

Clinton Collage

From the soft-touching sing-song allusions to China by Pearl S. Buck and Edgar Snow through the apocalyptic Vietnam war and anti-imperialist decisions to discordant Tibet, Taiwan, Tiananmen Square and intellectual property rights it has been one long story of hate-love relationship between the USA and China.

The purpose of this editorial is to remain confined within the bilateral and global implications of Clinton's Odyssey. How the visit impacted on South Asia will be the subject matter of another editorial which we hope to publish shortly.

Beijing and Washington stand to gain hugely from the 47-point pact they have signed to create a large framework for enduring material cooperation. But to our mind the mutual learning and edification process set in motion by President Clinton's 'open forum' with the media, university students, and industry, trade and farm leaders was of immense benefit to both sides spiritually.

The US policy of engaging China stems from the seminal realisation that she is an emerging global economic power worth dealing with in every sense of the term. Politically, her vast demographic and strategic presence on the world map coupled with the nuclear prowess she has mastered endows her with a realpolitik clout that cannot be shrugged off either.

Let the Sino-US rapprochement-turned-partnership be not a political and strategic alliance of a kind that treats other world powers as adversaries. For that would mean the exact opposite of what the mankind expects to see after the end of cold war — peace and stability in the world.

For Harmony in the Hills

From Friday night's ugly incident created by some people, young and drunk, Rangamati has been a terrorised town. Several clashes have already taken place resulting in injuries to many and death to one street-dwelling mad woman.

It is gratifying to see that both police and army personnel have reacted with adequate measures to secure the town against any further spread of communal violence. The Deputy Commissioner has also met the community leaders initiating a process to defuse the situation.

It is very important for the administration as also for the community leaders that groups or individuals who think they stand to benefit from such internecine and violent conflict be identified and effectively isolated. A clear distinction must be made between those who want to fish in troubled waters and others who politically disagree with the treaty and want certain changes in it.

The war and all-out confrontation has been ended by the accord. But tinder-boxes remain in the towns or whenever there are concentrated populations. The situation calls for some unflagging vigilance and other positive social and cultural work to establish amity and non-confrontation as a way of life.

Sports at its Best

What a fascinating week of simultaneous assertion of old and new it has been! It would really call for strenuous search through record books to find out last when feats as dissimilar as that of debutant Croatia's emergence in world football and veteran tennis player Jana Novotna's twilight triumph coloured the imagination of sports buffs.

If Croatia was writing an ode to novelty, youth and new order in Lyon, across the English Channel, gritty Jana Novotna was making light of the elusive nature of success and bitterness of near misses on the green turf of Wimbledon. After having blown away her chances on two occasions before, Novotna made no mistake third time. In a game of younger people, the seasoned campaigner overcame the odds with sheer perseverance.

INDIAN politics looks no different from the Gulf countries where I spent five days recently. The BJP-led coalition is gasping for breath. The other parties, which were once fiercely opposed to one another, are trying to act jointly to see if Congress, not too strong itself, can provide health to the nation.

Will the BJP coalition last? This is the question which is posed as much here as back home. The Indian community here, one million strong, is largely from Kerala. Muslims are in a majority. They are the ones who keep India's flag flying and remit to their homes some \$50 million a year.

They have a soft corner for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee who they consider liberal. And they have applauded his assurance that a masjid at the disputed Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid site will not be built if the Supreme Court's verdict goes against

EVEN for a country used to rapid changes in its destiny, the months of May and June 1998 have at least equalled if not surpassed our past history of ups and downs. From the limits of despair on May 11 to the high point of euphoria on May 28 was a substantial change by any measure. We now begin July back in the throes of impending disaster, economic and political.

What Pakistan needs is damage control, urgently and relentlessly, the economy occupying pride of place. Whereas the imposition of emergency in the wake of the blast was necessary for a few days to exercise control over the foreign currency accounts in the first few days, the uncertain course followed thereafter, with directive after directive having contradictory instructions, has panicked the currency market.

To the Editor...

BB and DB Sir, In the independent Bangladesh, the dream for construction of a bridge over the river Jamuna was first dreamt by Bangabandhu who undertook active initiatives to translate his dream into reality following the long felt need of the people of the country.

Meanwhile one thing has struck my mind that most newspapers have reproduced reports/editorial from the 'Dainik Bangla' (DB) but unfortunately this historical newspaper is no more with us!

I am thinking if the AL government could do something to re-start publication of the Dainik Bangla again under the able editorship of our national poet, Shamsur Rahman.

M Zahidul Haque Associate Professor BAI, Dhaka

Publication of government annual reports

Sir, Publication of annual reports or reviews of various departments of the government was once a regular feature during British rule in the subcontinent. These reports were prepared by the respective departments of the central and provincial governments and published by the government press and were easily available to the public at a reasonable price to enable them to know the activities of the departments during the previous one year.

This was one of the ways through which a coloniser made themselves answerable for their deeds to the 'native'

Will the BJP Coalition Last?

One felt strongly that the BJP-led coalition has failed to explain to the Indian community about the whys and hows of the tests. But when the party has not worked towards creating consensus within India, it should not be expected to bother about non-resident Indians. This approach fits into the superiority complex with which the BJP suffers.

Hindu claimants. In fact, the demolition of the masjid has hurt the sensitivity of not only Muslims but most of others, including Hindus, because the destruction of mosque is not what they associate with India.

The recent debate in parliament and the insistence by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on building Ram masjid at the site where the Babri masjid stood once have 'reopened the wounds,' as most Indians living in the Gulf say. In fact, this is one issue which can stoke fires of differences and defiance in the region, including the Muslim-run states, if ever a government at Delhi becomes a party to the building of temple despite the court's judgement going against such a proposal.

But it is not the BJP coalition or the Babri masjid which engage all attention. In fact, with whichever topic you begin, it ends up in a discussion on nuclear tests in the subcontinent. Initial euphoria or criticism has lost its edge. There is a tinge of pride, a bit of chauvinism still lingering but all this is buried beneath a mountain of doubts, whether it was all necessary to have conducted the tests. Most people would have preferred to leave at the earlier status when India had the bomb but had not invited the fury of the West after the tests.

One felt strongly that the BJP-led coalition has failed to explain to the Indian community about the whys and hows of the tests. But when the party has not worked towards creating consensus within India, it should not be expected to bother about non-resident Indians. This approach fits into the superiority complex with which the BJP suffers.

The Kerala Muslims are aggressively pro-India. I was told that their mood of elation got

a chorus heard endlessly in the West. In fact, there is a perceptible sense of gratification, both in the UAE and Arab countries over the display by the third world of its technological prowess.

Since people in these parts hate America, they are happy that Washington's monopoly has been broken. At the back of their mind, of course, is Israel which, they believe, has a large number of bombs in the basement, with America's blessing.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

changed when Pakistan went nuclear. The holocaust in the subcontinent is seen more real than before. And this has scared all. For some reasons, there is fear of misadventure at the hands of some fanatics or fundamentalists.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), a conglomerate of Sheikhdoms has been cautious in its comment. It has advised both India and Pakistan to be 'careful' after having displayed their nuclear capability. Noticeably, there is no word of condemnation or admonition.

The resentment against Tel Aviv is transferred to Washington. The applause for India and Pakistan is an applause for standing up to big powers.

None in the area says, nor confirms that the Pakistan bomb is the Muslim bomb. But there is no doubting about the confidence of the countries in West Asia have gained after Islamabad's nuclear tests. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's visit to the area has been fruitful. He has been able to get from Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Iran a substantial aid

Ultimate in Damage Control

Decisive leadership invariably decentralises authority and acts on concerted intelligent opinion rather than react to the slogan of the day.

tive devaluation of almost 20 per cent. At the moment, at least US\$ 3.5 billion in the foreign currency accounts is being used as collateral, mostly by resident Pakistanis. While off-setting that amount, the accounts of the non-resident foreign currency account holders could have been unrozen immediately so that a measure of confidence in Pakistan's economic viability is restored among overseas Pakistanis.

The second area for urgent attention is the Foreign Office. Even when going through the worst crisis this country has faced since 1971, there was no agency in the corridors where foreign policy is to be formulated. And what foreign policy? A hackneyed version of cold war era initiatives having no relevance to reality in the present age. As we learn that Mian Nawaz Sharif seeks advice from former Indian PM I K Gujral, a person who is 100 times (or more) dangerous than the BJP trio of Thakre, Advani and Vajpayee who rule India presently put together. It was Gujral's doctrine of regional sub-groupings during the short time he was PM that isolated Pakistan within SAARC. Now a BJP insider has confessed that Gujral had cleared it with BJP

before inviting Pakistan for the series of talks that led to nowhere. The Foreign Office failed the PM and the country by not warning the PM against the knife cloaked in Gujral's honey and sugar approach.

Their responses throughout this present crisis has similarly been hidebound. We needed to soften the effect of sanctions by convincing the west that it was in their interest to pedal a soft approach to Pakistan. Instead we got stuck in the pre-May 28 stance when even US President Clinton pleaded with Pakistan not to

the Mian Nawaz Sharif promise on prime time TV to pay off all the family debts to the banks by asking the banks to sell off the assets. It requires courage to liquidate assets built up by hard work, obviously loans by itself do not create industries, ingenuity and hard work do. Now many weeks have elapsed and we still do not have an accurate rendering of (1) how much are the debts? (2) how are they off-set? and (3) what is the transparent modus operandi for their squaring off? For the personal credibility of the PM it is vitally necessary that the pro-

cess he announced with the national agenda be cowarded. Mr. Ardesheer Cowasjee, my respected friend, has kept a bet with me that this liquidation process will be still-born, the bedrock of the reason for my bet is trust in Mian Nawaz Sharif's word. A lot of people say that the Sharifs only keep their promises to their inner circle and the rest is simply a ploy for time and consumption by a gullible public. For the sake of the Sharifs one hopes that this is false. And by the way I went to the so-called 'palace' at Rawwind. Besides a well-kept good-sized farm, there was a most modern hospital built on station-of-the-art parameters and including within the premises

detonate (and we excitedly counted how many times he had rung up the PM). How many times after May 28 has he rung up the PM? Unless we completely revamp our Foreign Office machinery and bring their rationale at par with reality, intelligence and modicum of pragmatism among their initiatives, we will founder as we are doing now. George Clemenceau said that 'war is too important to be left to generals', peace is too important to be left to diplomats, particularly of the Pakistan Foreign Office-kind. The Sharifs have made a lot of promises they cannot keep even if they want to, the intention by itself a matter of conjecture. For me, the high point was

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

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OPINION

World Cup — a Different Angle

R Ahmad

We Bangalis seem to be carried away on many occasions by rather small things but don't get involved too easily in more serious affairs or even in matters of life and death.

In my young days I was the captain of the then East Pakistan team of a particular game and I was selected for the Pakistan national team and called for a training camp in Quetta for three months and if I attended there and was successful, I could have represented Pakistan in the 1960 Asian Games in Tokyo. And had I (or could I have) done that I would have had to lose one year in my undergraduate professional career and for that reason my father vetoed it and I was not allowed to even join the coaching camp in Quetta.

I am not saying my father was absolutely right, but although I resented by father's overruling at that time, I don't resent it now, and that was the

sense of those days. And I would say if there was no possibility of building up a career in that game it was right for my father not to have indulged in letting me lose one year in my educational career. I still pursue my interest in games and sports, but I think I do it in the right perspective.

When England became the World Cup champion in 1966, I was working and training for my postgraduate career in the UK. But I did not see any of the crazes that one is witnessing now for watching the World Cup where Bangladesh cannot even dream of participating in the next 50 years or more. I and my British colleagues were performing their normal work and duties while England was playing in the final and won the championship. I and they only came to

know about it in the evening television news.

But here the students refuse to attend their classes during the day (although the matches are shown at night) and refuse to take their exams and most stunningly the Parliament reduces its session for the World Cup! If the Parliament can reduce its session for the World Cup, the students can legitimize their demand for not attending their exams or classes.

It is a little disconcerting for me that the Parliament can make special consideration for the World Cup but cannot find time for special consideration to make a session, say, on women and children abuse, or law and order situation, or one of the highest rates of deaths from road traffic accidents in the world, or on pollution which affects longevity (Dhaka is now the most polluted city in the world, causing shortening of every Dhaka citizen's life).

Villages are Bleeding

Md. Shah Jahan

In the good old days minor disputes in the villages were culminated in rebuking and yelling. If the situation demanded a harder treatment it went upto slap or blow. If the situation was more demanding then sticks and clubs and ultimately dao (used as the domestic chopper), and spears were used in the fight.

With the advance of time old social values have eroded. Today the common use of arms in the villages for the same incidents are hand bombs, pistols, cut rifles and other lethal weapons. This drastic change in the use of arms is the direct result of perverted politics which in fact re-introduced zamindari system in the shape of godfather clout. The godfathers impose and realise tolls. They maintain their own cadres for enforcing their wills. They have their own justice system within

their jurisdiction. They receive commission from the development works undertaken by contractors and the tenders within the jurisdiction of a particular godfather has to be or is awarded to his nominated person and/or portages which has knocked the professional contractors out of the business.

As a result widespread terrorism, extortion, rape, murder, abduction, land grabbing, drug, women trafficking with all the vulgarity, brutality and cruelty have become the order of the day. The society has lost its humane values. A citizen does not feel secured at home or in the street. Life and property of the citizens are left to the mercy of the terrorists and mastans. With the passage of time the base of mastanism is widening rapidly, even opera-

tion of mills and factories in some cases depends upon the pacification of mastans.

This awful change upto the grassroots level warrants immediate and effective state intervention to contain violence and restore peace. Access to justice is not an easy matter for the villagers due to financial inability to afford the advocate services for the unusually lengthy legal process. Personal security of a complainant is not guaranteed. People are reluctant to approach police with genuine grievance.

The Government had rightly appreciated the deplorable situation prevailing in the rural areas and had taken laudable step to bring about peace in the village by introducing village judiciary system through Grameen Court. The sooner the Gram Adalat Bill, 1998 is passed the better.