

Premier Kim's visit

Dhaka-Seoul ties strengthened

SOUTH Korea and Bangladesh have had excellent cooperative relations for years now. While these have been mutually rewarding, some unrealised potential remained for enhancing the ties from the existing levels. It is from this standpoint that South Korean Prime Minister Kim Suk-soo's visit to Dhaka has proved highly useful.

Premier Kim's talks with his Bangladesh counterpart Khaleda Zia on Saturday yielded some concrete results. Simultaneously, there has been a degree of forward-looking into the future which augurs extremely well for both countries.

As for the concrete outcome, Dhaka and Seoul have signed two loan agreements. In terms of the first accord, Economic Development Cooperation Fund (EDCF) of South Korea is to provide US\$ 30 million for our telecommunications sector. This will help install new digital exchanges to beef up telecommunications services in Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna. The second loan worth 28 million dollar being contracted will be for procuring 11 new locomotives for Bangladesh Railway. Seoul has also pledged to invest in our Information Technology sector. It is good to know that an IT centre will be set up at the Dhaka University. Overall, what is noteworthy is the thrust being given to the infrastructure-building sector.

By virtue of Kim's visit to Dhaka our manpower export to South Korea may well have received a significant impetus. South Korea has increased the existing quota of intake from 5,500 to 8,800. More work permits are expected to be issued to Bangladeshi workers in South Korea by way of regularising their cases.

Our requests for greater recruitment in the construction and ship-building sectors are likely to be heeded by the host country. Bangladesh side has taken the advantage of such a high level visit from Seoul to streamline manpower export to South Korea. We have insisted on rules to bar workers from quitting jobs they were recruited for in the first place.

While the increasing level of ODA from South Korea is highly welcome, we are looking forward to a greater private-sector component to its investment in Bangladesh. For this to happen the private sectors in both countries need to have frequent contacts. What we need is a robust FDI flow into the Export Processing Zone we have designated for South Korea.

Traffic jam worsens in Dhaka city

Take some steps before pre-Eid buying spree

TRAFFIC jam in capital Dhaka has become a part of daily predicament; but it has gone from bad to worse in the last few days. Reaching work-place on time or keeping an appointment with your business associate or even a doctor has become a difficult proposition. These days we leave home keeping at least an extra hour to spare in case we get stuck in the jam. It is simply an unimaginable waste of valuable and precious time of our lives.

Why can't the situation be improved? We had witnessed the government's sincere efforts earlier in the year when old buses and trucks were banned from the streets and a big number of two-stroke engine three-wheelers was phased out. But it seems several of them have since crept back on to the streets. The dubious owners initially kept their vehicles off the streets but not for too long. Many of them have apparently taken advantage of a non-existent public transport system.

The government is yet to put adequate alternative transport facilities in place for the commuters although some increase in the fleet strength is noticeable. We have banned slow-moving rickshaws from big thoroughfares; yet we see motorised vehicles moving at a snail's pace even on those roads. Dug-up roads, indiscriminate parking of vehicles and business spillage on to the road ledges have become a menace to city traffic. It is not fair to blame only one single authority for the chaos, the fault lies on the total lack of coordination among all concerned bodies.

We have heard of an ongoing project funded by the World Bank to improve the traffic situation. Construction of flyovers across some busy traffic intersections is going on in full swing. But this is a long term solution. We need to see some quick actions, especially with Eid festival coming up when consumers will be out in full force on a shopping spree. Recalling past experiences, we shudder to think what would happen this year if the situation doesn't improve in good time. We hope heads will be put together to draw up an action plan to meet the approaching traffic contingency. But at the same time we would like to appeal to the city dwellers to follow traffic rules and cooperate with the officials who would be on duty during this busy period.

Pakistan's post-poll crises



M ABDUL HAFIZ

NEVER before has the religion of Islam been so much abused as of now when it has turned into refuge for any one from nincompoops to scoundrels. The dictators at the helm of most of the Muslim countries find it the best tool for legitimising their regimes. Even people with little predilection for Islam find it handy for rescue when in trouble. Saddam Hussain, an avowed secularist who persecuted religious scholars throughout the first decade of his presidency also slapped 'Allahu Akbar' on Iraqi flag when he faced the mother of battles against the United States. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the first elected prime minister of a truncated Pakistan who won election partially on his socialist plank initiated maximum legislation with regard to Islam to win over deeply religious Pakistanis. Pakistan's military rulers, always in search of legitimacy, went whole hog to make use of Islam to sustain their regimes with late President Ziaul Haq establishing its bitterest legacy for Pakistan.

Although the appeal of Islam has in no way diminished at least in

Pakistan for the military's sheer sustenance in power the game is risky indeed in post-9/11 world. While the clerics are still its pampered and pliable lot elsewhere in the Islamic world and are on establishment's pay roll at places to lend support to the corrupt regimes President Musharraf turned his face away from them and adopted policy for both national and regime security befitting the frontline state of international war on terrorism. He has sufficiently reassured his coal-

distinctly worried at this Islamists' surge in Pakistan where the international war on terror has entered a crucial stage. The US is particularly concerned whether Pakistan will stay as a leading member of the coalition against terrorism. So much so that two federal ministers issued statements, presumably to assuage the anxieties of the coalition partners, that Pakistan's foreign policy would not be affected by the result. Notwithstanding the rumpus over MMA's rise in last election, neither

delicate international relation on the other. Indeed the MMA's post election posture has been positive and mature while it has already reduced its anti-American stridency.

The rise of the MMA as the third largest party in the National Assembly is, however, significant. Also its emergence as the largest party in the Senate raises the prospect of its exercising greater influence in shaping national policies than ever before. Its electoral showing is most impressive in North Western Fron-

away raised the key question involved in the rise of Pakistan's religious right. As far as America and rest of the coalition are concerned the question would now be: how far an MMA government in the NWFP is really able to block the joint-actions by Pakistan and the US against al-Qaida. There is no certainty to what extent the MMA government in both NWFP and Baluchistan where the alliance has majority would undermine the hunt for al-Qaida keeping in view that there already existed

the *Guardian* in response to a question that the MMA would 'never' hand over Taliban suspect to Washington. The Taliban are our brothers. They are good people," he added. Round about the same time the Jamaat-Islam's Syed Munawar Hasan and senior MMA leader told a press conference in Karachi that the al-Qaida and Taliban were 'brothers' and they would never be handed over to any foreign powers.

Anatol Lieven, a senior associate of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, writes that the MMA with its favourable equation with other major parties could be expected to gain a 'near stranglehold' on the senate and this "could block any continuation of the social reforms" begun by President Musharraf. This however remains to be seen though it is likely that the MMA's majority in two smaller provinces might more than offset the gains made by PML-Q and PPP in the larger provinces in terms of the representatives each province will send to the senate. If the MMA does succeed in obstructing the US goals the Pakistani administration would perhaps come under intense US pressure to get rid of it. Although Pakistani governments showed in the past that it could indeed get rid of the governments in the smaller provinces with the help of Army it is going to be different story the next time. It will most certainly portend a period of another crisis. Islam or any convenient alternative to it, unless an endless trickery to hold on to power stops this crisis will continue to intensify.

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

PERSPECTIVES

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tion partners with sweeping reforms aimed at bringing the country back to a secular track with an orientation of tolerance, moderation and democratic norms. Even as Pakistan's U-turn is opposed by stiff resistance Musharraf's secular credential remained intact with his Western patrons till the last month's general election in Pakistan.

The outcome of the election on October 10 giving Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the alliance of the Taliban-sympathetic religious parties, dominant position in two provinces bordering Afghanistan has obviously upset Musharraf's scheme of things and caused paranoid anxiety in the West which is

its intention nor actual strength in terms of forming government is as yet known. Even if some of the member groups in the MMA were closely identified with the Taliban movement, the initial reactions of the MMA leadership have been rather circumspect. It clearly rejected the suggestion that there will be any sympathy for the Taliban or any desire to promote a system of governance associated with the Taliban. The MMA spokesmen have eschewed any sweeping statement on policy issues since they are aware that they have to show moderation and restraint, given the compulsion of interparty negotiation on the one hand and the country's

tier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan where the alliance has virtually obliterated most of its secular rivals. As for Punjab, the MMA made limited inroads. But these were also considered significant, especially in areas where there is heavy military recruitment. In fact NA-49 Islamabad lying next to the garrison city of Rawalpindi -- the army's heartland -- was won by an MMA candidate.

Yet the American and British press have shown clear wariness at the dramatic success of MMA, since the six-party alliance had an overly anti-west agenda. Calling the result worrying and unwelcome an article in the *Guardian* on Oct 12 straight-

considerable hostility to these operations in FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Agencies).

Reporting on the last month's election the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* generally took the line that the MMA's big win would hand them control of two provinces that were key to the anti-terrorism campaign, not least because several senior Taliban and al-Qaida figures are believed to be there. Then in the crosscurrent of ideas on a future outlook there are divergent statements coming from MMA leaders some of which appeared disturbing to the coalition partners. For example, Mian Aslam, the MMA-elect from Islamabad told

North Korean nuclear gambit

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

STUNNING "confessional diplomacy" of North Korea relating to its nuclear weapons programme has added another corrosive twist to the present international order. Challenged with proof by a US delegation visiting Pyongyang in October that North Korea has a programme to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of Agreed Framework Agreement, her commitments under the Non-Proliferation Treaty, IAEA Safeguards Agreement, and the Joint North-South Declaration of Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula, North Korean officials acknowledged that they have such a programme. The "confession" halted President Bush's attempts to improve relations with North Korea provided she behaved well across a range of issues including weapons of mass destruction, development and export of ballistic missiles, threats to its neighbours, support for terrorism, and humane treatment of its own people.

In the last week of October Presidents Bush and Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea and Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan called upon North Korea to dismantle the programme " in a prompt and verifiable way" and to come into full compliance with all international commitments and in conformity with the recent Japan-North Korea Pyongyang Declaration. Prime Minister Koizumi stressed that relations with North Korea would not be normalised, already bedevilled by the issue of abduction of Japanese nationals by North Korea, unless security issues including nuclear issue

were resolved. Chorus was joined by China, perhaps the only country to which this exclusive, Stalinist and the last outpost of the Cold War listens to. President Jiang Zemin promised President Bush that China would use its influences with North Korea to abandon these destructive programmes.

It would be illustrative to leaf through the pages of history a little to understand why North Korea's "confession" to nuclearisation programme came as a rude shock to the world. In 1991 both North and South Korea were admitted as members of the UN. Next year North Korea signed a pact with IAEA to allow inspection of the

assist North Korea in replacing two of its nuclear reactors with modern versions designed to produce less weapon grade plutonium. A formal agreement was signed in 1995 and the US undertook to finance the project costing \$4.5 billion.

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw in a recent address to the Birmingham European Research Institute made a point relating to Iraq, which is equally applicable to North Korea. He said, "From one perspective, totalitarian regimes and failed or failing states are on opposite ends of the spectrum. But there are similarities: one is unable to avoid subverting inter-

these weapons) to prevent the proliferation of WMD, notwithstanding the vivid tapestry of distinctive living standard one wallowing in almost obnoxious prosperity while the other is living in abysmal dehumanising poverty.

North Korean truancy has assumed direct relevance for South Asia because of Pakistan's alleged supply of uranium enrichment equipment and technical expertise to North Korea in exchange of ballistic missile technology sorely needed by Pakistan. President Musharraf described the allegations as "absolutely baseless"; Colin Powell and Condeleezza Rice

"Instead of allowing such games (Pakistani military undermining the mainstream political parties ahead of the just held elections) to be played the US should question Musharraf's domestic policies. The moral imperative of supporting democracy in Pakistan is important. But equally important is the need to diminish the military's influence as a means of ensuring a more transparent Pakistani foreign policy".

Analysts have tried to explain the reasons behind North Korea's continuance of its nuclear programme risking the possibility of being caught out. The reasons suggested are: (a) increasing

issues. Kim Jung-Il might also have thought that President Bush tied up in the maze of multilateral diplomacy over Iraq -- his unilateralism being largely unsupported by the world -- would hesitate to take recourse to preemption towards Pyongyang in addition to Baghdad. His calculation has been borne out as of now because State Department spokesman Richard Boucher on 16th October spoke of US' desire for a "peaceful resolution of the situation". Ten days later the Joint US-Japan-South Korea trilateral statement stressed the three countries' "commitment to resolve this matter peacefully". It would, however, be wildly irresponsible for North Korea to depend on the constancy of the so-called peaceful resolution of the situation. President Bush would be hard pressed to explain to the international audience his discrepant policy towards two "rogue" states both of which belong to the so-called axis of evil. He may be held up for following an eclectic and non-sequential foreign policy-- one regularly being threatened with extinction while the other is being bribed to leave its delinquent path...The UN as an agency of global democracy can be considered going beyond Butros Ghali's Agenda for Peace...

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country's nuclear facilities. But in 1993 North Korea refused to let the IAEA inspectors visit the facilities and threatened to withdraw from Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which she signed in 1985. In December 1993 CIA reported that North Korea had built at least one nuclear weapon. The crisis resultant of continued refusal of inspection by IAEA was defused by President Carter meeting with North Korean leader Kim Il-Sung which followed signing of the US-North Korea Framework Agreement under which North Korea agreed to permanently shut down facilities capable of making weapon grade materials and allow IAEA inspection of its nuclear sites. In exchange US agreed to

national law; the other is only too willing to flout it". He argues for preemptive actions to be taken (not in the sense of the unnerving preemption theory advanced in the Bush National Security Strategy) through developmental and diplomatic engagement of potential foes. Jack Straw declined to rewrite international legal system or propose its replacement with an interventionist charter because for three hundred years Westphalian doctrine of sovereignty has served the world well. One could argue the point. Twentieth century saw two great wars, countless little ones, birth of weapons of mass destruction etc. We are now witnessing efforts of the oligopolists (who hoard the largest number of

agreed but refused to commit in "absolute terms that there had never been any Pakistani-North Korean cooperation" (Hussain Haqqani-*Indian Express*-01.11.02). Pakistani disclaimer is understandable given its dependence on Western economic and political support. Conversely US' benign view of Pakistani military's covert operations is equally understandable because of US' crucial need for Pakistani support in its war on terrorism. This provident Faustian bargain may presage an uncontrollably dark future for South Asia given the region's nuclearisation and sharply dichotomous and adversarial relationship between India and Pakistan. Ambassador Haqqani suggests'

diplomatic and commercial bargaining leverage; (b) to raise cash through sale of missile technology; and (c) deterrence against Japan and South Korea as well as US forces in the region. It has also been suggested that "confessional diplomacy" was predicated on the threat of blackmail by Kim Jung-Il to proliferate fissile material unless compensated by international political and economic assistance. But this attempted extortion failed as Bush administration suspended the Agreed Framework Agreement(which effectively would have helped North Korea to come out of the woods) and refused to restore it unless North Korea agreed to behave properly on security

The UN as an agency of global democracy can be considered going beyond Butros Ghali's Agenda for Peace. A reformed Security Council with an invigorated International Court of Justice with mandatory jurisdiction over inter-state conflicts or potential conflicts threatening world peace and stability could be considered.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a retired Secretary to Bangladesh government and former ambassador.

To the victor belongs the responsibility

ESAM SOHAIL, writes from Kansas, USA

TWO and a half years ago candidate George W. Bush was asked if he intended to be a President like his father. He had replied that if he became president he would be more like a Ronald Reagan than a George Bush Senior. The popular Reagan was known as the *Teflon* president because few scandals around him stuck to him personally. Like the famed *Teflon* coating, however, his popularity rarely transferred to the Republican Party in general which kept a minority status in the American legislature for all of his presidency in the 1980s. The junior Bush is seemingly an upgraded version of Ronald Reagan.

As I write these lines, the complete numbers have not been tabulated yet and the full demographic nuances of the 2002 American voters have still to be finalized by the exit pollsters. Few will doubt, however, that the results are a major triumph for the man who learnt well from his sire's headaches: George W. Bush. Unlike the elder Bush, Junior never let the overwhelming international picture

bore him to the relatively uncharming ways of domestic politics. A less patrician Texan than his New England bred father, 'W' relished the hustings, travelling the length and breadth of a diverse continent, raising record amounts of money for Congressional candidates and lending his popularity to local turnout efforts. The results of an energetic fifteen state Presidential itinerary in the last week before elections are a defiance of history.

For only the third time since World War II, a sitting President's party has gained seats in the United States House of Representatives in a midterm election; for the first time since Dwight Eisenhower, Republicans control both chambers of Congress and the White House. Even the ever popular icon Ronald Reagan could not match this record of achievement. More personally gratifying to George W. Bush, perhaps, is his vindication to the battalion of local and foreign columnists who never lose an opportunity to ridicule his intellect, mannerisms, leadership abilities and even morals. Some question his legitimacy, others his popularity,

and yet others his understanding of politics. The day after the polls none other than the chairman of the Democratic Party admitted that Bush and his likeability did Democrats damage across the country. The victims of the Bush charm include the venerable former Vice President Walter

Florida where, thanks to a dozen visits by the helpful elder brother, Jeb Bush retained his seat.

Such was the context of the 2002 US elections. The subtext is worth pondering over as well, especially by the giddy Republicans. While many state governorships changed hands between the

parties like Kansas, New Mexico and Tennessee. The American public, supporting the president on momentous issues of foreign affairs, the Iraq situation, and national security, seems still willing to trust Democrats with matters closer to their day to day lives at home.

The election results of November 5, 2002 give President Bush a lot to be happy about. Far more than his party's, it is his personal victory at a time when he needs to assure the world and the American people that the United States is far more cohesive and unified than its detractors perceive. With the historic triumph, however, come haunting responsibilities. In less than two years Americans go to the polls again with George W. Bush as well as his congressional and state-level allies on the ballot. If the American public is unhappy at that time, there is only the party they see in singular power that they will punish.

Mondale who lost his senate race to a young local politician who had never held statewide office before, several otherwise popular Democratic governors, and two incumbent Democratic senators -- all from traditionally Democratic states. Bush also won the marquee race of the night, the contest which had the potential to embarrass him like no other: the governorship of the third biggest state

parties on November 5. Republicans lost the Democrats three of the most important races in Pennsylvania, Illinois and Michigan, states considered the pivotal battleground in any presidential election. Republican gains in traditionally Democratic Maryland, Massachusetts, Hawaii, and Alaska were more than offset by Democratic governors replacing Republicans in conservative bas-

Even at the national level the change has been less than gigantic. With a net gain of approximately half a dozen seats in a 435-member House and two in a 100 strong Senate, few sober Republicans expect a massive shift in policymaking in a still closely divided legislature. The more sanguine ones are plain worried because of the public expectations. Now that the Republicans

the sole party in power as the Democrats found out to their detriment in 1994. Making things more dicey for the victorious Republicans are certain unobtrusive realities of the United States Senate.

Given the age old rules of procedure of the Senate, a major piece legislation requires 60 out of the 100 members to consent for the matter to be debated. Not only do the Republicans not have that

strength, but a few of their own independent minded members may have serious disagreements with the legislative majority on key issues: environmentalist Lincoln Chafee opposes plans to drill in Alaska, reformist John McCain is likely to join Democrats in further restrictions on campaign donations, and newly elected Palestinian-American John Sununu will probably want a stricter supervision of Middle East policy.

Yet, some thematic changes are only to be expected. When the Senate convenes in January, President Bush is likely going to get the stalled Homeland Security bill passed by a broad bipartisan majority, the Democratic holdouts having been reduced or even defeated. More significantly in the long run, the President can expect his nominees for judgeships to be given a hearing, if not an outright confirmation, in the Senate where they were often blocked without a hearing during Democratic control. His plans to reduce taxes, simplify the mind-boggling tax code, open free trade with South America and Asia, and fund higher defence

budgets is also likely to get a far more sympathetic reception than before.

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As the ancient scriptural saying goes, "to whom much is given, much is expected".