

## New purification devices

Enforce your own rules

By taking a high-powered decision to make the use of purification devices on diesel and petrol-run vehicles compulsory, the government has once again raised expectations that it would come to grips with the erosion of clean air in the capital. We welcome this move, but we must also ask, will this new initiative turn out to be a hollow promise, like other similar moves in the past?

Plans to take faulty and old vehicles off the streets, administer stringent licensing and maintenance checks, regulate the supply of unsealed lubricants and two-stroke engines, have failed miserably in execution. The dubious distinction earned by Dhaka as one of the most polluted cities in the world, together with the accompanying health impact on millions of its inhabitants, have continued unabated. We must therefore caution the government to make sure it does not fall short on this promise, as it has been doing repeatedly, so far.

The new rule is poised to become mandatory from June. Why then has the government solicited the opinion of ministries, departments and organisations on the decision? The modus operandi of the decision has not been clarified either. We would like to know which, if any, official body would be ultimately responsible and empowered to ensure that vehicles comply with the new requirement? The government must spell out the basic mechanisms of implementation immediately. It must set the ball rolling by enforcing safety standards on its own considerable fleet of vehicles which, as we have stated in the past, are notorious for chronic and blatant violations. Such a move would induce a salutary effect on private owned vehicles and inculcate adherence to law.

The crux of the matter is, as it has been thus far, that the government must simply get on with the job and execute its plans. We urge it to recognise that the time for words is over. It is time to act. Failure would spell disaster for this city and an irreversible loss of confidence in the competence of the government.

## Barbaric Taleban onslaught

Part of human heritage in danger

It is difficult for any soul not to be gritting his or her teeth in livid anger at this piece of news emanating from Afghanistan. How mind-boggling it has been to visualise the Taleban militia firing tank shells and rockets to reduce towering Buddhist stone figures into rubble under orders from their supreme leader Mulla Omar. They seemed so determined to lay all extant statues, since the pre-Islamic times, to waste that even the statuettes at the Kabul museum look endanger, let alone the relics in Ghazni, Herat, Jalalabad and Kandahar. Thank heavens, there is talk of an international initiative to move the statues out of Afghanistan in a last-ditch effort to salvage them.

Nevertheless, this has been obscurantism at its worst. For nearly one thousand years since Islam came and established itself in Afghanistan between 8th and 11th centuries none of the puritanical leaders of early Islam deemed it necessary to fiddle with those monumental works of Hellenic art. Suddenly, far removed from those times, the Talebans have now appeared in the self-assigned role of an avenger without the slightest provocation. The Talebans do not seem to pride themselves on their own heritage, let alone a heritage of for mankind.

Islam is a religion of moderation nurturing respect for other religions. That is an added reason why no 'Islamic' excuse can be palmed off by the militant Talebans behind their wrath against the Buddhist figures. Even Iran and Pakistan have expressed their displeasure over the extremist step. Bangladesh should join the chorus of world's disapproval of it.

Either the Taleban starts showing respect to world opinion or court an otherwise avoidable ostracisation from global community. If it is the sanctions they were chagrined at then there must be some other way to overcome that problem.

## Handling the nuclear gene in South Asia

# Risk reduction talks between India and Pakistan



DILARA CHOUDHURY

THE year 1998 has been very significant for South Asia. In May that year India and Pakistan went overtly nuclear and thereby ending decades of speculations with regard to their respective nuclear programmes. Once the innocence of Pokhran-II and Chagai hills were lost forever, both countries rationalized their actions in the name of their respective national security interest for doing something immensely irrational. They opted for the kind of weapons that would never be used (hopefully), but went ahead and acquired it only because of its perceived utility as a political currency. And consequently spent billions of dollars that could have benefited millions of poor, marginalized, and dispossessed population of this wretched land. It is indeed difficult for us to internalize the top-down vision of our leadership and their inability to prioritize our requirement. So not surprisingly, despite international condemnation as well as economic sanctions against both India and Pakistan, elite from both sides considered the event as an achievement and felt that they now walked "taller" than before as they have, at last, been able to gate crash the exclusive club of nuclear weapons states (NWS).

Rational thinking demands that when millions in the region live below the poverty level it is criminal to have nuclear weapons costing billions of dollars. There are other compelling reasons also that defies the logic of their going nuclear. For example, predictions of the nuclear prophets that nuclearization of South Asia would stabilize Indo-Pakistan relations and eliminate the threats of full-fledged war and consequent reduction in defense expenditure for conventional arms, have proved fallacious. On the contrary, the defense budgets of India and Pakistan for conventional weapons have kept rising and the threats of war between the two have remained as high as ever, and that too, with an added nuclear dimension. The question is why should the entire region live under such ominous threats? Why should countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan pay the most unspendable "price" in case those two South Asian adversaries trigger an inadvertent nuclear conflict or accident? So, now that India and Pakistan have become the *de jure* NWS and basking in their self-perceived glory, wise thing for them to do is everything possible to fulfill their obligations and responsibilities as so-called nuclear powers i.e. to stabilize their nuclear regimes through nuclear risk reductions like confidence-and-security-building measures (CSBMs).

Having stabilization and nuclear restraint regimes in India and Pakistan is something that neither the international community nor South Asia, especially the smaller countries who with no stakes in India-Pakistan love and hate relations are compelled to live in the midst of weapons of mass destruction, can ignore. Prior to 1998 things were different. The international community was then mostly busy in persuading India and Pakistan from not going overtly

nuclear. It was believed that neither India nor Pakistan had begun weaponization of their offensive nuclear capabilities and had only the component of the warheads that could have been assembled for use within the stipulated time. In such eventuality, the danger of an inadvertent nuclear war or nuclear accident during peacetime was remote.

The situation was something like that existed between the United States and erstwhile Soviet Union, when the practice of keeping nuclear warheads dismantled and their composition stored separately minimized the risk of nuclear accidents or inadvertent war. But as the cold war intensified, and there was a shift in their military doctrine, both the cold war adversaries opted

between India and Pakistan. Even the Indian nuclear lobbyists, who constantly propagate for more tests in order to have a "minimum deterrence," believe that continuing weaponization of India and Pakistan is bound to have a spiraling arms race in the subcontinent and it is imperative that India and Pakistan begin nuclear dialogues. In this respect a positive development was the agreement by India and Pakistan, signed in February 1999, on a package of CSBMs whose details and modalities, however, needed to be worked out.

But installation of effective CSBMs in a region like South Asia is fraught with difficulties. First and foremost is the environmental factor in South Asia that is emotionally charged with mutual suspicions and

limitations, can India and Pakistan with their very rudimentary command and control arrangements tackle these obstacles?

Unfortunately, despite the urgency there are no signs of the beginning of official level nuclear dialogue between India and Pakistan once 1999 agreement was aborted and dashed the hopes for their mutually agreed intents that their respective nuclear ambiguities and risk of nuclear conflict should be addressed mooted through the MOU signed as part of the Lahore Declaration. It is argued that the package on CSBMs became redundant following a nadir in Indo-Pakistan bilateral relation over Kargil intrusion and heightened tensions in Kashmir and military take-over in Islamabad. Con-

sequently, defying all diplomatic niceties Prime Minister Bajpayee refused to be on talking terms with Pakistan's Chief Executive and prospects for the resumption of nuclear risk dialogue paled into insignificance. However, after Islamabad's humanitarian gestures to the victims of the recent earthquake victims of Gujrat and subsequent telephonic conversation between Bajpayee and Musharraf showed some signs of thawing between the two South Asian arch rivals.

Tragically, the people's power in this region that is opposed to the nuclearization of their region is yet to be surfaced and be reckoned with. So the recent endeavours of the international community in pushing Track-II nuclear dialogue between India and Pakistan was more than welcomed in the region. Indeed it was thought to be the beginning of a process that would lay down some kind of foundation and pave the way for official level talks. Islamabad-based think-tank Islamabad Policy Research Institute and Delhi Policy Group, constituted under the provisions of the same bilateral agreement signed in February 1999, after being generously funded by Hans-Seidel

Foundation of Germany, held two meetings first one being in New Delhi and the second in Islamabad, "to reduce the risk of an accidental nuclear conflict and suggest confidence building measures related to nuclear risk reduction." Tragically, however, even this Track-II nuclear diplomacy ended in an abyss. The familiar Indo-Pakistan behavioural patterns, once again, dominated over the merit of the issue itself. The meeting ended with notes like importance of such unofficial meeting, which would seek the meeting of the minds on the security of South Asia in future but had no positive substance whatsoever.

It has been alleged by Indian side that the meeting in Islamabad was already structured on the basis

**PANORAMA**  
Handling nuclear gene is not an easy matter. It not only requires genuine and committed politico-diplomatic efforts but also the technological know-how and helps from the nuclear experts. So far, the two South Asian adversaries seem not to have internalized the fact that the nuclear gene is already out and it is time to tame it so that the subcontinent is not devastated by nuclear holocaust through its accidental or otherwise use

for heightened readiness manifesting into fully assembled weapons. Consequently, Washington and Moscow sought nuclear dialogue to make their mutual nuclear deterrence (the utility of which has recently been challenged by numerous strategic analysts) transparent in the forms of highly effective CSBMs. Even so, one has to keep in mind that despite minute, intricate and technologically effective CSBMs adopted by Washington and Moscow there are now reports that the chances of nuclear accidents were not completely wiped out. One gets a chill as one goes through the writings, which deal with such incidents, of a number of military personnel who were in charge of the nuclear arsenals during the cold war era. It is indeed hair raising to know about how close the world had been, on a number of occasions, on the verge of inadvertent nuclear holocaust despite painstakingly constructed transparencies in the relevant areas.

Given the above discussion, it is only natural that the concerns of the international community, who have in depth knowledge about the inherent chances of nuclear accidents or war as well as the requirement of intricate technologies in order to have a nuclear restraint regime, would be heightened. Because on many occasions it seemed that this region was almost teetering on nuclear brinkmanship in the context of the entrenched security dilemmas between India and Pakistan over the State of Jammu and Kashmir, their history of hostilities culminating into as many as three conventional wars and the border skirmishes along the LoC almost on a routine manner. Most worrisome has been that both India and Pakistan are now going ahead with their weaponization programmes and their delivery systems. India is boasting the recent successful testing of Agni II, a land-based missile with solid fuel system that can be kept on a hair-trigger alert and, thus, having a distinct "military advantage" over the countries like China that have liquid fuel-fed missiles, and Pakistan is boasting that it has enough bombs and missiles that can take out every Indian city that is counted. Here we have a situation where both countries are going ahead with the development of sophisticated nuclear arsenals and their eventual deployment without any visible signs of confidence building measures. It is, thus, crucial that CSBMs are implemented

and Pakistan's Foreign Minister's commitment of the MOU signed in Lahore with the understanding that only issues related to nuclear risks and measures to reduce them would be discussed. There was a mutual understanding to isolate the nuclear issue from other issues and conflicts affecting the bilateral relations between the two. It was Islamabad's insistence, according to New Delhi delegation, to link resolution of Kashmir problem with that of the nuclear, which spoiled the broth. Islamabad, on the other hand, opined that the resolution of the problem for which Islamabad had to go nuclear must be solved first. What can be stated in a nutshell is that Pakistan's nuclear policy is linked with the perennial Kashmir problem, and as such cannot be dealt with in isolation. Although there exists in Pakistan an opinion that propagates that while ideal solution to the resolution of the problem that is causing the tension is not forthcoming in the immediate future, it is imperative that measures are undertaken to ensure that a nuclear holocaust does not afflict the region for want of safety measures based on command, control, intelligence and communications. But the fact of the

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matter is that no progress has been made even at the Track-II level dialogue with regard to nuclear restraints and nuclear risk reduction between these two very hostile neighbours. Lack of convergence between the two was more prominent than the conciliatory statement of the spokesman of Delhi delegation.

The failure of the Track-II level dialogue has been a great disappointment for South Asia. The crux of the problem, according to a nuclear analyst, is that the groups which met in New Delhi and subsequently in Islamabad are the same people who while in office actually pushed India and Pakistan to a nuclear path through relentless advocacy and lobbying. And now they are involved in Track-II diplomacy. He feels that it is futile to expect that they would turn a new leaf overnight and bring qualitative changes in the field of nuclear arenas. This has been evidenced when during the dialogue both sides stuck to their respective official positions while the academicians from both sides remained embedded in their scholarly activities by making irrelevant references to Western strategists of the cold war era. It is, thus, no wonder the meeting ended with familiar accusations and counter accusations. Indeed it is a matter of great concern when even the Track-II people can not find a common ground on which the future nuclear dialogue can take place.

I would conclude with a cautious note that handling nuclear gene is not an easy matter. It not only requires genuine and committed politico-diplomatic efforts but also the technological know-how and helps from the nuclear experts. So far, the two South Asian adversaries seem not to have internalized the fact that the nuclear gene is already out and it is time to tame it so that the subcontinent is not devastated by nuclear holocaust through its accidental or otherwise use. This poses a challenge to Indo-Pak leadership and their elite as for years Indian and Pakistani nuclear lobbyists rebuffed the concerns of the western countries about the handling of technological nitty gritty of nuclear arsenals by countries like India and Pakistan as insults and considered them to be typical white man's condescending attitudes towards the brown men. It is now time that India and Pakistan prove their (western) concerns fallacious by stabilizing their respective nuclear regimes.

## OPINION

# How to become a leader

ALIF ZABR

CULTIVATING leadership in Bangladesh is not taken seriously, but rather casually and informally (perhaps because there is hardly any genuine competition from the qualified aspirants). Here is a check-list for quick entry into the privileged class. Make any when the sun is not shining.

Always disagree, make a lot of noise, and be vicious about the stand of your opponents. Never smile in public, and scowl a lot. Use body language, and spit venom. Look furious. Consensus, tolerance and patience have no place in the current changing culture of hurried development; first of the self, then of the masses (nation and society have lower priorities). Democracy has to be tamed first, before the fruits could be plucked. As for plucking, there are

many avenues open to the political and business entrepreneurs. Loan-default culture is a cult openly practised here. The investment return can be easily calculated.

Fine-tune the art of denouncing the manifestoes of others. Be super-patriotic and accuse others of trying to sell the country through subversive ways. Do not explain how the freedom of the country has been preserved for the last three decades. The illusion is that when you are in power, everything looks wrong and suspicious.

Remember, at this stage of the evolution of the political culture in Dhaka, the party comes first. Unless the party is strong, the nation will be weak. Do not depend upon yourself; depend on your followers (do not bother who are sycophants). Self-reliance has depreciated under the current market conditions, and has

hardly any market value. Your inner strength cannot be monitored by the outsiders.

Now security can be hired through godfathers. If you are 'armless', your footprint will not spread. Do not be trigger-happy, but your tongue must be connected to a hair-trigger mechanism to burst into action with provocative confrontation. The gift of the gab is highly prized locally.

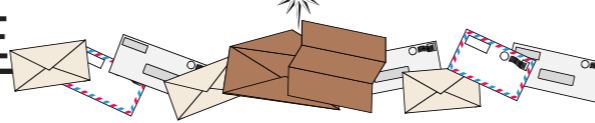
What is the difference between bakshish and commission? The former is a reward for services rendered (dubious or otherwise); and the latter is a business transaction, earned legitimately through mutual agreement. The public services tend to be graft-oriented, as outdated administrative and management procedures are still entrenched since the colonial days. Always talk about reforms. To

reduce time and distance, premium has to be offered. The difference to similar conditions prevailing in the other countries is one of kind or degree. Take advantage of the law and order situation; the chances are that you might be able to get away with it.

Politics is still a form of business in the country; hence you earn your living first, then think about providing business opportunities to the downtrodden.

Religious fatwa is having a hot press, but political fatwa is cleverly disguised. Avoid originality and display of individualism; sing in chorus. Political pollution provides a safe haven for the leadership clock to be worn for a longer period. Beware of the coming elections; the public mood is volatile and intransigent.

# TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



## PHOTORIAL

Readers are invited to send in exclusive pictures, colour or black and white, of editorial value, with all relevant information including date, place and significance of subject matter. Pictures received will not be returned.

### Makeshift home



PHOTO: A K M MOHSIN

We are failing miserably to provide the urban poor with basic facilities. Like this family, forced to make their home under a cart, thousands survive precariously on the streets. They are vulnerable to exploitation, health hazards and could indulge in petty crime. It is high time the authorities launched low-cost housing projects, with health clinics and schools. These people are in dire need of state-sponsored support, but does anyone care?

### Mystery virus next door

A news item "Death from mysterious disease rises to 20 in India" (Page 11, February 25) has attracted my attention. Shiliguri, in India, is near our land port. Residents and local authorities are concerned about pigs and cattle as a source of the virus. Since animals in our cattle market mainly come from nearby Indian cattle-raising areas, and in the 'Qurban' festival the movement of cattle increases manifold, it is more than likely that along with the cattle, carriers of the unknown virus may permeate through our porous border along the Shiliguri area and may spread all over Bangladesh as an epidemic. The large-scale movement of people and animals, and the rotting of recklessly disposed animal refuse, would make the virus spread faster. I hope, the authorities (entomologists, city fathers, BDR etc.) have taken note of this news item seriously and prepared themselves accordingly to alert the people. A stitch in time will save nine, especially valuable lives.

Similar news had appeared before about dengue spreading, but it went unheeded until dengue took a heavy toll here. Besides, it was only after the outbreak was all over that foreign experts were called in and our experts went abroad, at public cost, to find ways to contain the problem.

Ahmadur Rahman  
Dhaka

### "Golden" Bengal

In school we used to sing our national anthem, "My Bengal of Gold I Love Thee." Now one wonders if there is a 'golden' Bengal. The whole country is in bad

shape, attacked by mismanagement, in-discipline, flouting of rules, political instability. Hartals and demonstrations are destroying society. We cannot ignore things. We must all raise our voices to launch a massive campaign against political instability. Then we can call this our Golden Bengal.

Mohammad Hafizur Rahman  
Jamalpur

### Quality of life

Community centres in residential areas are causing all kinds of health and social problems. People are unable to sleep because of the commotion created due to preparation of food, washing of utensils and related activities. Some of us residents tried to take up the issue with the builders and owners of clinics and community centres, but we have been threatened with dire consequences, emanating from godfathers and mastans, by their intermediaries. Given that the relevant institutions are deteriorating one after the other, we have decided to write to you.

Sufferers  
Dhaka

### Black sheep of art

I read recently that film and drama personalities, models and singers have not paid their taxes. I started to think of them as inconsequential persons. When devotees of art commit misdeeds intentionally, it becomes very pitiable. The moral example which they set for others is something that they do not maintain in their own lives. This is really shameful. I would like to reproach these black sheep of the arts.

Shamim Ansary Sumon  
Jahangirnagar University a