

Our Culture of Delay

In our country, the process of decision-making is so long and arduous that finally, the decision tends to achieve very little...

If you are on time for a dinner at eight in the evening then most likely, you will cause an embarrassment to the host and the hostess...

It is the future of our next generation. But the delay in our daily life — sometimes for the selfish gains of certain individuals — must be fought...

It seems that the principle of avoiding the problem has now become so rampant that files are simply moving in circle and everybody is avoiding everybody else...

Talking Business at OIC

Depending upon what is targeted to be achieved, the international meets of heads of governments and states come in as many different kinds as the participants themselves are...

We are delighted that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's address yesterday at the OIC extraordinary summit in Islamabad steered clear of that routine and not a word of that was articulated without being meant...

This is a businesslike approach, hardly needing to be padded up by community sentiments. The same could be said of the projected emergence of the D-8...

What all this should mean is that Bangladesh is reaching out to resources that is not in her and opening herself up for partnering in progress with the states to the fore...

After our Ganges water accord with India, this is the second biggest news of salubrious neighbourly connotation we seem happily poised to welcome...

But hardly has this been any proverbial Midas touch. While the political changes in both India and Bangladesh proved conducive to a positively holistic rethinking on the issue...

The two-legged but essentially co-related negotiations conducted by the National Committee with the political wing of the Shantibahini and their refugee welfare wing bore testimony to the efficacy of dialogue as a powerful means to solve difficult problems...

Let us be prepared to accord an emotional welcome to the home-coming of our citizens after so many years of separation from us.

This is the latest in youth degeneracy and, therefore, the worst of its kind. A group of youths abducting a lady college teacher at Shibpur in Brahmanbaria, rescue efforts of the village folks ended on a patch of field...

Their taking the law into their own hands would draw a flak no doubt, but it has admittedly brought into a sharper focus the combined failure of the local law and order machinery and community level leadership...



Window on Asia Shahed Latif

The share market calls for decision on time and no Committee can deliver the desired results...

Delay does not seem to affect us all since we are so used to delay in practically all aspects of our life...

The traffic congestion of Dhaka has added a new dimension of delay to our daily life. Banking hours will be over before you can reach the place and you have to go without cash...

We remain backward and tend to get ever more primitive. The delay in the education sector used to be phenomenal. The University examinations got so far out of time that sessions of one year might start next year and a three-year course run into four or more...

Things have improved in the recent past but who knows. The hartal session has started and since politics take precedence over anything else in this country, delays may gain ground once again. We must be vigilant...

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ME Peace Process in Deep Crisis — Danger of Conflict Looms Large

The protests in Bethlehem, Hebron and other parts of West Bank are gradually turning violent. The situation may soon go out of control. Netanyahu is blaming Arafat for inciting violence. Netanyahu does not realise that the violence has erupted because of his action...

PRIME Minister Netanyahu bulldozed Arab protests and international opinion by sending the bulldozers in the hill top of Jabal Abu Ghueim — Har Homa (in Hebrew) — East Jerusalem to break grounds for building 6500 new Jewish settlements. There were widespread international condemnations...

It could remain aloof if the very lives of all Arabs and Israelis and their future were not fast sliding towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster. Your course of actions seem bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve...

events are unfolding and with the history of intense animosity between these distant cousins, it looks ominous. Unfortunately, the peace process has often been facing crisis primarily because of series of bad actions by the Israeli government and consequent reactions of the Palestinians and particularly of Hamas, often with violence...

Although Oslo Peace Accord stipulates status quo of Jerusalem until final status of Jerusalem and West Bank is determined, Netanyahu government unilaterally decided to build the new Jewish homes in Arab East Jerusalem which means changes in the present physical structure of Jerusalem...

King Hussein's letter clearly showed how angry he was over the issue. But the anger at the common men level has apparently reached its peak. This was reflected when two days after King Hussein's letter to Netanyahu a Jordanian soldier erupted his automatic rifle on a group of Israeli school girls killing seven and wounding another six when they visited 'Island of Peace' — on Yarmouk river, north of Jordan, which Jordan recovered from Israel...

Under 1994 peace agreement. Unfortunately, the island has now turned to be an island of death. This was a senseless mass murder. The anger of Jordanians and more so of Palestinians over Israelis is understandable but the Jordanian soldier delivered this in an uncivilized and savage manner on wrong targets — the innocent school girls...



Spotlight on Middle East Muslehuddin Ahmad

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President Arafat is faced with serious crisis due to Netanyahu's action as protests have both from Palestinian public including Hamas and his own cabinet are fast gathering momentum. An unidentified suicide bomber entered a cafe in Tel-Aviv on March 22 and blew himself up along with three Israelis and also wounding another two dozen men, women and children. President Arafat called up Israeli President and expressed his condemnation over the bombing and condolences to the affected families. He did not call up Netanyahu...

The protests in Bethlehem, Hebron and other parts of West Bank are gradually turning violent. The situation may soon go out of control. Netanyahu is blaming Arafat for inciting violence. Netanyahu does not realise that the violence has erupted because of his action and his own Intelligence Chief already warned him about this. Hamas, which was kept under control, has started taking advantage of the situation. It has virtually forced Arafat to release Hamas commander Ibrahim Muqadmeh who was in Gaza jail for his alleged terrorist activities. Netanyahu became very angry over the release of Hamas leader. Total distrust between Israelis and Palestinians prevail. The peace process has come to a grinding halt. Though Arafat appears disturbed and exhausted he has, so far, maintained a calm posture. He has asked Palestinians to shun violence. This means Arafat does not want the situation to go totally out of control. But would he succeed? As the

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The repeated vetoes gave clear signals to Netanyahu that he could go ahead; the private advice or request of the Secretary of State Albright to Netanyahu to postpone the decision was seen by Netanyahu as a pure public relation exercise and therefore, Netanyahu could merrily ignore Albright's request. The earlier meeting of President Clinton with President Arafat and President Clinton's displeasure over new Jewish settlement did not have even slightest effect on Netanyahu and his government. The US has itself relegated its own position to this level because of such self defeating policies. At least abstention in the UN and Security Council resolutions could send signal to Netanyahu that the US disfavoured settlements and this could maintain better image of the US in the eyes of the Arabs.

As the events are unfolding, at least temporary postponement of the settlement decision could have averted the present crisis. Israel could certainly build houses later after the final status of Jerusalem was determined. Alternatively, Israel could have at least commenced negotiations on Jerusalem, showed its bonafide intention to settle the issues amicably and in the process negotiated the issue of new settlements at a site acceptable to both. This was a unilateral decision on the part of Netanyahu's government to build homes on somebody else's land on the philosophy of Israelis' exclusive biblical ownership which has all along been challenged by the Arabs. Arabs were not planted in East Jerusalem yesterday by any foreign power. They have been there for thousands of years. Therefore, if the idea of undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel persists, the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem is bound to fail. East Jerusalem remains Arab but some border adjustments acceptable to both seem to be the only answer.

Human Rights in India: Need for a Fresh Look

T Ananthachari writes from New Delhi

HUMAN Rights issues, especially in the field of civil rights, have been at the centre stage even as India was making all-out efforts to grapple with unprecedented terrorism in Punjab and militancy in J&K. Many of the northeastern States have also been facing practical problems in preserving Human Rights in the face of determined offensives by insurgents. Luckily, since recently, Punjab is settling down to an era of peace following the revival of traditional and democratic political activities. It is hoped that J&K which has recently gone through Assembly elections leading to the installation of an elected government would also settle down to a peaceful and purposeful administration...

Statistics show that since 1947 there has been phenomenal rise in terrorist activities — estimated to be 65414 violent acts in the various parts of the world, working out to an average of over 4 every day over the last 50 years continuously. As far as India is concerned it figured in the top 5 terrorist-affected countries in 1993, among the top 8 in 1994 and among the top 2 in 1995, clearly indicating how serious the problem of terrorism and violence is in India. Further, such violent acts have sought to disintegrate India which has cast a special responsibility on the security forces...

fighting a war with an external enemy) that many a controversy has arisen about Human Rights violations. There is no doubt that, given the best of intentions, the security forces do violate Human Rights requirements on occasions. While some security forces have accepted this fact and taken remedial measures, some others have tried to wish away the same. We have reached a situation in our country where it has become routine and common to call the central forces, including the Army, to assist in the maintenance of internal law and order. Gone are the days when such forces were called out occasionally and were deployed for very brief periods. Instead, we have got used to their deployment for years together and in context of very intimate civilian surroundings. When forces like the BSF and the Army, who are trained for altogether different responsibilities are continuously deployed in the midst of densely populated civilian areas, the forces have no option but to realise that the public expect them, and rightly so, to adhere to the broad legal framework and what is more, be accountable in their eyes...

These developments provide the right and opportune moment for the security forces and the government concerned to take stock, introspect and absorb the lessons learnt in the course of operations, particularly from 1984 onwards. Discussions on a sensitive issue like Human Rights vis-a-vis security forces, have often tended to result in strong criticism (partly justified and partly unjustified) of the security forces as well as Human Rights activists (including well-known NGOs). The fact is that the security forces have a very difficult and delicate task to perform and the NGOs a very desirable and useful role to adorn...

All along, Human Rights have been sought to be viewed in the legal context and very little has been done to review and re-define Human Rights as a moral concept or political concept in the larger context of socio-political-military environment. Besides the use of increasingly lethal weapons, explosives and remote control devices, use of mercenaries (in many cases, foreign), has further complicated an even otherwise complex situation. These are some of the issues which have emerged over the years and these need careful, greater and organised debate. There is no doubt an emerging need for taking a fresh look at what Human Rights would and should mean in a given context, particularly with special reference to the aspects mentioned earlier...

Therefore, there is no use for the central forces, including the Army to come up with excuses and explanations to justify special considerations in regard to their operations. There should be no doubt proper appreciation of the role of forces like the BSF and the Army, it is extremely important and necessary for such forces to redefine the procedures to be followed by them while assisting the local civil authorities. Similarly, there should be far greater transparency and openness in convincing the public in regard to their accountability of the former, particularly where public complaints are involved. Instead, if forces like the Army insist on extending the special protection available to them in the context of war to even internal law and order situations, there will be no escape from facing complaints from the public of violation of Human Rights...

It is extraordinary to realise that even now there is a strong dichotomy in the overall attitude of the people to the conflicting aspects of the Human Rights problem. There is no doubt that there are a number of NGOs and other enlightened individuals who can brook no compromises in the protection and preservation of Human Rights. At the same time, there are many including equally enlightened individuals from all walks of life, who would like to tone down the rigour of Human Rights in the specific context of the enormous challenges faced by the security forces in dealing with groups and individuals who do not hesitate to resort to violent means of the extreme description. It is often brought home by them that there is preponderance of evidence of 'increasing combatisation of in-

creasingly filled and the new government will not suddenly be denied of the expertise and services of a large number of well-trained officers. In fact, in many cases, extensions are being given, so why not generalise it and make the limit 60 for all especially in view of the promise made earlier in this regard by the present PM? There is no doubt that with the health standard and longevity we have now, public servants can serve very well up to 60 years and beyond even. Those who protest will only see a few years from now that they can perform better even up to 65!

Age limit in public service Sir, There has been a debate for quite some time as to whether to extend the age limit of public servants to 60 years from 57 years. Some are even suggesting it to be extended to 65 years as is already done in the case of university teachers. Those who oppose seem to immediately get their promotions but what about the extended service tenure with so many prospects that would otherwise await them? Besides, even if it is extended up to 60 years, there would be many retirements, as those already in different extended terms will reach the age of 60. There is no doubt that the government needs the services of officers/staff with long experience and as such the senior-most ones are generally those who can serve much better. In that case, the vacuum could be

To the Editor...

gradually filled and the new government will not suddenly be denied of the expertise and services of a large number of well-trained officers. In fact, in many cases, extensions are being given, so why not generalise it and make the limit 60 for all especially in view of the promise made earlier in this regard by the present PM? There is no doubt that with the health standard and longevity we have now, public servants can serve very well up to 60 years and beyond even. Those who protest will only see a few years from now that they can perform better even up to 65!

News headline Sir, The caption, title or heading of a news item is very much important for attracting the readers' attention. For instance, recently while I was go-

ing through a national English daily, my attention was drawn to a news heading — "PSC signed with UMC on exploring oil in block 22". At first sight I thought, PSC should be the abbreviation of 'Public Service Commission' but why would PSC have such an agreement? Then quickly I read the news. Actually it was reported under the above caption that a production sharing contract was signed. Interestingly, the abbreviation, PSC was not written in parenthesis after 'production sharing contract'. One would agree with me that the abbreviation under reference is not common but it was still used in the caption of the news, probably to make it prominent. Well, the purpose of writing this letter is to draw the attention of the professionals concerned.