

Wrong Handling

Prime Minister's dinner meeting on Sunday with the development partners was set against a definitive background of the latter's efforts to bring the two conflicting political parties in the country to a negotiating table.

The meeting was sought by the development partners in a state of heightened anxiety to see a speedy end to the highly confrontational and polarised political situation in the country.

Because the donor representatives wanted the meeting with the PM they obviously craved for a businesslike, productive session not a Ganobha-in feast interspersed with exchange of pleasantries and recital of government achievements.

The seriousness of the meeting was deflected, diffused. Why are we playing this game? Let's face facts in the shape of the following two questions: One, are the donors' concerns serious or valid enough to be considered?

Since the development partners are expressing a concern that is universally shared, we think it is valid and worth paying heed to.

Face the Camera, Please

We are appalled at BNP Secretary General Manan Bhuiyan's perception of a responsible opposition in a democratic society claiming immunity from accountability.

The allegations brought forward by the opposition against the state-run electronic medium hold true now as it did in the past with a slight variation in degree and content.

BTV is public property and the opposition has as much claim on it as the ruling party has. So, don't shy away from this powerful medium. Utilise it as best as you can.

In the past she had avoided appearing on BTV; but as a responsible public leader and one who cares for her people Khaleda Zia must face the camera and answer questions.

More Potable Water

Construction work for the Syedabad Water Treatment Plant has begun. Belated beginning it is, indeed, but what matters most is the fact that the project has at last taken off.

However, as it often happens in our country, a project's implementation slows down, for one reason or the other, after it has been formally launched.

The plant will definitely go a long way towards resolving acute scarcity of piped water in and around the capital. However, as the Local Government and Rural Development Minister Zillur Rahman observed in his speech at the inauguration ceremony, wastage at the consumer's end renders the distribution system ineffective in no small measure.

BOMB and politics are linked together through strong, durable bonds of love and affection. Strange, isn't it? But Bangladesh is a world apart. It is a sovereign Nation. Strange or stupid, whatever we do is entirely our business.

During early 1960s, politics was essentially divided into pro and anti establishment and the instruments used were mostly vocal slogans intensifying into fist fights or at worst, hockey sticks would be brought in when the confrontation used to be prolonged.

However, art of politics must keep on changing. Actually, the dynamism of politics, particularly in our country, knows no bounds. Yet new forms of political aggrandizement must come to light.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) tried its best to solve the Kosovo problem with the threat of force, not actual force. They had been threatening dire consequences for Serbia for eight years since 1992 — without following through.

After incessant saber-rattling and predicting doomsday for Serbia to no effect, NATO sent its favourite frequent-flier, Richard Holbrooke, back to Serbia on March 21.

Holbrooke was back in Belgrade ten days later to give Milosevic "one last chance." The problem was, Milosevic did not want that chance.

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through innovations. Remember the prehistoric age of stones when men fought with sticks alone. It was much later that the sharp steel blades of swords made their appearance and thus the Iron Age emerged.

From hockey sticks and firewood to cycle chains and knives was a major event of historic proportion although within our eggshell environment. The age of bombs was not far removed but it had to wait for the confrontation with fire and our struggle for freedom.

Afterwards, we had a quite, practically soundless, celebration inside my house. Oh what a bomb and what glories. Shortly, there were bomb jokes under circulation. The head of one of the specialized UN agencies was in town and after the first night, he asked his Pakistani host: I heard bomb blasts in the evening, what is going on; it does not seem to be quiet and peaceful even within the city limits?

The second Kosovo peace talks in Paris were canceled on March 19, because the Serbs would not sign the agreement, although the Kosovars did. The Serbs did not want NATO peacekeepers to witness their atrocities.

Instead of immediate bombing, as was promised, NATO tried to delay, and give Serbia "one last chance." As NATO gave the Serbs more time, they moved in heavy equipment and regular soldiers — in violation of October agreement — and started destroying Kosovo, one village at a time.

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Bomb and Politics

There was a report by explosive experts belonging to the Army that bomb making instruments and materials were found inside the house of a lawmaker. There were bombs, exploded and unexploded. Yet the house owner remains above suspicion since he has not been arrested. This is the kind of rule of law that prevails in our country.

bomb blasted inside the hotel. The UN Agency Chief immediately requested his host: Please tell your soldiers not to practice so close to the hotel.

Such explosions by Mukti Bahini used to be the nightly renewal of our determination that we must fight on; we must win. Those were the beginning when the youth of the land was introduced to bomb and fire.

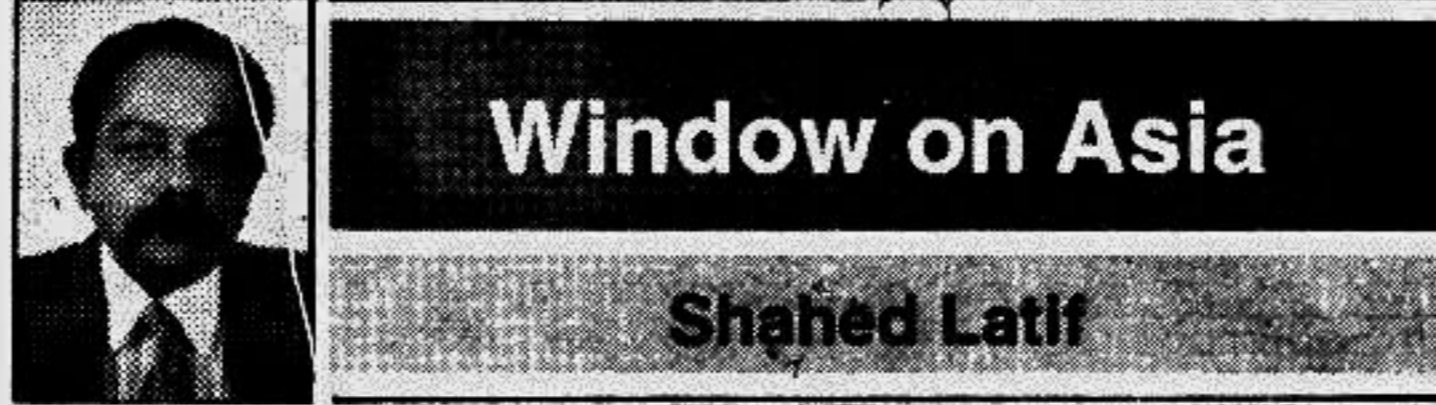
And politics has found out highly innovative opportunities of deployment. Crude bombs are easy to make, that is one advantage, and there is no dearth of young unemployed, desperate and ignorant enough to risk their lives in manufacture, supply and actual use of such explosive products.

Also, please remember that there is now a global appeal for privatization. So law and order services should be privatized and the best way to do so is to take the law in your own hands. Private armies of mashtans is an ideal solution who for a service fee may explode couple of bombs in support of hartal or do the same to drive away the hartal mongers. It is all a question of the right time and price.

I will request my readers to fully appreciate the predicament of our beloved politicians. They are forced to make use of bombs since if they don't, the other side will and if the other side doesn't, they are living in fool's paradise and nobody wants to live in that sort of heaven. It is very fortunate that several of our politicians are grassroots people. So they believe in the politics of the street, not debates or other such methods where education is very important. Thus the strong and

I repeat, people are not stupid. Perhaps politicians think people can be fooled since they are enamoured with bombs and they cannot give it up. After all, it is love, I said at the very beginning and who does not know that love is blind. In fact, there seems to be an intensification of the love for bombs; so much so that law givers of the nation have turned into bomb makers of their constituency. They could be the B52s of political parties. After all, we are too poor to afford B52s for our Air Force. Instead, we may organize well spread out bomb making and storage with occasional explosions here and there which is the necessary price we must pay for the unique decentralized strategy of defence.

It is also now well established that lawmakers are above the law. Isn't it logical? They are not ordinary human beings. They travel first class anywhere within the country, free of charge, by sea, air or surface transport. They live in luxury suites next to the Parliament building — overlooking a beautiful lake and exquisite garden. They make laws sitting in the most imposing building of the country and they have to work the least amount of time and even if it is a working day for the parliament, they can remain absent without any qualm. Even if they attend, they can walk out at any time. It is all play and practically no work, making them denizens of perhaps another world. How can they be subjected to the laws they make for ordinary human beings like us?



Window on Asia

Shahed Latif

LETTER FROM AMERICA

No Eid for the Muslims of Kosovo

Dr Fakhruddin Ahmed writes from Princeton

Any student of international law knows that a province that is 90 per cent ethnic Albanian Muslim, with a language, culture and religion that is different from the Serbs, that is bordered by friendly fellow Albanians in Albania and Macedonia, is a viable independent state. Before that can happen, there is this simple matter of winning a war.

As in "Desert Storm," the NATO mission was meticulously planned — take out the Serbian air defense system first. With Serbia unable to defend its skies, go after the moving targets such as tanks and soldiers. Unfortunately, Serbia knew NATO's plan. Therefore, without wasting a second, they went about the business they are best at — murdering and ethnic cleansing. Before it was safe for the NATO planes to fly low and threaten them, the Serbian soldiers torched Albanian villages, took men and boys to execution fields, and pushed women and children into Albania.

Yugoslavia's Vice President has been jangling the air waves complaining that the Albanians have been committing "genocide" over the last 50 years. His rationale? When Marshall Tito formed the Yugoslavian nation after the Second World War, there were a lot more Serbs in Kosovo than there are now. The truth is that Kosovo is situated in a region that can be called the ethnic Albanian region of the Balkans.

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management which the public do not see. There are several areas for improvement (who administers and how chart of the set-up, with special watch on the feedback systems at the different levels). It will take time to bring cricket professionalism to the routine level, despite amateurish encouragement from the official quarters. Patronisation has to be strictly neutral.

Anyways, there is no reason to lose hope about the bright future of international cricket in Bangladesh. There is plenty of talent around waiting to be tapped. The infrastructure is coming up, and the overwhelming public support is encouraging. We must remember that there should be no politics in cricket and the specialists should be allowed to run the game without too much bureaucratic or political nepotism.

Who are going to control the rulers of Tejgaon IA-CA? Another Rajuk type of authority? When nobody listens to anybody, where to go with the gitanavans, malpractices, corruption, bribes and other vices in which many personalities can be openly identified without putting the names on paper? What will be the role of the bank loan defaulters? This area is a gold mine for prospectors. The new allotments may see another DSE-like scam. Do we learn from experience?

There must be a ceiling on the maximum height of the new buildings and extensions with enough surrounding area left for medium traffic density. The civic and road designs and alignments must work for the next 20 years. There should be some insulation for the residential flats as Tejgaon is going to be a satellite town. At present the entry and exit points are too few and too narrow.

The DS may initiate a roundtable on the new Tejgaon IA/CA, to bring out the plus and minus points in public interest.

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For the better part of a decade, the Albanians under their elected President Ibrahim Raguva adopted the Gandhian civil disobedience. As soon as the Bosnian war was settled in 1995, Milosevic turned his attention to ethnically cleansing Kosovo. His brutal suppression of the Albanians gave rise to the militant Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) only two years ago. Way back in 1992, the then President Bush had warned Milosevic to keep his hands off Kosovo. True to form, Milosevic ignored good counsel. The world has to realize that Milosevic is a psychopath. Both his parents committed suicide. Now President Clinton has to back up Bush's warnings with actions.

The Republican Senator from Kentucky, Mitch McConnell, recounted a recent meeting at the White House. He and the Democratic Senator from Connecticut, Joseph Lieberman made forceful arguments why the US should aid the Kosovo Liberation Army, so that they could fight for their own independence. There was a deafening silence. Suddenly they realized that the US is opposed to Kosovo's independence; the official policy is that it

should remain a part of Yugoslavia. If one could fault the President on one issue, it is this.

The instability of the Balkans can be traced to the clash of civilizations, cultures and religions. Yugoslavia was a very artificial country. The Croats, Catholics, identify with the West; the Serbs, Eastern Orthodox Christians, with Russia and Greece; and the Bosnians and the Kosovars, Muslims, with Turkey and the Muslim world. That is why Yugoslavia broke away so quickly into distinct ethnic nations. It will be a tragic mistake, after all that has happened, to forcibly keep Kosovo in Serbia.

Any student of international law knows that a province that is 90 per cent ethnic Albanian Muslim, with a language, culture and religion that is different from the Serbs, that is bordered by friendly fellow ethnic Albanians in Albania and Macedonia, is a viable independent state. Before that can happen, there is this simple matter of winning a war.

Madman Milosevic will do his best to expel all the Kosovars from Kosovo and present the West with a fait accompli — a 100 per cent Serbian Kosovo. Up until now, the US insists that all the Albanian Kosovars refugees will be resettled in their homelands, as in the case of displaced Bosnians. It is safe to say that the "Badger of the Balkans" will test the West's resolve up until his last tank is put out of commission in Kosovo.

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OPINION

Chaos in Telephone Policy

A Zabr

It is not surprising to read the critical comment and technical analysis by Abu Saeed Khan, the independent telecom consultant (DS Mar 115), on the weak handling and processing of technical policy by the BTB, as per the lettered technical advice to the government on the strategy to be adopted for the accelerated development of telephones in the country.

It is difficult to advise the ministry and the cabinet due to the current trend of fast changing telecom technologies affecting the market and marketing of new devices, as the growth of information technology has been so rapid that it is difficult even for the non-specialist professionals to be updated. Moreover, the implications of the technical specifications offered in the tender proposals from the international vendors and bidders and forecast the impact in the near future, say even after five years.

The Japanese PHS (Personal Handyphone System) is similar to the outdated Japanese HDTV (high-definition television) which was initially demonstrated and experimentally introduced in Japan, based on the analogue system first researched in the 1970s and later developed in the 1980s; only to be outdated by the subsequent digital HDTV systems perfected in the West. Now to maintain global compatibility, the Japanese were forced, by technological developments to abandon their old analogue system and go along with the current digital HDTV standard. Even then there are several de facto standards vying competitively, based on proprietary systems.

BTB is unable to go ahead with large scale crash programmes in new telephone connections due to confusing technical standards available in the global market place. Now CDMA is competing in the USA

with the established system, the USA being the largest users of telephone in the world. Of course the US companies could gate crash into any country in the telecom sector as they are doing in the energy sector. The US trade policy is straightforward. Keep hold on communications. IT, energy and arms markets.

Japan was technically innovative in the 70s and 80s, but now with continued recession of the Japanese industry (