

Too Hurried a Rejection

NO sooner had the Prime Minister renewed her offer for talks than Khaleda Zia rejected it as if the two leaders are in a competition of showing who can be tougher than the other, regardless of the cost to the country.

The call for talks should have been positively responded to because most of the stumbling blocks have apparently been removed. First, the PM does not seem averse to the idea of an early election, a core demand of the opposition.

Khaleda Zia's rejection of the offer for any talks throws our politics into a very uncertain future. We foresee nothing short of violent clashes and destructive confrontation.

Strike at the Root

TIMELY intervention by the Indian police has certainly saved the six Bangladeshi boys and girls from a subhuman existence as camel jockeys and prostitutes respectively while the initiative of the Bangladesh Women Lawyers' Association secured their passage back home.

Aside from the active child-trafficking racket at play, there is another side to the story here as reflected in Parveen's case. The 12-year-old was taken to India by her own aunt who sold her off to another trafficker for seven thousand taka.

Spend for a Good Cause

IT happens all the time that government exchequer runs dry when it comes to financing a good cause. Higher computer education in five universities of the country has not been able to take off because of funds constraint.

The ministry concerned seems to have washed its hands off the job by writing to the Computer Science Department (CSD) of Dhaka University in haste; but when the reply was sent accordingly to the ministry the latter appears to be sitting pretty on it.

Private universities cater to the need for computer education to some extent but at great expense. The students can only be trained in IT at a cheaper cost in the public sector institutions.

AT the end of eighteenth century the Russians, in their long process of empire state building intruded into what is today the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya — then an idyllic abode for the meditating Sufi branch of Sunni Muslims.

After more than two centuries of intermittent war between the Russians and Chechens the conflict is now seized on by the believers in the 'clash of civilization' propounded by Samuel Huntington who said in 1993 that cultural and religious fault lines would be most likely source of conflict in post-Cold War world.

So far, Huntington's theory

A "Clash of Civilisation"?

The clash of civilization is, however, not unknown to history. It is that clash which catalyses change and brings about rise and fall of civilization. The time is not as yet ripe to challenge the civilization symbolised by advanced western countries; neither is there a countervailing force to match it.

applied exclusively to the west with whom a resurgent political Islam clashed — and clashed violently at times. During the past decade the United States alone bore the brunt of international terrorism for its alleged crimes against Islam: propping up Israel in Arab heartland, inhumanely starving the Iraqis and desecrating with its presence the land of Islam's holiest places during the Gulf War.

Recently the Russian government has blamed terrorists from the country's Muslim south for a series of bomb blasts in Moscow and other cities which claimed over 300 lives. This is apart from their secessionist war in Chechnya.



PERSPECTIVES

by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

But they gradually began to arm themselves and set up semi-autonomous enclaves with local followers in Caucasus to enforce Sharia. Can they be without a role in on-going war in Chechnya? All thoughtful Muslims — whether the proud mountain clans of Caucasus or the outsiders — tend to find cause in Chechnya war to wipe out the rule of foreign infidels.

returned home duly battle hardened. Many of those Afghan-veterans are believed to be in Chechnya in search of new Islamic cause to fight. It is the presence of these elements which helps to explain why Russia regards its own Islamic adversary in Chechnya so dangerous.

Ruling Party and Opposition Poised for Another Bout

by Mansoor Mamoon

In a speech to the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies on January 19, 2000 US Secretary of State Madeline Albright warned the elected leaders of the new democracies not to succumb to the temptations of self-enrichment, self-glorification and self-perpetuation in power. The result is sham democracy.

SIGNS are indeed ominous. Dark clouds are again hovering over the horizon (the sky, however, has never been very clear either). War cries are increasingly becoming louder and the ruling party and the mainstream opposition combine appeared to have been poised for yet another bout in their do or die bid to elbow out, even to the extent of liquidating, their rival.

The recent decision of the cabinet to go for the draconian Public Safety Bill for what has been described as "the rising trends of violent crimes, hijacking, dacoities, destruction of public properties etc" has added fuel to the fire.

Burma's uncompromising pro-democracy leader and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi in one of her political essays succinctly said it is largely out of fear, fear of mass alienation and the possible backlash arising out of such a dire situation that a government becomes repressive.

on an unwilling nation yet another black law. The first Awami League government's legacy of the Special Powers Act is still riding high on the shoulder of the nation and cannot be shaken off despite persistent demand from the components of the civil society.

The people should not be asked to pay for the utter failure of the government in curbing violence and crimes and in maintaining law and order which was professedly the first priority of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when she assumed power on June 23, 1996.

save the people from the slow poisoning of these killer polythene bags.

have an effective local government power base so that when national elections are held under a neutral caretaker government as provided for in the constitution, it will have an edge over the opposition. Monopolisation of local bodies by the ruling party supporters will be a safety-valve for it to influence the polling.

In a democracy the carrot and stick policy does not work. What works is gesture of goodwill and confidence-building. The folly of the ruling party was that this carrot and stick policy has rather helped the four-party opposition combine to iron out their differences.

overall law and order situation. The innocent people who have nothing to do with power politics will be the innocent victims and bear the brunt. Resolution of the impasse is therefore of utmost necessity to save the nation from the possible pitfalls.

ing the students on the campus of Dhaka University known as the Oxford of the East.

Conversely, the ruling party has also ingeniously invented to bring out battle-equipped peace processions on the road in a bid to rescue the country from the acts of vandalism of the hartal-caller terrorists.

What one finds in the educational sector of Bangladesh? Kindergarten, private English medium schools and colleges, private medical and engineering colleges, private universities etc have cropped up as flourishing commercial enterprises in the name of rescuing the nation from the poverty of updated, well-managed academies in different tiers of education.

A Nation of Rescuers?

by A R Shamsul Islam

AS some of the alleged accused of the most shameful act of repression on a young lady on the thirty-first December night on the Dhaka University campus are being apprehended by the police they have amusingly started to come up with a delusion that it was they who rushed to rescue the lady from attacks on her chastity perpetrated by someone else.

The outcry against such an infamous incident has been quite great and wide. Different sections have cried shame on it and strongly demanded exemplary actions against the culprits. The PM herself bitterly condemned and expressed concern at the incident and ordered the Home Ministry to go for stern action.

There was a section of men who have opined that in the prevalent situation of law and order deterioration and corroding moral values the victim lady might not have gone to the campus to celebrate the occasion at so dead hour of night for her own safety.

Whereas this time thirty-first night celebrations passed off rather peacefully without any report of incident of extreme wild youthful exuberance in trouble-prone, vulnerable, sensitive posh spots of the metropolitan capital, it is extremely sad that a lady was sexually attacked, before the very nose of the law-enforcing agencies and hundreds of onlookers, by a band of young men includ-

against international terrorism even if it was the handiwork of some militant Muslim groups. Mr Putin also firmly rejected the view that the 'bandits' Russia was fighting could be described as Islamists.

That the present in general is discreet in dealing with Islam and even its own Muslim minority grows out of its fear of a Muslim backlash the world over. So its policy is to divide and deal piecemeal. There are six million Muslims in the United States who constitute certain political weight and the government is increasingly conscious of their clout.

Notwithstanding a highly mixed up scenario in Chechnya where multiple factors like geopolitics, religion and ethnicity combined with each other to fuel a protracted conflict, the clash of civilization is, however, not unknown to history. It is that clash which catalyses change and brings about rise and fall of civilization.

bring the two sides to the negotiation table. In this effort the President will find the entire nation behind him which will be his strength and which neither the ruling party nor the BNP-led opposition will be able to ignore to the risk of their peril and isolation from the people.

Meanwhile, the ruling party should better pay heed to US Secretary of State Madeline Albright's advice to the leaders of new democracies the world over. In a speech to the Johns Hopkins University School for Advanced International Studies on January 19, 2000 she warned the elected leaders of the new democracies not to succumb to the temptations of self-enrichment, self-glorification and self-perpetuation in power.

The writer SAARC Gold Medalist, is a former Researcher at the Institute of South East Asian Studies and the Commonwealth Foundation for Broadcasting Development.

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Preserving our national heritage

Sir, Two different English dailies in their 14 January issues published reports depicting the dilapidated condition of two historical mosques — Dhaka's 'Satgambuj' (Saath Masjid) and 'Chandamari Pucca Mosque' in Kurigram.

I would like to call upon the relevant authority to take urgent measures for the protection and development of these mosques. This is important for our heritage.

M. Zahidul Haque Associate Professor BAI, Dhaka-1207

A bid to save the Chechens

Sir, We express our heartfelt appreciation for the stand taken by the government of the US and European Community (European Commission) to deplore and condemn the inhuman attack of the Russian military against the freedom loving Chechens.

Fighting pollution

Sir, We hail the concerned members of Bangladesh Environment Lawyer's Association (BELA) for obtaining a verdict by the High Court upon their petition to save Buriganga from ruin by the encroachers (DS January 19, 2000).

act but also asked the Russian government to immediately halt their criminal activities. In comparison, the Islamic countries and their 'toothless organisation' (Organisation of Islamic Countries) are almost silent on the matter, well knowing the fact that the majority of the population in Chechnya is Muslim.

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Cripple the country?

Sir, I found in the Daily Star a news item which began with this: 'Main opposition BNP has threatened to cripple the country....' The threat is attributed to Mr. Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan, the party Secretary-General.

It is preposterous of a leader to threaten to cripple the very country he or she claims to lead. Crippling here means loss of production and income, less access to education, deteriorating law and order, another day of human misery. It is one thing to try to oust the government of the country. It is quite another to threaten to cripple the country.

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