

DHAKA THURSDAY DECEMBER 20, 2001

We condemn the attack on Indian parliament

Let restrained approach be taken to avoid escalation

error has struck in the immediate neighbourhood of Bangladesh. Last week's dastardly attack within the

high security precincts of Indian Lok Sabha is yet another proof of how no-holds-barred terrorism can really get in the choice of its targets. We find no word strong enough to condemn the heinous act perpetrated at the heartland of Indian polity.

The choice of sensitive targets for a special effect and their accomplishment through hell-bent suicide mission have given terrorism a horrific new dimension. Indian Home Minister L K Advani has officially put the blame at Pakistan's doorstep through a statement in parliament. It is alleged to be the doing of Pakistan-sponsored terrorist outfits called Jaishe Mohammad and Lashkar-i-Tayeba. It is understood that India is thinking of exercising its right to defence through hot pursuit into the other side of the Line of Control (LoC) There has been talk of 'calibrated' attacks on alleged training or staging camps etcetera. Whatever it is the scenario looks prone to escalation. Not since the Kargil days has the relationship between India and Pakistan been so much under strain as it is today. We urge the two powerful neighbours in the SAARC region to exercise utmost caution in their utterances to keep the situation from deteriorating any further. It seems the onus is on Pakistan to prove it has had no connection with the terrorist acts. India, on the other hand, should not jump into conclusions, because the matter is so grave that it calls for a scooping investigation to find out the nexus and finish off the terrorist networks.

We fully understand New Delhi's sense of outrage at the dastardly mayhem and share its concern for an early counter action against the perpetrators. At the same time, we implore her as the bigger and more powerful neighbour in the SAARC region to be chary of any hasty step. Both India and Pakistan are nuclear countries carrying a heavy burden of being extracautious in their dealings with each other under an extraordinary situation they find themselves in today.

If after thorough investigations accusations of state terrorism are proven then it no doubt will warrant severest of action conceivable. This is primarily because of the fact that no civilised norms can endure if states emerge in the role of terrorists

Restore road sanity before normal traffic resumes

Post-Eid ease provides an opportunity which one should take advantage of

ne of the great blessings of the post-Eid season is the traffic situation in Dhaka. The privilege of watching a city traffic scene which borders on the sane is surely nothing short of a miracle. But instead of just enjoying it, we should also take advantage of the respite and do some urgent repair of the traffic management before the city is overwhelmed once more by jams and more jams.

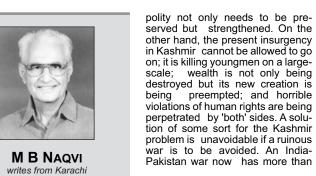
Some of the typical problems that can be resolved involve making intersections actually traffic facilitating points. To ensure that necessary and sufficient space is available to enable vehicular movement instead of massive gridlocks, which remain unmoving throughout the day. The first job is to remove all the hawkers from road intersections and part of the sidewalks. Second is to keep the intersections clear of all buses, tempos, autorickshaws etc. that stop to collect passengers. No obstruction of any sort should be allowed within 100 yards of intersections from all directions.

Large bodied public transports like the buses often crowd such intersections as well as other parts of the city roads at will as if they were parking lots. While recognizing that there is lack of space, it has to be asserted that such use constitutes a major traffic hazard which won't go away unless planned steps are taken

And not all the crazy parking is because of space constraints. Much can be attributed to the lack of concern and knowledge about traffic rules as well as deliberate flouting of the same. General vehicular anarchy, Dhaka's cadaverous traffic management system and a systemic refusal to handle this problem over time have all contributed to this massive chaos. We have also long neglected the need for a corps of trained traffic police and sergeants. We also need to raise their pay, benefits, prestige and self-image. The bus stops have in fact become informal super markets of the vendors and street shops. This may be providing space to the shopping under-class but it's also playing havoc with the traffic movement and contributing to the already extremely high level of confusion on the roads. Of course, the great contributor to the traffic madness of Dhaka are the rickshaws and with every passing season they become mightier in size and diminish the ability of the managers to establish order and sense on the road. The problems are many and all point to the proportionate shortage of space and high increase of motorised vehicles along with the muscle driven variety. This may be a problem of the economic segmentation of the city travellers and relate to a bigger problem of urban transport management. Cleaning the roads will mean firming up the governance process. And today could be a good day as any to start it all.

Governments need help

preempted; and horrible



OLLOWING the 13 December terrorist attack on the

Parliament in New Delhi India and Pakistan seem set to slide into war --- now or a little later. Their governments can scarcely rise above the futility of angry mutual accusations and making hostile propaganda attain ever greater intensity. Far too much poison has been injected into the public discourse vis-à-vis the other within each country and between them. At any rate, the two governments cannot be trusted to keep peace between themselves because their politics --- Pakistan demands serious negotiations on Kashmir and India feels unable to talk on the subject --- brings them into conflict at every step. Indian government, with inflamed nationalistic opinion behind it, has barred all foreign mediation. And yet without some outside help, the two can neither arrest the powerful undertow towards all out hostilities nor begin talking in a civilised way to defuse the situation

They obviously need help, if not of a government, then non-official for resuming a serious civilised dialogue. Both sides make a case that is strong enough. Secular framework of Indian politics and

the governments in New Delhi and Islamabad are culpable: they keep stoking the fires of what is religious intolerance through their work-aday Hindu and Muslim politics that is based on communal sentiments with much dissembling rhetoric. They have a bad history of com-

munal hostility of over a century behind them. Evidence of religious intolerance is everywhere in both countries. Today's rulers are legatees of those who carried out world's largest ethnic cleansing and wide-

one dimension of terror for common are nuclear powers. Should a war people on either side. It will not be erupt, there will be strong temptation to use nuclear weapons to ike US' war on Iraq or even Afghaniquickly crush the losing side and by stan. Here religious passions of well over a billion persons, men and the weaker party to avoid being women, are being steadily roused defeated

by hardliners on both sides. Indeed, A nuclear exchange on the populous Subcontinent will cause horrible death and destruction. India no doubt talks of no-first-use but is now said to have evolved a doctrine that permits a conventional war --- for which India is better prepared --- and thinks there will not be a nuclear exchange. There is no reason to ignore the repeated Pakistani threat of using the atomic weapons first if it looks like losing Moreover, in a war the war. between two nuclear powers, no one can possibly wait for the other

side to obliterate a city or two before spread genocide, not to mention using one's own nuclear weapon; trampling of human decencies and rights underfoot in the days of 1947 both may in fact race to be the first to partition of British Indian Empire use it. A nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would otherwise Communal riots have been frequent in both countries wherever they be unthinkable because, all said could since. Should a war break out and one, the human material in the in the present surcharged atmoleadership on both sides is aware sphere, religious minorities stand to enough and human enough not to suffer horribly. Ferocity of the war inflict nuclear destruction even on can set off a prairie fire of relithe 'enemy' country. But the roused giously-motivated strife --- a prospassions on both sides that are pect that should not be allowed to strongly tinged with religious hatred materialise. Then, the two countries and, in conjunction with the pro-

found mistrust that the mere exis-

tence of nuclear weapons on the

'other' side inevitably generate, can

cloud judgements, especially of the

kind of political decision-makers

there are. What is needed therefore

is some wise people with high

statures to intercede with both to

move back from forward deploy-

ments --- from high alerts and hair-

trigger readiness --- and to begin

negotiations. Now, it should be

widely known that left to themselves

neither the two governmental leaders --- after the kind of

exchanges they have indulged in ---

nor their bureaucracies will find it

easy to sustain a meaningful dia-

loque. Ruling classes in both coun-

tries have boxed themselves in

formulations that leaves no meeting

PLAIN WORDS

Let there be an international seminar of prominent persons.... Let it suggest a committee of five, seven or

ten. This would, after studying the problems at issue exhaustively, make the two governments begin the

dialogue at appropriate levels.... The task of sustaining this official dialogue will then devolve on prominent

intellectuals of India and Pakistan. They have to jointly and separately find formulations and principles on

which hopes can be pinned that they can be usefully and productively accepted by the two governments,

on the one hand, and popular consensus can be created among the two peoples, on the other.

point and which would drive each other away

We have thus to find individuals of

wisdom as well as high stature who

can be persuaded to undertake this

difficult task. Who can such persons

of goodwill be? Well, if a hundred

persons were to find five to 10

persons from around the world, a

few names that are repeated by

most of these 100 can surely be

agreed upon. Here is a suggestion.

Let there be an international semi-

nar of prominent persons on the

subject. Let it suggest a committee

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make the two governments begin

the dialogue at appropriate levels.

They can then retire after popularis-

ing their common approach, if any.

This would, after studying the

of five, seven or ten

The intervention from outside cannot however be too intrusive. It can only initiate the process. The help for sustaining the inter-state dialogue will have to be by leading members of the intelligentsia in both countries acting both nationally as well as jointly for coordinated efforts to find principles and formulations that the two governments can accept and which would eventually make the negotiations fruitful.

But the task of sustaining this official dialogue will then devolve on prominent intellectuals of India and Pakistan. They have to jointly and separately find formulations and principles on which hopes can be pinned that they can be usefully and productively accepted by the two governments, on the one hand, and popular consensus can be created among the two people, on the other.

Let me set the ball rolling about selections. For the international committee, one should look for men and women who have experience of national affairs, have conducted international talks, possess high integrity as well as stature, not to say wisdom. One can throw in a few names for a start. How about persuading Bishop Tutu and Nelson Mandela from South Africa, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl from Germany, Jimmy Carter and Michael Gorbachev, leaders of international peace movement and anti-nuclear campaigns and a few Nobel Laureates. Persons noted for their human rights struggles such as Wali Khan, Justices VM Tarkunde and Sachar to name only two and a few noted Gandhians with a few litterateurs thrown in. Out of such a lot volunteers must be sought and a few like Mandela and Tutu press-ganged, in a manner of speaking. The Subcontinent itself is not devoid of persons of goodwill and stature. Similar national committees and an Indo-Pakistani steering committee can be created not only to help sustain the intergovernmental negotiations but to arrange brainstorming sessions at suitable intervals of Indian and Pakistani intelligentsia --- nationally and jointly. Can some such thing be

MB Naqvi is a leading columist in Pakistan

achieve a number of inter-related

done?

Yeh dil maange less! Is 13 December the Kargil of 2001?

and instead of offering an alternative government, a dysfunctional Opposition fractured in full view of television cameras. Amar Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav tripped Sonia Gandhi's efforts to lead a new government; while she gave sufficient evidence of the fact that no one had taught her to use the political abacus. In comparison, Vajpayee, with the help of information and broadcasting minister Pramod Mahajan, was brilliant in the management of a war environment and particularly in the use they made of

election, the voter was telling

principal virtue. They told her that

The third was the inability of the

base. No voter thought Jyoti Basu was unpatriotic.

The BJP has convinced itself that the startling mission that broke through the outer security cordons of Parliament and nearly pulled off a remarkable terrorist achievement is the starting point of its return to the public favour that it has lost during two years of mismanagement. I deliberately do not call it a suicide mission, because while the terrorists were certainly ready to risk their lives, death was not part of their end-game. As is now clear from the

of the highest rung of politicians

hostage and then bargain with the

Indian government over at least ten

days to get a number of demands

met. This was a Kandahar operation

on a far more dramatic and demand-

ing level. The five terrorists had a

last full meal at Karim's in the Jama

Masjid area before their operation

but it was not meant to be a last

breakfast. They carried with them

enough nourishment to last ten

days. I suppose they had estimated

that it would take about this long for

the will of the government to crum-

works, which is why a government

any collapse of nerve is enthused

about revival instead. Once the

security apparatus of Delhi under-

stood the level of the challenge, and

it did so in remarkably quick time, it

responded with efficiency and

effect. Hard taskmasters at the

senior of police will still ask why

CRP sharpshooters used so many

At least one parallel with Kargil

ble

rounds, but that is only a part of the drill for even better capability. A grateful government is not counting the number of rounds.

A second parallel is also becoming manifest. Luck. If the Vajpayee government had been replaced after the no-confidence vote two and a half years ago, and a Prime Minister like Jyoti Basu been in the chair when Kargil broke, one can imagine the havoc that he would have wreaked politically on the BJP. The armed forces would have done their job irrespective of whether their

and consider. Men in such an operation are most effective when they do exactly what they have been programmed to do. They are not trained to think of rational alternatives. At best they work, in those fleeting seconds, on instinct. Instinct cannot take you beyond a limited range. If even a couple of them had managed to break through into the inner circle and enter a single room occupied by MPs or ministers, the story would have been different.

The symmetry stops being parallel, and it all becomes an

objectives through 13 December. The passage of the anti-terrorist law is part of a package that is expected to deliver Uttar Pradesh in the crucial Assembly elections ahead, along with some strident rhetoric against madrassas, a convenient way of broadening the attack on minorities. The politics of Kargil worked during elections because no one had any answers. This time, parties other than the Congress have an equally vested interest in the answers, like the Samajwadi Party of Mulayam Singh Yadav. He is going to deflect the demand for passage of the prevention of terrorism ordinance by pointing out that POTO is already law. He is going to agree about the involvement of Pakistan, and then point out that there are still hundreds of miles between the borders of Pakistan and the centre of Delhi: why was the home ministry unable to stop terrorist activity in between? He is going to note that both the Prime Minister and the home minister publicly said and repeated that Parliament was

threat. Why was nothing

The most important difference between today and two years is the gap in credibility. Today, voters are more likely to call the performance of the government incredible rather than credible. You can sell merchandise in politics if you are believed; the same goods find no buyers if the market has lost its confidence in the salesman. Publicity is no substitute for policy.

the betrayal of their Lahore initiative. available evidence or equipment Prime Minister was Vajpayee or embarrassing square with the third Karail war. and and supplies that they thev Basu since both have factor The before the beginning of the general wanted to hold a sufficient number



argil came out of the blue, or rather the white of Himalayan mountaintops, for the Vajpayee government. Not to mince

any words. Kargil was a massive intelligence failure. For months armed men had been creating a bulwark from which they could threaten Indian defence forces and. prospectively, the stability of Jammu and Kashmir, and the government in Delhi had absolutely no idea of what was happening, not on the hostile side of the Line of Control but on our



side. Three factors shaped the story of Kargil.

The first and most important, Vajpayee: Yeh dil mange more! was the capability of our security forces and systems. Once the Opposition parties, and particularly Indian armed forces became aware the Congress, to formulate a viable of the extent of their challenge, they response. They were buried in an did not need any further psychologiavalanche, and whatever Sonia cal persuasion. Pepsi has probably Gandhi managed to suggest from never had a more successful slogan under the Kargil snow sounded than the line that still swims across weak, unconvincing and often contradictory. She was given what the audiovisual waves: Yeh dil maange more! That is what the can only be described as typical Congress advice by those in the jawans were saying as they mobilised and climbed up towards the party who have made seniority their peaks that had been lost to intrud-

ers. the government should not be The second was the ability of the criticised because that would be the BJP government to convert an unpopular thing to do. Sonia Ganadministrative disaster into a politidhi, perhaps also nervous about her cal coup. Crucial to this turnaround status as a person of foreign origin, was the credibility of the Prime was unable to draw a dividing line Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, between support for a national cause, the war effort, and criticism then higher than ever thanks to a disastrous victory won by the Oppoof those who had allowed the situasition in Parliament. A notion to deteriorate on the borders. confidence motion against the The Communists of Bengal, who Vaipavee government had been are articulate and understand policarried by one controversial vote, tics, did so and preserved their

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Movie of the week

The timing of the Movie of the week on BTV Saturday morning at 10:40 am should be changed.

If this government declares Sunday as a holiday, BTV can change the time schedule of Movie of the week either Saturday night or Sunday afternoon or Sunday night.

BTV once used to care about which programmes could be put on which time slot but they aren't so considerate now. The Bionic Woman, Six Million Dollar Man, The Saint, the Fugitive, Charlie's Angles TJ Hooker, The Land of Giants etc are some of the movies series that were popular.

Now we watch good programmes using dish or cable connection. I hope some day BTV will totally change and they will introduce good programmes for the Adib Reza

Paribagh house Dhaka 1000.

In search of good habits

When bad habits can ruin one's life, all of us should try to mobilize public opinion to save our younger generation from being destroyed. Unfortunately, most of us do not exert

we belong. Some of us talk in terms of social injustice, corruption, terror ism, political instability etc Maybe if their utterances were true in spirit, many of the social ills and prejudices would have vanished with the passage of time. What we need most today is a

spirit of patriotism and love for the country. Let us hope that "The Daily Star" will play a vital role in enlightening the minds of people in power and those in opposition for the nation's security in future. We search for the best in every aspect of national life.

Abul Ashraf Noor Uttara, Dhaka

E-cash advert in bad taste

I found the E-cash ATM advertisement on the back page of December 3 Daily Star inappropriate and in bad taste. The advertisement

attempts to use a father's heart attack as a reason for having their Ecash card. An emergency could be portrayed in much better taste than this.

ourselves for the society to which MA on e-mail

The news on the activities of the

Women should be in purdah

IPRC (Islamic Paribash Rakkha Committee) of Islamic University has drawn my attention. There used to be a time when Muslim women of Bangladesh practised parda (veil). I remember my mother and other elder female relatives used to go out covering the rickshaw by a saree. Muslim women used to cover their heads (qhumta) with their saree (anchal). They used to be in parda while talking with males. In those days no Muslim female used to wear 'tip' on her fore head but this is very common now a days. Dresses of Muslim girls were sharee or salwar

kamiz while frocks or skirts were the dresses of Hindu airls. Muslim women presented themselves in a very modest and sober way. In Muslim countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Iran. Muslim women are enjoying equal rights with males in different fields of employment yet dressing in conformity with Islamic codes. Islamic code and conduct is not deterrent to modern life style. Female students can't be iso-

lated from the prevailing culture of our society. Strong motivation is required. All Bengali Muslim families

should come forward to rescue the females who have deviated from

Ziaul Huda Uttara, Dhaka

SSC and HSC results

The Education Boards should encourage newspaper reading. Good students need to read newspapers to do better. The trouble is that only their parents and quardians read the daily newspapers. Keeping the newspapers out-totally out of the reach of the students is dangerous. Is it not important that every student read newspaper daily to keep oneself informed about what is taking place inside our country and abroad?

We hope and pray that the Ministry of Education and the Education Boards will take a wise step in the vear 2002

Mujibul Haque Sobhanbag, Dhaka

Hasina's three leftouts

Sk Hasina, after her defeat in 2001 election, started blaming each and everyone. She blamed the 4 party alliance for crude rigging, the care taker government and the Election

gas,

gas, foreign observers gave a certificate of fair election. She is blaming everyone and everything except three. These three are (1) Allah (2) People (3) herself. Why ? I have an explanation

Had she said that Allah had defeated her, every one would saytrators to justice If Allah doesn't want that you become the PM, what can you do? Mahmood Elahi Ottawa, Ontario. Canada Had she said, the people defeated me, every one would say - then if people don't want you to be their know how? PM, what you can do? Had she said I have lost because of me - then every one would say- is it Hasina?

Really? Are we dreaming? Shawkat Hossain Lalmatia,Dhaka

Laden tape confirms evidence

Even before the release of the tape showing bin Laden gloating over attacks on New York and Washington, the earlier released tapes showed0 him congratulating the

sense not to interfere with professionals, and provide all the logistical support they need. But a non-BJP Prime Minister would have used the information available to tell people how the previous government was sleeping while the mountains on the Line of Control were awake with preparations for war. On 13 December as well, luck was on the side of the government. After their car had crossed the outer security ring, the terrorists discovered that they were prevented from reaching the main and most vulnerable entrance of Parliament by the oldest reason in the modern world a traffic iam. There were just too many cars in

queue, for the hour they chose is the that might have crumbled along with busiest moment of arrivals. It was this that probably forced them to choose the entrance at which Vice President Krishan Kant's extra security was posted. They hit the Vice President's car, and in that instance all their plans went awry. We can ask ourselves, endlessly, as to why they did this, or why they did not do that. But pause for a moment

Kargil that the government is trying hard to forget: the coffin scam, extraordinary not so much for the money involved but for the sheer audacity. That the defence ministry, under the leadership of the virtuous George Fernandes paid 2500 dollars for a 175 dollar casket is one part; but it takes some gall to make money out of coffins. The chant coffin-chor, gaddi chhor! has become part of the political litany, and George Fernandes will hear it again when he weaves through Uttar Pradesh to ask for votes for the BJP. The BJP will hear it even when George is busy elsewhere. The most important difference

between today and two years is the gap in credibility. Today, voters are more likely to call the performance of the government incredible rather than credible. You can sell merchandise in politics if you are believed: the same goods find no buyers if the market has lost its confidence in the salesman. Publicity is no substitute for policy.

The government is trying to

special done to protect it when government had the intelligence reports on its desk? If there was no intelligence failure this time, then there was administrative failure. That is common sense. The home minister has asked plaintively that if the Pentagon cannot be protected from suicide missions then it is impossible for any government to protect anything. One can understand admission of a one-time failure. Or even if terrorists succeed twice or thrice. But not when they punch deadly holes into the system time after time, and place after place the Red Fort, the J and K legislature, now Parliament itself.

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When politicians start running from their mistakes, they quickly discover two things: first, you can run, but you can't hide. Second, you also run out of excuses

MJAkbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

whether the police has any real intention to catch terrorists. And, two, whether the police has the ability to catch them

Lack of motivation of the police is a major problem. If the matter is serious then the pressure comes from the higher authorities and the investigation intensifies. May be some arrests take place. The question is, if the police do not feel like catching the criminals and only acts like an efficient actor and shows superficial seriousness to satisfy his boss, then what can be done ?. Here, I am not going to accuse the police that they are not dutiful, responsible and honest. But if they are for any reason or other demotivated and do not discharge Does the government their duties properly then what will happen? Lack of job satisfaction, no One question that baffles many is promotion for a long time, undue the failure to curb terrorists activity influence by politicians, lack of especially in the capital city ? Is it logistics, low pay, disadvantageous because that the government does transfer, political affiliation with or not really mean to eliminate terrorobedience to certain party or dissatism from the society as their party isfied for any other reason or reamen are involved in these activities? sons may be the cause of

Or, the authorities concerned can demotivation of the police. My point not properly figure out the best ways to counter terrorism? The only tool here is, has the government read the pulse of the police ? Are they which the government has in hand is working for them or to sink them. the police. No official or politician is To combat the terrorists the

and tact. Here training means

police should have proper training

are being published on the inactivation of the police on duty nearby the crime taking place. If the police on duty are asked by the mass, they reply that "this is not my duty". I am in doubt of the awareness of the latest training and techniques developed in the Western countries. Here at home, training facilities of the police is absolutely meager. Under these circumstances, to curb crimes and terrorism from the society following suggestions may

physical fitness, latest tactics,

weapons, communication facilities

and logistics. So many news items

be taken into consideration: 1.Special Force should be deployed to monitor the activities of

the police; 2.Community participation should be ensured:

3.Honest and dedicated party men may recruited as volunteer;

4.Local bodies (Ward Commissioner, Member, Chairman) should be brought to book for restoration of peace in their respective areas.

5.MPs may be given the responsibilities to supervise the activities of the enforcement agencies.

Matin bin Zahir Gopibagh, Dhaka

Commisioner for alleged support to make BNP the winner. She and the Awami League blamed the police and the army to work together to defeat her. She also blamed President Shahabuddin Ahmed for taking BNP's side. She also blamed the USA saying that in exchange for

hijackers and calling for more such

attacks. The discovery of terrorist training camps in Kabul and Jalalabad were proofs that he and his Taliban henchmen were plotting for such attacks. The present tape confirms this. As Information Minister of United Arab Emirates, Sheik Abdullah bin Zaid Nahayan, said: 'There is no doubt in my mind that Laden was behind those operations. The tape confirms that in a way that leaves no room for doubt." Now it is the duty of the international community to bring the perpe-

going to face the terrorists in the field. Here two questions arise. One,