

Let Long March be Peaceful

Just a day is left before BNP's planned 'long march' commences from the capital city. Both the opposition and government camps appear to be in an intensely animated state.

Experience tells us that more often than not these prior commitments to law and order and to democratic rights get embroiled in violent conflicts.

We are apprehensive that the fact that the AL has called for peace procession and rallies on the same day may just create a recipe for skirmish that is eminently avoidable.

Let the history of long march remain a peaceful medium to lodge protest.

Indo-Pak Talks in Sight?

For the first time in 50 years, arch rivals India and Pakistan find themselves in similar straits having some notes to exchange against the backdrop of their nuclear tests.

So, they are in the same boat — in an extremely limited sense though — insofar as their attitude to the exclusivity of nuclear possessions by the Big Five goes.

But more cogent here seems to be the fact that with their nuclearisation and the acquisition of mutual deterrence capability India and Pakistan are moving closer to a significant dialogue than ever before.

Ombudsman

We are then going to get our long-promised Ombudsman. And soon! This is one good thing to happen to the nation that should be well received by all quarters.

The office originating at the beginning of the nineteenth century in Sweden has so far been introduced in not more than a dozen states and is defined by the Britannica as a legislative commissioner for investigating citizens' complaints of bureaucratic abuse.

The nations that have this institution differ in important areas on the charge the ombudsman is put to as also how he or she would discharge the duty. Much will depend on this.

Three names have come up for the job. All of them former judges of the highest palace of justice in the land. The society will look for the fairest man in the nation to man the post.

The office will be as good as it does. The government's performance is important as this institution will be a kind of limiting factor for it.

South Asia's Nuclear Passions

Both India and Pakistan may be gloating and strutting on the centre stage for a time while their teeming millions will continue to remain steeped in hunger, disease and ignorance.

HINDU India can not escape the consequence of its medieval defeats however much it might try and Indian Islam cannot overcome the consequence of the failure of its mission of conquests in India whatever it might do.

The symbols were vivid also earlier when India targeted Pakistan with Prithvi, her Pakistan-specific tactical missile presumably named after Prithvi Raj Chauhan who gave tough resistance to Muslim invaders from the north-west and Pakistan tested 'Ghauri' — her intermediate range missile named after Shahabuddin Ghauri who finally defeated the Hindu hero during the medieval period.

At the core of the current crisis is however a paranoid anxiety of both India and Pakistan over the insecurities vis-a-vis their perceived adversaries.

Pakistan remained obsessed with an Indian threat right from its inception while India also developed a security panic after her defeat in 1962 Sino-Indian border war.

Although India remained mired in her insecurity vis-a-vis China there is nothing substantial to vindicate India's threat perception. China, in the meantime, warmed up with Pakistan which could have been the product of China's growing isolation at the height of cold war.

In fact, Rajiv Gandhi's ground breaking journey to

Beijing in 1988 when Deng Xiaoping fervently sought Indian cooperation to make 21st the Asian century had been a watershed in Sino-Indian relations after 1962.

Even George Fernandes, India's defence minister said in one of his recent statements that 'relation between the two countries, the largest in Asia, improved over the years'.

On the contrary, China has always been cautious enough not to be physically involved in Indo-Pakistan stand-off. Both during 1965 and 1971 wars no Chinese help arrived much to the disappointment of the Pak-

istanis who desperately expected China's intervention in Pakistan's favour. Even on crucial Kashmir question China maintained a safe distance and never offered an international role in resolving the issue.

Likewise the Pakistani perception of India's threat also had been, to start with, bizarre as far as the gap between the real and perceived threat was concerned.

Justification was rather archaic when a military scholar in Pakistan wanted to regard Pakistan as the successors of the Muslim rulers of India who in spite of being a minority ruled over a large population of Hindus in the subcontinent.

In the aftermath of 1971 Indo-Pakistan war Pakistan clearly lost the arms race she herself initiated and took recourse to a dangerous option by launching in 1972 her nuclear programme with exclusive purpose of making a bomb well before India exploded her nuclear device in 1974.

Kashmir issue which was almost dead after Shimla agreement has been claimed by the Pakistanis to be at the core of Indo-Pakistan dispute. But can the issue be resolved by an armed conflict which was tried by her in the past — let alone

the use of bomb to resolve it. All conflicts in the history had their own peculiar dynamics which drove them towards certain consequence. No nation can shape those dynamics to its own design.

The security outcries of both India and Pakistan are there only to conceal their deep seated hatred for each other. No amount of security measures — not even the nuclear bomb can give them a sense of security.

Neither can they provide them an international respectability. The world community remains unimpressed by them even with their possession of nuclear device. It does not automatically catapult them to the apex club of world powers. Even a non-nuclear weapon state like Japan or Germany wield greater power and carry more weight in global management.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

trade with Hong Kong it further rises to close to \$5 bn now. Although this trade volume between the two most populous countries of the world may be considered small and pace of progress of the dialogue slow and straight-jacketed there has seldom been a security challenge to India from China after 1962.

On the contrary, China has always been cautious enough not to be physically involved in Indo-Pakistan stand-off. Both during 1965 and 1971 wars no Chinese help arrived much to the disappointment of the Pak-

seek Chinese blessing for a retaliatory blast, it returned 'empty handed'. Given this background, an Indian outcry of Chinese threat had not only been preposterous but cruel. A Pakistani threat for India is even more ridiculous.

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OPINION

Let Us Rise to the Occasion and Save BUET

Dr. A.K.M.A. Quader

BUET crisis in the past two weeks has hit hard the newspaper stand. News items, editorials, commentaries, articles and the letters etc. concerning the crisis and continuing impasse have been published in the dailies as well as in the periodicals.

Who did provoke the education minister to delve in the academic matters of BUET regarding the admission test on the ground that HSC arts background students would not be eligible for architecture programme?

Why did the education minister act on the copy of the letter of December 9, 1997 addressed to VC, BUET written by the teachers of the architecture department regarding admission test?

Why did VC and the Chancellor on February 18, 1998 and appraise her about the external interference in matters related to admission test?

Why did the fifteen architecture teachers fail to honor the agreement reached with the education minister on March 10, 1998?

Why did the fifteen architecture teachers resign on March 15 under joint signature after reaching such an agreement?

Why did the education minister take it upon him to warrant that acts of academic and administrative indiscipline would not be investigated into against some of these teachers? These were unrelated with the admission test. The syndicate and academic council instituted these investigations.

Why did the syndicate issue ultimatum to the teachers of the architecture department for submitting examination grades by 12.00 p.m. on February 26 at the latest? The last date for handing over the grades was February 12. Except for the architecture students, all other students were being issued grades from February 25.

Why did the education minister refuse to meet the odd

sixty teachers of BUET at VC's bungalow on March 21? This meeting was requested by the minister himself and scheduled to start at 3.30 p.m.

When some of the fifteen architecture teachers had been carrying on discussion with the Chancellor in his office on March 23, why did Mr. Shamsul Wares appear before the sub-judge praying for injunction to stop the admission test scheduled on March 28? Is it not an act of mistrust if not treachery? Did these teachers plan to give the Chancellor a surprise free ride full of embarrassment? Does she deserve that at all? Had the injunction been granted (in fact BUET was served a show cause notice by the same court to be replied on March 28. Had it not been a weekly holiday, things could be really bitter on the day of the examination if the court would have resumed). The Chancellor would have found herself sadly law abiding fighting for vacating the injunction in the court along with BUET.

Did these thirteen teachers including one who had been on leave for higher study tell any one what was written in their long five page joint withdrawal letter? Out of the original fifteen teachers, two submitted separate withdrawal letters. The architecture department has now thirteen teachers working of which six are professors.

Can't the people resign if they do not like to continue their employment? Can't the employer accept the resignations when they're submitted?

Why don't these thirteen teachers go to the court and seek justice? Or why don't they appeal to the lawful authority to get justice?

How did these thirteen teachers exploit their accesses to high places and how did they manage to keep a magic spell upon them to pursue their ego at the expense of the credibility and accountability of government and institution?

Why did some of these thirteen teachers break confidentiality regarding their assignment related to the admission test? It never happened in the history of BUET admission test or any examination affair.

What do these thirteen teachers stand for? What do the remaining more than three hundred teachers believe in and stand for? And so forth.

If such people are pampered and receive legal approval of their conduct like Golam Azami, certain people like the two presidential candidates of 1991 would touch their holy feet seeking divine blessings in their missions. We can hardly afford it any longer. These are better not cited nor endorsed.

Enough time has elapsed to assess the realities at BUET by

everyone who matters here. None is vanquished and none is victim. The nation has learnt a lesson at a very high price. Let us now make an earnest effort to resolve the impasse. As a human being we are not infallible. We can misjudge the situation and mood. It is our realization that our efforts were misdirected. We can now win over our mutual misunderstanding, loss of confidence and mistrust. The Chancellor has every reason to be sad with BUET today but it is our right upon her as citizens to urge for considering our earnest request to find one good reason to lead this premier institution. We have the reasons to believe that she has the ability and courage to set things right and lead us to work with her with a deep sense of togetherness and belongingness for BUET. From now onward BUET on its own can alone bring back academic and administrative normalcy immediately if everyone concerned shall honour and abide by the academic discipline and administrative rules and regulations. The scar within BUET is too deep to be removed too soon with any kind of cosmetic surgery. The students belonging to all the five faculties must return to their classes and let them wait for the completion of all the process before a decision is reached about these thirteen teachers. No avenue shall remain untapped to preserve the lawful rights, but everyone is to have the patience to permit the process to be completed. We must respond to this wake-up call by forgiving what happened recently.

If the feelings of some of those who matter in the affairs of BUET are that they have been unjustly undermined and treated, let there be a judicial fact finding committee headed by a sitting judge of either Supreme Court or High Court to find — some of the following: — was there any miscarriage of justice? — was there any misadventure by any one? — was there any mishandling of the affairs within BUET? — was there any kind of personal vindication against one by another? — was there any immoral act by any one? — was there any motivated action to disable BUET?

Such an effort can certainly provide the people with fact and food for thought to find ways and means to avert crisis and impasse which now have engulfed BUET and may arise elsewhere in future. Let good sense prevail and let us make fresh pledge to commit ourselves to serve BUET in its best tradition. God willing, we shall win over the crisis without prejudice.

The writes is Professor of Chemical Engineering, BUET

Doing Away with Drugs

by Ekram Kabir and Chandra Shekhar Das

Drug problem is yet to strike roots in Bangladesh. We can wipe out the problem. But, as it has been said... we need an iron will to make sure that law is enforced.

WITH the alarming spread of drug abuse and addiction both in developing and developed countries, leaders and delegates from at least 30 countries met today at the UN headquarters where US President Bill Clinton kicks off a three-day (June 8-10) Special General Assembly Session on Drug Problem.

Proposed by Mexico, according to Dhaka UN Information Centre (UNIC), the special session will highlight the need for international cooperation against illegal drugs and related crimes. The session will focus on six main areas: precursor chemicals, amphetamine-type stimulants, judicial cooperation among member countries, money laundering, drug demand reduction and alternative development strategies for drug-producing countries.

The session is designed to assess the international drug problem and to develop a strategy for the 21st Century based on the principle of balancing supply- and demand-reduction efforts. Representatives from attending nations, including Bangladesh, will reaffirm their commitment against drug abuse with the aim to reduce global production and consumption of illicit drugs over the next 10 years.

The special session should be a turning point for the world to go forward with renewed energy on drug control. Pino Arlacchi, the executive director of the UNDCP (United Nations Drug Control Programme) was quoted to have said him.

According to "The participants will declare that demand reduction is 'an indispensable pillar in the global approach to counter the world drug problem', the first time that issue has been included in international drug control."

Arlacchi's concern is profound because governments have found that no country is immune to the drug problem and in the present-day world, no country can say: it is not my business. Every country is worried and willing to work with others. Internationally, UN estimates say, illegal drugs involve 200 million users and \$500,000 million a year, an amount that surpasses the GNP of most countries. The UNDCP

computes that annual illicit drug consumption involves 3 to 4 per cent of global population.

Now as far as Bangladesh is concerned, the problem here may not be as grave as it is in countries like Pakistan, Afghanistan, Colombia etc., but this social haemorrhage called "drug abuse" has crept into this country and has already clouded many souls and taken away many lives. This problem of drug abuse will not go away in the foreseeable future and the so-called war on drugs will remain a poor metaphor here because Bangladesh is still not a signatory to all the UN conventions and is a partner of all the sub-conferences.

The pet-sentences at round-tables and seminars that go around in Dhaka are that "no single approach or strategy can solve the drug-abuse problem", "concerted efforts are needed to control this menace" and the like. These sound hollow when one comes to know that there's no exact data of drug abusers and nobody seems to understand the connotation of the phrase "concerted effort" but keeps saying it while the country's youths go astray.

Why does Bangladesh sign all these conventions and charters if it can't back its own commitment in international fora with concrete, tangible deeds back home? Is it compelled to or advised to do so? Well, there seems to have developed a sub-culture of ineffectual grandiloquence in Bangladesh's involvement in international affairs.

This is typical Bangladesh. One can say an extension of the psychic geography of the local leadership. Their problem is they harp on things they don't believe. Theorists would say that is all about politics. May be. But this is essentially an age of change. Traditional beliefs and ideas are undergoing wholesale change around the world. There is hardly any room for idle fixe. In their mindless pursuit for ornamental in politics they have forgotten that politics is also about ensuring good governance and managerial efficiency.

Unfortunately that key element is missing in our leaders' deeds. Why can't our leaders in-

corporate issues like drug abuse, reproductive health or repression against women in their agenda? Why do they have to personally indulge in investigations against each other? Don't they have the wisdom to see that problems like poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, superstition are working in tandem to thwart Bangladesh's march ahead? Answer to the question as to why the crusade against drug abuse is yet to make any discernible impact has to be searched in the anomalous attitude of our leadership.

Although it is a global issue, the problem of drug abuse has to be fought locally. Once the local defences are in place unbreachably, global networking would remain there as a rather simple objective to attain. Although there have been suggestions to bolster the laws of the land in order to fight drug abuse, the real challenge seems to lie in their enforcement. Laws have to be enforced effectively and impartially. This calls for authorities' sincerity and conviction. We have reasons to believe that government is yet take the issue of drug abuse seriously when we hear that its Department of Narcotics Control is severely ill equipped. How can it convince the world about his desire to fight drug abuse by keeping a vitally relevant department in disarray? Government has to show the way both in terms of increasing public awareness and ensuring enforcement of law.

Drug problem is yet to strike roots in Bangladesh. We can wipe out the problem. But as it has been said earlier we need an iron will to make sure that law is enforced. The liquor tragedy in Gaibandha is a classic example of law slack or no enforcement of law can lead to disaster. Besides, Bangladesh should seek genuine cross border cooperation through regional forum like SAARC to deal with the problem of trafficking. Because there have been signs in the recent times that Bangladesh is being increasingly seen more as useful geographical conduit for trafficking operations. Unlike our neighbour Myanmar drug problem is not a matter of legacy or tradition. The problem is surfacing. We can nip it in the bud provided we will.

To the Editor...

Distribution of RAJUK plots

Sir, It appears from the daily newspapers that the government has finally decided to build up a township called Purbachal with 6,000 acres of land in the city. This is indeed laudable, and I congratulate the authorities for their timely decision to implement such a project to ease the residential problem of the citizens.

However, I shall try to point out a very pertinent point which prohibited many a conscientious citizens last time (November-December, 1997) from applying for a plot of RAJUK land at Uttara, Gulshan and Banani. In the RAJUK prospectus, it was clearly mentioned that those having land or house/flat in the city would disqualify from applying for RAJUK land. This stipulation was simply appalling to many. There are now many families living in the city for over half a century or more and have jointly inherited from their forefathers a katha or two each or a house which can hardly be conveniently divided among 10 or 15 partners. There are other

problems also which only a jointly acquired partner knows.

Moreover, the situation will become worse when the same piece of jointly held property will be handed down to succeeding generations and this too not in a distant future. With no other land in the city of Dhaka, the once well-to-do families will thus be economically ruined.

I, therefore, sincerely appeal to the authorities concerned that individuals having less than 5 kathas of land in their own name (and even if jointly acquired, his portion is less than 5 kathas) should be permitted to apply in future for state-owned lands including that of RAJUK, and housing and settlement.

Dr A Z Mia 68, Azimpur Estate, Dhaka

"The worst victims"

Sir, Yes, we are the worst victims, who are studying in BUET. I am a Level-2, Term-1 student of Mechanical Engineering Department of BUET. I had a conception about this

university, that it is one of the best educational institutions in Bangladesh. But from this deadlock, we are afraid that it will not be able to maintain its fame, if this situation goes on. I think no one is considering this situation seriously — neither the Chancellor nor the VC or the teachers of BUET.

To me, all of them — the Chancellor, the VC and the teachers — should take proper steps to resolve this situation at BUET. We do not want to know who is responsible for this unbearable situation, we only want the immediate solution and justice.

The Chancellor will remain in her power, the teachers will be in their previous positions and the only sufferers will be the students, who will gain another session jam of some months.

So, Please! the Chancellor, the VC and the teachers — do bring an end to this situation in the university for our sake and help us from being frustrated and helpless.

A Student of BUET Pallabi, Mirpur, Dhaka