statements critical of Pakistan.

have to do much more

This simply won't do. If India

India must adopt a posture of

"concerned impartiality" -- not

jockeying for its own favourites, but

offering resources and counsel

when asked. Second, it must pro-

vide generous humanitarian assis-

tance, especially food. It should also

offer rehabilitation programmes to

Afghanistan's infrastructure, agri-

culture and pipeline projects. Pub-

lic-sector firms like Engineers India,

ONGC, Oil-India and GAIL have

considerable expertise in designing

will rebuild relations with Afghani-

stan. The two countries have had a

rich cultural interaction for over

2000 years, from which India has

gained much: Basmati rice.

asafoetida (heeng), and the sitar,

Afghanistan runs through all of

sarod and dilruba

Such South-South cooperation

and operating oil/gas pipelines.

Finally, India could help develop

the war-devastated people.

wants to win back the goodwill it

once enjoyed in Afghanistan, it will



DHAKA SATURDAY DECEMBER 22, 2001

War cries are on again between ancient enemies

India and Pakistan must prove they are capable of finding peace

HERE is unease in the air on the borders between India and Pakistan. Armies are being mobilized along the Kashmir border. Although neither countries have declared any immediate call to hostilities, the military option sits waiting. It comes at a time when the delayed SAARC summit is expected to be held in early January 2002.

The present crisis was ignited by the recent attack on the Indian parliament. Security agencies in India have said that the attackers were Pakistanis linked to the Kashmir militancy. Of those named, George Bush has declared one, Laskar-e-Toiba, a roque organization.

The Pakistani authorities have however refused the charges saying that the attackers are not linked to them and that this is just an excuse to start another round of war. They have called for a perusal of the evidence, which naturally India has refused. For South Asia in general all of this can only be called bad news.

The root cause is of course Kashmir. The heightened stake of both countries is obvious. The September 11 attack on the US followed by the US led coalition victory in Afghanistan have both been great advertisements for war and violence. It has in fact created an environment where moderation finds little space. The attacks have shown that no matter how perfect a security blanket, they have vulnerabilities. It has also exposed the fact that once a major country starts a war, it can go on till the objective is reached. In the tension filled air of South Asia, the examples have become deadly role models

South Asia can't afford a war in any sense. As its two most powerful neighbours continue to sustain a high pitched level of rage and wrath towards each other which has led to many wars before, one wonders if the two countries are fully in control of the process or not. Can they seek peace if they wish to or are they trapped in the semantic web of violence?

Or do we have to say that peace in Kashmir is beyond the capacity of both the countries? After all, war can be waged by anyone with a gun but peace needs vision. While both have that rare quality, both seem unwilling to display it when it comes to ending mutual hostilities. Although war and terrorism have both been glamorized recently, India and Pakistan have a unique opportunity to glamorize peace.

It has to be recognized that the entire South Asia has a stake in the emerging scenario and both India and Pakistan are responsible for that as well. The SAARC summit should provide an opportunity to send that message to both so that they may recognize the common fate of the region and the futility of war that neither can win. Peace appears to be the only option for them.

Biman investigates power misuse by ministers

Code of conduct the only way out

HE final report on the matter of Biman off loading passengers in its Jeddah-Dhaka flight to accommodate two cabinet ministers and their entourage isn't in yet but the concerns are very much here. Misuse of power

by the public officials is common but accountability remains the most elusive element in the governance grid. If the matter occurred the way media has reported, we are staring at a long time profile of systemic abuse of privileges

and authority which indicates how our elected officials look upon state property. This used to be called a feudal approach in earlier times. Feudalism may have expired but its culture has certainly remained behind to plague us.

It's a bit surprising that the BNP, which campaigned on the platform of equal rights for all, should be so keen to break the very rules they promised to uphold. Using Biman or for that matter any institution this way reflects not only a sense of unfair entitlement but also denial of equal rights. They

Unstable Afghan peace

used since the days of Ahmed Shah Durrani

PRAFUL BIDWAI

writes from New Delhi

have been hunted down

hence invincible

nounced near-invincible

ance or simply dissolve

by Prophet Mohammed, is the first

man to claim the "Amir" title since

the Fourth Caliph did over 1,000

years ago. Most supporters have

already deserted the man once

declared the Purest of the Pure, and

beneath the feet of Osama bin

Laden, who too had been pro-

of Al-Qaeda escapes death or

capture. It will be equally a miracle if

the 30.000-plus Taliban "regulars"

do not defect to the Northern Alli-

not merely through devastating

force, but also through the collapse

of its own morale. It unravelled

through the traditional mode of

sides: the losing party suddenly

ceases to resist in return for

amnesty, bribes or power-sharing.

This mechanism has been liberally

This mode involves switching

conflict resolution in Afghanistan.

The Taliban regime was routed

The sand is also slipping from

It will now be a miracle if the bulk

The Taliban used this mecha-Y the time these lines nism to seize power by co-opting appear, Mullah Mohammed local warlords. They are now losing Omar, Amir-ul Momineen, Afghanistan the same way.

Commander of the Faithful, and The Afghan war clearly proves Head of the Supreme Shura of the the Taliban were unpopular. They Taliban's Founding Members, may were hated, especially where their rule fully flowered. Islam was only Mullah Omar, who in 1996 an expedient instrument and the donned the legendary robes worn

The Al-Qaeda-Taliban hopes of converting the war into a conflict between Islam and the Rest of the World stand belied. This should bring considerable relief to secularists -- particularly in India. It is a sign

of the democratic commitment of India's Muslims that they did not succumb to sectarian appeals. The Afghan situation, however, has many negative features. The

extremely well-represented. The NA "troika" -- Foreign Minister Abdullah. Interior Minister Qanooni and Defence Minister Fahim -- is all-Taiik

There are intra-Pushtun divergences over former King Zahir Shah too. The King was deposed in 1973 and has not been missed. He has since not bothered to visit Afghanistan once. However, US policyMr Karzai to change his stand on an extremely myopic agenda, e.g. putting Mullah Omar on trial, rather getting Mr Younus Qanooni to issue than grant him amnesty

The US's larger agenda is Black Gold. Afghanistan holds the key to exploiting the Caspian Basin, the world's second largest oil/gas reserve. The US has strongly supported corporate bids to build a Turkmenistan-Pakistan pipeline across Afghanistan. In 1995-98.

South-South cooperation will rebuild relations with Afghanistan. The two countries have had a rich cultural interaction for over 2000 years, from which India has gained much: Basmati rice, asafoetida (heeng), and the sitar, sarod and dilruba. Afghanistan runs through all of South Asia's veins: from the Gandhara civilisation to the Kabuliwala legend ... But restoring those links today means taking an autonomous initiative, not slavishly following the "Bush Doctrine". Are we ready for this?

Pashtun identity a cover for their ambition to absolute power with which to control people's lives, faith and even minds

These "Holy Warriors" were no more "organic" to Afghanistan than leaders like Babrak Karmal or Najibullah -- the "modernisers in-ahurry". If anything, the Taliban were the greatest obstacle to Afghanistan's natural evolution into a plural civil society and state

The Afghan war did not generate sustained large-scale Muslim protests anywhere. Even the protests in Pakistan were limited to Afghan localities especially after the NA emerged as the principal anti-Taliban force on the ground.

interim government hurriedly put together at Bonn is not fully representative. Some participants of the Bonn process -- itself a confluence of four different groupings, from Rome, Peshawar and Cyprus, besides the NA -- oppose the government. As does the Centre-Left,

which stands totally excluded. Mr Hamid Karzai's 30-member cabinet includes only two women. Pusthuns too are underrepresented. Mr Karzai is a Pushtun, as are 10 others. The Pushtuns' representation corresponds to their share of the population. But only two of the five leading

ministers speak Pushto By contrast, the Tajiks are makers favour a kind of "Orientalism", the view that societies such as Afghanistan are irredeemably feudal and therefore "naturally" privilege kings.

The Bonn accord is part of an American game-plan -- despite the role of the United Nations' diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, who had quit the same job in disgust in 1999. Washington called all the Bonn shots either through arm-twisting, hard lobbying or money power.

The NA couldn't have captured Kabul without US air support. Washington also marginalised Mr Burhanuddin Rabbani. It ensured the NA would agree to an international force. More recently, it forced

Washington came close to recognising the Taliban. Can these imbalances be over-

come? The honest answer is no -unless a credible international body takes charge. The UN Charter provides for just such a Trusteeship Council. But the US squandered that chance. India too has fallen in line with the

US. It didn't once demand that the South Asia's veins: from the Bonn process should be inclusive. Gandhara civilisation to the Nor did it take the lead in organising Kabuliwala legend ... But restoring humanitarian assistance for the five those links today means taking an million Afghans who face starvation. autonomous initiative, not slavishly New Delhi is content with smallfollowing the "Bush Doctrine". Are time lobbving -- through Taiik leadwe ready for this? ers whose families took refuge in India. Even here, India is pursuing

Praful Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist.

towards negotiations

with the

Will opposition victory create political instability in Sri Lanka?

of a hung parliament. Indeed, it has been a resounding performance for the opposition leader, who now adorns the position of prime minister.

When parliamentary polls took place in Sri Lanka late last year, few thought that fresh elections will be required so early - just little more than a year later. The People's Alliance(PA) of president Chandrika Kumaratunga had secured support

opposition ranks to restore the majority. The task was difficult but support from the Marxists JVF made it possible. Then came something which

was least expected. Withdrawal of support by some notable treasury bench figures weakened the PA once again reducing it to minority with little chance this time to regain the majority. The president, finding no other ways, dissolved the parliaplays an important role in certain areas. An opposition majority in parliament has paved the way for a hostile prime minister and his government that can make the president quite uncomfortable. At the same time the powerful president can often turn the government uneasy. It is a sensitive situation which can also be difficult at times bringing the two sides at the loggerheads. As such, it is going to be

which the electorate will certainly not relish considering the need of political stability in a country ridden with manifold problems. That both sides are taking pragmatic steps under this situation has been reflected in their policies that followed the elections. Setting speculations in some quarters that the president might use her constitutional prerogative to deny Ranil of the prime ministership and choose

Tamils to end the war which, however, seems a Hercluean task. It may extend greater encouragement for a solution of the war through dialogue. Both the president and the prime minister are wholly Sinhaelse and so are their political groupings which provides positive scope to cooperate with each other in settlement of the crisis. It seems that the two sides are keen to work in concert while differences of views on policy matters stemming from political rivalry cannot be ruled out. If they come together and weld a common position in various issues despite some divergence, it would be good for the nation. But if differences go out of proportions, this may invite trouble for the nation leading to political instability which is least desired in Sri Lanka now. Reports from Colombo suggest that the president and the new prime minister appeared to be somewhat at loggerheads over formation of new cabinet. Finally, the cabinet was formed and new prime minister



ZAGLUL AHMED CHOWDHURY

 INALLY, the new parliament in Sri Lanka began its maiden session on December 19.0pposition National Unity Party(UNP) leader Ranil Wickramsinghe had the last laugh in the parliamentary elections of the island state held on December 5.The UNP-led opposition alliance known as National United Front(NUF) has won enough seats in the 225-member parliament to form a new government. It replaces the government headed by Ratnasiri Wickramnayake of president Chandrika's People's Alliance(PA) coalition. The elections were expected to be hard fought but the opposition victory has been easier than anticipated. It won comfortable majority to form a government. Ranil Wickramsinghe lost presidential elections to incumbent Chandrika Kumaratunga in December,1999 and his party lost the parliamentary polls in October, last year, to president's People's Alliance(PA).He spared no efforts to take on his principal political foe Chandrika Kumaratunga and this time his relentless determination paid dividends. The polls for a new parliament were necessitated as the president called snap elections following dissolution of the house.



Whether the new government can make headway towards resolution of the contentious problem remains to be seen. But the country needs political stability to the extent that midterm polls are not held in quick succession. All sides of the political spectrum have a role to play here. Hopefully, the president and the new prime minister would work in concert at least in this direction despite their differences.

to form a new coalition in the island state after failing to garner the necessary seats of its own. The blood-soaked line up to the polls had taken more than seventy lives and the opposition parties com-

ment and called midterm polls. Typical of Sri Lankan pattern, the voting was marked by widespread violence and many lives were lost. The government and the opposition accused each other of intimidating

some tight-rope walking for the new prime minister. Similar conditions existed in 1994 when Chandrika Kumaratunga was elected prime minister under UNP's president D.B.Wijetunga. However, that

somebody else from the victorious party for the job, has actually called upon him to form the government. This is not only in accordance with the democratic spirit but also realistic to avoid any unnecessary conlast frontation with the new government. On the other hand, the new government said it nurtures no rancour against the political opponents and stressed on a broad-based national unity government to accommodate even the PA representatives. All these have allayed the fears of an early clash between two sides. During the campaign, Wickramsinghe focused on development and economic recovery while the president's coalition concentrated on the need for fighting the separatist Tamil rebels in an 18-vear war that has claimed more than 65,000 lives, damaged tourism revenues and caused deficit defence spending. The new government may take a softer stance

can

obviously feel that rights may be denied without any after effect.

This may sound harsh but in fact it isn't because that has roughly been the way the politicians and senior officials have treated state property for years. It's strange but after so many years of being an independent country, after seeing first hand how governments become unpopular in a matter of months, how public humiliation can reach fever pitch, one wonders what still inspires people to act this way?

The only answer is that they haven't been told that what can or can't be done. And since they continue to be ignorant through a relay of regimes, the authorities must seriously consider enacting a code of conduct for the ministers.

The ministers over many years have shown that they don't know where the line between use and abuse of privileges are drawn. It's imperative that they should know the limits so that the public is protected from the capricious behaviour of people who think they are not answerable to any authority.

We await the outcome of the investigation.

plained of rigging and malpractices in the voting. Main opposition leader Ranil Wickramsinghe had predicted snap polls since the PA gained single majority but fell short of absolute majority which was mustered with the support of smaller parties to facilitate the formation of a government. The PA with 107 seats had received support from Sri Lankan Muslim Congress and another small organisation. But defections at later stage reduced the PA to minority in parliament and president Chandrika Kumaratunga suspended the legislature for two months to avoid a show of strength in the floor of the house with the hope that government would be able to engineer defections from the Opposition won belying impression

the electorate and adopting unfair means

But at the end, all accepted the result because none really doubted that this could have been otherwise despite minor malpractices. The government side deserves praises for accepting the outcome although it lost and this reflects a degree of political wisdom and love for the country. Rejection or designs to whip up controversy on the issue would have come on another setback for the country which is crippled by a longdrawn bloody civil war on the "Tamil" issue and occasional political bickering.

The country has a presidential system where the chief executive is president but the parliament the

situation did not fortunately long as president Wijetunga was there in the helm for a short period and Chandrika herself soon was elected as president and her party or alliance was in majority in the house. She made her mother late Sirimavo the prime minister. Now, the situation offers different scenario as the president is set to be there for about four years with enormous powers in hand. Disputes between the president and the prime minister are likely to occur occasionally.

This raises fears of instability in the country since a kind of diarchy may arise creating new political tensions. However, both sides are aware of this unhealthy condition

said his government would attach priority in resolving the civil war. which he felt, remained unresolved mainly because of the peace efforts launched by the Chandrika government on "weak foundation".

Whether the new government

can make headway towards resolution of the contentious problem remains to be seen. But the country needs political stability to the extent that midterm polls are not held in quick succession. All sides of the political spectrum have a role to play here. Hopefully, the president and the new prime minister would work in concert at least in this direction despite their differences.

Zaglul Ahmed Chowdhury is Senior Specia Correspondent of BSS.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

Some features of Israeli democracy

Western nations are sympathetic towards Israel for being the only democratic country in an autocratic Arab neighbourhood. But take a look

-It disregards international law by occupying other people land using military force.

-.Refuses to comply with hundreds of UN resolutions.

-Practices racism against Arab Israelis - .Killing 13 Arab Israelis within a

few days, just because there were marches and demonstration in Israel

. Racism against Black Jews Forcing them to

seek medical treatment in separate hospitals; rejecting their blood donations; Housing them in the

poorest areas in Israel and never assigning them a key position in the government

All political parties in Israel are either based on religious and/or ethnic bases and lack a multi-racial political base except one or two parties such as the Sas, Russian Jews party, Arabs party and others.

- Transplanting thousands of settlers into the occupied lands of the West Bank and Gaza Strip while their armies are killing Palestinians and confiscating

there lands and homes.

- Legalization of the use of torture learn against Palestinian detainees.

In spite of being 'the most powerful -Implementation of illegal detennation' in the world, America has tion for years without fair trial or always displayed a servile attitude towards Israel. For years, they have supported and facilitated Israel's brutalities and all they got in return was the hatred and contempt of people all over the world. The US policy regarding Israel has been criticized by both Muslims and Non-

Muslims alike

citizens.

IBA

Sonya Hossain

needed

University of Dhaka

America has had to pay a very

high price for such policies

andmayhave to pay even more

dearly in future if they continue to

incense people by backing Israel

blindly. Onewouldexpect that they

wouldstart behaving more rationally

after the bitter experience that cost

them the lives of their innocent

have reached an outrageous height,

I guess some people never learn.

New Ambassador to

US clarification

America remains as servile as ever.

But now that Israel's atrocities

Political calendar for 2002 Please allow me to predict the

without bringing charges

The University of Asia Pacific

Dr. Mahboob Hossain

Dhanmondi.

political calendar for the coming year. In January AL will hold a circus attended by cultural luminaries and certain NGO's. This will further assist in humiliating Bangladesh in the eyes of the world This will be followed by a small

respite and then will start the hartal season which will go on till the Qurbani Eid.

After Eid we can look forward to more hartals and possibly some natural calamities like cyclones etc. All this should be enough to put

the final nail in the coffin that used to be the Ready Made Garments Industry. Or I can be proved wrong and our leaders will make it their New Years

Resolution not to call any more Hartals and to return to Parliament. Sadly there is little chance of that happening.

Some people never

residency, which arises the question of his integrity and allegiance to the national interest Bangladesh.

Given the nature of current US anti-immigration policies, what is the surety that he won't prefer to maintain his immigration status, and thus forego the greater interest of the country? This pressure would

be totally uncalled for the sensitive position of an Envoy

Also, US is going through a tremendous change due to the September 11 NYC tragedy, and appointing a bureaucrat with his background (prominent member of the "Gang of Eight" during Ershad regime) would not bring any laurel for the expatriates living in the USA Apart from at his link with the Pakistani military junta during our Liberation War in 1971 was not above controversy.

I wonder what is the logic behind demoralizing our diplomatic corps? We demand a visionary and pro-people individual to be appointed, who would represent Bangladesh without any hints of controversy. We demand a clarification from our Foreign Minister stating that this appointment will not undermine our national interest. Nafees

'Women in purdah"

It was quite disturbing to see Mr. Hassan Ahmed being appointed as This is in response to Mr. Ziaul the next ambassador to US as Huda's letter in your daily titled "Women should be in Purdah." After reported in the Daily Star. It is alleged that he has permanent US

giving some anecdotal evidence on the history of Bengali women in purdah in the good old days, he has called upon the Bengali Muslim families to "rescue the females who have deviated from Islam." Without

aoing into criticism of his point of view or arguing the validity of his apparent definition of deviation from Islam, I would like him and his likes, to consider the following: How does the purdah issue

which is a woman's personal choice. compare in terms of society's evils, with the issues of mass corruption by the powerful, rampant political murders, prevalent street crimes, wide spread domestic abuse, and general deterioration of ethics and loss of conscience?

Before preaching to the women and "rescuing them from deviation", I suggest that the men in our society clean up their own acts. They should stop giving dirty stares at woman that passes by regardless of whether they are in purdah or not ; stop hitting and torturing their own female relatives, stop throwing acid on women who reject their advances ; stop cheating in exams, stop asking for bribes when people come to request phone service or to pick up their pension checks that they have rightfully earned ; stop harassing witnesses and victims of crimes. A society that fails to prosecute crimes which violate other people's life, property, and liberty, has no moral authority to call attention to complicated, personal and sensitive issues like purdah. A Concerned Citizen, Dallas, USA

"Women in purdah ": A fetish?

Ziaul Huda's letter on women in purdah is a very interesting one. It's interesting how he keeps insisting that by being covered and observing purdah, women become more attractive to men who watch them. In other words, purdah to him is sensously attractive

Of course that's not what the objective of purdah is as prescribed by the Holy Quran. It's modesty and self-effacement, the opposite of what he claims purdah achieves. Does Mr. Huda realizes that he may have a burga fetish. That is people who actually enjoy watching women who are covered from head to toe and not otherwise.

Mr. Huda needn't feel anv embarrassment. There are many cases like this in many parts of the world and he is one of them. Clinical psychiatry can easily deal with such cases. But it would be interesting to know how he feels when he watches women without burga. Disappointed

Manzur Hasan Cantonement Dhaka. Why India refuses investigation of

Recently there was a terrorist attack on the Legislative Assembly of India. All the terrorists were killed by the Indian security forces in a quick shootout and about six guards were killed in the crossfire. None of the officials or members of the Legislative Assembly were hurt. A similar attack happened on the Kashmir Legislative Assembly after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Then there was a hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane on a domestic route. As usual India was quick to blame Pakistan for the

EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

terrorist incidents ?

hijacking, but as soon Pakistan provided the proof of Indian intellience agency's involvement in the hijacking, Indian government backed out of their accusation to malign Pakistan and declared the hijacking a "False Alarm". In each case India quickly blamed Pakistan and Pakistan

based guerilla groups fighting to liberate Kashmir from the Indian occupation. Each time Pakistan offered to India a joint Indian and Pakistani investigation of these incidences, each time India refused Both times President Bush offered to send FBI teams to India to help the investigation and each time India refused the offer.

For a long time India has been trying to get Pakistan be declared a terrorist state and the freedom movement a terrorist movement by

the U.S government. There is a strong feeling in Pakistan and Kashmir that these terrorist acts are carried out on behalf of the Indian intelligence agencies to malign Pakistan. The circumstances under which these incidents happened also fuel these suspicions. Persistent Indian refusals to allow Pakistan to conduct joint investigation and President Bush's offer to send FBI team to India to help the investigation don't help to ease Pakistani and Kashmiri suspicions.

The freedom movement in Kashmir has entered in it's 12th year. More than eighty thousand Kashmiris have been killed since then by the Indian army. The groups fighting against the Indian rule has mostly targeted Indian army. After the September 11 attacks, when there are strong sentiments in the world against terrorism, it seems highly unlikely that any group, or Pakistani government will be so silly to conduct these terrorist acts and in turn risk themselves by getting declared terrorist outfits.

Terrorism is a worldwide problem. If India is serious in fighting terrorism and want U.S help in punishing the responsible parties in these crimes then it would be wise for the Indian government to allow an international team to investigate these terrorist acts

Sohail Ahmed Houston, 77059