

Kashmir moves towards war

Friends of both countries should do trouble-shooting at once

FEAR and violence stalk the borders of India and Pakistan once again. A jingoistic fervour is sweeping the power lobbies in both the countries and its fuelling the fires that makes war a real possibility. The situation has festered for long and the causes behind belligerence are being overwhelmed by the impulses of hostility.

Ostensibly, these two countries are now caught in a self-generating web of violence that has developed a logic of its own. Cross border violence continues with no end in sight but even worse is the fact that the reasons behind such violence are not being addressed. Kashmir has unfortunately become a flash point to be nursed to meet internal political needs and cross-border violence that keeps the self-image of a South Asian notion of sovereignty alive and bleeding.

At this acute phase when war may happen any day such words may have less of an urgency but even if this phase of slugging is over the next phase will be quite ready for exploding in no time.

India and Pakistan while accusing each other of committing violence don't seem desperate enough to seek peace at all costs. Thus efforts at mediation have been turned down. Just as the international world has condemned the sanctuary being provided to extremist Kashmiri groups in Pakistan, many have spoken out against the treatment of the Kashmiri people by the Indian security forces as well. Thus, neither country has a clean slate nor a record of being serious about seeking peace.

The present umbrella of violence under which both countries breathe are made more fearful because of the nuclear shade that it provides. Reports say that Pakistan was close to using its nuclear option at one stage of the Kargil war and should this one also burst into flames, use of nuclear bombs can't be ruled out either. There seems to be a state of permanent war that has taken hold of both the countries.

Given the situation we urge restraint and continued communication. But more importantly, we hope that the persuasive powers of the USA will weigh with both countries to have them pull back from the precipice of another war that seems fraught with grave consequences. Common friends of India and Pakistan should also join in a trouble-shooting initiative.

Kashmir must become the graveyard of wars. It's everyone's responsibility to ensure that.

Death in police custody

Get tough with the guilty to deter others

ONLY the other day, tyranny by DB men allegedly claimed young man Badal's life at Narayanganj in a rape case dating back to October last year. Even though the victim's mother had not named Badal in the FIR but with the transfer of the case from the thana to the detective branch his name suddenly figured on the list of suspects. DB men picked him up without a warrant and "tortured" him to death when the ransom money (!) they had demanded from the relatives of the victim was not paid to them. Badal's mother has since lodged a murder case against seven DB personnel.

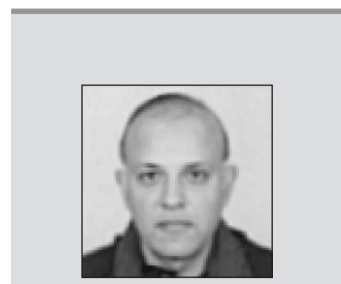
Just a couple of days later we hear the news of two on-trial prisoners dying at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) in the wake of alleged police torture. Again? The first victim Fazlul Huq Bhuiyan was a UP member and AL leader of Rupganj. An FIR-listed accused in the murder of a housewife taking place nearly six months ago, he was arrested only ten days back. His 'conditions deteriorated' on a two-day police remand; and shuttling between the Narayanganj Jail and Dhaka Central Jail Hospital he eventually landed at the DMCH and died. ASP Narayanganj has denied police torture adding that high blood pressure caused his death. The actual cause of his death should be determinable by autopsy.

The point is why should an under-trial prisoner, named in the FIR, need to be brutalised to extract any information with such fatal consequences? This could have been done through skilful investigation in the first place. Application of torture methods is a pathetic admission of forensic failure.

The second casualty has been Mohammad Ata, a rickshawpuller of Kamrangirchar, who was earlier arrested as a drug addict. In this case he was picked by DB men first and then handed over to the local police and not the other way round. Allegedly tortured at the police station, he too was whisked away from the jail-house to the hospital before being 'declared dead'.

While relatives of such victims are known to sue cops, there should be a mechanism within the police directorate to launch a probe into an untoward incident as and when it occurs. And those found guilty should be given the severest of punishment, because they have denigrated their position from a gatekeeper of law to that of the worst violator of rule of law.

A question of image



K.A.S. MURSHID

ONE of Bangladesh's major problems is its poor image. It doesn't matter that our human development record has improved; it seems irrelevant that substantial progress has been made on the food security front, or that dependence on foreign aid has lessened significantly. These more subtle messages have yet to filter through the 'white noise' generated by the usual image of a desperately poor, aid-dependent nation at the mercy of the forces of nature and the depredations of man. The rest of the world cannot really be blamed for this uncomplimentary view. Our achievements have been very significant in recent times but at the same time we seem to have made a quantum jump into the mire of corruption, anarchy and violence. Today, virtually every Bangladeshi is a victim of this malaise: parents are afraid for their children even while they are at school, women's mobility has been further threatened, families are ever-increasingly withdrawing further into themselves, unable to trust neighbours,

colleagues and friends. The many-headed hydra of poor governance and cronyism has now spread far and wide and affects everyone directly. A principal cause of this syndrome is our political confrontation and the dependence on goons and *mastans* to do the other side in, to cause terror in order to ensure control and compliance and use the law enforcement agencies as a party-political appendage. Is it therefore totally unjustified that our national image should suffer? In fact

problem was that they had no legal documents and were therefore at the mercy of the local police and frequent victims of extortion and harassment. In my travels in Pakistan and my encounters with people from various walks of life I have the distinct impression that Bangladesh now enjoys a much more positive reputation, even envy, in this part of the world. The old shopkeeper at Chiniot (a place famous for its rose wood furniture) looked at me intently for a few seconds upon learning that

of Dhaka (i.e. sky-scrapers) as seen on live telecast of cricket matches held at the Dhaka stadium. These were the two factors behind the more favourable image of our motherland here -- not just among ordinary Pakistanis but even among the relatively better heeled. Let me elaborate a little.

I invited Mr. A. Khan (not his real name) to lunch when I heard he migrated to Karachi in the late 1980s -- well after completing his studies at BUET. I was intrigued and

first came to Karachi, a dollar was worth 18 Pakistani Rupees and 35 Bangladeshi Takas. Today, the Taka is stronger than the Rupee". He further confided: "You know, we made a mistake. We should have stayed back in Bangladesh -- although most people who have come here will not admit it publicly". I had no trouble agreeing with him but found it tragic nevertheless. History was taking its revenge once again as the seeds put to ground thirty years ago were still yielding a bitter

BETWEEN YOURSELF AND ME

Poor Bangladesh was ambling along quite nicely before September 11 but quickly found itself on thin ice as exports dwindled, remittances fell, reserves plummeted and growth forecasts kept being revised downwards. No amount of posturing on the anti-terrorism front could sway those harsh, cold and calculative minds in Washington! The real truth is that Bangladesh has been skating on thin ice for some time now without really knowing it.

the logical thing for us might be to accept all this by amending the constitution and declaring ourselves as the People's Republic of Mastanistan!

A different perspective

But guess what? There are actually people beyond our borders, in this wide and beautiful world who think we have done rather well! I noticed an article in the local press late last year on a visit to Karachi about the problems faced by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants who were desperately trying to return home. The paper thought that since the Bangladesh economy was improving rapidly many of our compatriots were now trying to go back. The only

I was from 'Bangal'. "Seventy-one me hum roya tha", he said mournfully. I was slightly taken aback by the statement. "Bangal ka hal toa bohot accha ho gaya", he added. "How", I wondered, "did this old guy in the middle of nowhere learn about Bangladesh's progress in human development, education and food security?" So, I asked him. No, he hadn't heard about our school enrolment rates or the Food for Education programme. Nor did he have a clue about the Human Development Index. His impressions were based on two directly observable factors: (a) the lower rate of depreciation of the Taka compared to the Rupee, vis-à-vis the greenback; and (b) images

wanted to know a bit of his background. He spoke fluent Bangla so that I mistook him for a Bengali and was very curious about why he had come to Pakistan. I found out however that his family migrated from UP, India after partition and that most members of his family had moved to Karachi over the years. "How are you guys doing?" I asked. With a wry smile he said that things were not easy. It was difficult to get employment. The Government did not recognise BUET degrees awarded after 1971. Without a strong 'jack' it was impossible to get a good job so he essentially plodded along from one short-term project to another. "Things are good in Bangladesh now, right? In 1987 when I

harvest -- at least for those who did not choose well. Here were a people who still did not have a home.

Recent trends

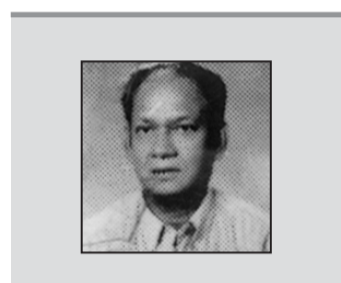
A quick comparison of the development experience of Bangladesh and Pakistan reveals some interesting features. Politically, Pakistan remains in a rut unable to make a transition from a military government to a democratic, civilian government. Bangladesh has made the transition although one may well ask to what advantage. On the poverty front, Pakistan experienced rapid declines in the 1970s and 1980s but the trend sharply reversed itself in the 1990s. In particular, urban poverty rose alarmingly accompa-

nied by huge macro imbalances, and rapidly dwindling forex reserves. Thanks to September 11 (and the huge inflow of aid for joining the anti-terrorism fight), conditions have stabilised and indeed improved with reserves shooting up, the Rupee regaining some of its lost value (resulting in huge losses to currency speculators who were hoarding their dollars in anticipation of a continued fall in the value of the Rupee) and growth forecasts hovering in the 4-4.5 percent level -- a good enough scenario for holding of referendums and promising away huge subsidies, e.g. to farmers, in exchange for their support.

On the other hand, poor Bangladesh was ambling along quite nicely before September 11 but quickly found itself on thin ice as exports dwindled, remittances fell, reserves plummeted and growth forecasts kept being revised downwards. No amount of posturing on the anti-terrorism front could sway those harsh, cold and calculative minds in Washington! The real truth is that Bangladesh has been skating on thin ice for some time now without really knowing it. Nine-eleven merely exposed those weaknesses, and it is high time that we tried to do something about it. (And we all know what they are, don't we?) There may still be time to change our image further a-field, perhaps even beyond the borders of Pakistan. However, that will require a little more effort. A few skyscrapers or a 'strong' currency will not be quite enough.

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India and Pakistan: Neither war nor peace



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

INDO-PAK relations remain in a state of suspended animation. The chances are that this state will continue for quite some time.

In order to understand the present state of affairs, we have at least to go back to the last days of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif, nearly two years ago, when he was unceremoniously thrown out of power by the Chief of Army Staff of Staff Gen. Pervez Musharraf. This method of usurping power by the top brass of Pakistan army has become such a regular affair that it hardly raises an eyebrow. This has been going on in Pakistan almost since its birth. A new twist has been added to the situation more than a decade ago when the opponent of defeated Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan people's Party (PPP) sent her to exile in London and Dubai. She continues her usual press statements from the safe exile away from Pakistan. Two years ago Gen. Musharraf sent the

ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to exile in Saudi Arabia. Gen. Musharraf has ordered that the two adversaries are not to set their feet on Pakistan's soil.

India, the most important neighbour of Pakistan took very badly the ouster of Nawaz Sharif. Indeed following the mini-war in Kargil, a *modus vivendi* appeared to be visible in the horizon. India has always preferred to deal with civilians in Pakistan, although they have

land team recently left in a hurry following bomb explosion in Karachi.

The latest developments are ominous to say the least. As US Assistant Secretary of State Christina Rocca, started her official visit to India, with the avowed objective of bringing the two nuclear neighbours to the negotiating table, a massive blast took place in Jammu, killing 34 Indians including women and children. These were three 'terrorist' bombers, who created

Pakistan further. It is, however, unlikely that India will succeed in breaking the strong bonds that have once again developed between Pakistan and the US following the 11 September events. Those events have made Pakistan a close ally of the US in her strike against Afghanistan and carry on the anti terrorist campaign particularly against the Al Qaida Network.

India has massed a million men on her western border with Paki-

stan. Pakistan had announced the disbanding of terrorist organisations like Jaish-i-Mohammad. From the regularity of terrorist acts within Indian side of Kashmir it is evident that Pakistan is either incapable or unwilling to rein in the terrorists.

For the present it is still a war of words from both sides. Indeed the nuclear weapons are working as effective deterrents from the situation degenerating into armed conflict. Both sides are painfully aware

the elections. The Parliamentary elections are not going to be much more credible than the referendum. Gen. Musharraf appears to have taken as his role model both Field Marshal Ayub Khan of the late fifties and sixties and Gen. Zia-ul-Huq of the late seventies. Both the dictators lasted a decade each.

Indo-Pakistan relations have seen many ups and downs mostly down. The regime of Gen. Pervez Musharraf witnesses the relations reaching the rock bottom. There does not appear to have much of a hope for the situation to take a happy turn. The new element is the competition between India and Pakistan for US favours. Whereas US proximity to Pakistan gives every indication of a temporary arrangement, relations between India and the US promises to have much more depth strategically. Because of temporary gains from a warming of relations with Pakistan, the US is unlikely to forego the steady growth of bilateral relations with India.

There is great public pressure on Prime Minister Vajpayee for decisive action against Pakistan. He has expelled Pakistan High Commissioner. He may continue on the cards of Vajpayee. Indo-Pakistan relations are likely to remain in a state of confrontation without the final action.

Arshad-Uz Zaman is a former Ambassador.

THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

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been few and far between. Gen. Musharraf's occupation of the top spot in Pakistan, soured considerably the relations between the two neighbours. India launched a world wide campaign to isolate Pakistan internationally. She was largely successful. Pakistan lost her place in the large and powerful body, the Commonwealth. Since India refused to sit with Pakistan, the south Asian regional organisation SAARC has remained frozen. Worse still Pakistan feels the 'stalemate' in the cricket field with India not playing against. The New Zea-

land team recently left in a hurry following bomb explosion in Karachi.

There has been war cries in India and the country has united behind the leadership of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. The Parliament has met in a special session and Vajpayee has received *carte blanche* for any action that he deems fit. As a first step India has expelled the Pakistan High Commissioner and will no doubt follow it up by scaling down the size of High Commission personnel. It is evident that India will launch a vigorous campaign world wide to isolate

stan. Pakistan has done likewise. It is really eyeball to eyeball. What gives added urgency to the matter is that both are nuclear powers and very densely populated. Moreover both are wallowing in poverty and misery. What is frightening is the accidental or 'spurt of anger' pulling of the nuclear trigger. This is the worst case scenario.

For long India has been raising the issue of cross border terrorism. The latest is an escalation of terrorist act, for which India squarely puts the blame on Pakistan and Pakistan routinely denies. Some time ago

of the fact that an armed conflict may not be possible to keep within bounds of conventional warfare. And nuclear holocaust is too frightening to contemplate.

After his referendum, which was very poorly participated by the public, Gen. Pervez Musharraf may feel that he will be there for the next five years. The Parliamentary elections will see a lot of noise but the basic situation is unlikely to change. The Parliamentary elections are due this autumn. Gen. Musharraf has forbidden the two prominent politicians to take part in

OPINION

For integrity of the police force

TAHERA JABEEN

ISSUES of police integrity and legitimacy are of concern to all countries as the integrity of the police and the integrity of the state are closely linked. Hence though there are particular problems associated with the democratisation of policing, it is clear that all societies may be considered, in one sense, as being in transition.

Two fundamental observations are underpinned observing the police force in our country. First, it has already been argued and accepted that misconduct and corruption by police personnel/officers are pervasive (found in all jurisdictions), continuing (likely to be found at all times) and not bounded by rank. Second, it has been agreed that effective policing is based on public confidence and

trust. Maintaining such trust is dependent on full and effective action against misconduct.

Now the question is what form of efforts to tackle corruption and misconduct should be taken into consideration? Examples from other countries indicated, either through relative absence (Poland, Hungary), or presence (South Africa, Northern Ireland), that some form of independent, external overseeing of the police is vital (particularly in societies where trust in police is especially low). Such external review is important for two reasons. First, it can provide an environment in which investigation can take place free from professional and political influence. Second, it has a vital symbolic role in fostering public trust in the police. Different models of external overseeing needs to be

discussed, the most radical model of which is now existing in Northern Ireland. There an established office of Police Ombudsman has powers to investigate all complaints made to police, made possible by a very high level of financial support. An effective system of scrutiny needs such financial support in order to be able to respond quickly and comprehensively to complaints.

Exploring the sources of police misconduct and corruption, and considering the socio-political and legal environment, human rights and organizational issues, it has been found that such matters are the legal basis for investigating misconduct, the nature and extent of human rights and ethics training, and such organizational issues as recruitment, selection and police pay and conditions of work. Poor pay and

conditions were held to be an important factor particularly where police officers are paid salaries below the poverty line. However, it is generally agreed that much or even more could be achieved by careful selection and recruitment procedures, and through ongoing training, to instill professional values, and to develop skills which protect against misconduct. Thus, in addition to strong, independent, retrospective scrutiny, it is agreed that considerable responsibility must remain with the police organization for proactive action against misconduct.

Police leadership, it is accepted, must also be at the core of tackling corruption. Creating the right environment to prevent misconduct is a core management responsibility for the police. There are concerns, though there is no evidence as yet

from Northern Ireland, that removing the entire responsibility for investigating complaints from the police might lead to abrogation of responsibility by senior police managers for tackling misconduct and corruption.

Besides, another dimension is the importance of establishing a complementary or symbiotic relationship between proactive prevention by the police organization, and internal and external means of investigation. But the thing is that there is clearly no single model for fostering integrity and tackling misconduct and corruption in policing. The challenge is to find a balance between 'internal' and 'external' means that are appropriate to the political and cultural environment in which they have to operate.

Recommendations:
i) Country should consider establishing external means of investiga-

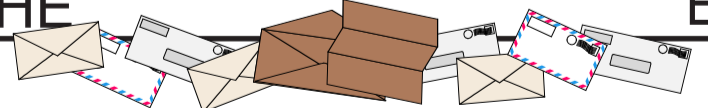
tion of complaints against the police, that are appropriate to the political and cultural environment in which they have to operate.

ii) External investigatory bodies should be independent of the police and those who are politically responsible for them. They should be impartial and well-resourced, and should report publicly on the volume and outcome of complaints/investigations.

iii) All police services should ensure that the need to maintain the highest standards of professional conduct is a central consideration in their recruitment, selection, training processes and in their management structures and procedures.

Tahera Jabeen is working as National Social Development Adviser in an international donor funded bilateral programme of Bangladesh government.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Manavzamin and freedom of press

Our courts have set the precedent that the sources for newspaper reports are no longer sacrosanct. Where is this going to lead us now? Every jumped up corrupt politician can sue the editors of papers on this pretext.

Where we could have hoped for a crusading judiciary in the absence of honest politicians, we now have one that is striking down the freedom of the press.

The judiciary is supposed to defend our freedom from the vagaries of politicians. What a screwed up country we live in.

D. Quixote
Dhaka

The BNP government has already

shown its willingness to censor the films we can watch and what music we can listen to. It thought nothing of banning the FEER for publishing an article which the government did not happen to agree with.

Now our courts have started to jail editors. We are becoming more and more like North Korea or Zimbabwe every day.

I wonder what the Committee to Protect Journalists is going to say about this new episode.

Astreix
Dhaka

How are the decisions made?

I was amazed to see the gushing flow of Letters to the Editor that obviously outraged the general public regarding the sudden ban on TV channels. What I fail to under-

stand is that how are decisions made in the ministries?

Don't our leaders stop for a minute to ponder on its positive or adverse effects? Do they ever at all think of long-term impacts? I don't think so. If they did, then a decision, it could be any decision, cannot be taken one day and then withdrawn the very next day. Or do our leaders wait to see the reaction of the mass and then judge the effectiveness of those decisions.

This ridiculous mockery of the government even got published in The Japan Times. What do we try to portray to the outside world?

Nadia
Guilshan, Dhaka

What a joke!

The Information Minister's sudden and uncalled for decisions regard-

ing some cable channels together with subsequent U-turn made the whole thing a joke!

But seriously, all of a sudden our "Honorable Minister" allegedly out of concern for the moral wellbeing of the young viewers took some decisions, virtually banning all the movie channels together with some other channels and left the viewers with only some Indian channels.

By forcing our viewer to watch these, does the Minister want to foster "Indian Culture"... surely that would not be desirable? The whole fiasco has raised serious doubt regarding the authority. Please do not try to "regulate" rather facilitate healthy flow of information and entertainment and trust the viewers to be the best judge.

Dr. Haroon Rasheed
Dhaka

"Diplomatic triumph

in Burma"

Referring to Mr Abul Fazal's letter (May 13).

Arakan, whatever be the name given by the junta and however reduced in its territorial size by the Burmans, belongs to the Arakanese. We don't need citizenship or recognition as a nation by Burma that occupied Arakan by force. Like the Karens, Shans and other nations subjugated, we want the Burmans to withdraw into their own country -- Burma.

Russia occupied the central Asian nations during the rule of the Czars more than two hundred years ago. The Indian subcontinent lost its freedom to the English in 1757. So, surely we all know the agony of not being independent. And we seek freedom from Burmese occupation.

I am sure Mr. Fazal could not have written the letter from

Maungdaw. The reprisal would be sure death for himself and torture to his family.

We hope Aung San Su Kyi visit Arakan and its six states to see the appalling conditions.

Maung Keo Maung
Rakhine Para, Harbang,
Chittagong

Waiting to see the Shipping Minister's action

I congratulate and thank The Daily Star for publishing the in depth report on the faulty construction of the MV Salauddin-2 (May 16) violating the approved design and drawing of the vessel, which is the main cause of its sinking. According to the report the owner illegally constructed a bridge-deck adding five cabins, one bathroom and guard-

room and from first floor by removing built-in benches from the sides-- added a saloon.

Moreover the vessel is two feet longer in length than originally designed; as a result its centre of gravity displaced and so easily it capsized. It's very surprising and astonishing how the concerned authority provided fitness certificate for years altogether ignoring the safety of the passengers. I like to draw attention of the Shipping Minister who is showing concern against the corrupt practices of some of the donor countries for the last few weeks-- especially after the allegation of corruption against his Ministry by the Denmark government.

I am waiting to see what steps he takes to the corrupt practices of his Ministry and sub-ordinate offices, so that in future no such gross violation

of fundamental principle of safety of the vessel is overlooked so callously and deliberately.

J Kobir
Mirpur, Dhaka

Titans meter reader

The government has just gotten a golden opportunity to counter its free fall in public opinion. By doing something about this corrupt meter reader, BNP would be sending a message that it has the courage to stand up to corrupt public sector employees, even if they are politically protected trade union gangsters.

So far BNP has only showed its fortitude and unity in standing up for Col. Akbar versus the Danes. Now it's their chance to do some real work.

Cervantes
Dhaka