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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 derisions 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 MFN status interspersing with it. But now the rapprochement looks really made. Not just on the government-to-government level but people-to-people as well by virtue of President Clinton's 9-day visit to China which flung open windows of communication with people there, particularly freedom-loving young people who are hugging the shoreline of 21st century.

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 President had a peep into the Chinese version of human rights while he tried relentlessly to convince his hosts that the other name of political freedom is the right to dissent. As we view it, China's impressive success in liberalising her economy makes it pertinent for her to deliver political freedom to her people.

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. For China it is a matter both of prudence and prestige to be dealing with the lone superpower in the world. So the air was rife with talks about 'strategic alliance' between China and the USA designed to protect their economic and security interests.

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. The. most unfortunate part of it is that starting from a non-communal act of extortion under influence of liquor the situation has developed along the Pahari-plains people communal line. If not contained in time, it is sure to harm the peace process.

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 former should be stringently denied any room to make trouble, by all including very much the latter.

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. Cultural action, activism more precisely, may provide the people of the hills and their plains neighbours with a rock-bed of tolerance and co-operation. We had seen previously how motivational work with leaders of Bengali culture proved effective in defusing an explosive situation immediately after the treaty had come into being. Sustained cultural activity participated by both the communities and punctuated by festivals with top artistes of the land should go a long way in healing the wounded minds in the hills.

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. In its 3-0 demolition of established superpower Germany Saturday night and passage to the semifinal of the last World Cup of the century the little Balkan nation Croatia have really made their presence felt. It is amazing the strides Croatia have made since waking up from the nightmares of ethnic violence and bloodshed. The World Cup has been the happy hunting ground of the experienced but then all experienced glory hunters had their day of beginning. May be this is Croatia's moment of canonisation. We have seen how Sri Lanka entered the heavyweight club of one day cricket. Even if Croatia meet its Waterloo against France in the semifinal, they will have lost nothing. Croats have come to stay as a force to reckon with in world football.

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. Sportsworld should be richer and wee bit more daring for the collective efforts of Croatia and the individual excellence of Novotna.

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.

Lcountries where I spent five days recently. The BJP-led coalition is gasping for breath. The other parties, which were once flercely opposed to one another, are trying to act jointly to see if Congress, not too strong itself, can provide health to the nation. But the real mid-wife is AIADMK chief Jayalalitha. who unpredictably moody. And everyone is looking towards her, anticipating withdrawal of

her support. 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. roughly Rs 22,000 crore. The amount can go up if there are proper schemes, more so proper persons, to persuade them to invest in India. If they are convinced, they alone can fill at least half of the gap that the US sanctions have created in the Indian economy. These people have felt unhappy about the BJP-led coalition and want to know if and when the govern-

NDIAN politics looks no dif-

ferent from the Gulf

ment will fall. They have a soft comer for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vaipayee who they consider liberal. And they have applauded his assurance that a mandir at the disputed Ram Janma Bhoomi-Babri Masjid site will not be built if the Supreme Court's verdict goes against the West after the tests.

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 parlia-

ment and the insistence by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) on building Ram mandir 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

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

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 Sheikdoms 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 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 in dollars and a large supply of oil on deferred payments. Significantly, nuclear tests

have had no adverse fallout on relations between Indians and the Pakistanis living in the UAE or the areas around. They continue to have the same equation which they have had before the tests. Coming from the same subcontinent as they do, people are primarily interested in earning money, not in importing their age-old rivalry. They even work jointly. Many outfits have both Indians and Pakistanis as partners. People from both countries working as employees is common. And it is no secret that the goods from India reach Pakistan through Dubai. The proximity in every field may well be the reason why the voice that the two countries should be friends is the loudest in the UAE.

A word about the UAE. Its main towns, Abu Dhabi, Dubai and Sharjah, look like the European towns planted in the heart of desert, with all modern facilities — with running water, surplus electricity, unpolluted air and wide roads. (Thank God, they do not have road toll as every highway in Europe and America has). What impressed me the most was the amount of greenery that the area has. It must be costing millions but more and more areas are being

retrieved from the desert. Between Dubai and Abu Dhabi some forests are coming up. Newer complexes are being built practically every month. And some of the multinational companies operating in India have positioned their headquarters either in Dubai or Abu Dhabi. Not long ago, only wooden sailing dhows set out from the creek in the area going to the ports of India even at that time.

There is an array of department stores, which sell consumer goods duty free. Every Indian or Pakistani even going to the area for 24 hours, is seen there, with trolleys piled up. Gold is particularly cheap and there is a separate street specialising in the business. Dubai is also called the 'gold city'. Sharjah, which has hewn a most modern cricket stadium from the wilderness, attracts the world class cricketers to play in the Cricketers Benevolent Fund Series (CBFS) oneday-internationals at least twice a year. This has, apart from other things, recognised the talent which would have gone into oblivion unsung, unwept. Retired players from the subcontinent have been benefi-

ciaries. Of course, Win Chadda of Bofors kickback fame, is in Dubai. He is less of a landmark now than he was about a decade ago when he took shelter in the city from the Indian authorities. tried to meet him through a triend. But the friend never came back to me. I believe this is the experience of every mediaman.

Ultimate in Damage Control

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

VEN 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 politieign currency account holders cal. Far from capitalising on could have been unfrozen imtheir golden moments, the mediately so that a measure of Mian Nawaz Sharif regime's confidence in Pakistan's ecoperformance has been disapnomic viability is restored pointing in not being able to examong overseas Pakistanis. ploit the opportunities it had at This rule must also apply to resthe beginning of June. The reident Pakistanis who receive sult has been sustained confupensions from abroad. The PM sion and ambiguity that has has announced revival of Formade even the future of this eign Currency Accounts as they country uncertain. As a conexisted on May 28, there is amfirmed admirer of Mian Nawaz biguity still. Unless positive ac-Sharif for some time, it is sad to tion is taken, no Pakistani note that Mian Sahib has lost abroad is going to open foreign opportunity after opportunity currency accounts again in to institutionalise a crisis Pakistan. management process, simply The second area for urgent because he cannot seem to grow attention is the Foreign Office. out of the flattery dished out by

his inner circle. 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. Even when the government finally moved to stabilise the Rupee by a 4.4 per cent official devaluation, a virtual run continues and from a kerb market of Rs. 46.00 to the US dollar on June 1. the Rupee fell to Rs. 54.25 on July 1, 1998, an effec-

tive devaluation of almost 20 before inviting Pakistan for the per cent. At the moment, at series of talks that led to least US\$ 3.5 billion in the fornowhere. The Foreign Office eign currency accounts is being failed the PM and the country used as collateral, mostly by by not warning the PM against resident Pakistanis. While offthe knife cloaked in Gujral's setting that amount, the achoney and sugar approach. counts of the non-resident for-

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 offset? 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-

ASISEEIT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi^{*}

detonate land 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. instilling a modicum of pragmatism among their initiatives, we will flounder 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 cess he announced with the national agenda be expedited.

Mr. Ardeshir 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 Raiwind. Besides a well-kept goodsized farm, there was a most modern hospital built on stateof-the-art parameters and including within the premises

boys' and girls' schools as well as Nurses Institute. The 80-year old patriarch of the Sharif family has a known history of charitable initiatives and this complex coming up within a short span of 14 months is a reminder that the wealthy have a duty towards the not so affluent that must be practically expressed, not given lip-service as most of us are apt to do. If I were Mian Nawaz Sharif

I would be proud of what his old man has done and continues to do during his lifetime. The hospital is an excellent symbol of philanthropy, let us at least be objective in our criticism and not get carried away with criticism for the sake of it. What the younger Sharifs can do for Pakistan in exercise of the mandate given by the people of Pakistan in 1997 is to trust people from out of their inner circle. In fact time (and goodwill both) is running out for the Sharifs in this respect, if they continue to rely on bad advice and do not have anyone in their inner circle capable of exercising restraint on their urges, it may see them out of power and that would indeed be a tragedy, particularly in the face of lack of credible alternatives for Pakistan.

Which brings us to the process of decision-making. Leaders often tend to rely on instincts but in this modern world one has to rely on credible information and options available. If both are not forthcoming in quantities required then even instinct fails. Moreover one cannot keep on changing decisions to suit the time of the day, it is better to play safe

by delaying a decision rather than be sorry and waste valuable time in subsequent damage control. While one cannot rely on the advice of technocrats and experts alone as their advice is usually void of human considerations, an institutionalised process for advice from a broad spectrum is necessary.

There is evidence that in many of the controversial decisions that have rebounded on Mian Nawaz Sharif there was a singular lack of consultation except from a small coterie of flatter-

This is dangerous for the country and very damaging to the Sharifs, to have a public perception that they listen only to what they want to hear and act accordingly on their own premises and assumptions based on a foundation of public adulation rather than any well thought out strategy. Public adulation is fickle, words are no substitute for bread. As the Rupee declines rapidly against the US dollar and the government is forced to print notes to keep up with deficits, the eroding of buying power may well bring the masses on the streets. anarchy may well result, we are close to it. Decisive leadership invariably decentralises authority and acts on concerted intelligent opinion rather than react to the slogan of the day.

The ultimate damage control that the Mian Nawaz Sharif regime must exercise is on their own urges lest the Lowers thatbe decide enough is enough and their continued governance is too expensive for the continued existence of the country. That fail-safe line may not be far away and the present government may well become part of the ultimate in damage control.

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.

However, in the recent days, common people of this country came to know about the above mentioned facts through national newspapers which was published newspaper clippings of 1973 and 1974 on the occasion of the historic inauguration of the Bangabandhu Bridge (BB) by Prime Minister Sheikh

Meanwhile one thing has struck my mind that most newspapers have reproduced reports/editorial from the "Dainik Bangla" (DB) but unfortunately this historical news-

paper 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 dur-ing 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 colonisers made themselves answerable for their deeds to the 'native'

population. Besides, people's comments and criticism, the press also highlighted the achievements and the shortcomings of the bureaucracy.

Even when going through the

worst crisis this country has

faced since 1971, there is no ur-

gency in the corridors where

foreign policy is to be formu-

lated. And what foreign policy?

A hackneyed version of cold

war era initiatives having no

relevance to reality in the pre-

sent age! And now we learn that

Mian Nawaz Sharif seeks ad-

vice from former Indian PM IK

Guiral, 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

Guiral'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

Questions were also often raised in the legislature on the contents of these reports. The government naturally, therefore, gave much time and energy in preparing those reports, and that too punctually.

Unfortunately, however, for dubious reasons this wonderful practice of public accountability through publication of annual departmental reports did not continue in most cases during the Pakistan period. The annual police reports, reports on public instruction, labour reports, reports on workers' compensation act etc., were,

however, continued. In the early years of Bangladesh's birth due probably to shortage of funds, trained manpower and other priorities of a newly born state, government publications were few and far between. It was hoped that in the coming years the government would bring out the publications and restore an important link between the elected and the electors. But the hopes were dashed by the rule of the generals who considered them-

selves 'masters, not servants'. Since 1991 we do have democratic governments and, therefore, it is highly desirable that the practice of publishing annual departmental reports/reviews of the bygone days be once again revived.

Dr A Z Mia Dhaka

Fundamental rights of defence personnel'

Sir, I had the opportunity to go through the above article by Major General (Retd) Syed Muhammad Ibrahim BP, awc, Psc published in your esteemed daily on May 13, 1998. It is indeed an excellent articles and the author has highlighted the aspects of the Fundamental Rights nicely.

In our armed forces as it is

learnt that there exist no scope for a defence personal to go to a Civil Court. Such provision is not there in the Manual of Military Law etc. But in our neighbouring country India, a defence personnel can go to Civil Court to fight his case, when-

In Indian Amy their promotion system is so systematic that no inefficient person can get promotion bypassing a competent candidate. This is only possible where the Fundamental Right is protected. But it is absent here in our culture.

ever there is a need.

In view of General Ibrahim's article I can only humbly appeal or request our authority concerned to kindly make some provision so that our army personnel can go to Civil Court.

Abdul Hai New Bejpara, Jessore

PM's micro and macro

Sir. Our PM is a tireless worker, and surprisingly finds time to attend micro public functions, fetching macro pub-

How she manages to dispose of all the urgent files, often attending so many official meetings indoors?

An Admirer Dhaka

The Biman ad

Sir, The advertisement of Biman, the Bangladesh Airlines on 24/6/98 flying the "democratic flare" real high reminds me of Nigeria, the only Commonwealth country under a dictator who talks about democracy.

Similarly dictator-type of management of Biman is also talking about "democratic flare" — sounds dubious, ridiculous thereby making "Biman. the Bangladesh Airlines" the name given by the Father of the Nation a laughing stock.

M Hag Gulshan, Dhaka

OPINION

World Cup — a Different Angle

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 have) done that I would have had to lose one year in my un dergraduate 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 responsibility of parents 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 that tournament within 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

Villages are Bleeding

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 choper), 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

Md. Shah Jahan

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 ter rorism, 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

of every Dhaka citizen's life).

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 The sooner the Court. Gram Adalat Bill, 1998 is

passed the better.