

## ADP with a notional ring

More domestic borrowing in prospect

**P**OPULISM and hard economics may not go together but a new government has difficulty drawing a line between the two. And, when it comes to adopting an Annual Development Programme (ADP), the distinction is likely to get even more blurred. The ADP formulation offering the first opportunity for a new incumbent to make an impression with the people, the former cannot check the temptation of grandstanding on it. In the process, it is likely to live in a make-believe world until the calculations get crossed at the end of the day to awaken it to reality.

The prognosis might hold good about the Tk 19,200 crore Annual Development Programme for the next fiscal year, okayed by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council at its meeting chaired by Begum Zia on Tuesday. This ADP outstrips the one for the outgoing fiscal by Tk 3,200 crore reflecting a 20 per cent increase in size. Even allowing for 8-10 per cent upward adjustment necessitated by inflation and foreign exchange depreciation, according to the finance minister, how is he to explain the remainder 10 per cent increase in the ADP size, more precisely, garner the resource for it?

The projected highest ever 55 per cent contribution of internal resource to the ADP is good augury in terms of self-financing development provided it is principally based on revenue collection rather than domestic borrowing. The government is likely to announce a surplus revenue budget apparently catering to the counterpart financing requirements, so that, on paper, the need for domestic borrowing would seem discounted. Already, a 20 per cent increase in revenue collection has been claimed, although there are reservations about such a high figure.

Yes, our internal and external debt repayments are 21 per cent of our annual revenue expenditure, which is less than what India, Pakistan, Brazil, and Nigeria expend on such accounts. But whereas our external indebtedness is well within control -- thanks largely to grants -- our domestic borrowing is being 'unsustainable', according to World Bank readings. Let the government not make it more untenable by recourse to further bank lending.

The best ADP strategy we can think of has to have two components: selection of projects based on purely economic considerations; and existence of a well-coordinated and decentralised mechanism for implementation of such projects.

## A wake-up call for environmental survival

Regional leaders should develop stake and work together

**W**ORLD Environment Day is being observed at a time when the environmental hazards facing the country and region are becoming dreadfully large and going beyond management. Bangladesh and the rest of South Asia face multiple dangers and threats, whether it's local level air-pollution or global hazards like global warming. In this environment of pessimism we must search for the positive and the doable.

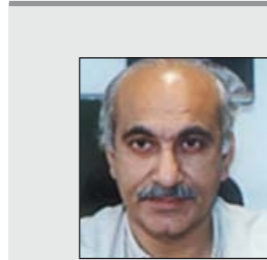
The bottom line is that environmental disaster has already occurred and what is required is an emergency management strategy. What's more, pure country level strategies will work only partially. It's impossible to protect the future by walking alone.

The government can, however, pay immediate attention to numerous sectors such as air and water pollution, contamination of drinking water sources, waterways destruction, loss of forest land and unplanned urban growth, to name a few. But for even this, there is a need for political will as the polybag ban issue shows. That is the most important ingredient.

In the same vein, the countries and regions affected by international disasters like global warming and ozone layer depletion need to band together to save themselves from various baneful environmental impacts. Some of the harmful effects are well known such as loss of land mass due to sea-rise, increase of natural disasters such as cyclones, loss of crops, rise of old diseases and emergence of new ones and desertification to name a few. But many more wait to be discovered and it would be foolish to think that the nightmare scenario will never occur. It already has.

Yet the worst disaster is the inability of countries to look beyond the borders of the nation states and see that political geography has been overwhelmed by nature. The recent crisis in South Asia shows how weak we are at managing mutual trust and joining together for peace and development. We hope that South Asian leaders will realize the need to work together to manage the environmental crisis if the region wants to survive. That's our prayer and hope on this day.

## A general paradox



M. J. AKBAR

**T**HE lady at the counter of the Virgin clubhouse at Heathrow on Friday night looked up at us, her eyes brimming with sympathy, her voice down to a hush. Did we know that the British government had just issued an advisory asking all British citizens to leave India as well as Pakistan because of an impending war that could go nuclear? She looked bemused when we began to laugh. We were going home, we said; and if that was the way the cookie exploded, well, what could be done about it? Home would remain home, even under a nuclear cloud. I am pleased to report that ours was not a singular reaction. The Virgin flight to Delhi was full to capacity. I learnt that Air India, flying at about the same time, had been forced to offload 40 passengers.

My very reliable guide to matters of life and death, Venu Sandal, informs me that on 15 May something happened in the heavens above that made things down below a dangerous place. Mars, Mercury, Moon, Venus, Sun, Saturn and the ever-uncomfortable Rahu were placed in Taurus. Something similar happened in 1942, and the sky fell over the British in Singapore and the Russians across a wide front in Europe. This turmoil in the skies is scheduled to last through June. There may be a story to tell after that if India and Pakistan do not blow each other up first.

The conflict between the two is a war between frustration and hypocrisy. India is frustrated by its inability to settle its longest and most cancerous problem, over the status of the Kashmir valley; and Pakistan has spent more than fifty years using this problem to spread the cancer across the region. Given the values of our age, it is perfectly in order that hypocrisy should hold the

edge. Our Prime Minister often resorts to poetry to express his frustration, although it is a moot point how many times you can cry "Wolf!" in verse. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee does give the impression that he would rather be a poet than a Prime Minister, a useful suggestion in a country that prefers power to be leavened by some degree of self-denial. At times of crisis he whips out one of his own poems in the hope that they are of some therapeutic value. During the awful and awesome carnage in the state of Gujarat, when Muslims first fell on Hindus on a train, and were pun-

someone may yet be too mad to worry about MAD. There are growing whispers from hawks on both sides that the nuclear option was created in order to be used. There is enough residual and continuing hostility to make this a real possibility. Pakistan has a first-strike policy that it does not pretend to hide, and has said that it will implement it if India's forces succeed in a conventional war. So India loses if India wins, with unimaginable consequences when it retaliates. The rough estimate of nuclear capabilities made by western experts is that Pakistan has some 35-odd nuclear

tion, which expires in October. Musharraf has managed to convince George Bush and Tony Blair that he is indispensable to their war in Afghanistan. But that was the easy part. He also had to convince the people of Pakistan, who are more sceptical about generals, that he was useful to them.

The sham-referendum as a fig-leaf convenience was initiated and perfected by General Zia ul Haq, who used it often. His situation was very similar to that of General Musharraf. The world was far from happy at the coup. Zia ignored the

him. The turnout was abysmal. Even political parties normally sympathetic to the army shunned this sham.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of General Musharraf's much-awaited speech on 27 May was the time he took to apologise to his country for this sham. He was defensive and looked wounded. And so when he switched to belligerence against India, it was more shrill than powerful. At times he chose to make debating points like an ebullient politician. And you don't really have to go on national televi-

fomenting riots against Muslims. Mr Vajpayee may have thought then that he was taking one step back in order to move two steps forward later, but he has been trapped.

The world would probably not bother too much if India and Pakistan destroyed each other if they did not also threaten to contaminate the oil-rich world around them. In the past the world has waited for the two to exhaust their ammunition and return to sense, but the first sign of nuclear war came in 1999 when Bill Clinton had to inform the then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif that some generals were planning a nuclear attack on India during the brief but intense conflict over Kargil. Sharif stopped the fighting and ordered Pakistani infiltrators to return home. One of the chief architects of that war was Pervez Musharraf.

George Bush has brought Donald Rumsfeld into play, and Russia has asked India and Pakistan to meet and talk, with help from Vladimir Putin if necessary, at a scheduled conference that both attend in Central Asia in this first week of June. It is safe to assume that the antagonists will pay some heed to advice from abroad before they do pursue any option more dramatic. Relief comes a week at a time on the subcontinent. But in one sense the threat of war has already internationalised the Kashmir problem. Rumsfeld and Putin will hardly leave the room when the subject of Kashmir comes up.

A London postscript: Much to my dismay, I cannot blame the British for our ills this time around. There is no divide and rule policy to hang out as an excuse for our murderous, or suicidal, tendencies. But I do blame the British for one thing. They could have taught us better football than cricket. While the rest of the world exhilarates over a festival of football India and Pakistan talk of nuclear war. Would we have gone to war if we had qualified for the World Cup? Maybe Britain can still do something useful. Instead of sending Jack Straw Britain could have sent David Beckham to the subcontinent. He would certainly have had a better chance of reaching a goal.

MJ Akbar is Chief Editor of the Asian Age.

## BYLINE

I do blame the British for one thing. They could have taught us better football than cricket. While the rest of the world exhilarates over a festival of football India and Pakistan talk of nuclear war. Would we have gone to war if we had qualified for the World Cup? Maybe Britain can still do something useful. Instead of sending Jack Straw Britain could have sent David Beckham to the subcontinent. He would certainly have had a better chance of reaching a goal.

ished with rape and death by arson afterwards, the PM complained that he had been stabbed in the back by a dagger shaped like a moon under the influence of Saturn. When dealing with the terrorist attacks launched by Pakistan-supported elements, he has returned to the skies for imagery. There was a point when he could not see any war clouds, but just in case you went away relieved he added that lightning could always strike from a clear sky.

He has, less poetically, also suggested that the restraint he showed when suicide-missionaries from Pakistan attacked and nearly destroyed the Indian Parliament on December 13 last year was a mistake.

That was when the famous million soldiers mobilised along the world's most dangerous border. As it happens the mobilised armies have remained immobile since then. That by itself is an unstable fact. Armies can stare at each other only up to a point without someone squeezing a trigger.

India and Pakistan would probably have finished their fifth war by now if they had not been nuclear powers. There is still hope that the prospect of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction) will maintain the peace, but there is also the fear that

warheads capable of reaching India by missile, while India has between 100 and 150.

The present crisis is a continuation from the one that began in December, but significant and even critical differences have occurred along the way. General Pervez Musharraf brought the temperature down in January with a much-admired speech whose candour was even more impressive than its courage. He accepted that fundamentalists and terrorists had created a "state within a state" in Pakistan and warned that they were as much a threat to his own country as they were to India. He arrested hundreds of fundamentalists, banned their organisations and set the mood for a new phase of relations between the warring neighbours.

But a paradox has overwhelmed him after that brief moment of glory. In January Pervez Musharraf was a man of destiny. By May he had become only another general who had stolen a country.

The central purpose of General Musharraf's policies and politics this year has been survival. Like so many of his predecessors, he promised a return to democracy when he seized power in a coup in 1999. The courts gave sanction to his rule but with a two-year limita-

tion to repeat what you tell your cronies over breakfast. The flat denial of any Pakistan support for terrorists in India was just that -- flat. He reiterated Pakistan's support for Kashmiri separatism and vowed that every Pakistani would become a holy warrior if India attacked. He did not mention nuclear weapons but his fellow generals have not been remiss in their promise to blow everything into a cloud if war comes. The general ended his speech on a plaintive note: You have always shown faith in me, he told Pakistanis, show faith in me in this crisis too.

Always? How long is always?

A question frames the dilemma faced by the dictator-generals of Pakistan: if you do not represent the people, then what do you represent? What is your rationale for seizing and then holding on to power? Patriotism becomes the first refuge of the general. And patriotism is synonymous with confrontation against India.

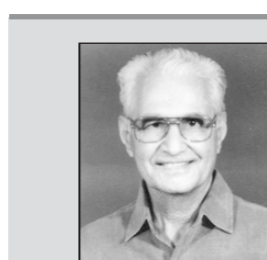
This time around the generals of Islamabad have some help from the hawks flapping at the outer regions of the ruling BJP in Delhi. These hardliners have taken control of the agenda ever since they cowed down the Prime Minister over Gujarat, and prevented him from changing Narendra Modi for

world and handed his predecessor Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. Musharraf ignored the world and banished Nawaz Sharif. Both were rescued within two years by Afghanistan, Zia by a Soviet invasion and Musharraf by an Anglo-American one. Both generals became "indispensable" to the western cause (the Soviet Union was also a western power). However, both had to pretend that they were indispensable at home as well. The sham-referendum was the preferred methodology.

The comparison begins to weaken after this. The nature of the two wars in Afghanistan is different. Zia could use Islam, as well as the "state within a state" in the service of his Afghan war, with full approval from America and Britain. Zia could reserve his vast resources of duplicity for others. Musharraf is required to confront powerful Islamic fundamentalist forces within his own country as part of his obedience test. Zia could depend on this constituency. Musharraf cannot. Army dictatorships are never popular. Musharraf has to walk without a single crutch. He clearly never conceived the possibility of walking away from power. So out popped a referendum meant to legitimise his rule.

It flopped. The referendum weakened him, instead of strengthening

## Question of war and peace



M B NAQVI

writes from Karachi

**W**HY should Pakistan go to war with India? The only serious dispute with it is over Kashmir. But the issue is that Kashmiris desire Azadi from the Indians. True, most Pakistanis support them, as they sympathise with the Palestinians' independent state idea. That is no reason to fight with India just as Pakistan is not going to go to war with Israel. Musharraf government says we support Kashmiris politically, morally and diplomatically. That is right. Let's stick to it. That should not be intolerable for India. Why, then, there is so much ill temper and war preparedness at great cost to both countries?

Indians allege that there is a large hiatus between Islamabad's words and deeds; the latter is supposed to be equipping, training, funding and infiltrating the Jihadis into Indian-controlled areas of Kashmir. This was certainly true for many years. Pakistan Army had convinced itself way back in 1990 that its then putative nuclear capability was such an invincible shield that behind it, Pakistan could go on bleeding India indefinitely without the fear of a serious reprisal. It is remarkable that there were cognisable dangers of war breaking out in the summer of 1990, probably 1995 and 1999, which the Americans claim to have

prevented. Then came 9/11. Pakistan changed its stance vis-à-vis Taliban. Indians saw a window of opportunity open up when there was a terrorist attack on Indian Parliament on December 13 last. It gave Pakistan an ultimatum and massed its troops on its borders in an aggressive mood. India convinced its ally, the US, that it was also a victim of terrorism that Pakistan was exporting. The US bought the Indian argument hook, line and sinker. Hence it has put pressure on Pakistan to not only go on helping the International Coalition pursue

mir insurgency. But almost no one believes that the Jihad can go on without Pakistan's active support. Meantime Indian and Pakistani governments have gone on trading fierce threats of war, including the use of nuclear weapons. The whole world has become anxious and is sending a stream of special envoys to urge Pakistan to "do more" to reassure India that it will do what it says. Musharraf said so again on May 27.

That should rid the people of Pakistan of the looming threat of war, probably nuclear, so that they can get on with their serious prob-

lem. Expectations of war were a huge and unnecessary distraction from their real problems. There are no concrete issues between Pakistan and India and Kashmir ought not to be a reason for war if Pakistani government means what it says. Well, earlier a certain amount of deception worked because there was that shield. Although India always had a clear edge even in atomic weapons capability, it took time to evolve a response to the Pakistani challenge. It now threatens a conventional war and dares Pakistan to act on its doctrine of first strike. It reserves the right to give a massive nuclear riposte to reduce all of Pakistan to a nuclear wasteland. That is where the two countries stand today.

Anyone who reads some of the Brookings Institute's latest reports on South Asia will agree with Paki-

stan's peaceniks that Pakistan's nuclear is a costly ornament for the Pakistan Army. Indian strategists planning action against Pakistan hope that the US with its special forces, precision munitions and CIA spooks would take it out. There are however reasons why the US would not do it. But it is most likely to prevent Pakistan pressing the nuclear button.

It cannot be repeated too often that no cause, including Kashmir, is worth a nuclear exchange. There are good reasons why Pakistan Army cannot cheat on Musharraf's promise, among them the US pres-

## PLAIN WORDS

Dictators possess limitless and unaccountable powers, are surrounded by sycophants and brook no opposition. So they venture forth into areas where wise politicians tread warily. The houses that Generals in Pakistan built have proved not only to be jerrybuilt but also preludes to disaster.

the fugitive Al-Qaeda and Taliban inside Pakistan but should cut off all links with Islamic extremist parties, groups, militias and others who sustain Jihad in Kashmir and indulge in terrorism in Kashmir and India.

Pakistani ruler, after vainly arguing that Kashmir Jihad is being conducted by disaffected Kashmiris by way of their freedom fight and that it cannot be confused with terrorism, changed again through the Jan 12 speech. Pakistan in effect promised to end its aid to Kashmir insurgents. The rest of the world is holding General Musharraf to his January 12 speech. Under American leadership, the rest of the world has brought unbearable pressure on him to act on his words -- in the way the Indians want it. Pakistan government has kept on saying it is not sustaining the Kash-

ence here itself with its supporters. Therefore the Indian bottomline will surely have to be satisfied. Indians will then climb down the high horse they have been riding for the last six months. Whether or not a Pakistan-India dialogue resumes soon -- though it should at an early date -- Pakistanis should get on with their problems. What are these?

Out of these, one is all too familiar: growing unemployment and poverty, inadequate healthcare and education and skills training facilities. The urban poor face even greater inadequacies. There is the near-total loss of sovereignty in economic matters and a creeping one in the political sphere, with what virtually the whole world telling us not to tell lies and do what is unavoidable. It will take a lot of doing and time before any improvement begins to be felt. One says this not

Constitution is a convenient fig to deflect the demand for the really needed changes -- it is already there and will be restored some day -- and also to effect the changes the dictator desires with flick of his pen. This has happened before; poor Constitution has been prostituted enough.

Anyhow ending the dictatorship of a person, quite irrespective of his acceptable qualities, must end quickly. That General Musharraf has given firm dates for October polls is to be welcomed, though the new Parliament can scarcely meet on October 13 next to effect the transfer of power. Let these dates not be changed on any pretext. As for the polls, they had better be on conditions that all democratic countries prescribe. The silly qualifications for candidates inserted under Gen. Zia's pressure ought to be dropped.

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**Mahmud Portsmouth, UK**

**Jubo Dal leader and DCC Commissioners**

The government's crime drive is such a joke. Groups of policemen stand by various intersections, the same spot everyday, to try and apprehend criminals who must be blind if they haven't seen them from a mile away. The only good thing that's come out of this is that sergeants now have those nice new motorcycles. In the meantime with certain DCC commissioners hiding at home at least the streets will be safer. Both from their depredations as well as stray bullets guided by God's wish according to the Home Minister.

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

### Round table on safety of passenger vessels

We would like to draw your attention to certain points of discussion, which were necessary and was not highlighted enough in the above round table.

1. Budget Allocation in the Revereine Sector.

The discussion, which was inaugurated by The Daily Star Editor on the budget allocation, somehow seems to be not taken seriously enough or not properly understood. If we look into the budget allocation in this sector, we will find the previous governments as well as the present government seems not to take this sector as seriously as one should. This sector has been neglected for long and is still done so. A substantial amount of revenue is earned by the government from this sector that offers one of the safest mode of transportation in context to Bangladesh.

2. Next Round Table

It was agreed by all present (including the Minister) at the meeting that we will again sit within three months to review how much we all together have achieved and performed on safety and other issues are concerned. Finally we also suggest that you could include one or two passengers who are frequent travellers on the inland vessels to join this roundtable and hear them out.

**Habibul Alam, Bir Pratik**  
Sr. Vice Chairman  
Bangladesh Oil Tankers Owners' Association

### The PM is back

The PM is home. I think she'll have her hands full with the debacle BNP is making of its rule. It's a good thing her knees are okay, she's going to be on her feet a lot to try and save her party from almost certain public loathing. Did any of her ministers mention to

her that in her absence the law and order drive has degenerated to random killings by paramilitary troops and harassment of all those except the BNP protected criminals?

**Cervantes, Dhaka**

### Appreciate honest journalism

The democratic government of Bangladesh should have the courage to appreciate honest journalism and reward those who excel in this field. The press is more like a watchdog of democracy. And in our country its role is more crucial due to the socio-political situation. The press speaks for the people here. Therefore we must recognise the enormous responsibility the journalists undertake.

I believe the act of recognition of honest and efficient journalism would be of immense benefit to the nation in protecting democratic rights of the citizens.

**Khairul Anam, Dhaka**

### Government antics

I watch with dismay as this government (one that I had actually welcomed in October 2001) seems more desperately incompetent and downright intolerable by the day. During eight months in office, this government has lurched from one policy fudge and inconsistency to another. Ministers routinely shoot their mouths off with crass inanities while the hottest of hot button issues of the last election-- the dismal, country-wide law and order situation-- is where this government, despite its self-righteous pledges during the elections, has bombed spectacularly. Pervasive and spiraling lawlessness (extortion, homicides, terrorism, religious bigotry and mindless violence of all sorts across the country) reported by national papers is testament to the government's abject failures in reigning in domestic terrorism and alleviating mounting public insecurity and disillusionment. Additionally, no meaningful initiative

is forthcoming to address the urgency of vital reforms of a hopelessly floundering education system, a dismal health sector, the moribund debate on gas export, the intolerably inefficient power sector, the precipitous inflationary market trends etc. Instead, government mandarins and their minions choose window-dressing--from the banning of polythene bags, the stringent laws on motor vehicles' usage to the recent high force of banning some cable channels by an inexplicable state fiat and so on and so on.

Also, haughty govt. officials, in a comical fit of pique, recently banned the mostly over-the-top, inoffensive FEER report depicting Bangladesh as an emerging Islamic extremist/terrorist haven. And this coming from the same party, remember, that when in opposition, triumphantly cheered and trashed the then government when Transparency International cavalierly declared Bangladesh to be perceived as the most corrupt country

in the world. When a party that accedes office with the sort of hefty mandate as this BNP-led government had done, and then proceeds to misgovern the country and betray the public's aspirations on this scale, for eight months on the trot, five years can seem like a ruinously long time to suffer thus and allow the country to rush headlong to the ditch.

**Sajjad Husain Dhaka**

### United voice from London

Thousands of people of different faiths and racial background assembled at Hyde Park in London and walked peacefully to Trafalgar Square on 18th of May to insist on the British Government to put pressure on Israel to withdraw all armed forces as well as the Zionist settlement from the occupied Palestinian area. They hate the killings and oppres-

sion perpetrated by the Govt. of Ariel Sharon in the name the Zionist campaign. In connection with the unrest and untold sufferings of the Palestinian people the huge crowd of Trafalgar Square square and evenly blame President George Bush and Ariel Sharon for all the mayhem in Palestine and call both of them 'terrorist'. They term the former as a 'crazy' person for his giving an appellation like 'man of peace' to the latter who is, they say, devoid of any respect for human life let alone peace. President Bush has to prove that he is with the peace loving people of the world; he has to establish that he is not a 'terrorist' and his country does not have any linkage with any 'rogue state' i.e.