

Defuse Tension over Kashmir

Since the beginning of India's air strikes on 'strategic positions held by Pakistani infiltrators' on Wednesday last and Pakistan's downing of two Indian aircraft closely on its heels, tensions in Kashmir have only boiled over.

Even as the military rhetoric over Kashmir mounts there is a parallel move by India and Pakistan to engage each other in talks to de-escalate the heightening tensions.

Our hope is both sides will see the wisdom of exercising all the diplomatic options available to them instead of adopting military means to straighten the latest angularity in Kashmir crisis.

As Pakistan looks upon the crisis as another opportunity to seek international intervention in the Kashmir dispute, India braces itself to combat it by insisting that the question should be resolved entirely bilaterally.

What certainly reads like a redeeming feature is that both India and Pakistan are keen on the agenda to continue with the talks and keep the Kashmir conflict localised for fear, maybe, of being drawn willy-nilly into nuclear misadventurism.

Tribute to Zia

Today we pay our tribute to late President Ziaur Rahman who was assassinated on 30 May 1981 at Chittagong Circuit House. A valiant freedom fighter who boosted the morale of a struggling people in those dark days of Pakistan through his independence proclamations.

In addition to all that, he should be remembered for his contributions to the freedom of press in Bangladesh. The print media, specially the daily and weekly newspapers, were free from government ownership and control.

We call upon all political parties to show respect where it is due. We do not want our children to grow up in an environment of hate and intolerance and with a split vision of our leadership heritage.

Vanishing Medicines

The news in yesterday's Daily Star of pilfering drugs from the leading healthcare establishments like Dhaka Medical College Hospital, Mitford Hospital, Institute of Cardio Vascular Diseases etc., and selling them in 'open market' underlines the fact that no place is immune from racketeering these days.

This illegal drug-marketing must not be allowed to continue. The authorities will have to devise ways, first to curb, and then to eliminate this felonious communion between the hospital personnel and the drug retailers.

This is a really not need to join the feminist party to protest against these horrifying acts which would lower down your position in the society. You just need to be a human,

NATO Fault-lines in the Balkans

The NATO must develop a negotiating strategy with the full understanding of Balkans' history, its ethno-religious divide, and its own peculiar conflict dynamics.

NATO's high-tech war in the Balkans conducted from the safety of very high altitude yielded so far very poor results. In the third month of the war in which little has gone right up till now the United States faces the ignominy of helplessness before a tiny defiant enemy who refuses to budge.

Instead of accomplishing any of its goals - strategic, political and even humanitarian the NATO has, as a matter of fact, strengthened Milosevic's hold on power, destabilised the neighbouring countries, destroyed the Rambouillet peace formula and, most important, actually worsened the plight of Kosovar Albanians majority of whom are now dislodged from their home under the cover of war smoke.

There is already a Vietnam syndrome in the Balkans. Most visible of it is a growing yearning for peace with honour.

wave of anger in Beijing. The bad timing goes far beyond Kosovo. China, the one big power besides Russia that has been firmly opposed to the NATO campaign is now demanding a halt to the bombing before talks can start in the UNSC.

NATO's political leaders seem to have gone haywire in evolving a rational perception of the war which is certainly not an optional extra of diplomatic policy; neither is that a gesture of irritation at being unable to impose one's power.

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ment, the war itself is a liability. There is hardly an exit route. Not only the diplomatic, political and military strategies were misconceived in the Balkans, they were all miserably bungled up.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

no contingency plan to come up with. They also did not foresee political difference that would split-NATO at a later time. It is the diplomacy leading to Balkan war was flawed by an arrogant disregard of Russia as an absurd military strategy depended on the belief that Milosevic could be forced to capitulate and accept Rambouillet terms by bombing alone.

The grand invasion, an inescapable requirement for a de-

clusive war was consciously set aside by the US and her allies all of whom seemed shy about using ground forces in the Balkans.

Americans are still haunted by Vietnam experience. If the bombing was likely to be ineffective and a ground invasion was unacceptable to almost every NATO member except perhaps Britain and Turkey it made no sense to start the air strikes.

In hindsight it seems that the NATO did not take history into account in evolving its Balkan policies. The conflict in the Balkans dates back to the period when the Turks pushed into Europe during the 14th century.

eration. The Balkan wars had their long histories and the record of their savageries. In the name of a Pan-Slavism the Tsarist Russia often appeared in Balkan scenes and overreached herself, for example, in Crimean war. Russia militarily 'liberated' Bulgaria from Ottoman Turks on whom it imposed the treaty of San Stefano.

After having lost the credibility of its air war and no immediate agenda to pursue either in Serbia or Kosovo NATO is morally bound to concentrate on the humanitarian aspects of the war.

Indo-Pakistan Tensions

Why This Sudden Flare-up?

The "Lahore Declaration" had injected some positive elements in the ties of the two countries and also in the overall political environment of the region. It is desirable that the spirit of the declaration is brought into play to ward off any major crisis so that people of the region as a whole can heave a sigh of relief.

The development was fraught with alarming level of worsening of the ties between the two countries both whom of late have acquired nuclear capabilities and are armed with sophisticated missiles.

The West and the international community is currently more engrossed with the "Kosovo" crisis. Otherwise, this developing Indo-Pakistan crisis would have certainly been the major flash point of international trouble-spots and international trouble-shooting at the moment.

two countries are concerned in the near or the foreseeable future? And finally, what could be the implications of this situation? There is no denying that "Kashmir" issue is the main bone of contention in the Indo-Pakistan relations.

All noble and pious protestations notwithstanding, it is commonly believed that this dispute thwarts all efforts to improve their ties. Two sides held several rounds of talks at the level of foreign secretaries on bilateral matters but discussions were generally back to square one since no progress could be achieved on either sides.

One widely believed notion is that both governments may have eyes on their respective domestic conditions while carrying out the current policies and actions in Kashmir.

On the Pakistani side, Nawaz Sharif government - despite its overwhelming support in the national assembly - is bogged down on a number of issues like the increasing confrontation with the Mujahedin.

bad economy coupled with the deteriorating law and order situation in the premier city Karachi. Some feel that the government may have chosen this time to harp on the "Kashmir" issue to distract the public opinion.

However, the present clashes are unlikely to turn into a full war since the two nuclear-capable nations cannot really afford to let the incidents go that far since the consequences could be more than disastrous.

The writer is Special Correspondent of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha

MATTERS AROUND US

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury



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To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Stop harassing us

Sir, Better late than never, I would like to draw the attention of all our conscious citizens to the shameful event that took place at TSC on the Pabeha Baisakh of this year (14th April 1999).

Whether it's a concert, a fair, a meeting, a programme or a shopping complex - women are always their one and only target. I don't think any women in this country feel safe for a single second at a single place.

No, you really don't need to join the feminist party to protest against these horrifying acts which would lower down your position in the society. You just need to be a human,

which is really rare nowadays. We are warning you that time has changed. You won't be able to do this. We are getting prepared with all our forces that you can't even think of.

Shehnaz Shahriar New DOHS, Dhaka, 1207

Unforgivable offence

Sir, It is noticed with great remorse that the highly sophisticated weapons used by NATO could go absolutely out of control so easily. The "accidental" bomb attack by NATO upon the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on the morning of 8.5.99 was neither acceptable nor forgivable.

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equipment. But how long are we to be used as live lab guinea pigs only for their fulfillment? Aren't our lives worth anything? True, history shows that the Nazis carried out the same inhuman tasks long time back.

But we were under the impression that what the Nazis did then was barbaric and not to be repeated ever again. Where did we go wrong? The constant killings of Iraqi and Yugoslav civilians remind us of a more advanced Nazis only who use their mouths as weapons.

Masroor Ahmed Deepak Dhaka

Osmani Uddyan

Sir, Osmani Uddyan is at the border of Old and New Dhaka cities separating them by 11,000 trees. A wonderful sight to watch. But sorry to say that the trees of the Uddyan will be cut down and it will be replaced by buildings.

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the relationship well-oiled, for possible future exploitation. This social attitude might have developed from the centuries-old zamindari system which developed in united Bengal during the British period and earlier.

The eradication of sycophancy should be well planned, and there should be no gaps for these deceptive bugs and virus to hide and play games of hide and seek. But it is a difficult task for our leaders (political and otherwise), who themselves cannot resist temptation and rent-seeking opportunities.

A Zabr Dhaka

"The Zulum of the Landlords"

Sir, The above titled letter from Mr Abul M Ahmad on 21 May, 1999 attracted my attention because I am a retired person living in a rented flat at Uttara, Dhaka. For the convenience of the tenants I wish to know the full address of the Rent Control Department and its telephone number in order to avoid any unpleasant situation arising at any time in future.

It is also important to make fair deals between the house-owners and the tenants in respect of the monthly rent as per the rent control-principles of the government. Some of the

been bad enough for the Kosovars but a continuation of the war could be worse. There is also the risk of rising civilian casualties from the bombing itself as NATO runs out of prime military targets.

Washington and its NATO allies have now only two options - wage a full war with an objective of physically marching upto Belgrade in a ground invasion or cut a deal with Milosevic with Russia's intermediation. Even if some quarters in the NATO countries do see the logic of an immediate ground invasion the leadership has been dithering for unusually long whether to commit the ground forces and in what strength.

If NATO wants to avoid that gory path it must develop a negotiating strategy with the full understanding of Balkans' history, its ethno-religious divide, and its own peculiar conflict dynamics. Even if Russia is considered an economic pariah, and underdog of its kind and an unequal among the equals it is the indispensable key to the solution of any of the Balkan crises.

The writer is former Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International & Strategic Studies

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tenants at times become the victim of the whims of the house-owners who are said to be the "social menace" because of their link with anti-social elements.

M A Osman Ali Ameer Complex Uttara Sector-7, Dhaka.

Money lenders?

Sir, Most of the NGOs in our country are operating credit programme among the poor women, living in the slum areas. But recently in a workshop, our finance minister told that if the NGOs continue to charge high interest rate, these would turn into rent-seeking institutions.

It is sure that our country has already achieved international reputation for the success in the micro-credit programme which benefits poor people, and the government is also extending support to it. So this type of NGOs should not behave like the traditional money lenders.

There should be a legal system to control it.

Mostafa Sohel Dhaka