The Daily Star



# **Palestine-Israel: Dangerous escalations**



**ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN** 

HERE is dangerous escalation in the Palestine Israel relations. The Peace Process appears to have gone with the wind.in the latest phase US Secretary of State Colin Powell delivered a major address on the half a century old Palestine-Israel issue. This was a follow up of the speech delivered at the UN General Assembly by US President George Bush, where he declared for the first time the need for the creation of a Palestinian state, that would live side by side with Israel. Coming from Bush, whose pro-Israel sympathies are well known and equally well known are his antipathy towards Chairman of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat, this was a major step forward. Secretary of State Colin Powell followed up his speech by sending two high powered representatives, whose instructions were to stay in the region and achieve cease fire between Palestinians and Israel and put the Peace Process back on

track. Then something went horribly wrong and it ended up in massive car bomb blasts inside Israel by Hamas terrorists, which killed nearly 25 Israelis and nearly 200 were wounded. Ariel Sharon, the Prime Minister of Israel, for whom the doors of the White House are always open, was visiting Washington at that point. His appointment with President Bush was advanced so that he could rush back to Israel. This time around Sharon, the hawk,

of Sharon, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who leads the Labour Party in the coalition with right wing Likud Party, decided to raise the stakes. Peres is unwilling to join hands with Sharon in the dismantling of the Palestinian authority for fear that Israel will be left without a credible negotiating partner from the Palestinian side. Peres seems to have threatened to leave the Israeli coalition leaving it in disarray. The long and short of the latest events is that the Peace Process

Palestine-Israel dispute, namely Jerusalem. Now they appear to have travelled back millions of miles. The two sides have allowed a golden opportunity to slip away.

It is a matter of recent history that during the more than half a century of warfare between the Arabs and Israelis, there have been numerous efforts at peace making. It is also established beyond doubt that although UN peace making efforts and European Union peace making efforts have their value, it is only

ever Israeli Embassy on Arab soil entirely even handed between the was greeted by the Egyptians with Arabs and Israel. stony silence. They were merely acknowledging an unpalatable truth. The second part of the deal could not be carried through because neither Palestine leadership nor the Israeli leadership were ready for it. The meetings between the two sides continued inconclusively on the seaside city of Alexandria From 1980 to 1992, the reign of

the Republicans, nothing much

### THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

Ariel Sharon, the long established hawk, appears to have temporarily pulled back from going all the way, that is reoccupying Palestinian territory. If we are to go by his past record this cannot be very far from his thoughts. That would surely plunge the perennially unstable Middle East into another cycle of violence, whose denouement remains highly uncertain.

bettered on his past record of mass murder of Palestinians. We may recall that he is the author of massacre of Shabra and Shatila and invasion of Lebanon in 1982. He let loose his bombers on targets inside Palestinian West Bank and Gaza killing and wounding many. His bombers appeared to target Yasser Arafat for a bomb fell nearly next door to Arafat's headquarters. It appeared that Sharon was determined to cripple the Palestinian Authority and if needed, to eliminate Arafat altogether. At this point the coalition partner

has gone into real deep freeze and there is no knowing if talks for a cease fire will resume. The two representatives of Secretary of State Colin Powell continue to stay in the region for a better turn of events

It is tragic to witness how the Peace Process has been unravelled since the departure of President Bill Clinton from the scene. In the last days of Clinton Presidency, Chairman Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister Ehud Barak of the Labour Party were engaged in serious discussion with the crux of the

superpower USA who alone is in a position to make the adversaries sit at the negotiating table and take hard decisions on peace.

Recent events have also shown that in this enterprise, the Democrat Presidents are more successful than the Republicans. Democrat Jimmy Carter is the first US President who took an even handed approach in the Arab-Israeli dispute and successfully concluded the Camp David deal between Egypt and Israel in 1979. I was Ambassador of Bangladesh in Equpt and the opening of the first

happened and there was a virtual stand off. President Bill Clinton play. invested more time and energy on the Palestine-Israel dispute, during his eight years presidency of the US, than on any other issue. He cleared porarily pulled back from going all the decks in Lebanon, from where Palestinian territory. If we are to go Israel withdrew. Diplomatic relations by his past record this cannot be between Jordan and Israel were very far from his thoughts. That established and relations advanced would surely plunge the perennially a great deal between Morocco and unstable Middle East into another Israel. Yet the heart of the Middle cvcle of violence, whose denoue-East conflict is Palestine. President ment remains highly uncertain. Bill Clinton came tantalisingly close to clinching a deal. He had suc-Arshad-uz Zaman is a former Ambassador. ceeded because like his predeces-

sor President Carter, Clinton was

### The mystic night of honour

#### KAZI AULAD HOSSAIN

Bush Presidency does not give any cause for optimism. Unlike Clinton, HERE is a Sura in the Holy Bush prefers to keep his distance Quran known as Sura and is not directly involved in the Jumu'a or the assembly negotiations. Gone are the days of Friday) prayer in which Almighty even handed approach, whereas Allah has laid great emphasis on the the White House doors are ajar for importance of Friday congrega-Israeli leaders. Bush has vet to meet tional prayer. In this important Sura Arafat. In fact during the recent UNGA Bush did everything to avoid the Lord Creator enjoins all Muslims a face to face meeting with Arafat. In "to hasten earnestly to the rememthese circumstances it would be the brance of Allah and leave off busiheight of optimism to expect any ness (and traffic)" when the Muezzin's call is proclaimed to prayer on The Palestinians appear con-Friday (the day of assembly). In the demned to be at the receiving end same way, there is a Sura in the for some time. On the one hand they Holy Quran known as Sura Qadr or are accused of fomenting terrorism the Night of Honour in which Merciwithin Israel, and the latest are the ful Allah has also not only put much car bombings, and on the other hand emphasis on its importance. He has Israel is supposed to rain death and areatly euloaized its significance. As destruction from the sky in selfthe holv month of Ramadan which is defence. Since Israel has overthe month of self-purification is the whelming superiority in fire power best lunar month, the Night of Qadr and media control, it is their side of or the mystic night of honour (or the the story that is getting maximum night of power) is regarded as the best and the most glorious night to Ariel Sharon, the long established hawk, appears to have temthe Muslims all over the world. We

may now see what Allah Gafur-ar-

Rahim has said in Sura Qadr of the

Holy Quran. He declares in the

In the name of God Most Gra-

"We have indeed revealed this

And what will explain to thee what

The Night of Honour is better

Therein come down the angels

and the Spirit by God's permission

on every errand: Peace... This until

We know that the massage, that

is, Al Quran as referred, in the

beginning of the said Sura Qadr was

revealed to our holy Prophet Hazrat

Muhammad (peace be upon him)

for the guidance of the whole of

mankind. And when it was

revealed? It was revealed, as

clearly indicated in the aforesaid

Sura of the Holy Quran, on the Night

of Qadr during the holy month of

Ramadan. Let us now see what

Yusuf Ali, a renowned translator of

the Holy Quran and noted commen-

tator, says about this Sura Qadr of

subject matter is the mystic night of

honour (or power) in which revela-

tion comes down to a benighted

world, it may be to the wonderful

cosmos of an individual and trans-

forms the conflict of wrong-doing

into peace and harmony through the

agency of the angelic hosts." And

elsewhere he further observes that

"Laila-tul-Qadr is a night that a

message descends from God is

indeed a blessed night like a day of

(message) in the Night of Honour:

following manner:

cious, Most Merciful

the Night of Honour is?

than a thousand months.

the rise of morn

period of time. This does not refer to our ideas of time but to timeless time." According to his commendation a moment of enlightenment under God's Light is better than thousands of months or years of animal life, and such a moment converts the night of darkness into a period of spiritual glory." Although it indicates some partic ular night, that is, the 27th night of the lunar month of Ramadan, as the

honour, vis-à-vis other nights, as

declared by Almighty Allah in the

above mentioned Sura of the Holy

Quran, this glorious night "is better

than a thousand months", and about

a thousand months, the great com-

mentator Abdullah Yusuf Ali savs

that "such a period of thousand

months must be taken in an indefi-

nite sense as denoting a very long

night of honour or Laila-tul-Qadr there is no unanimity as to which night it is. The 23th,  $25^{\text{th}}$ , and the  $27^{\text{th}}$ of the month of Ramadan as well as other nights have been suggested It may not be irrelevant to refer here also to Avat 3 of Sura Dukhan (or smoke) of the Holv Quran vis-a-vis the said Sura Qadr. In Avat 3 of Sura Dukhan of the Holy Quran Almighty Allah says, "We sent it (Al Quran) during the blessed night for we (ever) wish to warn (against evil)." The night referred to in this Ayat is also usually taken to be a night in the month of Ramadan, say 23rd, 25th

and 27<sup>th</sup> night of that month. I may state here that Almighty Allah's calculation of a night or a day is basically different from our calculation of a night or a day in this mundane world of ours. In this connection we may refer to Ayat 5 of Sura Saida (or adoration) and Avat 4 of Sura Marij (or the ways of ascent)

of the Holy Quran. In these two Ayats Almighty Allah savs: Ayat-5: "He rules (all) affairs from the heaven to the earth

in the end will (all) affairs go up to Him on a Day

the space whereof will be (as) a thousand years of your reckoning.' Ayat-4: "The angels and the spirit ascend unto Him on a Day

the measure whereof is (as) fifty years." So, we cannot reckon or calcu-

late the space of the night of honour or Laila-tul-Qadr when merciful Allah says in Sura Qadr that this night is better than a thousand months. We should be ready to hail this glorious night, which according to Almighty Allah's reckoning, and not according to any human calculation, is better than a thousand months, and observe this auspicious occasion with due solemnity and fervour and avail this opportunity also to supplicate Benign Allah for His blessings and forgiveness.

About the position/status of this sacred night, that is, the night of

rain for a parched land.



## Why can the US claim victory in Afghanistan while other powers failed in the past?



HARUN UR RASHID

Mikhail Gorbachev decided to HEN President Bush launched armed attack on 7 October in Afghanistan to wipe out terrorism, most commentators said that the US would face an invincible enemy and would be in a mess as the Soviet Union experienced in the 80s. Many military strategists including retired Soviet war veterans warned the US that no foreign power could defeat Afghans partly because of harsh climate and mountains. The British could not do it in the 19th century and Soviet Union failed during the 80s. Many academics compared the Afghans with the Russians as both

#### stan in 1979 with some 80,000 troops and installed Babrak Karmal as the leader of Afghanistan (Karmal defended the presence of the Soviet troops under the mutual defence treaty). The Soviet presence led to a civil war and the Mujaheddin forces supported by the US and Pakistan fought against the Soviet troops. The zone became the "Vietnam" of Soviet Union with thousands of body bags flown to Soviet Union. The Soviet leader

Soviet Union entered into Afghani-US to cease bombing so as not to alienate the Muslims from the US war on terrorism.

The predictions did not eventuate. The Taliban regime collapsed like a ' pack of cards' within two months of the commencement of the war. US bombing continued unabated in Afghanistan during the month of Ramadan and there were no visible mass protests of Muslims continuing armed attack during the holy month. In Pakistan and Indonesia, protests from the extremist Muslims died down gradually.

that war to eliminate terrorism was seen as justifiable. There was no ifs and buts. The other wars (Vietnam and Afghanistan) were politically motivated and they did not have support from the people of the country which was involved in the war, let alone people of other nations

Second, the war on terrorism was not opposed by another power. Both Vietnam and Afghanistan wars in the past were considered to be proxy wars. Two superpowers were indirectly involved in those situa-

had devastating effects on the Talibans. Such weapons did not exist earlier. It is the technology that provided the US a complete superiority in warfare in Afghanistan. Furthermore the dirty ground war was fought by the anti-Taliban Afghan forces. The Talibans had to surrender their strongholds in Kandahar within days despite their

earlier propagandistic rhetoric of fight to the last. Fourth, from the very beginning President Bush and other Western leaders including Britain's Tony Blair had harped on the theme that the



It appears that war is practically over in Afghanistan and the new Afghan interim administration will be in place from December 22. It is hoped that the Western nations will be directly involved in co-operation with the UN to get the nation on its feet. The new Afghan leaders, at the same time, must conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent with fundamental human rights, democracy and freedom of action for women in the country.

withdraw the troops from Afghanistan and they left in 1989. In the light of the above scenario, almost every one predicted that the

The question is : Why did it happen ? It is because there are differences between this war and the past wars in Vietnam and Afghanistan. US would be in a quagmire for a long *First*, it has been a war against terrorism. It is not directed to achieve political domination or occupy Afghanistan. Every one condemns terrorism and the impact of airplanes hitting the Twin Towers in New York killing thousands of people of over 50 nationalities was global. The emotions of an overwhelming majority of people around the world were so intense and deep

tions. They helped the opposing local powers and as a result wars bogged down. This time Russia and other powers supported the US stance, Russia was so keen to see the collapse of the Taliban regime that it materially helped the Northern Alliance/United Front against the Talibans. The strategic interests of both the US and Russia converged for the first time to eliminate terror-Third, the US had sophisticated and state of the art weapons and used them. The smart bombs. cruise missile, and B-52 bombers

society?

war against terrorism would be a prolonged one and prepared the with the UN to get the nation on its people in their respective countries feet. The new Afghan leaders, at the that there were no quick-fix solution to eradicate terrorism. Furthe more, there were only subdued protests by the pacifists in the US and Europe against the war. Finally, the US and other leading Western powers adopted a very clever "bomb and bread" strategy in this war. While bombing continued resulting in deaths of many innocent Afghan civilians, wheat and other edible items were being distributed

simultaneously by air to the needy Afghans. For the first time there was a humanitarian dimension perceived in the war. It was emphasised that the war was fought against the Talibans for harbouring the terrorists and not against the Afghan people or Islam.

the way, that is reoccupying

What we observe regarding the

breakthrough.

The war on terrorism has shown that if war is fought against a potential threat to human kind, it has the the Holy Quran. He says, "The support of the majority of people world wide. Legitimate wars can be fought for legitimate causes. The UN Charter did not outlaw war totally. Article 51 of the UN Charter permitted a member-state to defend itself from "an armed attack". The attacks on 21 September in New York and Washington were considered by the US as an 'act of war' against it and the US launched its attack as a right of defence against the master minders of the terrorists in Afghanistan.

It appears that war is practically over in Afghanistan and the new Afghan interim administration will be n place from December 22. It is noped that the Western nations will be directly involved in co-operation

Napoleon and Hitler failed to defeat Russia. They said Moscow and Kabul were 'no-go' zone for foreign invaders.

In the Anglo-Afghan wars (1838-42 and 1878-79) the British entered Kabul but could not conquer the country. A truce was finally concluded which gave Britain to control external relations until the end of the First World War (1914-18). The

SHAHABUDDIN MAHTAB

time to come in Afghanistan because the terrain was inhospitable. Mountain ranges would pose a big headache for the US to target the attack. Furthermore winter in Afghanistan was severe and would soon begin coupled with the onset of the holy month of Ramadan. During the holy month of fasting Pakistan and Egypt reportedly requested the

same time, must conduct them-selves in a manner that is consistent with fundamental human rights, democracy and freedom of action for women in the country. Materia assistance to the people of Afghanistan will largely depend on how the Afghan leaders comply with their obligations as agreed in the recent Bonn meeting convened by the UN.

Barrister Harun ur Rashid is a former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

cated work, and a life of simplicity

### All health information to keep you up to date

### Back pain : What it means?

Tick the following boxes if you have these "risk" factors:

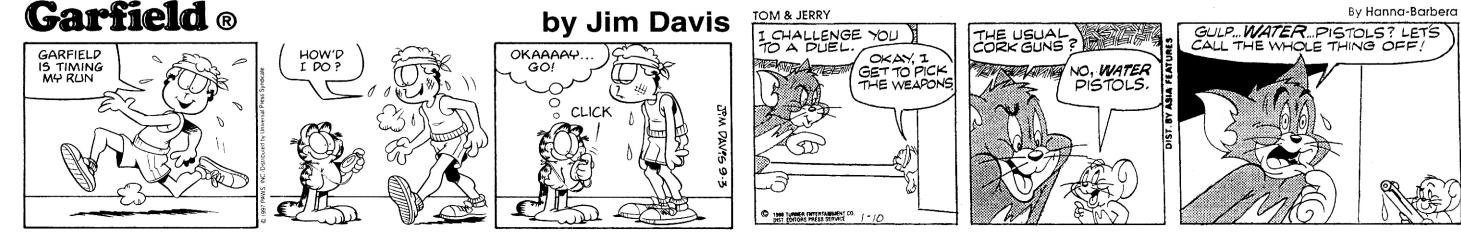
- ! Do you avoid certain activities because you know your neck or back will complain?
- Do you wake up in the morning feeling stiff in the back?
- Do you have trouble simply lifting your head off the pillow in the mornings because of pain or stiffness?
- Does your back ache after simply standing around (e.g. ironing, washing up, queuing)?
- Do you have pain or other unpleasant sensations associated with back pain while sitting down for a while, watching TV or driving the car?
- Do you ever wake up in the middle of the night to change position and become aware of back pain?
- Are you aware of burning in one area of the spine or between the shoulder blades?
- If you ticked two or more boxes, you may have chronic back pain and should seek medical advice

#### What is back pain?

Just about any of the connecting parts of your neck or back can be a source of pain.

- Poor posture can stress ligaments and tire muscles and eventually your joints can't continue to function under pressure, resulting in pain.
- A minor muscle strain from an awkward movement can produce a muscle spasm and pain.
- An accident or sudden injury can over-stretch ligaments.
- Discs are well anchored in place and don't actually "slip" out of place. They can, however, wear out, bulge or even rupture and so can be a source of pain.
- The sciatic nerves run from the lower back through the buttocks and down the back of the legs. Irritation anywhere along this pathway will cause pain in the back and legs.
- Vertebral and facet joints can be affected by arthritis, causing degeneration and inflammation within the joint and the growth of bony spurs on the edges of the vertebrae

Next: ABC of blood pressure



the leadership did not follow their

OR quite some time now, the whole nation is deeply concerned regarding the law and order situation in the country. The man in the street is worried, whether he can go to attend to his business with complete safety. The present situation may perhaps be analysed in a wider canvas, so that it can be placed in the right perspective.

The year of our independence (1971) was the most glorious chapter in the nation's history. The best of our youth made their supreme sacrifice for a prosperous and peaceful country. But within a few months of our liberation, the youth were disappointed and angered. when they found that the wealth and properties of the country went to the hands of a privileged few. These people did not acquire their wealth by way of hard work or their creative entreprenearship but through questionable means. The political leadership did not inspire the confidence of the people, by their way of functioning. We conveniently forgot that political activism enables us to be of service to our fellow beings. It was not a profession for earning money or accumulating wealth. A single example of unselfishness or sacrifice would have far out weighed a hundred sermon or exhortations. but

own advice.

The kickback and commission culture had started from the very beginning of the seventies, and it has cascaded to its present form of a Franknestein. The Bangladesh society has to work through the various social groups and sub-groups to bring in the required tide attitudinal changes in our present

value system. The goodness in man can overcome his evilness, and that truth, honesty and integrity are the value that can bring peace, and social and economic development in the society.

The family is the most durable form of all human relationships, and also the oldest one. The individual from birth to adulthood lives with his/her parents and imbibes their social values. In the turmoils of the early seventies, with the violence of the liberation war in the background. the expectations of the youth had risen, and they looked forward to an egalitarian society keeping in view socialism as one of the four pillars of our constitution.

The times were such that the children grew away from their parents. The family is the place where the child and the youth learn the fundamental values of life namely discipline, duty, truth, understanding et al. The experiences of the last

How responsible is our civil three decades have shown that parents gave very little thought and time to their children. The resultant outcome has been the noncommunication between the two groups. Over the years there has been continuous erosion of human, social and moral values. The family was unable to check and turn the

If we want to make any headway from the present downward path, the restoration of family ties and values is an essential ingredient. This is the responsibility of the families, and that of the nation. Without hardwork and sacrifices on the part of the parents, we cannot aspire to be a disciplined nation. The ages of five to fifteen are a crucial stage in the life of the child, and what is learn at this stage, sets the course for his/her future life. The present unrest has not gripped the nation

suddenly, but has now blown up because of our gradual decadence. What can be expected from parents who hardly give company to their children, or their time? The best investment of time that we could make is often not done. Of the

twenty-four hours in a day, the parents-get more than sixteen hours, to spend with their children. The indiscipline and restlessness

in the society has led us to destructive activities, in all spheres of our

life. And because of our nonwithout any entrepreneurial quality. productivity, there is less purchasing power in the hands of the people in real terms, with the consequent wants that follow. The general, deterioration of the country is a tale of more that three decades, and not that of the last few years. The great divide between the few thousand of lucky families and the rest of the people started many years ago.

The prosperous and profit earning enterprises left by the non-Bengalees were nationalised, and overnight all these became losing concerns. Those who were given the charge of the concerns were only interested in being rich themselves within the shortest possible time. The downward trend could not be rectified, when the government reversed its policy and went for privatisation. The existing SOEs are a severe drain on the slender government resources

For quite along time, the culture of middlemen, 'briefcase' business and 'indenting' have taken a deep root. A class of people, who grew with rich overnight with political patronage, and the 'right' links, displayed their wealth in a crude and vulgar fashion. This had an evil consequence for the society. This led to the development of the thought, that wealth can be 'earned' without doing any hard work, and

This image dealt a mortal blow to the and austerity. The political and future of the nation, from which we have to extricate ourselves the hard way, if we want to survive as a dignified nation. Our failures, follies and weaknesses are known to the donors and the aid giving agencies; that it why foreign direct investments move to Vietnam, not Bangladesh, It is only through our own efforts that we can bridge the credibility gap.

The schools, colleges and the universities, the maktabs and the madrashas are important organisations from which we can draw our moral strength, provided the political parties are willing to keep these places free from their spheres of influence.

in the year two thousand one we are witnessing the loss of valuable lives in our cities, towns and even in the villages. In India and Pakistan. violence has erupted at many places from time to time but the educational institutions have been singularly violence free. It is only our political parties, which can free the campuses from bloodshed. Or shall we go the way of Somalia or Congo? The North is not going to bail us out for our own follies. The bureaucracy in Bangladesh have been gener-ously treated by the nation. It is now

for them to set an example of dedi-

In the eighties, nineties and now now is an ill omen for the country. Our basic economic policies have to be geared to the generation of employment opportunities, so that the people in general can meet their essential needs at affordable prices. The terminologies that we have used in all our FYPs, such as employment generation, poverty alleviation and an egalitarian society have mostly remained inside the covers of the books. We are already late in the day in meeting the aspira tions of the people, but let us not be too late.

social leaders and can set a noble example to the nation by theirsimplicity of living, and a dedicated life in the service of the people. Our Prophet (SA) and all our four Caliphs led a very simple life. Of serious concern is the unbri dled consumerism which has enveloped the whole nation. The expenditure for it has to come from 'black'

money in many cases In almost every month we see the opening of expensive shopping malls/plazas, luxurious eating houses et al. The glaring neon signs beckon us to as hopping spree. These islands of wealth in a sea of poverty cannot last very long. The super-consumerism that we witness