

Tower Collapse

The government sees no mystery behind the collapse of the power tower in Pabna which triggered the unprecedented shattering of an overlong loop of a life-line called the East-West Interconnector. The Prime Minister had called it an act of sabotage, in so many words, a few days back, albeit on the basis of preliminary reports. We now have the Energy Ministry hand-out saying that experts have found evidence of a well planned act by miscreants' writ large on all of the four legs of the fallen tower. Technically, however, this has to be regarded as an interim report because a wider government investigation has gotten into full swing to reveal the full facts of the case in a week's time.

The timing of the tower collapse is open to interpretation either way depending on which side of the gullibility divide one is sitting. Without any prejudice to the final and detailed findings the government probe committee is likely to come up with, it can be stated that the gridline disaster has occurred co-incidentally with the power supply crisis which has been an embarrassment to the government. So, there can be a surmise that miscreants took a plunge into an act of sabotage to apply the *coup de grace* to the public dismay over power failures. On the other hand, the detractors' perception may be that the government was merely trying to divert public attention from the unheard-of power crisis via a self-invented tower collapse controversy. As it is, recriminations have been markedly caustic and unabatedly free-wheeling between the government and the opposition BNP on the power supply track-record of the latter when in power.

Forget the imagined or real motivational swings about the whole affair, there are three clear-cut views we would like to take in the wake of the tower collapse. First, the government has to come out in public with a detailed maintenance report on the towers and the interconnector satisfying queries like when was the last inspection of the network undertaken, at what intervals is this usually done, is there any provision for guarding the towers physically where this is possible, etc. etc. Secondly, the culprits must be brought to the surface and punished. And thirdly, any politicisation of the issue will not find favour with the public who are solely interested in a focused attention paid to the brass-tacks now.

Transport Challenge

Based on a suggestion of the World Bank, the government is going to establish the Greater Dhaka Transport Planning and Coordination Authority. The title of the set-up itself spells out the task it is expected to perform. Currently, a number of bodies and agencies — such as the DCC, Rajuk, BRTA, LGRD, — have their respective responsibilities in regard to the city's transport system. But then none is entirely responsible for the development or expansion of the city's transport facilities nor is there any particular authority to look into the coordination among all the organisations — a task so vital for planning and operation of the city's traffic. Besides, the need for a coordinating body might have been felt in light of the implementation of the US \$121.7 million Dhaka Urban Transport Project (DUTP).

The creation of any authority, however, is vindicated only when it delivers what is expected of it. In the case of Dhaka city's transport and traffic, total chaos reigns supreme. That is mostly because of poor planning and lack of management. Now this new set-up will have justified its creation if it were ready to face the all-round indiscipline and mismanagement — and face them squarely. We do not know how much authority it will enjoy to take up the great challenge. As parts of the implementation of the programme under DUTP, the introduction of the premium buses in the private sector has been made possible and the foot-bridges have been put in place by the DCC. These are small measures but have tremendous prospects. Realising the projects' full potential, however, greatly depends on how these operate or are made to operate.

We need to admit that much of the transport problem in the city is either a creation of the road users or a result of wrong planning. Large and wide-bodied buses instead of the mini ones could have made a noticeable difference by a single stroke. Strict time schedule for plying buses, making queuing compulsory for passengers at the bus stoppages and allowing no scope for buses to stop anywhere other than the designated spots are sure to improve the city's transport in spite of the limitations. A plan has to be drawn up in a way where modern and convenient transports can prove their advantages and thus help phase out the cumbersome and primitive modes of transport.

Disgraceful

The manhandling of an umpire in the first semi-final and severe beating of another in the second semi-final of the Karnaphuli Garden City Club Cup hockey tournament have not only caused physical harm and social humiliation to the victims but also butchered the country's sporting spirit and honour. The players who can be so intemperate have no right to be on the field. They have brought out the worst in men who have ever wielded hockey sticks. Instead of making the best and artistic use of the sticks following the greats of the game, they have behaved like thugs who call into action all their so-called heroism when they swoop on a humble and law-abiding citizen.

And how futile it is to repose our hope in these men who were just about making a slender progress in the game. Think of these people going on to represent the country at the international meets! How shameful it would be if they committed a similar offence there! If the players of our best local outfits can be so brutal and violative of all sporting rules and norms, God forbids, we see no future for our sports and games.

Now the hockey federation must show the firmness required on such occasions. The offenders ought to pay for their unsporting and criminal behaviours on the field. If this means we have to dispense with the services of some of them, so be it. Sports and games are not a farce, they are an ideal to be regarded very highly.

THE Islamic Summit at Islamabad is a unique opportunity for leaders of member-countries of the most resurgent religion of this century (and foreseeably the next as well) to have a meeting of minds as to the dangers facing the Muslim Ummah because of (1) internal conflict and (2) the pressures of external civilisations. We face daunting problems due to the 'clash of civilisations' as well as the sectarian and cultural differences that seem to have divided Muslims into different worlds.

Since the Summit is taking place barely a month or so after the new government in Pakistan has taken office, it would indeed be a miracle if effort if all the logistics are satisfactorily in place. The security environment is certainly not conducive for at least a handful of Heads of State and/or Government. While Pakistan would be privileged to be their host, in the greater interest of safety and security it would have been better not to present too tempting a target for possible terrorist action, if not by various aggrieved parties than by those who profit materially and psychologically from causing mayhem at such occasions.

The Muslim World can be divided into geographical blocs of identity viz (1) South East Asia, comprising Indonesia, Malaysia, Burma, Bangladesh, Maldives, etc (2) Middle East (and Arab), comprising Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt, Sudan, Iraq, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Yemen, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Palestine, etc (3) Pan Africa, comprising Uganda, Chad, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Mali etc, and (4) Central Asia, comprising Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (with the additional state of Bosnia Herzegovina from Europe).

In its earliest days Islam spread from Spain in the West to Mindanao Island in the East close on the heels of commerce. Only when Muslim trade initiatives in the form of caravans or commercial sea-going vessels were interdicted and looted, Islamic land and sea forces were sent in as punitive measures and for providing protection. Islamic cavalry as well as sea forces were a vaunted force throughout the then known world. The Sultan of Istanbul would get the hull of his war ship made in Sandwip Island (in Bangladesh) from timber from Arakan (in Burma) as early as the 15th century. Invariably the message of Islam spread through the world because of the combined force of trade and services was backed by military power.

Today most of the populous Muslim countries are struggling. While western countries

are openly protectionist in denying access to their markets for developing countries the more prosperous Muslim states give the more developed countries 'Most Favoured Nation' status in both 'Trade and Services' while denying the same status to the less fortunate Muslim states. In a travesty of justice, commercial entities from the developed world obtain contracts, assemble a handful of management people from their own countries and then bring in middle management and skilled/unskilled labour expertise mostly from the less developed Muslim countries. In effect they skim off the profits while the actual physical work is performed by the poorer sections of the Muslim Ummah. Some countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE, etc., have followed an enlightened policy in encouraging a complete package from the poorer countries, however this is not followed as a comprehensive policy universally. It is important, therefore, that the Muslim Ummah gives 'Most Favoured Nation' status for trade and services to each other in preference to others by allotting extra percentage points to entities from Muslim countries.

To give one example, whenever western countries allocate government contracts in other countries they give 5-10 extra percentage points mandated by law to companies from their countries in the evaluation of the bids. Why not have a similar system, giving additional weightage to developing Muslim countries? Similarly part of the gold and foreign exchange reserves can be kept in affluent Muslim countries, the less developed Muslim world benefiting from the profit given as mark-up. There is need to support direct relief to the working poor as is done by Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, in effect giving support to people willing to help themselves. Similar effort can be funded in less developed countries with support from the more fortunate ones.

We are losing the war on information mainly because the vast resources of the Muslim world are not pooled and coordinated. This problem cannot be solved by purchasing a few newspapers and magazines or by putting into service some TV and radio stations. What is required is a comprehensive communications plan for the media that employs one central direction that collects and collates all information and programmes from the member-countries **electronically** before beaming them via satellite into ground stations in many lan-

ISLAMIC LEADERS SUMMIT

A Gathering of Eagles

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guages simultaneously like Arabic, Urdu, Turkic, Swahili, Bengali, Sinhalese, Malay and English. There should be quality world news on the hour every hour. Muslim private entrepreneurs must be encouraged to run TV and radio channels through satellites, it should be encouraged in word by strong financial support and dead by financial support in the

ing an Islamic product must be dispensed by intellectual discourse in an organised manner. Terrorism is a western invention, in its most brutal form it is the prerogative of Christian zealots in past centuries, today the same is more or less true. This message must be disseminated through logic and reason to whichever audience the message is being articulated. While

such this should not be acceptable to Pakistan, we must not be averse to actively supporting the independence and integrity of Saudi Arabia and UAE. There is also the matter of gratitude for their constant expression of solidarity whenever we are in trouble, our swift and total support is necessary to shore up their confidence.

The expression of unity in the military field can be solidified by earmarking a 'Rapid Deployment Force' comprised of troops drawn from a number of countries, to be available to Muslim countries at short notice, both for internal and external threat.

The HQs element of this force along with a skeleton operational staff should be a permanent fixture. There is some move for a common production of armaments and defence-related equipment spread in various countries, the economy of scale should make it cost-effective. The indigenous manufacture within the Muslim countries making it economically viable. Pakistan already provides training facilities to

many countries as well as logistics support, so does Turkey, Bangladesh, Malaysia and a number of other Muslim countries. There are many subjects under the sun that require attention, education, health, transportation, social security, etc.

On the pattern of the United Nations, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) should have a permanent session of an Islamic General Assembly and have subsidiary organisations on the UN pattern, learning from the mistakes made by the UN in enlarging an already bloated bureaucracy without commensurate results down the line. While the OIC does do many things, the perception of effectiveness is unfortunately not there. We must be pragmatic in our approach, ensuring that all initiatives pay their way in correct implementation and sound result. It was important for Pakistan to hold the Summit at the start of our Golden Jubilee celebrations as a country.

The government has had the courage to go through with this exercise even in adverse circumstances, it shows that nothing is impossible, given the will and motivation. One hopes this message of determination will be heard loud and clear at this gathering of leaders of the Muslim Ummah.

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

form of grant and low service cost loans from Islamic financial institutions.

In the 'Clash of Civilisations' as announced by Prof Samuel Huntington, it is quite clear that the next targeted civilisation is Islam. After the fall of communism, this was to be expected as the west has always perceived Islam to be the natural threat to their civilisation for centuries. The Crusades have never really finished, their modern sword is technology that is used to create false facts and subvert culture. There is a lot of emphasis by the West on a Europe-East Asia relationship, in recognition of the fact that as the oil in the Middle East will begin to run out in the next two decades or so, the present relationship will fade in importance as these will be no further use for the mass land bulk of Asia and Africa as an unwanted hinterland of conflict. Unfortunately we are as much at fault for failing to correct the media-influenced perception of the western masses about Islam as they are in propagating false notions. We have never bothered to explain the moderate nature of our religion to outsiders, with the result that invariably the very vocal fanatic minority is always on display by both the electronic and print media as representative of the character of Islam. A Central Fund must be organised by the more affluent Muslim countries that will employ a corps of intellectuals that will explain to audiences constantly in the West as well as the East the basic moderate nature of our religion as is applied to everyday life.

Far from being a threat to anyone, it is we who are really under threat.

That we are not in conflict with any civilisation must be expressed in clear terms far and wide throughout the world. The media images of terrorism be-

ing too much to expect Muslim nations to come to each other's help whenever the sovereignty of a nation is transgressed, at the very least we should be ready to give moral and material support to our brethren. On 4 Aug 90, in a news analysis in *The Nation* entitled 'Iraq Move Danger to World Peace', this writer had the privilege to write: "As a sit-

OPINION

Improvement of Hospital Service

Dr M Zakir Hussain

that the providers demonstrate a high level of accountability and ethical standards that protects the rights of the patient and enhances the reputation of the profession as well.

These unique characteristics and imperatives of good patient care imply that quality assurance is a function that is to be largely self-imposed and self-regulated by the providers themselves. Self-discipline and self-audit are the key for which general administrators to medical doctors are not specifically trained or competent to manage these non-clinical and general services. The growing private sector could well be contracted to provide an array of patient care services often using a high level of skills and technologies.

Hospitals, therefore, deserve

to be run as prime service enterprises using sophisticated and modern management methods and mechanisms. There are several unique features that characterise a modern hospital and the services that it provides. Unlike the consumers of other services and products, the consumers namely patients in a hospital are unable to really evaluate the quality and relevance of the services they get. The consumers are weak and vulnerable on that count. The technical quality of the care is best known and judged in this case by the providers. The providers bear a great responsibility to assure the quality and content of what they are providing to the patients. Not only the technical content, but also the attitude and behaviour of the providers assume great importance in the perception of the client.

A humane and ethical conduct by the medical profession in particular and by the professions supplementary to medicine in general plays a significant role in what constitutes total quality of the service in a hospital setting. It is essen-

tial to run as prime service enterprises using sophisticated and modern management methods and mechanisms. There are several unique features that characterise a modern hospital and the services that it provides. Unlike the consumers of other services and products, the consumers namely patients in a hospital are unable to really evaluate the quality and relevance of the services they get. The consumers are weak and vulnerable on that count. The technical quality of the care is best known and judged in this case by the providers. The providers bear a great responsibility to assure the quality and content of what they are providing to the patients. Not only the technical content, but also the attitude and behaviour of the providers assume great importance in the perception of the client.

A second major component

of good medical care and good hospital management is efficient administration of hospital's support services. These support services include the house-keeping, security, food and diet, laundry, public relations, education and orientation of employees. In addition,

there are important functions such as purchasing, finance and accounts, and continuing care and outreach services. Many of these services are similar to those provided in the private service sector. These are also perhaps more suited to the training and experience of general administrators to medical doctors are not specifically trained or competent to manage these non-clinical and general services. The growing private sector could well be contracted to provide an array of patient care services often using a high level of skills and technologies.

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A national level surveillance mechanism would also be essential. But most of these functions are best performed by an enlightened, responsible and willing profession committed to the keeping of high standards and reputation. Vigilance and enforcement mechanisms play a secondary, though important, supplementary role without substituting the primary function.

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Dream versus Reality

Munira Khan

I was annoyed with my daughter who lives in Europe and said, "Where were you? I told you to stay near the telephone, as I would be ringing you within five minutes".

My daughter laughed, "Darling, how can I think your 'five minutes' is really five minutes. You always tell me that getting an operator to make a foreign call takes ages, and then, you are to depend on the operator's will to get the line. Anyway, I am sorry. Now tell me what do you want me to do?" I said, "Come to Bangladesh, I need you urgently".

She was horrified: "Amma, how could you do this to me? You know I never come to Dhaka during this season, and I hear that the power failure has become very frequent. People are suffering a lot due to lack of water, gas, electricity etc. Now that I live in Europe for 20 years I have not passed without electricity for a single minute. It is just impossible for me to go without it. I also hear they stop the supply of the electricity without giving any notice. Moreover, killing, acid-throwing, raping, dacoity are going on in a bumper scale. I do not want to have the experience of being mugged by my own countrymen while on visit. That would shatter my dream about my country. I would not be able to bear that."

I said, "You don't have to. We have solved all our problems. At least, the national ones."

She was amazed, "How did you do it? Is it Majic?"

I said, "No, by sheer foresight, sincerity and determination of our leaders."

Then I told her the story. A story of success — how our leaders ultimately felt the pain and agony of the people. They decided to look beyond themselves and to keep the promise they made of the citizen to make a *Sonar Bangla*. They wished earnestly, tried sincerely and honestly and acted with vision. That is the formula. And when I said leaders, they are leaders. Not only the political leaders in power, political leaders in opposition, social workers, leaders of all Government Employees' Association, financial institutions, mass media, journalists and

leaders from all walks of life. They decided to unite the nation. Keeping their own interests behind, they were united on one issue — development of Bangladesh. It got the priority over all other issues. They understood that the people are the ultimate strength of a nation. If they cannot get pure water to drink, get a proper meal, breathe unpolluted air, sleep in peace because of one of the smallest creatures on earth and other menaces, how can anybody expect them to work? And for what and for whom would they work?

So it is evident that our next generation is frustrated because of some adult's irresponsible behaviour — parents could not show their faces to the children who had to suffer a lot because of the leaking out of exam question papers. Certainly it was done for money by some villains. We have been demanding capital punishment for acid throwing, rapes and killings. What punishment these people are supposed to get for killing? The whole system of education which is very close to breakdown is a big question to our conscience. We have to go to foreign countries for proper medical treatment. Husbands of my three friends died of heart failure due to maltreatment and lack of treatment within a period of one month! Many had to go to Singapore for treatment. We are ready to do that for a better future. We are ready to be in the darkness for some time for giving light to good national cause. But we would not be willing to get unequal share in anything which we deserve to get. Outright, we would not be willing to sacrifice our children's education which is the first step of moving forward, and it would be a tragedy for the nation if we do that. We do not want to fall behind because of the selfishness, lack of foresightedness of our leaders who like to shift their responsibilities on each other's shoulder. By that way they were keeping us in darkness.

Suddenly, I woke up from my sleep. Everything around me is dark. I only felt the heat and darkness. Again, the electricity (light) is gone. But I will be waiting patiently for it to return.

Anyway things are changing now. By the grace of Almighty Allah, good sense seem to pre-

To the Editor...

Load-shedding

Sir, The merciless load-shedding by the grace of the so-called PDB is critically felt by the people of the Chandaon residential area, Chittagong. This situation aggravated further for last one year when the AL government came to power. I am aware that it is not the fault of the government. But what the steps the AL government is taking are not clear to us (people of Chandaon R/A) or anybody. Sometimes, we feel that the people of