

## Frankenstein culture as usual

*Sony's killers must be punished*

THE death of BUET second year student Sadequannahar Sony in a cross-fire between two warring factions of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) comes as a damning indictment on the ruling party's failure to rein in its student wing desperadoes. The central committee of the JCD may have been dissolved but as its fall-out aggressive factionalism is being observed within the ruling party's student wing. And the factious battles raging for territorial control take on the fiercest form when jingle of coins is heard as it has happened in the latest incident. Mukti-and Togor-led feuds were already on warpath to gain control of the cafeteria area when came the floatation of tenders for the construction of a dormitory on the campus. This was a red rug to the bulls. Rather than going for a scramble over tender bids, each side decided to physically out the other to secure the business for itself. In the resulting exchange of fire, the girl had to die.

Sony's death has sparked emotions, condemnations and iron-fisted resolves not to let it happen again almost like a familiar audio-visual cassette put on a replay. Ministers and city mayor came visiting the hospital morgue; the cameras clicked; and the night noises were made. The government party dignitaries, including the political secretary to the PM, made stock utterances: a *santrashi* belonged to no party; his only identity was that of a murderer and that he should be dealt with accordingly under the law of the land. But when the dusts will have settled, the accused, even after being arrested, would be let off. It is a repeat of AL government's methods. Have the killers of Ahmedullah, a BUET student, who was shot dead in 1995 been punished?

So rapid-fire has been the criminalisation of student politics that its vicious tentacles are spreading beyond the premises of Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet universities. In fact, these have crept on to the BUET campus, the least likely place to be courting such an intrusion given its loaded academic routines and traditional quietude. And, what is even more mind-boggling, gun-shot has claimed the precious life of a female student for the first time in Bangladesh.

Either the political parties de-link themselves from their student wings; or student politics is banned; or a moratorium is placed on it for a certain number of years under a law passed by consensus in the parliament. Whichever is the option adopted it has to be exercised through a legislation.

## Stop this hide-and-seek game

*No "if," AL must join the Parliament*

WHILE conveying her party's reaction on the budget the AL Chief Sheikh Hasina said, "If necessary", she would attend the Parliament to fight for the rights of the people. What are we curious about is what constitutes that "if". To be very honest we-the voters-are sick and tired of seeing our politicians make all sorts of excuses for not doing that which they are morally, legally and politically bound to do, namely serve the people who elect them. We have written this several times and we promised to repeat it on every occasion that we deem fit. The opposition party's stand that it will join the House as and when the right atmosphere is created is not acceptable because there is no such thing as the 'right environment'.

Emotions aside we want the AL, and especially it's chief Sheikh Hasina, to seriously think how she and party can serve the nation best at this moment. She has termed the budget as "anti-people" and that it is meant to enrich the upper class at the cost of the poor. She has also castigated the Finance Minister for ignoring the law and order issue in the budget and said no development will take place if people do not have security of life and property. We would like to ask, "wouldn't it be better" if she would say all this on the floor of the House with the whole nation to hear it. With 58 members in the parliament, the AL could hammer this issue till the government was forced to either change its policies or take its own case to the people. The law and order issue that the AL chief keeps on hammering, and rightly so, could form a significant part of the opposition's stand in the House.

There are hundreds of other issues that should come up on the parliament's floor and these are not coming up simply because the opposition is not playing its role. It is speculated that AL may return for a single day just to avert the legal requirement of not being continuously absent for 90 days. If the AL follows what BNP did while in opposition then it will suffer from the same moral blemish that the BNP did. Such a move will not bring about the positive political change that people want. The AL can and will get a lot of credit if it shuns the path of negative politics which both AL and BNP have followed ever since the restoration of democracy in '91. People are tired and fed up with this type of politics. Will the AL read the signs of time and change its politics? Given the present government's rather shoddy performance so far, a positive AL move will earn it a lot of public support.

# First war between the nuclear rivals: Awaiting only a spark!



M. ABDUL HAFIZ

THE war cries being raised in India for last six months are now reaching the crescendo. With the Indian Prime Minister calling for a 'decisive fight', the already nerve-racking tensions in the sub continent went up by several notches and have indeed acquired a grim note. Simultaneously some Indian warships have been moved from the eastern coast into Arabian Sea to increase what Indian defence officials called "the level of preparedness in the western sector" (facing Pakistan). Addressing troops in Kashmir Vajpayee took his war rhetoric to pitch higher than ever before. Meanwhile the heavy mortar and machinegun fire continues across the line of control. Faced with an unprecedented armageddon with rival India enjoying clear 3 to 1 superiority both in conventional and nuclear forces Pakistan is, unlike in the past, circumspect. While vowing to meet the aggression with its full might, she has been constantly putting emphasis on a dialogue and proposed one even while leaving for Almaty -- only to be sharply rejected by Vajpayee. In their subconscious the Pakistanis must

also be looking for an outside (possibly an American) intervention not only to avert an imminent war but also to resolve their mutual disputes once for all -- although not favoured by India.

As the South Asia's two arch rivals are already arrayed in battle formation against each other as well as both the international border and line of control are amassed with hundreds of thousands of troops, the US Assistant Secretary of State

first place had clearly taken an ominous turn by the time she left for home. It has cast further gloom when recently the UN, the foreign missions and aid agencies asked their staffs to quit the region quickly. With Rocca's mission a failure there is little initiative to avert perhaps the history's first nuclear confrontation because even a punitive action from India which she has been threatening with will at a stage spiral out of control and provoke

Pakistan to teach her a lesson for what she calls Pakistan's cross border terrorism but she certainly did not want to provoke a nuclear strike from Pakistani side and had engaged her intelligence agencies to find out Pakistan's nuclear red line or trigger point beyond which the latter will not accept further beating from India's superior forces or possibly a preemptive nuclear strike on Pakistan's strategic assets both in terms of Pakistan's

would try to hit remains as murky. Pakistan which has estimated 30 to 50 nuclear war heads as compared to India's 30 to 130 spread across her different bases will never be able to preempt Indian nukes. Therefore, she has to perform wait till her red line is threatened.

In its quasi-official nuclear doctrine Islamabad vaguely lays out where its so-called triggers for nuclear retaliation are. Pakistan describes its tipping point as a

as if they knew for sure what would provoke such a response. All those who expressed confidence affirmatively, however, laid out different red lines.

According to the US officials the Indian military strategists are aiming high to not only destroy the militants' camps in Azad Kashmir, they also intend to take control of the mountain passes through which the insurgents enter Kashmir. They may even possibly push for enough north to control Indus river watershed that supplies Pakistan. But who can guarantee that all of them particularly the Indus river watershed do not constitute Pakistan's nuclear red line? India has already been threatening Pakistan to scrap Indus Basin Treaty.

All the way it is very tricky game so far as the nuclear dimension of any punitive action -- however limited may that action be -- is concerned. One should not forget that General Musharraf described attacks on Indian forces as part of a legitimate freedom struggle -- his much acclaimed anti-terrorist reform package notwithstanding.

It seems that India which is now on the horns of a dilemma is looking for a face saving device to end its present predicaments. No wonder if it is contemplating a symbolic strike on Azad Kashmir with some semblance of grace. Apparently it wants to avail itself of its oft repeated allegation of cross border terrorism against Pakistan to salvage its position. But with hundreds of thousands of troops massed on both sides of the border any punitive action, limited or otherwise, could trigger full-blown war with its nuclear dimension.

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## PERSPECTIVES

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Christina Rocca ended her South Asian tour amidst the gloom of 14 May attack on a military camp killing 31 men, women and children in Jammu. The Jammu incident unleashed -- as was the practice following similar incident -- a flurry of accusation and counter accusation. India accused Pakistan of masterminding the attack and labelled it as a case what it calls "cross border terrorism". Pakistan denied the charge and claimed that India should investigate the attack before pointing finger to any one. Ms Rocca routinely stressed that only a dialogue between Pakistan and India could resolve their problems and pull them back from the brink. The already tense stand off between the two countries which had prompted Rocca's visit in the

retaliation -- even with nuclear strike. Washington is visibly worried of the developments obtaining in the subcontinent in view of the presence of the US troops in Pakistan but involving itself in resolving the dispute, particularly that of Kashmir, does not seem to be its priority area at this moment.

India's decision to expel the chief of Pakistan's mission in Delhi and the stepped-up artillery attacks are examples of the war hysteria the BJP wants to maintain. The party was subjected to enough flak after its Gujarat pogrom and a series of setbacks in state assembly elections. The Pakistani analysts reckon that even as a face-saving measure India will launch a limited conventional attack. For India has long been threatening

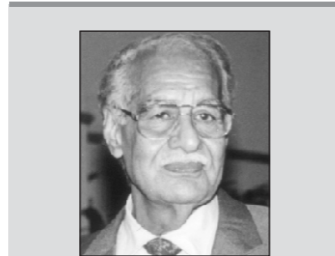
nuclear devices or vital physical features. Hence there has been an inordinate delay in India's military actions.

For the first time India now seems confident that limited conventional military operation against Pakistan will provoke only a limited response -- not a nuclear strike. Is it then that the Indians have been at long last able to find out Pakistan's nuclear red line? In India's strategic circle Azad Kashmir has long been debated as an objective striking which may not provoke Pakistan's nuclear strike. After all, the area is disputed one and some adjustments as a result of its occupation by Indian forces may be acceptable to Pakistan during post war bargaining. Yet in any final analysis, what and when the Pakistanis

"looming collapse" in the face of an Indian conventional or nuclear attack. "If Pakistan's existence is threatened or its vital interests compromised in any manner, it will use nuclear weapon," said a retired general last week.

As for India, according to a 1999 paper on the country's nuclear doctrine "any threat of use of nuclear weapon against India shall invoke measures to counter the threat." It implies possible preemptive strikes against Pakistan's nuclear arsenal or the planes and missiles that would be used to deliver the warheads. Even if that strike is conventional, Pakistan with its much smaller military and entire stockpile of nukes might feel compelled to retaliate massively. Krepon asked the Indian gener-

## A no-win situation



KULDEEP NAYAR  
writes from New Delhi

AT times certain situations between the countries develop in a way which they know will have pernicious results. Yet they seem to be helpless to avoid them. Both India and Pakistan know the consequence of hostilities. Still, as in a Greek tragedy, they are relentlessly moving towards a disaster.

The rulers on both sides should step back and think what they will gain from the war, which is likely to go nuclear. Rhetoric is all right for the purpose of playing to the gallery. Even the military build-up is understandable because of pressure. What is not understandable is why there is no serious effort by both New Delhi and Islamabad to find an honourable way out.

One foreign journalist phoned me from Pakistan a few days ago to suggest that India should have a dialogue with Pakistan to defuse the situation. I wish it could be as simple as that. New Delhi has reached the point of no-talks because there has been no end of cross-border terrorism which Islamabad has promised to stop many a time. India says that it will not respond to any talks until Pakistan's proxy war in terms of terrorism stops.

Islamabad's inference is that

terrorism is the only way to keep the Kashmir issue alive. In its absence, New Delhi puts it on the back burner. This is not entirely correct because from the Tashkent agreement in 1966 to the Lahore Declaration three years ago, India discussed Kashmir several times. It has repeatedly given an undertaking for "a final settlement of Jammu and Kashmir." Why the meetings between the two countries have ended in a deadlock is because the

willing to resume talks. But Pakistan wants to hold a dialogue on Kashmir straightaway. It has come to believe that the only pressure which works on New Delhi is the killing and destruction which the terrorists effect. Were they to stop, India would be let off the hook.

This is a no-win situation. The loss of confidence between the two is understandable because they have had no contacts except the one at Agra. But countries like

in him. Can America disabuse India's mind?

Probably, Musharraf is under pressure within his own country. A person who had a hand in building up the Taliban and the Al-Qaida had to disown and fight them. He may be playing the Indian card to placate them and other religious leaders.

What about Kashmir? I believe there is a change in the perception of people in India. Increasingly they realise that they have to get out of

would once again threaten or force voters not to participate in the polls. More and more Kashmiris are disappointed with the Hurriyat. A recent independent survey confirms this. Still the Hurriyat, through violence or threat -- Islamabad may be a party to it -- will try to bring the proposed new political process to naught. The more people participate in elections, the more irrelevant the Hurriyat becomes.

As for a dialogue if the integration

the assumption that the passage of time will solve the problem is like waiting for the cows to come home. It is worried that any small skirmish between India and Pakistan may lead to a bigger conflagration and divert attention from the Al-Qaida. The type of rhetoric in which leaders of India and Pakistan indulge were not used even by the US and the then Soviet Union throughout the cold war.

As for nuclear war, America and the Soviet Union had a long physical distance between them. Information is now available how America rectified its mistake within a few months of sending nuclear weapons to the then Soviet Union. But then situated as they are, they had time to retrace. In the case of India and Pakistan, there is no time available. New Delhi is only one and a half minutes away in terms of Islamabad's missile range and Mumbai two and a half minutes. The West considers this a real threat. That is why the Western countries have asked all their nationals and non-diplomatic staff to leave India and Pakistan. In fact, the international community would not have shown so much interest in the standoff between India and Pakistan if they were not nuclear powers.

Still the priority of America is to eliminate the Al-Qaida and the Taliban who have slipped into Pakistan. Focused on their extermination, America does not want to annoy or go away from Musharraf who has helped it in Afghanistan and who, Washington believes, is its best bet in finishing the remnants of the Al-Qaida. It cannot go beyond a point in putting pressure on Musharraf since the road to the Al-Qaida goes through Islamabad.

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## BETWEEN THE LINES

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priorities of the two have been different. India has been wanting some outstanding problems between the two countries to be sorted out first so as to create an atmosphere of amity in which the knotty problems of Kashmir could be taken up. Pakistan, on the other hand, has been saying that "other problems" are peripheral and the core problem between the two in Kashmir. The priorities have not been changed over the years. Even today when the world's attention is focused on the region, India wants cross-border terrorism to stop before it sits with Pakistan across the table. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has said: "We will respond if there are results on the ground." In other words, if cross-border terrorism were to stop, India would be

America can play a role. This should not be that of a mediator or an arbitrator but of a communicator. Washington can convey New Delhi's assurance to Islamabad that the talks will be held when there is concrete evidence on the ground that Pakistan is no longer sending terrorists across the border. America, with all its intelligence agencies and satellites functioning in the region, can easily assess the veracity of General Pervez Musharraf's claim that the cross-border terrorism has already stopped.

New Delhi believes that while Musharraf is cooperating with America in action against Al-Qaida and the Taliban, he is conniving at the activities of the jihadis waging an undeclared war against India. New Delhi has very little confidence

the mess New Delhi has made. It has denied the state free and fair elections and has imposed a chief minister on Kashmir at will. The people's mood is that the real representatives should emerge from the coming state elections.

Even the supervision of polling by human rights activists and eminent people from India may be acceptable. People in India do not want any rigging which forced many youths after the 1987 elections to prefer bullet to ballot. They went to Pakistan for training and weapons. Pakistan had tried to woo them earlier but had failed. The disappointment by youths over "rigged" elections became grist to the mill of terrorism.

The problem is with the Hurriyat, which does not favour election. It

of the Muslim-majority valley with Pakistan is its objective, New Delhi may have little to talk about. Over the last five decades, Jammu and Kashmir, however wanting in good administration and clean politics, has come to be considered part and parcel of the country. The trouble in India is attributed to Pakistan's "machinations and interferences." The Indian people may be prepared for more autonomy to the state but they will not brook any part seceding from the country. How to reconcile the two irreconcilables is the problem? And the question that still remains unanswered is how far New Delhi is willing to go and whether that "far" would satisfy the Pakistani establishment? It is not that the West does not understand the problem. It has come to realise that

# Can the country prosper without foreign assistance?

MOHAMMAD AMJAD HOSSAIN

UNDER resolution 2768 the United Nations General Assembly established the category of 'least developed countries' in 1971. Three main criteria were taken into consideration to determine the list of least developed countries: GDP per capita, share of manufacturing in GDP and literacy rate. Thirty-one countries were categorised as LDC at the time of the first United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries in 1981. In 1988, rules of application for inclusion in the list of LDCs were changed when the application of Mozambique for inclusion was considered:

a) If its per capita GDP fell below lower cut-off point of the per capita GDP criterion (\$356) and its manufacturing share was 10 per cent or less of the total GDP, and its literacy rate 20 per cent or less; or

b) If it satisfied the manufacturing and literacy criteria, even if per capita GDP exceeded the lower cut-off point, so long as it did not exceed the upper cut-off point (\$427); or

c) If its per capita GDP fell below the lower cut-off point and it had a manufacturing share of 10 per cent or less of total GDP even if its liter-

acy rate exceeded 20 per cent.

If we look at the criteria, Bangladesh still belongs to the list of LDCs. Although the Finance Minister of BNP-led coalition government has made public of his dismay as being a member of LDCs. However, there is a good news for the citizens. At the Cologne meeting of G-7 and Russia in June 1999, 41 countries among the least developed countries were considered as the heavily indebted poor countries, but Bangladesh fortunately did not figure in the list.

All the LDCs are dependent on foreign assistance which is considered as economic instrument. Foreign assistance includes monetary grants, loans, commodity aid, technical assistance and emergency humanitarian relief. It has a long history. However, in 1960's America decided to shift financial assistance to LDCs from Europe and a few countries in Europe after economic recovery also joined in providing aid to foreign countries. The Development Assistance Committee (DAC) has now been monitoring foreign aid programmes of major western donors. The confessional non-grant element (25 per cent) of aid consists of loans that LDCs can repay with low interest rates over long periods. Amer-

ica also introduced food for peace programme (Public Law 480), which is popularly known as PL 480, to meet the need of food in LDCs, apart from supplying emergency food relief when starvation threatened.

PL 480 is used for political reasons also. In this connection, America's decision to cut off food aid to Bangladesh in September 1974 is a glaring example. This decision was taken by America because Bangla-

FDI will increase if the government succeeds in containing law and order situation and corruption and follows judiciously rule of law in governing and administration...The country can progress without foreign assistance if revenue income is raised internally. There is enough scope for raising revenue if there is strong will and commitment.

desh was exporting jute to Cuba. Earlier, America requested Bangladesh government to cease exporting jute to Cuba. Under PL 480, a recipient country cannot trade with US blacklisted countries such as Cuba. "Only after Bangladesh gave in and sacrificed its trade with Cuba was the flow of American food resumed. By then the autumn famine was largely over." (*Poverty and Famines* by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen P. 136)

Since the birth of Bangladesh she has been on the list of major

donor countries of the world as recipient of foreign assistance. Every year aid consortium meet takes place in Paris to review the request of Bangladesh government for aid.

The flow of foreign aid is declining as there are many new countries in Europe aspiring for foreign assistance. Bangladesh receives aid bilaterally and from different multilateral sources. Most donor countries prefer to channel foreign

advisors, equipment and softwares. For example, recently completed SIDA aided projects under Local Government Engineering Department and Bangladesh Rural Development Board may be cited.

Of the 250 crore taka SIDA aided projects, 60 crore taka were channelled through LGED and BRDB annually and subjected to auditing whereas the rest is spent through foreign consultant appointed by

project. This is the position with regard to utilisation of money given by foreign donor(s). So it is better to get out of this vicious trap.

On the other hand, Bangladesh as a recipient of foreign aid receives sermons from donor countries at the annual bilateral consultation meetings. Slow approval of the project, cumbersome procurement procedure of equipment and frequent transfer of staff assigned with the project before it is completed

mances in our road and energy sectors. Drastic steps should be taken by the authorities to bring down loss in the energy sector to a minimum level. Arrest of corrupt officials and staff in the energy sector will improve the situation. Activities of CBA (Central Bargaining Agent) should be monitored and curtailed to bring corrupt leaders to trial and award punishment to stop corruption. Apart from the above points, donor countries also recommended for structural adjustment in the economy and development of domestic resources. Donor countries are encouraged to dictate the government of Bangladesh ignoring diplomatic norms because of inherent weakness and corruption in the system.

At the recent Bangladesh aid consortium meeting donor countries laid a number of conditions for giving aid in future, including some of political nature. Sale of gas to India through pipeline was also raised in the meeting. Apart from this, the economic survey of Escap 2002 stated that increased flow of foreign direct investment (FDI) would largely depend on an agreement to permit the export of gas. It is not understood why the sale of gas has been linked with the prospect of FDI to Bangladesh. It appears that

the pressure is building up by interested quarters. On this particular issue the government should adopt policy guideline for the utilisation of gas domestically and also prepare industrial plan for petrochemical industries, which will bring in foreign exchange and generate largescale employment opportunities as well. If situation demands, the government could sale gas after its proper and optimum utilisation internally.

It is, however, heartening to know that the government is preparing plan to mobilise internal resources, reduce revenue expenditure, restrict imports of unnecessary and luxury goods, provide incentives to domestic industries and boost production in the field. The government should cut down the visits abroad. FDI will increase if the government succeeds in containing law and order situation and corruption and follows judiciously rule of law in governing and administration.

The country can progress without foreign assistance if revenue income is raised internally. There is enough scope for raising revenue if there is strong will and commitment.

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