

Early Aid Signal

FINANCE Minister SAMS Kibria's budgetary planning for the next fiscal will be facilitated by the World Bank Country Director Frederick T Temple's indication of the donors' aid pledge ahead of the Paris consortium meet.

On policy and constitutional reforms we wished the government had carried out the 'sensitive' ones amongst them during the first couple of years since their induction into power.

Nevertheless, where we can really make some difference is in aid utilisation which has been our Achilles Heels. In working off the pipeline bulge it is essential for us to streamline the existent mechanisms for implementation of projects and programmes.

Once we succeed in breaking our bureaucratic tangles we shall be in an unassailable position to have the donor community simplify their disbursement procedures.

DUCSU: Forgotten Glory

THERE are clear signs that any thought of staging elections to the Dhaka University Central Students Union (DUCSU) will have to be put in the cold storage for some more time yet.

Sadly, the vice-chancellor's statement in this regard — "we should remember that the poll could hamper the university's academic atmosphere" — highlights what a terrifying phenomenon DUCSU election, or for that matter student politics, has become, thanks to overindulgence from our political leaders.

Indeed, DUCSU poll should be a regular feature in the academic calendar of Dhaka University but the authorities must ensure that it doesn't turn into a fray for the superannuated student leaders.

Chittagong University in Turmoil

It seems that none of the student wings of political parties is interested in seeing the Chittagong University re-open after 103 days of an unscheduled vacation.

The All Party Students Alliance (APSA), dominated by the Shibirites, called for an indefinite strike at the CU campus on 1 February placing a five-point demand that included the removal of VC and Pro-VC of the university.

Clinton's Visit and Its Implications

by Benazir Bhutto

Fed on its policy of strategic defiance, many in Pakistan's decision-making areas had convinced themselves that the world community could not afford to abandon Pakistan in the event of an Indian threat, for fear of a potential nuclear conflict.

THE Clinton visit dramatically outlined the political contours of a post-cold war South Asia. India, the world's largest democracy, was wooed and won, with a five-day presidential visit and four billion dollars in foreign investment.

In stark contrast, Pakistan was cold-shouldered with a five-hour visit at the tail-end of the Clintonian tour. The streets of Pakistan, the world's newest military dictatorship, were empty as President Clinton landed in Islamabad.

Concerned about yet another Indo-Pak conflict, with both countries having acquired nuclear devices, the American president came, firstly, to see if the Pakistani side was amenable to a change in political direction, and secondly, to keep the lines of communication with the unelected rulers open in the event a new conflagration broke out.

Even before the American president landed, his National Security Adviser made it clear that Pakistan's post-cold war policy of strategic defiance made no sense to the international community.

That message was reinforced by President Clinton's own televised address to the Pak-

istani people and in talks with the General's regime. The President made it clear that he was "worried about the direction Pakistan is moving in".

The deadlock in negotiations was evident with the lack of agreement between the two sides, despite the brave talk that the "visit augers well for a better future of our region and for strengthening of mutual relations" by the country's ruler.

General Musharraf gave no ground on the Kashmir issue either where violence escalated with the killing of thirty-five Sikhs during the American President's visit.

Although many construed Clinton's words to apply to Pakistan, they applied equally to India. Both sides claim

grievance, indulge in violence and are responsible for actions leading to civilian casualties across the line dividing Kashmir. Both need to forsake bloodshed and find a way to mutually end the violence without prejudice to their overall views on the dispute.

General Musharraf was quick to respond that he was "ready for a dialogue anywhere at any time and at any level". Whilst some contact may take place, it would be naive to assume that India will be in any mood for talks.

Much despair was caused in Pakistan on the refusal of America to mediate in the Kashmir dispute. Again, this was misplaced. America has consistently maintained over the years that it would only mediate if both parties agreed - and India has been unwilling to permit that mediation.

In the obduracy of the Indian position, Pakistan is under pressure to seek a bilateral solution to the build up of tension in the region. To do otherwise could well tempt India to cross the border in the disputed area.

pared to bail itself out, Pakistan has little choice in the matter.

This need not have been the case and Pakistan could well have won international respect if it was willing to move in the nuclear non-proliferation field. But here the country showed inflexibility.

In proposing "resumption of dialogue with the United States on nuclear issues", the regime appeared to miss the issue further. Given the precarious financial situation, perhaps it believed it could get another rescheduling by promising another deadline.

Although the military regime promised to make an "effort" to bring Osama bin Laden, the man most wanted by America, to justice, they failed to make a commitment.

Terrorism in South Asia Nothing Official About It!

The world is being fed deliberately with misleading Indian propaganda about Pakistan; one has to separate terrorism from support for a broad based and indigenous freedom struggle of an oppressed people.

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

the bombings of the US Embassy in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam? That is pure terrorism, there being no justification whatsoever for the murder of these poor innocent people.

India has tried desperately to paint the freedom struggle in Kashmir as terrorist activity in international eyes. Many veteran Mujahideen of the Afghan war having volunteered to physically help the Kashmiris in their struggle, the Indian attempt is to provide a linkage between US Enemy No. 1 Osama Bin Laden and Kashmiri Mujahideen.

hours. In this age when countries have substituted regional hegemony by binding and equitable economic links, India's bid to impose its hegemony over South Asia and the Indian Ocean is reflected in the massive 28 per cent increase in its defence budget, surely the biggest outlay for defence by any country in the world at this time.

Partly because of economic reasons, partly because of the

tion efforts at combating terrorism". He made no mention of bilateral efforts for that purpose. The regime talked about its plans to deweaponize society but they kept quiet on deweaponizing Madrassahs imparting military training to Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen.

The difference in perception was never greater. Ironically, China, Iran and India, Pakistan's three neighbours, who have had difficulties with America, are moving to bridge the gaps between them and the US. But with Pakistan, once the most allied ally, that gap is growing.

Fed on its policy of strategic defiance, many in Pakistan's decision-making areas had convinced themselves that the world community could not afford to abandon Pakistan in the event of an Indian threat, for fear of a potential nuclear conflict.

Is Pakistan willing to do that? Only General Musharraf can answer this question. The American president has left and the country is in shock over the frankness with which the visitor spoke.

The military regime bent over backwards for the American president to stop in Islamabad, hoping to gain legitimacy. Such hope was built by incom-

petent advisers blind to the realities of a changing world where markets have replaced missiles as the measure of influence a country enjoys. A bankrupt Pakistan has slid down the scale of importance even as it brandishes nuclear bombs, missiles and threats of terrorism.

Had the military junta listened to the political parties calling for a timetable for democracy, the release of political prisoners and a national consensus on important security matters, Pakistan's position could have been different.

It is still not too late. General Musharraf recently described himself as a "trustworthy, altruistic soldier". It is time he and his regime showed that altruism and trusted the people of Pakistan and allowed them the opportunity to lead Pakistan into the direction of regional peace and domestic harmony.

The author is former prime minister of Pakistan. This piece first appeared in the March 31 issue of The Dawn.

OPINION

Shake off the Hobson's Choice

A H Dewan

The 17th session of the current Parliament ended on the 28th March and majority of the people wanted the opposition to come back to the Parliament and play their part in right earnest.

It is now over a year and a half that the opposition have boycotted Parliament and embarked upon the "oust government" movement in various fashions. Although their movements have so far yielded no result towards meeting their ends, the country has already paid heavy prices by way of loss of human lives or maiming of human persons and retardation of economic development.

Being awfully appalled at the political stand-off or strife and its pernicious effects on the socio-economic scenario of Bangladesh, twenty-three Bangladeshi non-resident academics living in UK, USA, Canada and Australia in an open letter to the Prime Minister and the leader of Opposition in the House have put forward two sets of suggestions, one of them being the idea to resolve the present crisis and the other to enact or amend laws that would impede recurrence of the same.

It is, therefore, fervently hoped that the government must be forthcoming in its overtures and BNP responding to them by their return to the

media blanket India has successfully thrown over its many insurgencies, the world has turned a blind eye to India's excesses as a terrorism-exporting entity. A fair number of the insurgents in its northeast e.g. Mizoram, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Bodoland, etc being Baptist Christians with support from like-religious groupings in US and other countries of the world, do we also label them as Christian terrorists? The world is being fed deliberately with misleading Indian propaganda about Pakistan; one has to separate terrorism from support for a broad based and indigenous freedom struggle of an oppressed people.

To the Editor ...

For regional prosperity

Sir, The US President Bill Clinton reached Pakistan at the last leg of his journey to the sub-continent. By the time he landed there, he had received the allegations against the country. He was given unprecedented welcome in India. He made several economic and commercial contacts with a country which is already recognized as one of the top industrial countries in the world as Henry Kissinger said a few years back of India containing world-class business executives.

But the way Mr Clinton mentioned restraint for Pakistan along the line of control gives a different picture. Did Pakistan mention deployment of seven hundred thousand Indian soldiers there to be watched by them? How much area is there per head? Somewhere I read it is 1.2 square feet. If this is the position, who scores higher in the global races, America will not ire Pakistan for several reasons.

During the cold war period it was the wrong American policy to arm Pakistan in 1956 against Soviet threat. Landlocked Afghanistan's need for a port was completely ignored

forcing her to go to the Black Sea for her exports and imports. This step caused infiltration of new ideas in the country sharing one-thousand-mile border with Central Asia. The Americans thus destroyed the 'buffer state' status of Afghanistan.

American support to India bordering the Hindu kingdom of Nepal suggests another attempt to contain a particular block. But these days people are much more clever than in the '50s — so what the Americans intend to do may become counter-productive.

An emergency? Sir, Two news items published in the DS on Tuesday, March 28, 2000, caught my attention. The items were about two persons with same names. They have same names but they are poles apart in their philosophies.

By standing up for his brother, the noted writer Dr. Humayun Ahmed silently gave us some food for thought. Twenty-nine years after the independence, we are still fighting among ourselves over trivial issues, like naming a structure. Our politicians are so busy with this 'naming culture' that they do not have time to think over

the other important aspects. It is no surprise that Bangladesh still has to beg from the donor countries to make ends meet.

But that did not bother the other Humayun, - Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury - to make a journey to grace the people of Sylhet with his kind presence by a helicopter. He billed the national exchequer Tk. 1,65,000 for his private helicopter ride. And he had a stipend distribution ceremony at a school does not seem to be an emergency work, even for the Speaker. Or is it?

Mohammed Kalam Boston, U.S.A

Bangladesh, Bangladesh...

Sir, Dr. Fakhruddin Ahmed's LETTER FROM AMERICA (DS March 25) took us back to the New York's Madison Square Garden of 1971 reviving the unforgettable heart-rending lyrics of George Harrison's song, 'Bangladesh, Bangladesh/ Where so many people are dying fast/ And it sure looks like a mess/ I have never seen so much distress...'

Dr. Ahmed wrote the first few lyrics of this song as they appeared Harrison as they appeared in a two front-page articles of a renowned reporter, Barry Bearak of the New York Times. The author wrote it after he visited Bangladesh during the tour of the US President. Those of us who were in USA in 1971 were not only emotionally overwhelmed by these lyrics on

the television but also recorded them in cassettes and listened throughout the war of liberation. Even our American friends, who listened to these lyrics, were also touched.

In those days of 1971 all we could think of was 'a day when the war would be over', and when George Harrison's lyrics will be a matter of the past. We hoped for the era of Sonar Bangla as promised by our leaders will be ushered in once the war was over. The war was over but our dreams never came true?

Twenty-nine years have elapsed since our liberation but there is no sign of the Sonar Bangla around, rather there is the increment of darker horizon while our Bangladesh has been run by inept people sitting at the helm. It seems that the situation is beyond the control of the government. The case should have been otherwise. Even to a foreign visitor, our pitiable condition does not escape his attention.

Has there been much change in the life of the common people?

Syed Walullah Dhaka.

Notice

The Law and Our Rights page could not be published today. It, however, will appear tomorrow. We regret the inconvenience.