

Undue Pressure

The Energy Ministry and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) are locked in an unnecessary battle, so we think, over preconditions set by the latter to financing the highly prized 9th Power Project. This potential harbinger of a difference in the power sector envisages modernising the distribution network at the crucial Meghnaghat and Siddhinganj points and having a national load despatch centre in Siddhinganj.

The battle lines seem to have been drawn one-sidedly by the ADB with the new government being forced on the defensive before it could use its influence with the power sector workers and their CBAs to curb the systems loss in the very least.

The ADB has flung three demands at the energy ministry: raise the power tariff by 25 per cent, decrease the systems loss of the Power Development Board from the existing 33 per cent to 20 per cent and privatise the power distribution system.

The sticking point of the ADB pressure appears to be this now: if the government does not agree to the proposed 25 per cent increase in the power tariff by December, it will have to make do without any ADB contribution to the project.

The demand that such a big increase in the power rate be effected in less than four months' time sounds so unrealistic that one wonders whether it is really meant to be met by us. The consumers hardly deserve this cruel joke when their purchasing power has been ebbing for a long time. An elected government cannot honour the ADB request without paying a heavy political price. In the first place it has a social commitment and responsibility to the electorate to ensure its welfare. Furthermore, how can it allow its intrinsic strength for governance to be weakened just like that?

Our considered position on the subject is that the government must have a regulatory role over the utility rates. Secondly, let the systems loss be reduced through an effective dialogue between the new government and the CBAs to benefit the PDB, DESA and the consumers alike. Thirdly, since our power rates are in no way lower in comparison to the neighbouring countries, why then insist on increasing it?

So Unbecoming

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) gave a demonstration of its militancy on Monday in the city's streets. Its activists were protesting the arrest of JCD's acting president Nasiruddin Pintu made on Sunday, the founding day of its parent organisation the Bangladesh Nationalist Party 18 years ago. Clearly, the observance of the BNP's founding anniversary has been far from ideal. The violence resorted to by the JCD activists did in no way complement the celebrative mood of a party observing its birth anniversary. What message are we to draw from this?

The student front of the BNP has behaved very irresponsibly, so unbecoming of a student organisation belonging to a major political party in the country. It can also be blamed for having misdirected an avoidable anger towards the innocent public. The JCD may have had grievances against the government but why attack and damage private cars? In the ensuing chaos and confusion it is the public who suffered immeasurably. If a student leader is arrested, you may have a right to protest but you can only do so in a peaceful and disciplined manner. And, should there be cases against the arrested person, his followers ought to be exercising a greater caution in their reaction.

We roundly condemn the unleashing of frenzy by any organisation. The JCD, as a front-line student wing of an important political party, should give a better account of itself in the future. If there are specific charges against someone, the court is the right place to contest them. Even then such issues can be dealt with as part of a political endeavour within a larger framework with the sole object of containing eruptive violence across the board. A large and well-knit party like the BNP surely has the ability to make its words heard by its student activists. Let the political scores be settled politically — and not in the street. We ask everyone to put an end to the smashing of private cars and the destruction of public property without batting an eye-lid.

The Stigma Must Go

State Minister for Law Abdul Matin Khasru disclosed in parliament on Monday that the government has initiated a process of examining the Special Powers Act with the objective of repealing it. The law enacted by Awami League government in 1974 is still there despite, amusingly enough, all the main political parties having been at one time or another highly critical of it. So far the trend has been that before coming to power every party viewed this law as an aberration but once in power they found it expedient to continue with.

Let the Awami League prove its difference by matching its promise with action. It must find two valid reasons to do the job: a) it has the historic opportunity of pronouncing death sentence to a demon it had created 22 years ago; and (b) the Awami League itself has faced the brunt of the abuse of the law to realise that it must be struck out of the book.

However, apart from any party consideration what becomes an overriding compulsion to get rid of this stigma of a law is that it is anti-human rights and anti-democracy. When we are moving towards the separation of judiciary from the executive, it is all the more necessary that we carry out the surgery of our black laws.

In the early hours of 6 September 1965, Indian land forces crossed the international border near Lahore, surprising the Pakistan Armed Forces. If it had not been for some forceful Brigade Commanders of 10 Infantry Division (defending the main approaches to Lahore) who had persuaded their divisional Commander the night before to allow their units to occupy Forward Defended Localities (FDL) by first light on that fateful day, Gen J N Chaudhuri, the Indian COAS, would well have been the host to his officers to his boastful invitation to "a chota page in the Lahore Gymkhana" by the evening of that day. It was a day of surprises, the Indians surprised us, we surprised them by being surprised. Three decades later, given the events of the four months starting in May 1965, starting with the Raids of Katch, Operation Gibraltar (infiltration into Kashmir), Operation Grand Slam (cutting of Kashmir from the rest of India) and the fact that PAF had shot down some Indian aircraft over Chamb/Akhnur in the first week of September, why our defence hierarchy was surprised continues to remain a mystery.

Our military leadership through the whole rank spectrum in 1965 and in 1971 were trained to fight the battles of World War 1 and the early battles of World War 2. Luckily for us, despite sorry experience at the hands of the Chinese in 1962, the Indian leadership at the junior combat level was atrocious. The higher ratio of casualties, officer to soldier, attests to the fact that our junior leaders (today's Divisional and Corps Commanders) were outstanding. Having learnt no lessons in 1965, but basking in self-created glory at the hierarchical level despite their strategic and tactical blunders covered over by the shedding of blood of our youth in the battlefield, we fought ourselves into abject defeat in 1971. In terms of strategy there can be nothing more amusing in history than the belief of our then strategists

that the defence of East Pakistan lay in West Pakistan. Instead of clearly stating that available forces were really meant for the defence of crucial areas in the West and could not be risked in the East, we were led down a garden path to this "ripley's Believe it Not" strategy. Hopefully, future strategy will not adopt Rip Van Winkle techniques of the past.

During the 70s, Pakistan's defence services went into high gear as a concerted effort was made to improve the quality of military education of our senior officers through the broad spectrum of all disciplines. The Gulf War has shown that warfare has reached such high-tech levels that we will keep playing catch-up because of our limited resources. India has developed software into a US \$ 5 billion business already, in this field we have definitely fallen behind. Because of the need to keep large standing defence forces we are hard put in the matter of resources to completely overcome the technological edge that is vital for defence needs. Any long-term strategy for our defence needs must take in relevant existing factors: (1) the geographical layout and terrain (2) the enemy's intentions and capabilities (3) our own existing defence preparedness and available resources and (4) likely help available from our allies and other friendly countries. Experience has shown that instead of going in for some complicated strategy we must stay with the KISS formula i.e. "Keep it Simple Stupid!" With regards to the last factor, the last three years have been spent in alienating our traditional allies in such fashion that their help becomes a matter of some doubt, available only as a dubious option.

For defence purposes Pakistan can be divided into five areas, geographically from

Defence of Pakistan

Where we are now really hurting is in the air. In keeping with some other rather stupid decisions of the 80s, we put all our options for air defence into the F-16 basket and as a result we have been left up the creek without a paddle in trying to obtain an alternative aerial fighting platform.

North to South, viz (1) Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas (2) Punjab plains, (3) Northern desert, (4) Southern desert and (5) the coast. The crucial aerial dimension must be treated as a separate front. Any war will thus take place over six fronts, for this we have to create six commands, each looking after a separate front, in accomplishing the mission, two more Commands, viz (1) a Strategic Reserve, spread in depth over Quetta and Peshawar, consisting of at least three armoured and three motorised divisions in a sort of "Rapid Deployment Force" and (2) a Logistics Command based a Quetta, responsible for overall supply

forces either in the open desert or the plains. Concentrated force can be exerted in a combination eg. (1) invasion of Sindh and a (2) blockade of Karachi and Pakistan's coastline.

It is time to revolutionise some basic concepts. Except for the mountainous Azad Kashmir northern areas and the defences of Lahore along the BRB camel infantry must be fully mobile. Trenches in the Desert and the Punjab plains have no longevity in the face of determined enemy onslaught, rather they are graves waiting to bury the occupying personnel alive as happened to the Iraqis in the Gulf War. Luckily for us, our liberal car import policy has

land-based aircraft having air-to-ship Exocet and Harpoon missiles, would give nightmares to any designs against our coast. These submarines are supposed to interdict Indian shipping plying to their ports and thus close their logistics route via the sea. To start with, such an operation would need more than a dozen submarines, supported by high-tech electronic counter measures (ECMs) and capable of remaining long periods underwater. Even if we do succeed in stopping the Indian traffic, so what? India has enough supply reserves to outlast as many times over in a war of attrition, this billion dollar investment has neither tactical nor strategic relevance in the immediate battle, it has only "commission" value.

Frankly it is money gone down the tube. The Coastal (or Maritime) Command should incorporate naval, air and land forces meant to defend the coast with a mission to keep our coastline open upto the Gulf for supply by coastal vessels.

Where we are now really hurting is in the air, in keeping with some other rather stupid decisions of the 80s, we put all our options for air defence into the F-16 basket and as a result we have been left up the creek without a paddle in trying to obtain an alternative aerial fighting platform. We cannot afford the Mirage 5 2000s at the price on offer, it would economically bankrupt us. We have to look at other options, the best seems to be the SU-27 if we can get a secure supply line, perhaps the Chinese will make under licence from Russia. However, the decision to get the Mirage 5 upgraded by Sogem was an excellent one by the PAF. Khatak needs to be commanded for standing upto the dubious charms of the lady of French extraction sponsored by influential friends. Having given way over the Pay TV issue to the

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

over mainly land routes during times of war

The geographical layout of the country, a study of India's war capabilities and previous experience point to the following possible Indian moves, viz (1) blockading of Karachi and Pakistan's coastline, (2) invasion of Sindh, (3) attempt to sever Pakistan in the narrowest section from Rahimyar Khan to Daharki, (4) the usual attempt to capture Lahore and/or Sialkot, (5) inroads in Azad Kashmir sectors from Siachen down to Bherim and (6) carry out heliborne attacks to capture nodal points to await link up with a ground attack or in conjunction and airstrike against Pakistan's nuclear facilities. Though it is possible, it is quite unlikely that India can bring maximum forces to bear on any one sector because of logistical limitations in concentrating

ensured many thousands of Toyota Hi Luxes, Land Cruisers and Pajeros to the country, enough to equip our Armed Forces many tens of times over. Since it takes about a 100 of these vehicles to equip an infantry battalion, 900-1000 would be enough to make an infantry division motorized. The shortage of Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) notwithstanding soft vehicles can function as "battle taxis." A peace-time logistics must ensure their presence at the right place at the right time, making it a reasonable offense not to make it available during wartime.

A major mistake has been made by putting in more than US \$ 1 billion in three French submarines, for this we could have bought more than 200 missile torpedo boats, even 50 acting in conjunction with

way over the Pay TV issue to the

the OIC summit and his talks with ZA Bhutto, then prime minister of Pakistan. Attention shall have to be given also to the visit of ZA Bhutto to Bangladesh in 1974 and his understanding with Bangabandhu on different bi-lateral issues which still today remain unresolved.

If Pakistan is sincere enough to have better relation with Bangladesh, she has to be serious and careful about the immediate removal of the bottlenecks that have meanwhile soured the relations. There is no possibility of any war between Bangladesh and Pakistan. Let this very reality be realised by the present leaderships of the two countries.

First of all, the positions of high commissioner, the highest in the diplomatic mission of these two countries, now being enjoyed by career diplomats, be immediately replaced by outstanding political personalities with enough maturity, integrity and sophistication to put the right thing on the right track first and then follow the next course of action accordingly. It has historically been proved that any political initiative and maneuvering by political leaders instead of career diplomats were more dependable, acceptable and workable to break the ice in any issue having a political perspective and the same is also true in case of Bangladesh-Pakistan relations.

Mr. Nazir's offer to mediate between Bangladesh-Pakistan may be considered. But, Bangladesh must be cautious about her point and logic while dealing with Pakistan so that there may not be any corresponding negative impact on Bangladesh-India relations.

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Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: Needed Sincerity of Purpose

by Sinha M A Sayeed

It is for the betterment of the peoples of these two Muslim countries, for the enhancement of the concept of "SAARC spirit," for the overall changing scenario at national, bi-lateral and regional and international politics and relations that a comprehensive, integrated and pragmatic "confidence-building frame" should be formulated, developed, followed, and continued.

which is very much unilateral in nature and it lies in Pakistan.

At the said press conference, on the question of repatriation of stranded Pakistanis known as Biharis, the Pakistani foreign secretary including foreign minister Abdus Samad Azad, state minister of the same ministry Mr. Abul Ahsan Chowdhury and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina details of which were published in the dailies and aired by Radio and TV. The visit was, in fact, a kind of response to the visit of Mr. Farooq Sobhan to Pakistan from August 9-11 and it took place in the backdrop of the visit by the foreign secretary of India Mr. Salman Haider to Bangladesh from July 5-7.

Although the Pakistan foreign secretary showed a positive gesture and goodwill about his visit while talking to the waiting journalists at the Zia International Airport soon after his arrival and the same, was conveyed by the foreign minister of Bangladesh Mr. Abdus Samad Azad who at his press conference on August 17 at the state guest house Maghna termed the ongoing talks at the foreign secretary level as "good and useful," the overall outcome, in fact, could not yield and ensure anything positive to bring about immediate solutions to the long-standing issues like repatriation of the stranded Pakistanis in Bangladesh, recent push-in of Bangladesh origin Pakistanis nationals and sharing of assets and liabilities of pre-independence period settlement of

delicate adding that Pakistan had its own view about the matter for which it could not be solved so early and easily.

About the business trade and commerce between the two countries he emphasised that more and more contacts in various forms and dimensions should continue and be strengthened including initiatives for joint venture projects in both countries as both the countries were now pursuing a broad-based "liberalised policy" to suite the purposes. He also attached importance to continuous contacts through meetings at foreign secretary level so that the tempo of a congenial atmosphere could be maintained to obviate any negative blast from any side.

Finally, in response to a question on Bangladesh-India relations particularly on water issue he made it unambiguously clear that "Pakistan should stand by Bangladesh in her due and logical fight with India. Curiously enough, instead of going for a broad-based frame for overall understanding between the two countries through peaceful and amicable settlements of the long-standing thorny issues, Pakistan's foreign secretary virtually stood firm and committed to gear up the slowing down tempo of "India phobia" to keep it alive for all the time to come here in Bangladesh."

More curious was the matter that just before one day of the visit of Pakistan's foreign secretary to Bangladesh an unhappy, rather unbecoming

diplomatic incident" was given birth to by the Charge de Affairs of Pakistan in Bangladesh. Although a number of heads of foreign mission in Dhaka including Pakistan's were invited and accordingly taken to the "mazar" of the father of the nation on the occasion of the National Mourning Day on August 15, the first of its kind after the change-over of August 15, 1975, Pakistan's CDA in Bangladesh kept himself aloof from joining such a national event. Does it bear any significance? Was Benazir's congratulation to Hasina over phone on the latter's becoming the prime minister of Bangladesh a mere diplomatic formality?

Mr. Walir Rahim, former senior career diplomat and now a leading columnist wrote, "It was sad very sad indeed, that the Pakistan Charge de Affairs in Dhaka failed to show up. It certainly did not bring any honour to Pakistan and its leaders. Have not they made blunders in the past?"

He further pointed out: "We must not forget that inter-state relationship cannot grow out of insincere or unclear policies. It is essential a priori condition to recognise the ethos of this country's creation to have a normal, friendly bi-lateral relations."

To speak the truth, Bangladesh-Pakistan relations should not be allowed and encouraged to move in the on-going apparently negative direction overshadowed by mere political motive as and when required. It is for the betterment of the peoples of these two Muslim countries, for the enhancement of the concept of "SAARC spirit," for the overall changing scenario at national, bi-lateral and regional and international politics and relations that a comprehensive, integrated and pragmatic "confidence-building frame" should be formulated, developed, followed, and continued.

Sir, probably there is no other country/community who talk louder of social, political and economic moralities than the society in Bangladesh, but perhaps, we are in the bracket of the countries who are practically the most corrupt.

In our day-to-day life, from the morning when we leave home, say, by a rickshaw till retiring in bed, we meet people of different backgrounds/status beginning from rickshaw-pullers to chief executive officers (CEOs) of big companies. Many a time, in behaviour, there is a semblance — in no time they lose temper and start uttering most filthy words (including the four-letter words synchronised with indecent gestures) and there is nobody to stop them. Even, the traffic police are sometimes observed to behave in the same manner.

This behavioural lapses of ours, of course, do not anyway enhance and enrich us. Rather, it is the most disgusting, insulting and embarrassing for all, particularly when elderly and tender-age people together confront such an unpleasant encounter. Many of us feel that something should be done about the said nuisance but due to certain shortcomings they hesitate. The Daily Star has already established its niche as a re-

Rahman as the Father of the Nation or Bangabandhu, I promptly contradicted him in order to listen to the arguments he could set forth in favour of his statement.

I sometimes cannot help wondering that the preceding accentuations should actually come out of sheer reverence and not compelling forcefulness. And today even the constitution does not address Sheikh Mujib as Bangabandhu as it was originally stated in the fourth amendment's, (33) and (34) resolutions. So legally there's nothing barring anyone from omitting the word 'Bangabandhu'. But of course, if we have one speck of thankfulness left deep down inside our hearts, we shall most definitely abstain from acting in such a way.

Likewise, the word 'Shahid' is always preceding president Ziaur Rahman. But actually, only a person who has taken part in a 'Jihad' and sacrificed his life for Allah can be regarded as 'shahid'. So, just adding a word like that to every other name would be pointless, and would be liable to render the word 'shahid' of no importance.

Actually what I've tried to get across is simply that, there's no use, trying to force anything on the people. Whether the Sheikh is really the "Bangabandhu" or President Zia a "shahid" should be left for the people to decide. If they've really lived up to their respective names,

the public will regard them as so. For such titles are not exactly officially tenable posts which one can add before the tenure is over. And for this reason, there should be no forcefulness behind them at any time.

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Turkey

Sir, I read with interest The Daily Star supplement (Aug 30) on Turkey on the 70th anniversary of the Victory Day of the Republic of Turkey. We look forward to increased trade with Turkey.

For additional information, I looked up a small Reference Book, "Bartholomew's Mini World Gazetteer," 1993 Edition. Therein the Turkish "national day" is printed as "October 29" (P 193). The same date is mentioned as their Republic Day in the Universal Almanac, 1990.

A clarification would be appreciated.

Alif Zab
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'Of Dranum and Likes'

Sir, Thanks for the above captioned editorial in your esteemed daily of 10th August 1996. We feel that there are some unscrupulous elements both inside and outside our

country who do not want that we develop our natural and mineral resources for the prosperity of our country and stand proudly on our own feet.

We strongly feel that a national consensus of our national leaders both in the government and in the opposition is imperative to overcome all our barricades and obstructions to tap, exploit and utilise our mineral resources.

We would therefore once again suggest that a national committee on mineral resources consisted of MPs of all the political parties should be formed to move forward boldly and smoothly with our various schemes and projects on mineral resources without further delay.

It may be mentioned here that millions of tons of valuable minerals zircon, rut