

Ingenious trickery at DESA

Show no mercy to swindlers

WHAT an elaborate fraud this was! Committed nearly five years ago by DESA insiders who did not even have to throw dust in the eyes of anybody to sweep it under the carpet, it was perhaps consigned to permanent oblivion. And, it's here that the anti-corruption bureau (BAC) deserves applause for revealing the truth. Apparently working on a tip-off, they tenaciously dug up the fake purchase papers helping to unearth a swindle that bore faint traces of mini-Enron or Anderson papers related scandal. This is no amusing statement; for, the mastermind behind the fraudulent act at DESA has perhaps shown a sense of ingenuity and bravado that might be emulated by others in the country if not deterred by an exemplary punishment of the culprits in the present case.

The whole act of swindle wove around a demand simulated by DESA's purchase directorate for 475 molten case circuit breakers of 200 ampere, floatation of tenders shown as published in newspapers with a DFP number that was thoroughly fictitious, arrival at a deal price of Tk 37.97 lakh allegedly with Techno Union and the siphoning off of the entire sum in league with it. The exercise was orchestrated by a whole range of actors in such a way that, on paper, the process was made to look proper and normal, albeit behind a public participation facade cleverly created to hoodwink people.

The fact that BAC has to seek permission from the Prime Minister's Office for taking legal action in such a glaring instance of embezzlement involving mid-level functionaries of DESA leaves us in a state of bafflement. The bureau has sufficient evidence in hand as revealed in our story to be able to file charges against the officials concerned, on its own. Predictably, those officials are lobbying at the PMO in a bid to hush up the matter which, we believe, would draw a blank.

We think it is a tip of the iceberg, so that further investigation needs to be carried out to reveal the full extent of corruption by way of establishing accountability in institutions that deal with public money.

CNG users face extreme hassle

No policy, poor implementation

THE government's declared intent to clear the Dhaka air of pollution is clear but steps being taken to ensure that fall short of requirement. If CNG is to be a major part of the answer to polluting petrol, then the shortage of pumps, fuel and the overall pace of the sector's performance doesn't exactly light fires of optimism. Can somebody hope that there will be a reality check somewhere?

There are right now 5000 vehicles running on CNG but only 6 stations to serve them which can fill about two thirds of the need. Long and desperate lines near the filling stations are a regular sight and make driving and travelling in Dhaka on CNG a particularly miserable experience. As expected the government plans are moving at a *thela gari* pace although the needs for supply are racing ahead. This equation is common in Bangladesh and causes all the problems.

It is learnt that a hundred private outfits have been given permission to set up 500 gas stations but little movement has been noticed. It appears that lack of urban space to set up the stations is a prime source of delay. The government has recently decided to lease unused railway land but till now that is still not in the files which basically means the crisis is still on. Meanwhile the entire CNG campaign seems blighted.

That the government is serious about pollution is obvious. Some of the steps taken like banning polythene are on display and earned it respect and thanks but banning a retail shop item is one thing and starting an alternative system of fuel supply is completely another. While one was a matter of issuing an order and the public's willingness to undertake immediate difficulties for long term gains, the other is about investment, land, import of machineries, in other words a veritable sector. It's also about profit and loss so one can't expect similar results within that same time-frame. It's this lack of maturity and high degree of overconfidence that makes the authorities objects of derision.

The imposition and withdrawal of taxes on IT and magazines show that the GOB machinery is not really in touch with the public mood. As more vehicles are pushed into the CNG sector, it will need to be smarter and quicker to keep its good-will at a viable level there. Let's hope it does.

Pakistan: Again at crossroads?



M ABDUL HAFIZ

NUMEROUS benefits attached to doing bidding of the world's sole superpower could have motivated both India and Pakistan to vie with each other in offering their alliance to the United States in the wake of September 11, 2001 to fight its war on global terror. When led by its own strategic consideration the US preferred to coopt-Pakistan as frontline state in launching its assault in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan, then the epicentre of international terrorism, the mood in Islamabad was celebratory. Pakistanis found it God-sent to be in the embrace of Uncle Sam once again. They fervently hoped that it, apart from bringing in financial relief in a cash strapped Pakistan, would be boon for resolving their chronic differences with India, the antagonistic neighbour to Pakistan's advantages with the US patronisation. More importantly, Kashmir, the core issue of their dispute with India, would hopefully be put on the front burner with major powers taking initiative for its resolution. President Musharraf, while taking the crucial decision to side

with the US clearly hoped that, as an ultimate reward, his country would also become part of the US strategic scheme for South Asia.

Now nearly after a year except for the sprinklings of a few millions of dollars of economic assistance here and there -- more as wage for the services rendered -- the most other expectations of Pakistan which took tremendous risks in joining the US-led coalition and offering bases/staging posts to it on Paki-

Sharon goes roughshod in dealing with hopeless Palestinians. The West, as a whole is not even prepared to differentiate between the terrorists and genuine freedom fighters. As a result, not only the whole lot of Palestinians become terrorists, even the Kashmiris struggling for last 54 years for their self determination are also identified under the same rubric. Ironically, while these freedom fighters are terrorists, India's suppression of

-- the world however more or less sided with India. Even the US State and Defence departments showed predilection for arguments emanating from Delhi notwithstanding Musharraf's January 12 address banning five Jihad groups including those accused by India and announcing that Pakistan was committed to eliminating terrorism in all its manifestation. In the meantime Pakistan also continues to pay the cost of joining the US-led coal-

the war drum with Pakistan responding with the warning of 'unleashing a fire storm' if attacked, the US rushing her emissaries to the subcontinent to defuse the tension and everytime putting a pressure on Musharraf to be effective on his promises, to stop the crossborder infiltration. This pattern perpetuated since 13 January terrorists' attack on Indian parliament encourages India which has, after 11 September 2001 obviously radically changed its

political contortions in which President Musharraf allowed himself to be implicated in relation to Kashmir. Pakistanis now find an apparent contradiction after what they experienced of their being a frontline state in relation to their expectations. There is a growing realisation that Pakistan must somehow be able to extricate itself from this impossible duality of the situation -- at least to save the Kashmir cause, before it is irreparably damaged. The Pakistanis seem visibly tired of their being between the nut-crackers of Indian threat and American pressure.

The voices are becoming loud within Pakistan against any further concession to India than what has already been made. It is considered enough to have played the devil's proxy for a while and contained the infiltration across the line of control (LoC). The concession inadvertently served only to justify India's stand and sanctify highly questionable Bush doctrine. India's latest demand concerns the dismantling of the Kashmiri militants' camps in Azad Kashmir. That tantamounts to granting the LoC the status of international boundary and finally dismantling the cause of Kashmir which is at some level central to the very existence of Pakistan. With the coalition forces chasing the al-Qaida and Taliban elements sneaking into Pakistan in the west and India with its menacing posture in the east, Pakistan is up again for crucial decision on the steps to be taken next with regards to her equation with both Washington and New Delhi.

Brig (ret'd) Hafiz is former DG of BISS.

PERSPECTIVES

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stan soil are dashed at the altar of changed reality.

After months of bonhomie when the war in Afghanistan was raging Pakistan is now increasingly sidelined in Washington which is busy steadily developing its strategic partnership with New Delhi. Pakistan apparently went wrong in its calculation that after 9/11 the US obsessed with the notion that the terrorism is exclusively a Muslim trait would involve itself strategically with a country of Pakistan's background. Look at Chechnya where America seems to have given a carte blanche to Russian repression and Grozny has been dropped off the international radar. Bush calls it 'Israel's right to defend' when Ariel

them is looked upon as anti-terror fighting. Pakistan must be by now rudely awakened to the fact that, like in the past, Washington has treated her merely as a pawn in fulfilling its long-term strategic purpose in the region.

Since Kargil war India, through a diplomatic offensive and its powerful media, has been able to convince the international community that there was no such thing as indigenous Kashmiri militancy. Pakistan less articulately reacted to the allegation of cross border terrorism as 'myth' and insists that Jihadi groups mount their operations without Pakistani assistance. In present standstill -- after a series of militant attacks in India and Kashmir

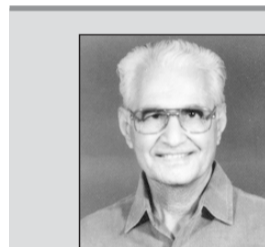
against terror in the form of violent backlash coming from within the country causing damage to life and property of its citizens. If there is one visible return of Pakistan's investment in global war on terror it is the further radicalisation of the country's religious right which in its targeted attacks seldom makes any discrimination. During attack on the US consulate in Karachi the casualties were all Pakistanis, yet the onus of the responsibility for such attack was to be borne by Pakistan.

In a murky situation like this India also knows its tricks well. Whenever she wants to extract some concessions aimed at lessening pressure on Kashmir the hawks in the ruling establishment simply start beating

strategy to exploit the new focus on terrorism. She knew that the international environment was, ever since, transformed in a manner favourable to her. Kashmir could now be tarred with the brush of terrorism linked to Islamic extremism with considerable ease.

Whether or not the purpose of peace was served by the emerging pattern, Pakistan's repeated capitulation, to Indian demands, buttressed by the US' pressure did help to establish the 'bona fide' of India's stands on Kashmir while Musharraf could never be oblivious of Pakistan's national sentiment for Kashmir and his own commitment to its cause. This has resulted in a bizarre double-dealing and inevitable

Of polls, politics and pressure



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

WHILE discussing the current political situation and the options available to COAS-President Pervez Musharraf few can fail to see the shades of a former military dictator, the notorious General Yahya Khan. This springs from the political restructuring that the Musharraf regime is engaged in. The first instalment of the constitutional changes that Gen. Musharraf wants and proposes to enact -- probably himself, though it is hard to see how he, on his own, can do so -- have been published -- for public debate.

An authority of sorts is supposed to have been vested in him by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. In its judgement on a petition against the unlawfulness of the military takeover of Oct '99, it observed the deviation from, and suspension of, the Constitution a lawful act under the famous (in Pakistan) doctrine of state necessity. Apropos nothing in particular, the apex Court in the

amplitude of its wisdom and understanding also laid down that this takeover may eventually involve making alterations in the organic law of the country which would also be valid in law.

But it put certain conditions on the scope of such changes: these changes should not alter the basic scheme and spirit of the Constitution. The highest court put this latter fly in the otherwise excellent oint-

shackle on his feet.

For some obscure reason, Musharraf insists not only on some reforms but wants to remain in power as President for at least another five years, beginning with Oct. 13, 2002, to ensure that his reforms become irreversible, in his own words. Insofar as his desire to stay on in power is concerned, he has held a controversial referendum to approve him as the President of

which held Pakistan's first general election in 1970. This election was hailed by the people as free and fair. In Pakistani military mind it proved negative results -- i.e. anti-military regime forces triumphed. Army could not accept those results. The rest is tragic history: it led to a civil war, the third war with India (1971) and the country's partition. Army seems to have vowed never again to hold polls that produce negative

general elections (1990, 1993 and 1997) to be "positive". The precise question is how to ensure "positive results" after a lot of public comment has been made about the previous polls having been doctored.

Temper of the public opinion will no longer accept the poll results if these were actually doctored as on previous occasions. A loud outcry against a rigged election will create a terrible crisis. It had happened

duce the desired results.

If the polls are held without any doctored, there is the possibility -- most analysts think it is a certainty -- that Musharraf's nightmare will materialise: Benazir Bhutto's PPP and Nawaz Sharif's PML will dominate the next National Assembly. Unreconciled as these parties are to Musharraf Presidency they are likely to create difficulties from day one. They might not ratify, and indeed legislate against, the Musharraf amendments. They could also pass resolutions or enact laws that may put the validity and legitimacy of Musharraf Presidency in jeopardy or indeed they may not let the indemnity bill be passed. The PPP and PML's emergence as dominant parties in Parliament will create an explosive situation. It will be 1970-like situation.

Which is why many analysts think that the regime might be forced to postpone the polls. Alas! This course of action too is fraught with much danger. There will be an immediate outcry from almost all the major political forces.

Three years are coming to an end and the regime has achieved an image of being badgered from all sides and of floundering. It has to decide, and so on, whether it will hold the free and transparent polls or it will postpone them or whether it wants to brazen out the accusations of doctored polls. Each option carries a political cost.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

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ment it presented to Musharraf even though he had not cared to ask for the favour. Now this fly is troubling. Indeed, from the viewpoint of Gen. Musharraf there is another and major fly: the apex court limited the duration of the deviation from the Constitution to three years. That became in public mind the life span of this military dictatorship, after which it is supposed to hold a general election and restore the Constitution and the system it envisages. In an earlier phase, Musharraf had promised to abide by the limits imposed by the SC. That now is a

Pakistan by all the country's voters. That others' question of the methodology and the validity and the genuineness of the whole exercise is neither here nor there. For, the general says he has been so validated and he is in power. But the task of holding elections remains to be done.

This presents cruel dilemmas to him. An earlier dictator, Gen. Ziaul Haq, had said that he wanted the election he was to hold in similar circumstances to yield "positive results". He had in fact Gen. Yahya Khan's Martial Law regime in mind

results.

The question thus is what if the Oct polls -- if held on the promised dates -- returned parties that would not accept his Presidency, ratify his reforms or refuse to regularise the military's transgressions against laws on Oct 12, '99 and since by an indemnity bill? It went do for them. That is why military strongmen hanker after "positive results". Zia and indeed his successors in the Army, reportedly acting behind the scenes, managed (i.e. doctored) the polls in a manner that powers that be found the results of the three

before: in 1977 there was a country-wide raging and tearing agitation and the government of a quite popular Prime Minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, could be overthrown by the Army without popular opposition. Bhutto had in fact vainly rigged to get an overwhelming number of seats although he was generally expected to win a clear majority in the Parliament. It is a common ground now among observers that doctored as hitherto is out of the question, though not all analysts agree because the powers that be retain the technical ability to pro-

Brazil means beautiful football

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes from Princeton

SOONER or later, the Berlin Wall had to come down. The German goalkeeper Oliver Kahn had stared down every goal scorer in the World Cup until the final, when he came face to face with the Brazilian maestros, Ronaldo, Rivaldo and Ronaldinho. This time Kahn blinked. In a way, poetic justice was served. It took the best forward in the world to tantalize and tame the world's best goalkeeper.

A few things are certain in the world: that Tiger Woods will win a Major Tournament in golf; the Williams sisters will end up in a tennis grand slam final, and either Brazil or Germany will contest every World Cup final. With the exception of England in 1966 and France in 1998 (both playing at home), since 1954 every World Cup has been won by either Brazil (five times, in 1958, 1962, 1970, 1994 and 2002), Germany (three times, in 1954, 1974 and 1990), Italy (three times, in 1934, 1938 and 1982) or Argentina (twice, in 1978 and 1986). Uruguay, winners in the 1930 and 1950, has long ceased to be a football powerhouse. The World Cup winners still remain a Group of Seven. Of the seventeen World Cup finals played so far, astonishingly, either Brazil or Germany has featured in fourteen of those, never together until this year. Regrettably, the great football nation of the Netherlands, who failed to qualify for this year's cup, continues to remain the Anna Kournikova of football, without a title.

Although the ending was routine, the beginning was anything but ... Both Brazil and Germany struggled mightily to qualify for the tournament (Brazil remains the only nation to have qualified for all 17 World Cups.) No one, not even the Brazilian and German fans, expected Brazil and Germany to advance far beyond the preliminary rounds.

Having excelled at the world stage so many times before, the two sleeping giants smelled the occasion and woke up just in time. Germany's flying start, an unexpected 8-0 thrashing of Saudi Arabia, raised the question: "Is Germany that good, or are the Saudis that bad?" (The quick answer: "The Saudis that good, or are the Saudis that bad?") The highflying Germans quickly landed with a thud, tying with Ireland, 1-1; with Kahn allowing the only goal until the final. Only the referee's partiality (or blind eye) allowed Brazil to defeat Turkey in the first game.

After the first few games, the fans may have been unsure who their favourite was, but the people who put their money where their mouth is, the odds makers, were not. While to the ordinary mortals it appeared that Beckham and Owens' England had a legitimate shot at beating Brazil, the bookies installed Brazil as the solid favourite. As the tournament unfolded, the wisdom of their choice became vividly apparent. Brazil became the only team to win all the seven matches they played. (Brazil had done the same in 1970, as had Italy in 1938 and Uruguay in 1930.) Germany won five, drew one and lost the final. While no other European or Latin American team has won the Cup outside their own continent, Brazil won the World Cup on four different continents: Europe (Sweden, 1958), South America (Chile, 1962), North America (Mexico, 1970; America, 1994) and Asia (Japan-South Korea, 2002).

A special word about Germany. Although Brazil lost only two World Cup finals, in 1950 (to Uruguay, playing at home, no less) and in 1998 (against France), they were clear favourites on both the occasions. German entry into the finals of 1982 (in Spain), 1986 (in Mexico) and this year was completely unexpected. As befis a superb football nation Germany consistently overachieves in the World Cup.

Every German will tell anyone willing to listen about the "Wembley Robbery" of 1966, when the Russian linesman "robbed" Germany of victory over England in the final of the 1966 World Cup at Wembley Stadium in London. Four years later, in the 1970 World Cup in Mexico, led by World Cup's all-time leading scorer Gerd Mueller (14), Germany avenged the defeat, 3-2, after spotting England a 2-0 lead. In the national election that was scheduled for the next day, irate British football fans voted Prime Minister Harold Wilson's Labour government out of office! A football fanatic and a First Class student at Oxford, the late Premier Sir Harold (who once said, "I know more about football than politics") complained

as long as Pele was incapacitated. Mercilessly kicked around, Pele was severely injured and promised never to play in the world cup again. He was persuaded to let the world witness his magic one more time in 1970. What a magic show it was! Backed by fellow wizards Zairinho and Tostao, Pele mesmerized the world on football's biggest stage. The level of competition rose sharply as England, Italy and West Germany provided tough challenge. West German forward Gerd Mueller scored 10 goals in the tournament. Ronaldo's 8-goal effort this year has been the best since. The Brazilians were so good in 1970 that after they beat Italy 4-1 in the final, with Pele scoring, reminiscent of German celebrations this year, the Italians

Cup goal goes to Diego Maradona in the 1986 World Cup held in Mexico, which the writer was fortunate enough to watch live. After scoring the disgraceful "Hands of God" goal with his fist, minutes later Maradona redeemed himself by going through the entire English mid field and defence, including the goalkeeper and scoring! No forward was more deadly than Germany's Gerd Mueller. The writer remembers vividly how Mueller scored the winning goal (2-1) against the seemingly invincible Dutch team of Johann Cruyff in the 1974 World Cup final in Munich, Germany. Mueller received the ball with his back to the goal, and with an uninterrupted motion swivelled around and directed a soft shot towards the

out. The referee intervened again. Rudi Voeller, this year's German manager, tricked the referee into awarding Germany a penalty kick in the fading minutes. The World Cup final should never be decided by the referee; the one in 1990 was.

Refereeing in this year's World Cup was inconsistent at best, horrendous at worst. Italy, Spain, Mexico and America can all claim that bad calls deprived them from a chance to advance. The stakes are so high that a momentary lapse by the referee should not decide a match. Sooner or later there has to be on the field tape review of an infraction. American football offers teams an opportunity to challenge a call. If after the review the call

Italy in the 1970 World Cup final, it took Brazil 32 years and 281 minutes of actual playing time in the World Cup final to score (through Ronaldo) again! The second goal (also by Ronaldo) took far less time, only 12 minutes. Much has been made of Ronaldo's illness prior to the 1998 final. An American colleague had a simple explanation. In a commercial show during the 1998 World Cup, Ronaldo pretended to be Jesus Christ. "You don't mess with religious figures and hope to get away with it!" the colleague said.

It was good to see Turkey finish third and do so well. They are the only team to defeat both the host nations. The world will hear much more about striker Ilhan Mansiz in the future. While Senegal was a pleasant surprise, Nigeria was a disappointment. If the absence of Zidane in the first two matches was so crippling for France, how could they have been a contender? Portugal paid dearly for underestimating America. If Portugal had talked with Mexico, they would not have. It was not so long ago that the Mexicans did not take the Gringos seriously. Lately, however, America beats Mexico more frequently than it loses, as it did in the second round. If America becomes serious about football, watch out! They will break down every aspect of the game into modules, use computer simulation to decide on the best mode of attack and defence, and within twelve years or less could contend for the title. Americans were interested in the Cup as long as the American was alive. My own sons got up at two in the morning to watch America play. After America was eliminated by Germany, they lost all interest, and had to be encouraged to watch the World Cup final!

Although the English Football League is considered the toughest in the world, the English team always comes up one or two steps short. Instead of fielding four separate teams, if England, Scotland,

LETTER FROM AMERICA

While the Germans used their speedy feet to scorch the field, Ronaldo used his feet as a painter's brush, and the field as an artist's canvas. While the Germans are used to celebrating Runners Up trophies, for Brazil, anything less than the Championship is a failure.

that the English manager Sir Alf Ramsey committed a blunder by substituting midfield superstar Bobby Charlton in the match.

The 1970 World Cup is still considered the greatest ever staged, and the winning Brazilian team, the best team that ever played. The world first heard of a player named Pele in 1958, when the 18-year-old Brazilian scored twice in the final to help his nation defeat the host nation, Sweden. An injury-plagued Pele contributed intermittently to his nation's triumph in the 1962 World Cup in Chile. By 1966, the whole world knew about Pele, and awaited his magic in the World Cup. Yellow and red cards did not exist then. And from the very beginning opponents did not play the ball, but went after Pele's body! They did not care if one or more players were sent off,

celebrated wildly saying that "it is an honour to finish second to Brazil!" So spectacular was Pele that someone dubbed him "god in disguise!"

Along with the boxing "Greatest" Muhammad Ali, in the 1960s and 1970s Pele was every sports fan's number one hero. The writer traveled from Oxford to Birmingham in 1972 to watch Pele and his Brazilian club team Santos play Aston Villa. Pele is a beloved figure here in the US as well. In the late 1970s, Pele (and Germany's captain in 1974 and manager in 1986 and 1990, "Kaiser" Franz Beckenbauer) played for the New York Cosmos in the short-lived North American Soccer League.

Although many of Pele's 12 goals (a mark matched by Ronaldo this year) in the World Cup were spectacular, the credit for the best World

far corner of the net, just beyond the reach of the sprawling Dutch goalie.

Up until 1986, both the teams in the world cup final scored at least one goal. The 1990 Cup ushered in a new era of defensive superiority and unforgivable mistakes by the referee. With padlocking techniques employed by the defence, 1990 saw the lowest goals per game to date, 2.21. This year it was only slightly better, 2.52. Unlike now, in 1990, yellow cards earned in the first round counted throughout the tournament. Consequently, three of Argentina's top players were disqualified from playing in the final. To make matters worse, very early in the game, the Mexican referee sent off an Argentinean player on a very questionable call. With only ten men, Argentina was clearly playing for a draw, and a penalty kick shoot-

stands, the team is charged a time out; if the decision is reversed the team is charged nothing. In World Cup football, an unsuccessful challenge should cost the team a substitution. If the challenge system were to be instituted, no team would return home aggrieved.

The goal drought intensified in the 1994 World Cup when Brazil and Italy were still tied 0-0 at the end of regulation and extra time. Penalty kick shootout, which is inherently unfair to both the goalkeepers, was used to decide the contest. It was Italian superstar Roberto Baggio's penalty kick miss that awarded Brazil their fourth World Cup. As is common knowledge, Brazil was shutout by Zinedine Zidane's France, 3-0, in the 1998 World Cup final. Therefore, after Carlos Alberto's 86th minute goal against

pieces on it.