# A Breakthrough in Bilateral Talks

by Barrister Harun ur Rashid

An environment of durable peace and security was in the supreme interest of India and Pakistan. The peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues including Jammu and Kashmir was essential for this purpose.

HE reported one hour meeting on 23 September In New York between the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly appears to have ended the stalemate of the dialogue between the two countries, to a great relief of the countries in South Asia in particular. An agenda including the contentious Kashmir issue is reported to have been agreed upon that presages a meaningful dialogue between them for peace and security in the region.

It is to be noted that Simla Agreement of 1972 contemplated that the Kashmir issue should be discussed between the two countries. Pakistan maintained that its cooperation with India on other areas would entirely depend on the progress of the Kashmir issue. On the other hand, India's position was that cooperative efforts on other issues must be established first to build confidence and trust between the two countries to resolve the Kashmir dispute. The position of both sides is comparable to an age-old riddle of "chicken or egg first"

In Indo-Pakistan bilateral talks at the Colombo Summit the parties could not even agree on an agenda including the medalities how to handle the Kashmir issue. Pakistan wanted the Kashmir question as one of the core issues while India perceived it as a political "point-scoring" against India. It was a dialogue of the deaf in Colombo.

### Possible Reasons of Change of Strategy

As the time elapsed, India realised that Pakistan was going through tough times internally and in foreign relations.

OME monsoon and there

is no escape from floods.

Whether it is big or

small flood is but a nat-

ural phenomenon in

Bangladesh. But this monsoon

it has hit the country very hard

submerging over two-thirds of

Bangladesh. The diplomatic

enclave at Baridhara in the cap-

ital could not even escape the

fury of flood. The writer himself

remained stranded in another

posh area Gulshan. If the capi-

tal townships like Gulshan.

Banani and Baridhara are in-

undated then imagine what has

happened to other parts and

slum areas of Dhaka city, leav-

ing aside the harrowing tale of

other cities, towns, villages,

agricultural and farmlands of

besides doing many harms, has

done one thing good. A common

man on the street is learnt to

have said that upper echelon of

the society has been brought

down by this flood from their

luxury cars to 'rickshaw - a

common man's transport.

Where rickshaw could not move

boat replaced it, being the only

means of transportation irre-

spective of the rich and the

poor. The rich has left the pinch

of the flood and came close to

However, this year's flood

the country.

The economic sanctions slammed on Pakistan made the people restive and the religious parties were exploiting the fragile situation. The Government came up with the 15th amendment of its Constitution to enforce Islamic laws in the country to placate the religious parties. In the economic front, Pakistan's situation appears to be precarious and there are signs within the country which could destabilise political envi-ronment. In such situation a Taliban type of regime is not unlikely to emerge in Pakistan to the consternation of India. Further Iran's war of words to the Talibans in Afghanistan placed Pakistan in a strategic dilemma because of its alleged backing of the Talibans.

India perceives that Sharif's Pakistan is much better than a regime controlled by the orthodox religious parties. Further a nuclear Pakistan with extreme Islamism could be a serious threat to India. Many of the militant Muslims were reported to be trained in Afghanistan to fight for self-determination of Kashmiris in the Indian administered Kashmir. Added to this is the recognition that India is now governed by a rightwing Hindu political party (BJP-Bharatiya Janata Party). Some BJP stalwarts are reported to have floated a novel idea that Hinduism is not a religion but a philosophy of life and embraces all religions including Islam. One may ask that if a right wing party with an ideology of "one religion, one people and one nation" can govern India, what does prevent a Taliban -type of religious party rule Pakistan?

India's principal rival is

and the Ganges/Padma are

snow-fed and rain-fed while the

Meghna is only rain-fed. The

rivers combined spreads over

several countries besides

Bangladesh, namely, China,

Bhutan, Nepal, and India

Bangladesh is the lowest reach

of this watershed. The Meghna

on the other hand rising in

Asam (India), has a total length

of 805 kms of which about 419

kms lies in Bangladesh. The

drainage area of these three

river's together is about

1616,050 sq.kms of which only

7 per cent lies in Bangladesh.

The combined maximum dis-

charge of these three rivers only

is over 141,643 cms. The annual

runoff is nearly 1.2 billion

acre/ft., which if could have

been impounded would have

attained a water height of 10m.

approx. over Bangladesh. The

length, area of drainage basin

known to be China and not Pakistan. China, some believe, replaced Japan as the secondbiggest economy in the world. India felt that unless political tensions are eliminated in the Indian sub-continent, its economic progress similar to that of China is not possible. In an unfriendly global economic environment coupled with the existing economic sanctions on India, large foreign investment is likely to shy away from it. Furthermore, because of sanctions. India is prevented from undertaking essential economic reforms which are needed for accelerating its economic

lose gradually its strategic edge in this region. India and Pakistan demonstrated their capability as nuclear powers and the perception of equilibrium seems to have stabilised the situation. Pakistan can sit on a negotiating table on an equal footing with India and not from weakness. One may argue that such recognition of equality is conducive to fruitful negotiations.

growth to match China's. With

the diminished economic power

India knows well that it will

#### Outcome of the Meeting in New York

Having taken into account of the emerging compelling realities, both nations, in my view are now prepared to adopt imaginative lead and some political risks. India is ready to talk about Kashmir with Pakistan. The top political level meeting took place in the background of five rounds of meetings between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries at Durban ( South Africa) where the Non-Aligned Summit concluded on 3rd September. The old adage "where there is a will, there is a way" proved correct as India agreed to have the Kashmir issue included as one of the two core issues in the agenda. the other being peace, security and confidence-building measures. The rest items include terrorism, border skirmishes, people to people exchange and

economic cooperation.

The two leaders have agreed to resolve their dispute over Kashmir peacefully and to hold series of wide-ranging talks on all issues immediately at Foreign Secretary level. The two Prime Ministers are to open a hotline for crisis communications. In a joint statement published earlier, both the leaders "reaffirmed their belief that an environment of durable peace and security was in the supreme interest of India and Pakistan. The peaceful settlement of all outstanding issues including Jammu and Kashmir was essential for this purpose.

Conclusion Though belated, the meeting augurs well that they will resume talks at Foreign Secretary level on all pending issues after the June 1997 meeting. India and Pakistan have to live as neighbours. They cannot refashion geography. In Europe, France and Germany live side by side harmoniously, although they fought wars with each other in the past. If they can do it, why can't India and Pakistan? It is time that both countries look for reasons and address the issues for the benefit of peace, progress and security in the region. Is it too big a demand of the two key players

in the sub-continent from their

LETTER FROM AMERICA

## Winter of Discontent Ahead for President Clinton

Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

President Clinton's fate lies in the results of November 3 Congressional elections. Before the Lewinsky scandal, the Democrats were expected to pick up 5 or so more seats in the House, or even to threaten the Republican majority. Now forty more Democratic seats are considered not safe.

decade from now, when America looks back at the Clinton-Lewinsky Lepisode, they will wonder how the entire nation took leave of its senses for a few months. The confluence of an out of control President, out of control prosecutor, out of control Republican party and out of control media, has produced a moment of national madness!

America is stuck with an extremely intelligent and successful President, who nevertheless, is a sexual adolescent. A cartoon summed up America's dilemma: "The President should not be impeached. He should be grounded!", it said. Clinton is forcing puritanical Americans to comprehend what constitutes "phone sex" and 'oral sex" — terms that are mysterious to those brought up in the Bangladeshi morality. According to Gennifer Flowers. Clinton's one-time extra-marital love, the President told her that he saw somewhere in the Bible that "oral sex" did not constitute adultery! That is why Clinton adamantly denied under oath in the Paula Jones case (which is about to be settled with money) that he and Lewinsky did not have a "sexual relationship." It has now transpired that they did not have sexual intercourse, but had everything else imaginable, including "oral sex." The President would have done himself and the nation a great favour by putting his sexual desires on hold for the eight

White House years. From the beginning, lifelong

Republican. Independent Counsel "Judge" Kenneth W. Starr was a prosecutor in search of a crime. For four years he utilized the full resources of the government of the United States to investigate possible wrong doings by the President in the Whitewater land deal, the White house travel office and FBI file mismanagement, and came up empty. Last year, he announced his resignation to take the job of the President of a California College. In the face of severe criticism for not finishing his work, Starr agreed to stay on. Then last January, the Lewinsky saga gave him a golden opportunity to justify the enormous expense of his existence. Failing to convict Clinton on real crimes. Starr is now attempting to have the Presi dent removed on sexual misconduct. So one-sided is Starr's report to Congress that whenever there was a conflict in the grand jury testimony of two witnesses, Starr incorporated the version most damaging to the President. Starr is recommending that the President be impeached for obstruction of justice, yet, in his 445-page report full of salacious details, he finds no room for any exculpatory evidence, such as Lewinsky's grand jury statement that no one at the White House asked her to lie or tried to buy her si-

As far as the Republicans are concerned, this is pay back time for Watergate and Iran-Contra hearings with which the Democratic House and Senate

method of manufacture of

rough paper from water-hy-

acinth which may be explored

in this respect for production in

large scale for use in bag manu-

facture. Re-cycling plants for

garbage disposal be also ex-

plored for production of fertil-

izer. This will help remove ob-

struction to flood paths apart

flood forecast/warning system:

Timely forecast and transmit-

ting warning will help greatly

in damage mitigation. BWDB

and BMD are equipped with in-

stallations though, they are not

fully developed for obtaining

flash flood areas.

yield any benefit.

time data essential for

Facilities are available with

SPARRSO, which might provide

allied organisations ample

scope for system modernisation

and integration amongst them

for further strengthening and

known as 'flood management

measures' and should not wait

till big projects (structural mea-

sures) are in place, since these

take long time to complete and

Above measures are better

improvement in this respect.

Flood preparedness and

from keeping the areas clean.

lence in exchange of a job.

majority had tortured Republican Presidents Nixon and Reagan respectively. Paying lip service to bi-partisanship, all House Republicans voted to release the Starr Report to the public; 63 Democrats opposed. When the Starr Report failed to damage the President's standing with the public, the Republican majority in the House Judiciary Committee, ignoring White House protest, decided to release Clinton's August 17 video grand jury testimony to the public. (Once again, all Republicans voted for, and this time all Democrats voted against the release. So much for bipartisan efforts.) Unfortunately for the Republicans, although evasive at times, Clinton earned the nation's sympathy for the drilling he took regarding very private matters at the hands of Starr's attorneys. Clinton's approval rating shot up 4%, to 66% after the release of the video tapes. In spite of howling protests by the Democrats, the Republicans have refused to release the audio tapes of conversation between Linda Tripp and Monica Lewinsky, which according to reports, damage their credibil-

last January. They are furious that he is still around. The media shouted "Fire!" in the theater and dropped a lighted match stick to boot! Every allegation against Clinton is reported as the ultimate truth. The media gave scant coverage to Whitewater and other Ken Starr investigations. Sex is altogether a different matter. They cannot have enough of it. Its reporting raises viewer ratings, increases revenues. That is why the media reports and rereports every sexual allegations against Clinton, beating a story to death and then reviving it. Of course, the media can never be wrong. Since all reporters had predicted heavyweight boxer Muhammad Ali's destruction at the hands of Sonny Liston in their rematch in Lewiston, Maine in 1965 (Liston had lost due to a hand injury in the first match in 1964), they quickly proclaimed the contest a "fix", after Ali won! Twenty-two years later. when Sugar Ray Leonard defeated media-favourite Middle weight Champion Marvelous Marvin Hagler in 1987, the me-

The media had written

President Clinton's obituary

"He who is without sin, let him cast the first stone!", so goes the saying. Republican Henry Hyde, the Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee. in charge of initiating impeachment inquiry, should not then cast the first stone. The Internet magazine "Saloon" reported that Hyde had an extramarital affair thirty years ago. Admitting his sin, Hyde countered with a flippant, "the statue of limitation on my youthful indiscretions has long since passed." Really? There is no statue of limitations on adultery. Hyde should check with

dia called that a "fix" too!

God. Thirty years ago. Hyde was 44 (he is now 74), not much more "youthful" than Clinton is now (52). Plus all of Clinton's affairs have been with unmarried women. Hyde destroyed someone else's marriage to save

President Clinton's fate lies in the results of November 3 Congressional elections. Before the Lewinsky scandal, the Democrats were expected to pick up 5 or so more seats in the House, or even to threaten the Republican majority. Now forty more Democratic seats are considered not safe. If things go very well for the Republicans. they may end up with sixty Senators. If the voters favour the Republicans in the November election in a big way. Republicans will be emboldened. Democrats demoralized, and Clinton will be in serious danger of losing his job. The Republicans run the risk of alienating the voters, by their refusal to pay heed to the public's demand that Clinton not be impeached, only censured, and that the matter be dropped. Further, the US constitution calls for the impeachment of the president only for "treason, bribery and high crimes and misdemeanor." It is doubtful that Clinton's "low crimes and misdemeanor" rise to the level of an impeach-

Clinton's high poll ratings may change. Ten months before President Nixon resigned in August, 1974, only 30 per cent wanted him impeached. The Republican strategy of slowly releasing information damaging to the President, may eventually poison the public's mind. If the public feels that Clinton's personal problem is impacting the job he was elected to do, they may turn on him. That is why, President Clinton wants to be seen as attending to the affairs of the nation. When the full House voted for impeachment hearings, President Nixon invited Barry Goldwater and other senior Republicans to the White House. "How many Senate votes do I have?". Nixon asked. "Ten", Goldwater replied (He needed at least 34). That's when Nixon decided to resign. If things reach that stage, some times next year, that will be the moment of truth for Clinton's

able offense.

American judicial system can be bizarre. Monica Lewinsky received complete immunity from perjury for lying about the same sexual encounters for which President Clinton may lose his job! The whole impeachment procedure is political. The Republicans will have to factor in the possibility of handing (President) Al Gore two year's jump on the 2000 Presidential election!

propensity to lie.

Ken Starr's grand jury was very sympathetic to Monica Lewinsky. At the conclusion of her testimony, they gave her a bouquet. "I hate Linda Tripp' (for destroying her life) were Lewinsky's last words to the grand jury. "And Ken Starr", she might have added.

## Flood Mitigation: Thoughts on Strategy by Engr. Shaheedul Islam

The school of thought on 'living with the flood' still exists. But the bitter experience of this year's flood has pushed the planners or philosophers up on the horns of dilemma what to do and how to live in such a situation.



and stood beside the poor flood Brahmaputra rises on the victims, a scene rarely seen benorthern slopes of the Himalayas in Tibet, flows in an In respect of depth, I am not easterly direction for a length sure whether this year's flood of 1127 kms before turning has crossed 1988 flood level exsouth through the mountains cept few places. But in respect of and flows towards west for a duration it has of course length of about 644 kms and crossed the previous record. Inthen suddenly turns towards deed this has been the most south and enters Bangladesh as devastating flood in recent a braided river. Its watershed memory. The country's econarea is about 583222 sq.kms of omy has been greatly shattered. which only 8.7 per cent lies in Now the question is how often Bangladesh. The Ganges which such a flood will take place and is a meandering river, rises on how the country can sustain it the southern slopes of the Hior afford to, before being fully malayas at an elevation of recovered from the wounds of about 7000m at a place called the preceding wrought? Un-Gongotri and flows in an eastdoubtedly, this is a serious erly direction almost parallel matter to be looked into, so that to the Himalayan range for a sufferings are minimised to the length of about 2575 kms. Its toextent possible. tal drainage area is about 956485 sq.kms of which only Floods and Droughts: Under 3.6 per cent lies in Bangladesh. a unique geographical, morpho-The watershed of these two

logical and meteorological setting Bangladesh suffers from twin-water problem, one of scarcity in one season and the other of abundance in another. When the country's blood bleeds in flood in monsoon with so much of water, its land suffers from want of soil moisture in the peak of dry season. What a paradox and a pity too, one is perplexed. This paper, however, discusses only the flood part of the problem and its mitigation strategy.

Flood Frequency: From an earlier history based on records of flood occurrences between 1870 and 1922, Prof. P.C. Mohalnobish, a noted statistician, made a study of recurrence interval of floods of different magnitudes that is, what flood how often is likely to occur. These are as follows:

#### Severity Recurrence interval (years)

Rated as flood 2.25 Moderate to severe Severe 33 to 50 Catastrophic

The Flood Discharge: In context of flood flow, it is important to mention about the three great river systems ranking one of the world's largest namely the Brahmaputra/Jamuna, the Ganges/Padma and the Meghna with some description here. Both the Brahmaputra/Jamuna and discharge of each of the above rivers may be seen in the

Issues and Concerns

Flood Control vs Flood Mitigation: Flood control is misnomer, being not feasible nor desirable. What is desirable is controlled flooding. But the fact remains whether this also is achievable with marked success in the absence of no control whatsoever, over almost all major rivers including the principal ones, particularly the Ganges and the Brahmaputra-Jamuna with their sources lying outside the country's territorial boundary is a real concern. In this respect, what is wanted most is a co-operative approach by all CO-BASIN STATES for regional interbasin development for mutual benefit. At present, apparently this is not forthcoming though a silver lining in the horizon is in sight, as ice is broken with the signing of a water sharing treaty on the Ganges with India after a long protracted negotiations. This is not the end in itself but a means to an end. Some look at this historical treaty as of no avail, some others treat it as a bright prospect for future development efforts.

The treaty has set the ball rolling. A starting point from where efforts will be continuing till the ultimate goal or destination is reached when the much desired joint and ambitious development plans of all riparian countries involved are in place. Until then, the country should carry on within its limited resource to fight flood menace with strategy which is possible within its means.

Max-Discharge\* Drainage Basin Name of River Length cfs (cms) sgm. (skm) B.Desh Total B.Desh 2500,000 225,000 19500 171 The Bramaputra (70000)(583222) (50545) (2900)(277)2200000 369,000 The Ganges (956485) (63000)34215 (258)(2575)500,000 The Meghna (14000)(29809)(419) (76467)(805) 5200,000 44200 623,500 TOTAL: (147,000) (114478) 7% of Total

Source: BWDB Hydrology 1985 \*Figures are not those of the highest recorded ever, since uptodate figures are not readily available with the writer. Current year's or latest record is expected to show that maximum combined discharge is more than what is mentioned in the above table.

Lessons have been learnt from this year's flood to recognize all the more importantly such a strategy to mitigate the suffer ings of the people.

Mitigation Strategy

The school of thought on living with the flood' still exists. But the bitter experience of this year's flood has pushed the planners or philosophers up on the horns of dilemma what to do and how to live in such a situation. It is strongly felt that issues and concerns that accentuate flood damage need be well taken to minimize damage and consequent suffering. With little or no control over the vagaries of Nature to which again added the recent much talked about phenomenon of 'El Nino' and 'La Nina' causing more rains than expected normally in the region, visitation of such a flood as the one experi enced this year is likely more often than not, may be in defiance of the law of probability.

Now, taking a stock of what is achieved and what remains to be achieved, an attempt is now made for planning a strategy for flood mitigation within possible means. This year's flooding is regarded as the worst ever in recent history. and has been an eye opener for planners to redirect their

thoughts to new dimensions. Under the prevailing context of the series of stress and strains the country is passing through, the possibility may be explored considering two aspects: 1) Structural measures and 2) Non-structural measures. The scope of this paper has been limited to only nonstructural ones. These are less or even non-expensive and nonetheless important for mitigating people's suffering, and are expected to bring about some improvement in flood condition and thus may be considered as supplemental to structural measures which can be undertaken where possible with external assistance and funding.

### **Non-Structural Measures**

These measures being inexpensive or even non-expensive have advantage over structural ones. Yet, these were neglected so long for some reason or other. A lesson is now learnt

from this year's flood experi ence that these are not to be overlooked any longer

Land development and use pattern: This is however, getting all the more difficult to implement in space and time, being gradually complicated due to population explosion, unplanned urbanisation, indiscriminate industrialisation etc. Over development of floodplains brings in harmful effects of drainage congestion and should be restricted as such Regulation of land development and use pattern is a must. Impromptu and unwise building construction particularly in low lying areas on earth-filled grounds on the strategic paths of floods intensify flood stage making provision for more flood damage and therefore should be prohibited strictly.

Watershed management: Watershed management plays a vital role in flood management. Deforestation and devegetation induce rapid runoff and rapid rise in flood level. Soil crosion takes place as a consequence of denudation of land. Therefore, the indiscriminate felling of trees without their planned replacements and over-grazing have to be stopped. Commensurate with flood situation involving the elements of its arrival, depth and duration, cropping practice and pattern be adjusted to reduce damage.

Slums and squatter area development: In towns and cities, particularly in all divisional towns and in Dhaka city where slum dwellers overcrowds the slums and squatter area development be duly attended to for orderly settlement of the dwellers. They should not be allowed to settle in ditches and depressions blocking natural drainage. They be encouraged to go back to their villages, giving some incentives by engaging them on rural development programmes viz. earthworks for roads, embankments, drainage channels, irrigation canals etc. and their repairs and maintenance.

Garbage disposal: Cities garbage disposal should be planned for dumping in suitable sites so that natural drainage on strategic flood paths are not obstructed. Particular reference may be made of polythene bags which should be totally banned. In place of these bags paper bags be used. House Building Research Institute Dhaka has evolved a

The writer is a former Member of BWDB.

### No Change on Rushdie, Say Exiles Dipankar De Sarkar writes from London

minimum of time"

is not state-run and that it has

RITICS of Iran's rights record say Iranian President Mohammed Khatami lacks the authority to declare his country's death sentence on British writer Salman Rushdie to be over and that his view is 'unimportant"

The Iranian leader told a briefing in New York on September 22 that Iran will take "no action' to carry out the death sentence on Rushdie imposed by the late revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. He said the 1989 fativa (or edict) had ended. "We should consider the Salman Rushdie issue as completely finshed," he said.

But the statement was seen as no advance on years of previous comments by Iranian officials, who have always maintained that the 1989 death sentence cannot be revoked, but that Iran would not seek to kill the Indian-born British writer. "(Even) if it's true, it's not important, because the com-

ment came from Khatami and Khatami is not an Ayatollah, said Farad Sakuahi, former chief editor of the literary magazine Adineh (Friday). Sakuahi, who was exiled to

Germany after being imprisoned for a year in Iran 1696 for his writings, said the world had to wait and see how the fundamentalists react, especially Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khameni.

"The fundamentalists may protest and resist it, but if they are silent it means that the religious leadership agrees." "Khatami has no authority

to pronounce on the fatwa. added Ahmed Ibrahimi, former International Secretary of the writers' rights group PEN. "Only an Ayatollah can pronounced a fatwa and only an Ayatollah can reverse it. Khatami is in New York to address the UN General Assembly.

The Iranian 15 Khordad Foundation has offered a reward of more than two million dollars to whoever kills Rushdie, accused of insulting Islam in his novel 'The Satanic Verses'. Teheran says the body

no say over it. Iran has long argued that the death order should not hamper its improving relations with the European Union and Britain. Speaking after a EU delegation to Teheran in July urged Iran to distance itself from the bounty set for killing Rushdie, Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi said 'such issues which belong to the Cold War period" should occupy "a

But hardliners have taken a directly opposite view. "Western countries must accept that the death sentence against Salman Rushdie cannot be revoked under any circumstances, and they must not discuss this issue again." Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati, a leading government figure, told Teheran University students at prayer in July.

"Although the Iranian government has always told the West that they don't want it on the agenda, and that we don't plan to assassinate Rushdie they've always refused to rescind the fatwa," Ibrahimi told

He said that if true, the news would be very heartening. "It may open the way to the future. if the (Iranian) government can find a face saving formula." But, he added, "the West may buy this superficial declaration by Khatami, to justify their trade

relations". British exports to Iran were worth 648 million dollars last year, though they lag behind Iran's main EU partner, Germany, which exported 1,722 million dollars worth of goods

to Iran in 1997. Britain's Foreign Office gave the comments a guarded welcome. 'We have heard these reports. We have always taken the opportunity of any meeting with senior Iranians to press for assurances of Salman Rushdie's safety " a spokesman told British BBČ TV.

"Robin Cook had a meeting the Iranian Foreign Minister in New York on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly on September 24. He will use the meeting to seek clarification of what the Iranian Government's position is on the

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's meeting with Kharrazi will be the first encounter of its kind for four vears. But Kharrazi cancelled an appearance at talks on Afghanistan with his US counterpart, Madeleine Albright, and Khatami and US President Bill Clinton avoided meeting during their UN appearances on

September 21. Despite this Khatami has drawn attention for his favourable comments about democracy, liberalism and dialogue between civilisations in New York this week. "From now onwards, we want to push forward a dialogue, and we hope that we have entered the period of dialogue," he told the press on September 22.

EU relations with Iran have steadily improved since Khatami's election last year. All EU states bar Greece cut links with Iran after a German court found that Iran's leadership had ordered the killing of Iranian dissidents in Berlin in

The court verdict temporarily ended a period of so-called 'critical dialogue' between the EU and Iran. Germany returned its ambassadors to Iran in Jan-

However, speaking in Berlin in May, Rushdie said EU policy towards Iran was "Hypocritical" and singled out German foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel for putting his country's business interests ahead of his life.

"He said he (Kinkel) could not deform German foreign policy for the sake of one person.' Rushdie said. "I would argue that there are other important values at stake here that he and other European governments supposedly hold dear as well.

"The fact is that this has been going on now for nine and a half years and it is still not over. I think I am entitled to say that it is nearly a decade later and I'm still in the jam. It is legitimate to ask (the EU), 'Would you please finish the job?"

— IPS/APB