

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 has never won against India in any World Cup tie so far. 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 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 (NPT) of 1968 and the Treaty of Tlatelco 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

Global Nuclear Disarmament Agenda

Dangerous Decades Ahead?

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.

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 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 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

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.

Second, China's modernised nuclear force and its possible deployment, in the backdrop of proposed NMD, would have far reaching impacts on South Asia. First, the possibility of resurgent debates in India on present nuclear policy. At present, despite New Delhi's draft nuclear doctrine there is a consensus about maintaining minimum credible nuclear deterrence with about 100 nuclear warheads. Even opposition Congress after a period of dilly-dallying has accepted the minimum deterrence theory, however implausible that might be. This is the centrist position. They support minimal and de-altered nuclear force and are in favour of signing CTBT and accession to Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT). On both ends of the spectrum are the Left who are opposed to India going nuclear, and on the other end are the hard-liners consisting of extreme rightist groups like RSS and India's nuclear establish-

ment led by A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who is already lobbying for a limited missile defence against Pakistan nuclear force. Their support for a maximalist posture with a triad nuclear force for 400 to 1000 would certainly get the upper hand (as evidenced by New Delhi's sensitivity to recent news by NBC that Pakistan has more nuclear arsenals than India) if China's strategic interest is undermined by NMD and it goes for building and deployment of long range missiles — a development that would definitely enhance the threat perception of India having chain reaction by Pakistan.

In such 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 potential adversaries.



Dilara Chowdhury

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

can be justified on moral and strategic grounds. On the contrary President Putin has vowed that he would tear up all arms control agreements if the United States goes ahead unilaterally with NMD programme. The world, thus, seems hardly convinced, and on the contrary, is worried about its cascading effects on the global arms control and disarmament agenda. Most analysts believe that the potential of NMD in strategic destabilization is enormous.

First, its effects in Asia. The building and deployment of NMD in Asia bringing Taiwan and Japan under its umbrella

Sons, Take Your Fathers to the Police

Prometheus invoked punishment on himself as the inevitable consequence of defying his heavenly father Zeus. In Orestesia, 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.

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 monarchies 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 his 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,

tion, rape and murder in the name of his father? John Dryden lamented on the futility of such bond. "And all to leave what with his toil he won/To that 'unfeathered two-legged thing, a son.' One is curious to know what the MP must have said to the police during his interrogation this week. Did he look concerned like a father whose son was missing? Did he believe that all his achievements, including his power, is

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 a 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 impregnated itself from a twist of faith. It is possible to rise by sins, while one by virtue falls. 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

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

Can these fathers 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 of 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 kindly, he writes, as it is the father's duty to act fatherly. If the king or father fails to behave 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 Orestesia, 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.

Crosstalk

Mohammad Badrul Ahsan



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-

tion, rape and murder in the name of his father? John Dryden lamented on the futility of such bond. "And all to leave what with his toil he won/To that 'unfeathered two-legged thing, a son.' One is curious to know what the MP must have said to the police during his interrogation this week. Did he

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To the Editor ...

"English medium schools"

Sir, My attention has been drawn to a letter written in this column on 11 June by one Ms Ayesha Hossain on the captioned subject refuting my observation on English medium school's standard and practice as expressed earlier in this space. While I wish to assure her of my well-fathomed knowledge on how these schools operate, I still stand by my sense of observation and don't intend to embark on an endless murky debate where allegations are very well founded! Barring a very few or scarce exception, such is the scenario *en masse*.

Please don't get me wrong, I have ample respect for the English medium schools, but not the ones that try to commercialise this choice by their capricious self-serving designs. Mushrooming of these so-called schools without ensuring a bare minimum of ethics and quality have greatly tarnished the image of this country, as well as the very few schools who still strive to offer at least some good education in return of fortunes invested by their parents. Things really have gone absolutely haywire in the name of English medium schools. Today's *Nouveau riche* who act like 'culture vulture' may well be staying happy just with their wards in any of these cosmetic English schools but surely not a little wiser ones who mean substantive education for their kids.

Ms Ayesha opined that, "in a democratic country with a free market economy" one has the option to choose anything that suits one's taste, liking and ability. Of course that is so, but then the State and its people must act to stop someone selling Hemlock on the open pavement in the name of honey! Again, the ones who have their kids in these English medium schools never spend 'least' to get the 'best', instead it's other way round, it's a fortune invested for most of the honestly earning parents. Crit-

icising doesn't mean discarding an issue altogether, rather it's an opportunity being offered to garnish or set right your deficient areas. Ms Ayesha also wondered why I educate my son under this system, when I have so much against it! It's because, these English medium schools still have an edge over the other ailing public education institutes, though these institutions surely fall much short of our expectation. Given the exorbitant charges that we defray for our kids under many 'heads' at the beginning of the year are way too much and very unjustified. You have no tenable logic to defend these so-called 'charges'. I am fully aware of the kind of salaries, perks and administrative costs etc that these school owners chip in to run the show, and am also quite aware of the kind of 'Bill Gates-like savings' that most of these school owners pile up in banks in no time!

About having school textbooks from abroad, I never said I am against it, but as these books mostly come from foreign land (mostly Indian editions to be precise), we have to wait for a long time for those to arrive. I have no bias on where they come from. The pirated books or copied ones (with smudgy prints) are sure a part of school's responsibilities. Schools can't shirk away from this, especially when they can prescribe us where to buy books from, where to buy school dresses from etc. This problem is compounded when certain books are never found in their original copies and all only in locally printed smudgy copies alone. It is there that schools need to act and swap crappy-copied books for some other comprehensively acceptable ones.

Lastly, British Council's YLE test has been made mandatory at least in my son's school! As we all probably know, BC has a wide range of various English courses to offer. And this currently being a policy of BC to generate earning for them and be self-sustained, they do a vig-

orous marketing to this end to attract these schools on a commission to send their students for such tests! Now, nothing wrong if our kids learn some better English, but please don't push for that and don't also get carried away by a BC Postal Certificate. You need to "assess" in your own English schools whether, these exams are really needed and if so, whether you with your effort can take care of it without further denting hapless parent's pockets. It indeed is too costly an exercise.

All I would assure you is, I am never in favour of 'blowing out the last lamp', and am actually with you. I beseech earnestly, please don't turn them in to a run of the mill. We are still a very impoverished third world country, where education is in a real sorry plight and where bearing a handful of *nouveau riche*, most of these students' parents find it increasingly hard to cope with the compulsive or forced luxury of this city life. Educating their children in such schools is one such forced option as well.

Please don't be myopic and let's all act a little rationally, with a bit of compassion before a silent mayhem is caused to this sector too.

Mushtaque Ahmed
Development Consultant
Lake Circus, Dhaka

Ibne Sina advert

Sir, Ibne Sina had advertised a 25 per cent discount on any pathological test done there. I went there twice with my wife for ultrasonogram. The first time I went I wasn't aware of the discount, and hence did not hesitate to pay them in full. The second time, however, I reminded them that I was supposed to get 25 per cent discount. I was informed that all the diagnostic tests except ultrasonogram were being conducted at a 25 per cent discount. My question is why harass and embarrass people like this?

Noor Muhammad
Dhaka

When the Two Ends Meet

by Navine Murshid

THE Korean Summit has opened doors for genuine dialogue and concrete discussion for the two Koreas. This may well mark the end of the clash of ideologies, memories of their bitter military conflict, and differences over how to reunify the divided country.

In 1945 the people of Korea hailed Japan's defeat in World War II. It marked the end of 35 years of Japanese colonial rule. However, the Koreans were denied independence and unity by the two great antagonists of the Cold War — the Soviet Union and the United States.

A United States-Soviet Union commission that was established to make plans for the reunification of Korea under a free government made no progress. In 1947 the United States took the problem before the United Nations, which voted that free elections — under its supervision — should be held throughout Korea in 1948 to choose a single government. The Soviet Union refused to permit the United Nations election commission to enter the north. Elections were thus held only in the south, where a National Assembly and a President — Syngman Rhee — were chosen. The new democracy was named the Republic of Korea.

In the north, the Soviet Union proclaimed a Communist dictatorship called the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea). Pyongyang was named its capital. Late in 1948, Soviet forces began to withdraw from North Korea, leaving behind an entrenched Communist regime and a well-trained, well-equipped North Korean army. United States occupation forces left South Korea in 1949. They left behind a government still "feeling its way" and an army ill-trained compared with that of the north. From this stemmed much of the tragedy of postwar Korea.

With the encouragement of the Soviet Union and Communist China, North Korea's premier, Kim Il Sung, undertook to destroy the Republic of Korea. On June 25, 1950, North Korean

troops invaded South Korea. The move was influenced by a United States decision to exclude Korea from the area in the western Pacific that it was prepared to defend.

Reacting quickly to the invasion, United States President Harry S. Truman reversed his country's position and brought the United States and other members of the United Nations into the conflict. The initial successes of the North Koreans, the intervention of Communist China, and the widespread destruction in the south hardened South Korea's opposition to Communism. When the war ended, Korea remained a divided country.

In 1970 shooting incidents were common in the demilitarized zone between North Korea and South Korea, and the two nations continued to strengthen their military forces. In 1971, however, the rival regimes opened discussions to reunite millions of Korean families that had been separated by the division of their country after World War II. A South-North Coordinating Committee was established in 1972, but in mid-1973 the north began boycotting its sessions. In the 1980s, there was no lessening of tensions, but also no serious move toward armed confrontation. North Korean President Kim Il Sung offered a unification plan that was rejected by South Korea. Kim also berated the United States for a plan to install medium range nuclear missiles in the South. But he renewed his call for a peace treaty with the Americans, probably desiring to decrease his dependence on the Soviet Union and China.

The summit held now, after such a long history of mistrust and animosity, does come as a surprise. However, there is a good feeling about it at least as far as the media and citizens of the two Koreas are concerned. Commentators interviewed by BBC in both North and South Korea expressed hope to see a unified Korea in the near future.

Along these lines emotions run high as people are hoping to meet up with friends and relatives long lost. People are expecting to see an enlarged picture of what was seen a few years ago when the two governments allowed some families to reunite.

Experts believe that the summit would generate goodwill and confidence. It may also ensure a peace agreement in the coming years. However, North Korea has acquired a reputation of being capricious, unpredictable, mysterious and diplomatic. James Miles of the International Institute for Strategic Studies feels this way: "All is possible for North Korea. In fact its decision to hold this summit comes as a surprise to all. It may change their decision anytime again. There may be other long term problems as well. One being a communist country and the other a capitalist country, conflicts may remain. Also, North Korea being in a state of economic decay and instability may clutch on to South Korea. James Miles is of the opinion that, given the opportunity, South Korea would give them aid. This may lead to inclusion of North Korea's massive economic evils. There is also the possibility that North Korea would hang on to China and keep up its communist practices.

But then, breaking the half-a-century barrier is, in itself, a big achievement. The summit that just concluded is, perhaps, a milestone in many a Korean's life. If this summit means reunification of even one of estranged families, then it's certainly worth it. And there are many spread across the two Koreas who wait for the day they'll meet the faces they've lost to international as well as internal politics. Let alone economic, social and international reasons, this summit has been welcome because it's a move that pays tribute to humanity; pays respect to all Koreans who could only dream of this day.