

BNP and its MPs

FROM the signals that BNP, our biggest opposition party, is giving out it seems that it has begun its preparation for the national elections due next June. We consider it to be a positive development and would highly encourage BNP to employ all its energy in that direction. However that decision and much else will depend on one crucial step that the party will have to take in the very near future — whether or not to protect its seats in the parliament.

According to rules, MPs absenting themselves from the parliament for 90 continuous days will lose their seats. That day of reckoning will most likely arrive during the current budget session. Options before the opposition MPs are fundamentally two. First, to let their membership lapse and allow their seats to become vacant and thus force the ruling party either to call for a fresh general election or to go for by-elections. Second, to return to the parliament for the briefest of time permissible and thereby technically interrupt the continuity of their absence and thus save their seats. The party leaders are reportedly considering both these options.

We would like to strongly suggest that BNP should return to the parliament not to technically save its seats but to **reclaim its rightful place as the representative of the 34 per cent of voters who voted for them and to play the crucial role of the opposition that our Constitution and parliamentary system of governance entrust them to.**

We think that BNP leadership should seriously evaluate their role over the last four years as the major opposition party. In our view during the last four years whatever the failure of the government has been, it has been ably matched by that of the opposition. If the ruling party has been arrogant and oppressive in its actions, then the opposition has been irresponsible and disjointed in its response. The latter will have to shun its habit of blaming the ruling party for all the faults and go in for a serious self-examination as to how effectively it has been able to provide the kind of leadership — intellectual, moral and institutional — that the people required of the party during its days in the opposition.

Such an examination, in our view, would reveal that boycotting the parliament was a crucial mistake. This mistake should be corrected immediately. Given our political culture BNP leadership may feel that it will lose face by making such a move. We also know that the ruling party, instead of welcoming such a development, will taunt BNP and try to humiliate it for its change of direction in politics. All this will be well worth it when by using the parliament the BNP can help to expose all the shortcomings of the government. **The BNP should start by demanding a debate on the law and order, followed by one on corruption.** These two parliamentary debates will set the agenda for public debates in the crucial pre-election phase. This will set the much needed positive trend in our politics. At the least such a move will restore to the parliament the central role that belongs to it in parliamentary democracy. This will help our future politics in a fundamental way regardless of which party wins the next election.

Match-fixing: No Let-up in Finger-pointing

THE cricket match-fixing story unwinds ceaselessly. The list of players involved has become longer than the run-up of Wesley Hall of the West Indies with no end in sight. There has been some absolutely fascinating revelations by players and officials that can beat the imagination even of the wildest speculators. The astute cricket administrator of South Africa Ali Bacher has pointed his fingers at the Bangladesh-Pakistan World Cup match of 1999. In fact he has reiterated his earlier accusation against these two teams, only this time he has a corroborator in Majid Khan who claims to have said so many things to Bacher but has nothing handy to prove his allegations. Does Majid Khan think the bookies were born yesterday? Whoever heard that a team is paid to win a match? How can Bangladesh be paid to win against Pakistan? A preposterous thought by any stretch of imagination.

The India-Pakistan match of the same tournament in the Super Sixes has again been brought to limelight by Bacher and Khan. These two teams are known to be avowed enemies as far as cricket is concerned and none of them is willing to give a pound of flesh without a fight unto death. If they can be persuaded to influence the result then one might very well conclude that this has been going on since the first World Cup in 1975 because Pakistan have never won against India in any World Cup till now. Why should the Pakistanis be paid all the time to lose their matches against India?

We are sure there will be others who will have a fling at catching the media headline. The issue has become so diverse and hydra-headed that it's very difficult to close it down and there seems to be no solution in sight right now.

The genie that got out of Aladdin's lamp should be retrieved and bottled by the ICC bosses. The focus should be on tangible instances with proof enough to take stern action against wrongdoers. Only accusing each other verbally and producing belligerent and hostile witnesses are not going to solve the problem. We suspect that in the doldrums and cacophony several real culprits might get away unscathed.

EVER since the atomic bombs were dropped on Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the fag end of WWII, the world has been grappling with as how to get rid of this horrendous weapons of mass destruction. But the ensuing cold war got in the way. The allies of WWII — turned enemies for nearly five decades during the cold war — the United States and erstwhile Soviet Union — accumulated thousands (according to one estimate 70,000 to 80,000) of nuclear warheads and put them on hair-trigger alert against each other on an array of land, air, and sea-based ballistic missiles. This cold war doctrine of "Mutually Assured Destruction" was propagated in the name of credible nuclear deterrence about which there a lot of misgivings abound. Those were the dangerous decades due to the fact that the world faced constant threat of its annihilation in case of a nuclear confrontation, an inadvertent war between the two super powers or through nuclear accidents. The seriousness of the situation was aptly summed up by then US Commander Lee that it was God's miracle which saved the world from a nuclear holocaust. This is also evidenced from the recently released documentaries on 1962 Cuban crisis that portray how a beleaguered US President Kennedy wrestled to avoid a potential nuclear confrontation with Moscow. Those must have been the most trying moments of his life.

The decades of 1970s, in which Cuban crisis of 1962 played a catalyst role, witnessed a number of steps that were taken towards nuclear arms control and disarmament. The Non-Proliferation Treaty Anti-Ballistic Treaty of 1970 and 1972 respectively came into being, and since the end of the cold war there have been giant strides by the NWSs (five

nuclear states are the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China) in this regard. Under START I and START II Washington and Moscow have now brought the number of nuclear warheads to 2,500 to 3,000. START III would aim to reduce the number to 1,500. There has been an indefinite extension of NPT in 1995. Approval of CTBT (comprehensive test ban treaty) in 1996 and its subsequent ratification by a number of countries made the world even more hopeful about the prospects of nuclear free world in near future. Unfortunately, a number of recent developments such as India and Pakistan becoming de facto nuclear powers in 1998, expansion of NATO with its rigid offensive nuclear doctrine, rejection of CTBT by the US senate, unwillingness of the NWSs to give a time-frame within which they are to get rid of their respective nuclear arsenals under article VI of NPT, are casting shadows of doubt about whether the world would ever be able to get rid of this menace once for all. However, the factor that is raising everybody's eyebrows with regard to global nuclear disarmament is the proposed National Missile Defence (NMD). The United States is planning to build in order to counter the growing fear that weapons of mass destruction may be used by the so-called rogue states, terrorists, and the organized criminals.

The United States has been toying with the NMD popularly

known as Star Wars since mid 1980s when most of the strategic analysts considered it to be just a gimmick. But over the years having NMD has somewhat become an article of faith with Washington, which seems to be convinced, at least for a limited missile defence, about its utility (as evidenced by Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush's call for a global defence shield and Democratic presidential candidate Al Gore's push for a limited one). It is now accepted by Clin-

ton administration and the Republicans that US indeed faces possible threats of missile attacks from countries with nuclear capabilities that have a history of long enmity (commonly known as rogue states) with Washington. However, majority scientific opinions about NMD question its functional capability whereas many strategic thinkers have questioned its utility. Despite such misgivings about NMD the United States is trying to impress upon the world that building and deploying the defence shield, which requires changes in ABM treaty of 1972, considered to be the cornerstone of

arms control agreements for 30 years, is needed for country's defence. But so far, President Clinton's attempts to make Moscow see its point, that such a shield is essential for the defence of both from the attacks of the rogue states, and is not meant to undermine Russian deterrence and strategic stability, have not worked. The Russians are not willing to buy Washington's arguments that the world has changed drastically during 1990s and deployment of NMD

would certainly affect China's present strategic modernisation programme. Due to the spill over effects Beijing would probably replace deployments of missiles like SRBMs of the M-9 and M-11 aimed primarily at Taiwan with more sophisticated and higher re-entry speed missiles covering not only Taiwan but also other places of strategic interests to China like South Korea and Japan. Such development would trigger an escalating arms race in the Pacific Rim.

In such an eventuality one simply cannot rule out India and Pakistan going for more testing in order to enhance their thermonuclear capabilities needed for developing sophisticated long-range missiles. And that means a virtual death sentence of NPT. And the ensuing nuclear arms race between India-Pakistan and India-China would have serious negative impacts on global nuclear system.

In the context of the above discussion, the United States should think real hard before embarking on such a course. It is easily discernible from the reactions of Moscow, Beijing and in Europe that NMD has all the potentials to destabilize the existing strategic stability, and undermine NPT and other arms control measures taken during the last two decades. In that case NMD may not serve US national interest. The United States must weigh the pros and cons of potential deployment of NMD and then take the decision (it will be taken this summer). Otherwise the world would set in for another period of nuclear uncertainty. All we would have is decades of living dangerously in a nightmarish situation with nuclear missiles pointed at potential adversaries.

that the secret of his father's fortune is bribery, extortion or smuggling?

Can these father take their sons to the police? Probably not. Firstly because they want to raise these sons to become the praetorian guards of their own ambitions. Secondly because they do not have the moral courage to hand over to the police the chip off their own block. Confucius resolved this contradiction in a chapter in the *Li chi* entitled the "Great Learning". It is the king's duty to act kingly, he writes, as it is the father's duty to act fatherly. If the king or father fails to have properly, he cannot expect his minister or son to act in accordance with ritual.

What the Prime Minister has asked for is to establish a ritual between a powerful father and his disobedient son. But how can two criminals perform that ritual between them without having the fear of exposing each other? Why not the sons take the burden on their conscience and bring their fathers to the police? Prometheus invoked punishment on himself as the inevitable consequence of defying his heavenly father Zeus. In *Orestes*, Homer extolled Orestes' patricide as filial piety. During the Chinese Revolution, children were encouraged to identify their parents who were class enemies. It may be too late to save the fathers, but we have still time to save their sons.

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worth leaving to a son who is likely to be convicted for murder? Did he propose to turn in his fugitive son in response to the Prime Minister's call?

In fact, he told the police what was expected of him as a father. He said he didn't know the whereabouts of his son who was on the lam. Then he discussed politics with the police, perhaps to bide time and avoid further questions about his son. But did the police actually be-

lieve that he did not know where was his son? Have the police taken a sworn testimony from him that he did not know where his son was hiding and reminded him that he could be accused of perjury if proven otherwise?

May be the MP did not have to do any of these as part of the trappings of his power. But how is this going to help him as a father? Can he go to bed at night without worrying that a monster lives inside his own flesh and blood? Is he powerful enough to overpower his own conscience that he has failed to raise a good son? May be he is the desensitized father of the desensitized son. May be that is how they have both learned to cope with cruelty by instilling at the core of their bond a terrible perversion of sensibilities and qualms.

In true sense, that perversion has imprecised itself from a twist of faith. It is possible to rise by sins, while one by virtue fails. How does it induce a son to life when he knows that his powerful father raped and killed, first to gain his power and then to live in the excitement of it? How does it shape the mind of a son who is aware

Sons, Take Your Fathers to the Police

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Power is nothing unless shared with family friends, and it is mostly shared between father and son. Syrian President Hafez Al Assad died this week, and his son Bashar has been chosen to replace him. The monarchs of the world were founded on the fundamental premise that power, like everything else in life, passes from father to son. The basic assumption of the American Dream is that the world will be better every time it changes hand from the father to son. During the Cultural Revolution in China that bond between father and son was attacked as a critical determinant of class struggle and it was perpetuated in the slogan "Dragons beget dragons; phoenixes beget phoenixes; rats beget rats." The sons of high-level party cadres were branded as the dragons and phoenixes, while the sons of the former landlords and rich peasants were branded as rats.

Hence, father and son forever come together in the cycle of their aspirations seeded in the transcendental legacy of biological transformation. In 1530, when Prince Humayun became so ill that his life was despaired of, his father Mughal

Emperor Babur is said to have offered is life to God in exchange for Humayun's walking seven times around the bed to complete the vow. Humayun recovered, and, from that time, Babur declined, dying within the same year. Again, in 1657 Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan fell ill, precipitating a struggle for succession among his four sons, Dara Shikoh, Murad Baksh, Shah Shuja, and Aurangzeb, the Victor, Aurangzeb,

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declared himself emperor in 1658 and strictly confined Shah Jahan in the fort at Agra until his death.

So the bond between father and son works in both ways.

The son's life can be enhanced by the power of his father's aspirations as much as the father's life can be endangered by his son's aspirations for power.

But how does one categorize that bond when the son is encouraged to undertake extor-

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