

Another Test of Will

The World Bank's stipulation of a deadline that borrowers refund their loans within three months...

The business leaders and captains of industry approached the Finance Minister for a waiver on the World Bank stipulation in view of disruptions in their production and delivery schedules...

Most importantly, their bona fides in the entire recovery exercise will be proved if they can display adequate political will to take legal actions against recalcitrant big loan defaulters...

Saving Dhaka

That Dhaka, by filling its water bodies and open spaces and raising high-risers endlessly, was racing towards dire days, has been universal knowledge for quite some time...

Now that the Prime Minister has very clearly sided with those that want the city to live and not to be milked to death by way of yielding profits to realtors...

Has the Prime Minister, by any chance, noticed that the Dhakaites do not take pride in their city. How can they? It is, as at present, not really a city...

A master plan exists for the city's all round development with an eye to the future. The shelf-bound document needs to be dusted and re-read for incorporation of any changes needed to make the metropolis into modern, vibrant megalopolis of the 21st century.

To Curb the Crime Rate

Absence of social resistance has been at the heart of the alarming rise in the crime rate. Tuesday's discussion on crime and terrorism in the society, organised by some Rotary clubs of the city...

Thirty per cent of the crimes in urban areas, as a former police chief cited, are not reported to the law enforcers. Now this is a point to ponder over. A great part of this figure comprises women and children...

It is not merely social sensitivity that we are lacking in. We are badly short of any sense of social responsibility also. Our concern for individual interest and security turned us into little pockets of foolishly smug and criminally irresponsible groups...

Escalating Tensions in South Asia: Call for Sanity and Rationalism

The recent pronouncements of Indian government's Kashmir policy in the context of its newly-acquired military muscles obviously has escalated the regional tensions.

SOUTH Asia is once again in the grip of acute anxiety and apprehensions about possible armed conflicts between India and Pakistan. Ever since India's five underground nuclear explosions on May 11 and 13...

In response to Prime Minister Bajpayee's assertion that India would take a 'proactive' stance on Kashmir to deal with alleged Pakistan-sponsored guerrilla Kashmiri insurgency...

He went on to label it as India's nuclear blackmailing of Pakistan in giving up its claim on Kashmir. Such misadventure, he warned, would be met with a resolute response linking it to possible nuclear testing by Pakistan.

Rhetoric aside, one now worries about the consequences newly added nuclear dimension in India-Pakistan's conflicts, especially in the given unforgiving political climate of the region...

Bangladesh, for example, is worried about the possible radioactive fallout of India's nuclear tests in its already-polluted atmosphere...

Most importantly, their bona fides in the entire recovery exercise will be proved if they can display adequate political will to take legal actions against recalcitrant big loan defaulters...

than military ones.

Kashmir has long been cited as the root cause of Indo-Pakistan conflicts. Wars, UN interventions, dialogue, nothing seemed to work, bringing about a solution since first Indo-Pakistan war flared up over it in 1948...

The talk of a military solution of Kashmir, which symbolizes the continuous tension between the two, has been unofficially stated by the General Secretary of BJP during the last parliamentary election campaign...

As such the recent pronouncements of Indian government's Kashmir policy in the context of its newly-acquired military muscles obviously has escalated the regional tensions...

There had been hopes that their relations would be stabilized and war over outstanding territorial issues would be a thing of the past. This is not to say that open armed conflicts between the two were completely ruled out...

successful use of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in various regions of the world like Asia-Pacific, South America and Middle East, began adopting a number of CBMs to reduce tensions, avert intended escalation or war...



Dilara Chowdhury

The hair-trigger situation during the Brassstack exercise of 1966-87 and near nuclear confrontations of 1990 only demonstrated that small steps taken could at best minimize tensions but could not promote political reconciliation...

much the part of the sub-continental scenario. The net result is a dangerous nuclear arms race in the region. That race may not be as deplorable as it was between the two super-powers during the cold war...

go ahead and do it? But what would be the consequences of such policy options?

First, the reactions from Pakistan. Islamabad has demonstrated commendable restraint following India's recent nuclear explosion even in the face of tremendous domestic pressures...

The country feels seriously threatened by New Delhi's aggressive mood. And if no steps are taken whether it is nuclear explosions or some sort of security guarantee from the major powers...

Second, maintaining effective nuclear deterrence like that of the super-powers require sophisticated second strike capability and command and control system...

protected environment, sudden opening up can do more harm than good. It is like discontinuing the feeder to the bottled-baby suddenly with the expectation of the baby's taking the solid food...

Besides, there are also other valuable suggestions put forward by different bodies/forum. Some of these are: elimination of infrastructure development surcharge, changing the methodology of tariff value calculation, exemption of income tax from exports...

both the super-powers experienced nuclear disasters throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. Without such developed procedures, one wonders what would be rate of such accidents or disaster in South Asia?

Third, BJP's expectations that India's successful testing multiple-use warheads have given them an edge, since they can be used in low intensity conflicts, and counter alleged 'proxy war' on Indian soil...

Isn't it a fact that the new generation of Kashmiris have become alienated from Indian polity? In that case should not the solution be a political rather a military one? After all if military solution could be imposed on alienated group of people...

Today, conflict resolutions, especially ethno-religious ones, are not feasible without having detailed and a protracted negotiation among the contending parties...

Actually any such actions would not only heighten, in the worse scenario case, the risk of a nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan inflicting unimaginable destruction on both...

which is being torn by its ethnic conflicts. In this regard has to be very seriously considered by the decision-makers in New Delhi. And in the context of non-state actors' increasing involvement in Kashmir conflict...

It is, thus, sanguine for both India and Pakistan, and in the present situation, more so for India to use wisdom. It must be internalized by both that avoidance of war and unintended escalation is mutually beneficial...

The realization should be there that only such measures can better serve their mutual national interests. After all security both India and Pakistan, in the long run, rest with the economic development of the region...

Would not the leaderships have the far-sightedness to realize that in a region where brutal poverty, hunger, disease still stalk millions, where basic human dignity is sadly lacking, and where women spend their entire lives in virtual servitude, a recourse to nuclear path tantamount to near insanity?

The regular column Currents and Crosscurrents by MM Rezaul Karim could not be published today under unavoidable circumstances. It will, however, appear next Thursday.

Budget 1998-99

Will it be Up to the Expectation?

by M Abul Kalam Mazumdar

Any developing country to grow, must have very clear cut longer term policy pronouncements so that it can give a clear direction to the investors and entrepreneurs based on which they can chalk out their own long and medium term investment plans.

In a country like Bangladesh where long-term plans are mere "plans", the budget plays key role for economic development by focusing on the development priorities in different industrial, commercial and basic infrastructure sectors...

As is the budget through which most people of the society (i.e. industrialists, professionals, service holders and farmers) expect some positive indication from the government on annual basis...

He mentioned, "Budget is a compromise document between good and bad proposals". Any compromise between bad and good can never act as objective development strategy of a government...

The national budget lacks long-term persistent policy or continuity of a policy. It has also limited attraction for the common people...

As has been the past, be it within the same government's period or not, the policies changed so frequently that the investors within a short span of one or two years after deciding or starting the investment in a particular industry or venture discovered that the venture is no longer viable/prospective...

It is encouraging to observe that gradually more and more awareness is being created regarding the budget. Over the last few months different socio-political, business and professional organisations have come up with their suggestions/recommendations on the budget...

Instead, quantity has become the identity of the government resulting in increased expenditure day by day. As has been observed last year, in view of shortfall of revenue collection and increase in expenditure, the government had to borrow from the banking system which ultimately affected the banks' lending for the industrial sector...

enough to let it happen even if it is just this once.

Did BUET authority win? No, because they are in the process of losing a department and because their powerful academic council has been declared to have taken an incorrect decision by none other than the Chancellor herself...

Who really won at BUET? Sir, Big events often take place as a result of reactions to minor incidents. It was the shooting of a prince at Sarajevo, a relatively minor incident, that eventually led to the first world war...

Who is or who are responsible for all these evils? In fact we are all directly or indirectly responsible for the present-day situation. There is no justification to raise finger towards any third person or to blame others...

noticeable, but we are indisposed in the present and cannot properly plan the future. Why is it so difficult to please the Bengalees? In West Bengal (India) how one regime could be tolerated for nearly one generation?

We are lazy and famous for adda-baazi, once the basic necessities of life are met. (The Malays also like to relax and take life easy, which partly explain the import of labour).

Our leaders have to face the challenge of concentrating the public vision on the future — improve your own lot; don't be a victim of the centuries of past glory.

Wistful thinking should be 'banned'! How? A Critic Dhaka.

Prof Abdur Razzak Sir, We appreciate your editorial on ailing Professor Razzak (The Daily Star, 5 April).

Indeed since 1940s Prof Razzak has inspired many of his students and admirers in the pursuit of knowledge in a proactive sense as also, as you say, 'iconoclastic' and 'incisive' thinking.

Abdul Haq Chowdhury Savar, Dhaka.

The personality bug Sir, The government (small g) has announced well in advance 'massive' preparations in the offing to 'celebrate' the anniversaries of Nazrul and Tagore in May...

One philosophical question arises: why we Bengalees have such a profound complex for ceremonial, anniversaries and living with the past?

Of course our past culture is

To the Editor...

We all are responsible

Sir, There is a plethora of crimes, violence, hi-jacking, illegal toll collection, violation of traffic rules, traffic jams, smuggling, corruption and irregularities in government offices and public sector corporations, erratic electric supply and load shedding, price hike of essential goods and commodities, foreign loans and deteriorating law and order situation all over the country...

Who is or who are responsible for all these evils? In fact we are all directly or indirectly responsible for the present-day situation.

There is no justification to raise finger towards any third person or to blame others. Why don't we indiscriminately blame ourselves individually, rectify ourselves and move in the right direction?

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Tender for 'radio station'

Sir, This refers to the advertisement of the Ministry of I&B calling for tenders for private operation of 'radio stations'. The term is vague and non-technical. There are many types of 'radio stations' used by various agencies, for different purposes such as transmission, reception, communication, data, broadcasting audio programmes in different bands, telephony, LAN etc.

It is regrettable that accuracy and precision are missing in the general announcement. There should be at least one Engineering Advisor attached to the Ministry to abide by ITU terms.

An Observer Dhaka.

Who really won at BUET?

Sir, Big events often take place as a result of reactions to minor incidents. It was the shooting of a prince at Sarajevo, a relatively minor incident, that eventually led to the first world war. The use of fat from pigs in ammunition led to the great Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. Was Edward VIII coerced into the throne of England? Carefully foreseen reactions to apparently minor incidents have often led to the successful achievement of a long cherished ambition.

One can take the example of the recent incidents at BUET. The admission test to be one example where a relatively small matter of minor significance could lead to big results. With the intervention of the Prime Minister it would seem that the matter has been solved or the end reached.

But one may ask the question, who won? Did architecture win? No, because according to the architects a wrong admission test will actually take place only because a decision has been taken and the power behind the decision is strong

OPINION Soothsayer's Telephone Development

A Husnain

Something is seriously wrong in the kingdom of the country's Telecom Authority. The waiting and existing users have been fed continuously tall and juicy stories and statistics on the rapid development of the telecommunications system in the country, especially the quick availability of cheap telephones for the middle-class homes and small offices...

National policy guidelines are not being explained to the public, except for the terse announcement that the national telecom policy is ready or released. There is one basic news item: the exchanges are being digitalised!

The policy may be discussed at press conference and seminars. Let us not talk about the non-deliberations in the Parliament. For example, has the government decided on the future policy on wire and wireless systems? What is the policy on WLL? When international standards are being drafted, the proprietary standards in the marketplace compete for de facto advantage. How the government is looking at this type of scenario, which is common these days when technology is chasing application?

The same type of procrastination is going on in the energy and power sectors. The reason is not far to seek — there is money in these sectors, and the vested interests must be very active. The Prime Minister had to take over one sector herself (she should be free for more visionary concepts).

The public can get better and quicker telecom services once the policy guideline is put on the rail and the guard blows the whistle and waves the flag to proceed full speed ahead. Where is the all-clear?