

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 Siddhirganj points and having a national load despatch centre in Siddhirganj.

The battlelines 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.

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.

forces either in the open desert or the plains. Concentrated force can be exerted in a combination of (1) invasion of Sindh and (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 ones Chinese will make under licence from Russia. However, the decision to get the Mirage-5s upgraded by Sogem was an excellent one by the PAF. Khatrak needs to be commended for standing up to the dubious charms of the lady of French extraction sponsored by influential friends. Having given way over the Pay TV issue to the

powers that be, it is the least he could do, though one dare say he did leave in the lurch the poor Rear Admiral who made the installment payment on his orders. Seriously, we cannot afford the Mirage-5 2000s but more than that we cannot afford to lose the race for air superiority.

When we have to face an enemy 5-6 times larger than us in number, weaponry and equipment, when we are faced with threat of Prithvi missiles that can attack any location in Pakistan, when we lack the strategic depth that the enemy has, etc the plans have to be aggressive as well as a combination of realistic and unorthodox tactics. We cannot wait for the enemy to breach our defences, we have to breach physically and psychologically theirs so as to gain strategic and tactical depth. In a sense we must make a hundred flowers bloom, launching small sub-units in deep penetration and destruction missions. These have to be supported on the ground. For that we need mobile forces, to break the crust of enemy's defences we need to have them armoured. As such the forces in the Punjab Command (the Punjab plains, north and south of Ravi), Desert Command (Rajasthan desert opposite Multan-Daharki) and Southern Command (Thar desert, down to Badin) must be armoured as well as motorised, capable of launching offensives on their own individual fronts deep into enemy territory.

Mobility and ingenuity have been the key to success throughout Muslim history, the infantry bearing the brunt of the enemy assault. Muslim artillery has always been devastatingly accurate in support. During one of the decisive battles of the western world, Muslim cavalry at Yarmuk proved decisive in inflicting defeat on the enemy. The fundamental premise of swift and decisive action must remain paramount in all our planning. Imaginative but pragmatic re-organisation of our Armed Forces is required in the 21st Century.

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) incursions in Azad Kashmir sectors from Siachen down to Bhimber and (6) carry out helicopter 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 in 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 most 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

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.

AFTER the conclusion of his three-day official goodwill visit to Bangladesh (August 16-18), Pakistan's foreign secretary Mr. Najimuddin Sheikh held a press conference on 18 August at the state guest house Maghna where his counterpart Bangladesh foreign secretary Farooq Sobhan was also present and replied to a volley of questions from the reporters. Mr. Najimuddin without any hide and seek freely opened his mouth about the gist of the outcome of his talks with Bangladesh 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 Pakistan nationals and sharing of assets and liabilities of pre-independence period settlement of

which is verymuch 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 Pakistan foreign secretary categorically and emphatically asserted that Pakistan had honoured the original agreement in full by taking three categories of people back to Pakistan adding that the present problem is very human in nature and both Bangladesh and Pakistan governments need to work together and expedite the process while Mr. Farooq Sobhan said, "It does not help relationship if one looks into the past."

In reply to a question on the recent push-in of Bangladesh origin Pakistan nationals Mr. Najimuddin made it clear and specific that Pakistan had differing views on the subject saying that, in fact, on push-in into Bangladesh had yet taken place. He further put forward a logic that the people who came to Bangladesh did so just to meet their relatives, friends and others. He said again that at present there were more than a million "illegal" Bangladeshi immigrants in Pakistan. Mr. Farooq Sobhan, however, outrightly denied the allegation saying that there were no Bangladeshis in Pakistan and even if they were people of Bangladesh origin they were nationals of Pakistan.

Regarding the sharing of the assets and liabilities of the pre-independence period Pakistan foreign secretary said that the matter was very complex and

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 settlement 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 des Affaires 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 congratulatory message to Hasina over phone on the latter's becoming the prime minister of Bangladesh a mere diplomatic formality?

Mr. Waliur Rahman former senior career diplomat and now a leading columnist wrote, "It was said, very sad indeed, that the Pakistan Charge des Affaires in Dhaka failed to show up. It certainly did not bring any honour to Pakistan and its leaders. Have not they made enough 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 ongoing apparently negative direction overshadowed by mere political motive and when required. It is for the betterment of the peoples of these two Mus-

lim 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. This can, without any question or argument, only be done by strong political leaderships equipped with determined political vision and will.

So the matter needs to be settled having talks at the summit level between the prime ministers of the two countries. It can not be missed here that Benazir Bhutto during her last visit to Bangladesh refused to accept the stranded Pakistanis as citizens of Pakistan referring them as Biharis only and her stand has not changed since then. On the other hand, Pakistan put forward a logic that it required 500 million US dollars to fly them home and rehabilitate accordingly. A trust backed by Rabit Al-Islamia, a Saudi Arabia based Islamic humanitarian organisation was set up by Pakistan in 1988 to raise the fund. Until 1991 it could mobilise only 15 million US dollars and since then the project has been left frozen.

Today Sheikh Hasina and Benazir Bhutto on account of their having a lot of similarities in their respective perspectives have to take into account the visit of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, then prime minister of Bangladesh, to Pakistan in 1973 to attend

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 Bangladesh 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 denying the fact that 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.

Iram'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.

The writer is Joint Secretary for International Affairs of Jatiya Party

To the Editor

Discriminatory IT rate for foreign companies

Sir, The rate of Corporate Income Tax for non-resident foreign companies operating in the country has been proposed at 45 per cent in the Finance Bill, 1996 as against 40 per cent applicable to local companies which are not publicly traded and other than Banks, Insurance Companies and Financial Institutions.

This has been done, when the avowed policy of the present government is to encourage more foreign direct investment in the country.

We feel, very strongly, that such discriminatory proposal would not only discourage prospective foreign investors, but also put the existing non-resident foreign companies in a disadvantageous situation vis-a-vis their local competitors.

In view of the above, it would be very much appreciated, if the authority concerned kindly give a second thought on the matter and does the needful towards removal of discrepancy in the said proposal of the Finance Bill under reference.

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Behavioural indecency: A dilemma

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) and there is nobody to stop them. Even, the traffic police are sometimes observed to behave in the same manner.

This behavioural lapses of our, 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-

spectful, consistent, logical, well-meaning and fair journal. I would request The Daily Star to wage a campaign to arrest the degeneration and inculcate a reasonable sense of decency into the minds of the people. In this connection, The Daily Star may consider to print conducive brief slogans in bold in both English and Bengali from time to time.

For example: "Indecent behaviour/utterances of filthy words and demonstration of offensive gestures pollute the environment and in turn it degrades our mental and physical health. It is wise to restrain ourselves from behaving immodestly."

I believe if the press gives the issue a sincere consideration, there will be a qualitative improvement in the lives of the people of our society in Bangladesh.

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Of titles

Sir, Very recently, I had been conversing with a friend who is..... I would say, very biased in his opinion. Years of inherent support for a particular political party has enabled all his emotions and personal opinion to supersede his sense of logic and rationality in an amazing way. As he was condemning someone for not addressing Sheikh Mujibur

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 'Shaheed' 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 'shaheed'. So, just adding a word like that to every other name would be pointless, and would be liable to render the word 'shaheed' 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 'shaheed' 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.

Scarface
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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 Mini World Factfile", 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.

Atif Zabr
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'Of Dranium 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, rutile, elmenite, garnet, magnetite and monazite etc., popularly known as 'Black Gold' of Cox's Bazar are available in some of our coastal areas spread from Teknaf of Kuakata.

It would be of immense service to the nation if the members of the national committee on mineral resources (to be formed) kindly visit some of the mineral deposit sites, see the miracles of 'Black Gold' and arrive at a consensus on the commercial utilisation of the valuable minerals either in the public or private sector.

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