get reconciled with the idea of Palestinian sovereignty over the occupied territories as the negotiation on final status of the occupied territories will start in two years' time...

can never entitle it to the sovereignty. Unilateral annexation does not create legitimacy. The UN and the international community never recognized Israel's occupation and this is why the UN through its resolutions repeatedly asked Israel to vacate the occupied territories...

While the implementation of the Oslo Agreement has been painfully slow and apparent peace in the M-E — a comprehensive one — is miles away, tug of war has started between Rabin and Peres for winning the Nobel Peace Prize. Of course, both deserve consideration, but there is at least another — a very important one, namely Arafat...

The World's biggest Talking Shop Gets down to Business

Ted Morello writes from New York

THE acrimony that for nearly half a century infected the United Nations General Assembly deliberations will be muted if not silenced during its 49th session.

Two issues that have made the Assembly a battleground for decades — South Africa and the Arab-Israeli hostility — have been toned down or deleted entirely from its agenda...

And while there will still be bitter words from some Arab countries, the general anti-Israeli fulminations will be muffled by the accord between the Palestine Liberation Organisation and Israel and the new relationship between Israel and Jordan...

The agenda will be dominated by the planning for the 50th anniversary next year and the largely ceremonial inflow of presidents, prime ministers and probably a king or two. More than 60 of the speakers in the general debate will be

The United Nations General Assembly opens its 49th session (Sept 26) on a note of optimism. The two vexed questions that have dominated the proceedings in the past — apartheid and the Palestinian issues — are off the agenda. This will give the delegates more time to use the forum for discussing development issues.

The big five defaulters



either heads of state or government. Key speakers on the September 26 opening day will include Presidents Bill Clinton of the United States and Boris Yeltsin of Russia...

Paul II, scheduled to address the Assembly on October 21, will be damped by two of his widely criticised recent actions, both touching on the UN. He virtually wrecked the UN International Conference on Population and Development by stalling family planning initiatives...

honours on former UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, ostracised for his Nazi associations.

Taiwan will create a brief flurry when, for the second consecutive year, it hammers at the UN's door for admission as a member. The outcome is certain to be a replay of last year's when its application died without ever reaching the Assembly floor...

Most of the agenda items are hoary holdover resolutions, inscribed more in hope than in expectation that they will be voted into effect: complete disarmament, nuclear-free zones, health and education for all by the year 2000, debt relief, narcotics control, East Timor...

In the Assembly presidential chair, there will be changing of the guard. Stepping down will be Samuel Insanally of Guyana, the first representative of an Anglo-Caribbean country to the regionally rotated post, formerly monopolised by Latin Americans. His successor will be Ivory

Coast Foreign Minister Amara Essy, the first Franco-African to wield the Assembly gavel. He is only the sixth 'true' African (preceded by representatives from Liberia, Ghana, Tanzania, Zambia and Nigeria) elected to the position in the UN's 49-year history.

Like Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt, past presidents from the continent's Arab north (Tunisia and Algeria) were considered to represent countries that were only geographically — not culturally, historically or racially — African.

In organisational revamping, Insanally has been active throughout his year-long term in working to negotiate more Assembly input into UN decision-making. Increasingly, most decisions have been made by the 15-nation Security Council.

Even there, the 10 non-permanent members have been at the mercy of a caucus of the council's veto-wielding Big Five (United States, Russia, Britain, France and China), in effect controlled by the US, the world's only superpower. It then remains only for the Assembly to rubber-stamp the Council decisions, more often than not amid strident but ineffectual protests.

Despite Insanally's efforts, it is unlikely that the expansion of the Council, the key to its

restructuring, will command the necessary consensus. For while it is generally agreed that because of their status as world economic powerhouses, Japan and Germany merit permanent membership, there are rival claimants to the positions.

Nigeria, Brazil and India are among those clamouring for the status, on the justifiable grounds that none of the permanent members, incumbent or prospective, represent the developing world. The incoming president will be spared a crippling debate on the issue, which will be pigeonholed for future General Assemblies to grapple with.

Instead, Essy inherits an unorthodox and apparently successful initiative introduced by his predecessor as a way of getting informed advice on development, a high priority for this session.

The innovation, patterned after US Congressional practice, consisted of a week of development hearings that drew on broad-ranging experts from outside the usual closed circle of UN diplomats, who are not necessarily the most informed or even sympathetic to the needs of developing countries.

As the guardian of the UN's purse strings, the Assembly will also be confronted with the world organisation's devastating deficit, already well over \$3 billion. It's unlikely to be significantly less by the session's end. In all, this will be a tame Assembly and, as a result, likely to be a more productive one. — GEMINI NEWS

TED MORELLO is a journalist based in the United Nations in New York.

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.

The Future of Jute: Problems and Prospects

Sir, I on behalf of myself and members of the Bangladesh Jute Mills Association thank you for organising a roundtable on 'The Future of Jute: Problems and Prospects' as well as publishing a supplement on the same in September 19 issue of your esteemed daily.

This, we believe, will go a long way in educating the people about the jute industry's present position and future prospects. We highly appreciate your gesture in touching upon the most vital sector of the country's economy and hope you will continue to do the same in future.

Syed Mohsen Ali, Chairman, BMA, Dhaka

New wave of ethnic cleansing

Sir, Mother Teresa is a household name. She has travelled to anywhere across the world whenever the humanity fell in distress caused either by tyrants or by natural calamities. Age has been no bar for her to undertake journeys even to difficult corners of the globe. Her greatness and record of humanitarian service was duly recognised as she was awarded a 'Nobel prize'.

It appears, however, that she has not so far paid a visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina, where in the name of ethnic-cleansing a minority Muslim com-

munity is being subjected to persecution, torture and rape. They were being denied even the right to self-defence and were cordoned off from all sides. There were reports that as many as fifty thousand Muslim women were made pregnant by the Serbs and kept confined so that they could not get rid of these unwanted pregnancy. I would like to think that a visit by Mother Teresa perhaps could kindle the light of human feelings among the people of Yugoslavia. The United Nations, at least, on this issue, has palpably failed to 'call a spade a spade' and take required action against the perpetrators. Lack of determination, undue delays and waverings saw at least three unkind European winters pass over them when the Bosnian Muslims were left in the open without any warm clothes.

The empty threats of going into military action by way of air-strike least bothered the Serbs. The lives of some of the UN personnel engaged in relief work were even not spared by the perpetrators. Thanks are due to Baroness Margaret Thatcher who was outspoken and candid in her views about the right of self-defence of the Bosnian Muslims. But her views seemed to have melted away in the midst of parliamentary procrastination.

It is God's-earth. God bade his servants to spread on the earth and seek His bounty. So no area or a place is anybody's preserve. But good conscience and collective morality seem to

have disappeared or been partisan against a particular community. As such the victims have no other alternative than to beseech Divine intervention, which we believe will surely come.

A R Khandoker, House 12, Road 3, DRA, Dhaka

Fighting AIDS

Sir, AIDS is the latest and probably the greatest threat before mankind today which is fast engulfing the entire world, despite keener efforts by the developed countries to combat it effectively. Expensive research works are on to find out antidotes and injections to cure the AIDS patients and innocent AIDS virus carriers all over the world.

Of late our Govt. also has stood up with profound seriousness and right earnestness, to identify, detect and segregate the AIDS patients and the carriers of AIDS viruses, hidden and spread out all over the country, in order to arrest their spreading.

As a first step the government has started anti-AIDS propaganda as it is of vital national importance through its national media e.g. radio, television and the newspapers. But what has lost sight of the government is that the bulk of our population (over 80 p.c.) is illiterate. They will hardly understand the message so dramatically presented by our TV, radio and stage artists through our media.

Why our approach to this menacing disease should be a shy one and can't be as courageous enough to plain talk and tell our simple folks e.g. truck and bus drivers, auto-rickshaw drivers, rickshaw pullers and millions of floating population, coming from far-flung villages, who frequently makes visits to the

cities and towns on various commitments that they are equally valuable to this disease?

Those among the above categories, who earn their bread, staying at cities and towns, away from their homes and near and dear ones for months together, can't help their biological urges, which force them to visit the cheap red-light areas off and on to ventilate their physical desires. They sometime even prefer it to cinema shows or other amusements. And in this process who knows how many of these innocent souls are contracting the AIDS virus unwittingly and unconsciously passing it on to their beloved wives, whom they meet after a considerably long time.

No one knows the exact number of the AIDS afflicted people in our country. It is upto the government to initiate a battle against this menace before it takes a monstrous shape.

Fit. Lt (Retd) Mohiuddin, South Kafur, Dhaka Cantt., Dhaka.

This Brinkmanship...

Sir, I fully endorse every word, every sentence and every paragraph of your free and frank editorial 'This Brinkmanship may Easily Go Out of Hand' of September 12, 1994. Congratulations on your in-depth thoughts, foresightedness, courage and patriotism.

Bangladesh is a country of natural calamities and political crisis. The sufferings of the people know no bounds. We all need to make clear distinction between ends and means before we become frustrated, turn berserk and run amuck — none of which is desirable.

O H Kabir, Dhaka

OPINION

Focus Shifted from the Culprit

The derailment of Chittagong University shuttle train near Sholashahar on Saturday last did not take a toll of any student's life. For that matter, none other died from it. But it has had tragic consequences. So the tragedy lay in the aftermath, not so much in the original accident.

Not a single accident is keeping within its confines. We wish it had. For, over-reaction has a way of rendering fixation of responsibility for a lapse extremely difficult. As if a smoke-gun was fired to let the real culprit escape the spotlight which got turned to incidents triggered by the accident. None of that TV serial Fall Guy stuff put together to throw dust into the eyes of the evil incarnate but something done in a foolishly uncontrolled rage, diverting the focus from both the who and the why of it.

As the train went off rail, students crammed into a compartment jumped out to safety but had scars on landing. Their class fellows in other bogeys went livid with anger and on a rampage. But did they have enough of a provocation to beat up railway employees, set the Sholashahar railway Station on fire and move in strength to the far-out central railway building (CRB) where another volley of attack was launched? They ransacked 20 office rooms breaking glass panes and telephone sets. Eight transports were also damaged.

At any rate, this is not to absolve the unruly students of their part of the impropriety. The right thing for them would have been to represent before the railway authorities in Chittagong and demand punishment of those responsible for what looked like an avoidable mishap. In the process, they could ensure speedy repair and revamping of the railway tracks, something their wrath was all about.

All this would have stopped fishing in the troubled waters by various politically motivated labour unions.

An Onlooker, Dhaka