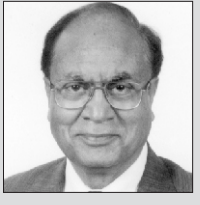


European Parliament's resolution

How factual and fair is it?



M. M. REZAUL KARIM

THE European Parliament at Strasbourg passed a resolution on Bangladesh on 21 November. It dealt with the internal political situation in Bangladesh and referred particularly to the "Operation Clean Heart" undertaken jointly by members of the Bangladesh Armed Forces, Police, BDR and other para-military forces in order to restore deteriorating law and order situation. The parliament expressed deep concern at what was called gross violation of human rights in Bangladesh, torture and killing of people held under army custody, rounding up of opposition leaders and workers, continued repression of minorities, rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the country and so on and so forth. It called upon the government of Bangladesh to take measures to restore law and order situation, protect human rights and refrain from torture, killing, repression and detention of the opposition and of the minority community. It also indicated possibility of suspension of its co-operation agreement with Bangladesh and asked to be informed of the progress of human rights situation in Bangladesh.

The passage of this resolution, if it is to be described in one or two words, is "most unfortunate." It is so because the resolution was passed by a parliament of a group of countries with which Bangladesh has developed friendly co-operative relations over the past decades. The resolution was based on many factual errors, drafted without proper verification and represents information furnished by a motivated quarter or quarters.

In order to comprehend the rationale of undertaking "Operation Clean Heart" one has to browse a little through the past. Prior to the parliamentary election of October 2001, the principal demands of the then major opposition party, BNP, included retrieval of all illegal arms and deposit of licenced arms with governmental authorities as well as deployment of contingents of defence forces to maintain law and order situation during the election. The BNP perceived that the ruling party, the Awami League, patronised terrorists with arms and also issued thousand of licenced arms to their cadres, who would nor have been otherwise eligible for licence.

The Awami League was opposed to the idea of retrieval of arms and deployment of members of the Armed Forces for election duty. However, the caretaker government and the Chief Election Commissioner dismissed the objection and the election passed off peacefully.

Following assumption of power by the BNP, the law and order situation did not improve. On the contrary, it deteriorated. The reasons were manifold. Besides the failure of

and especially in military custody. In a battle against terror, some degree of human rights were sacrificed. However, success of the Operation Clean Heart lies in the fact that many of the marked terrorists have been apprehended and others are on the run. Moreover, killing of five to six people by terrorists on an average per day has now stopped and that the public are happy.

The EU parliament called upon the Bangladesh government, inter alia, "to release opposition mem-

were some incidents immediately after the last election over a year ago, but those were scattered, short-lived and many of which took place to settle personal score.

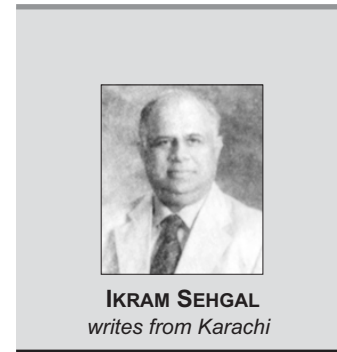
The Resolution also expressed "the concern at the growing Islamic radicalisation in the country." What is the basis of this allegation? Was it the reports of the Far Eastern Economic Review and the Time which have since been countered positively by many quarters. Even the US authorities in no less a person than President Bush and ex-President Carter themselves dismissed the idea and praised Bangladesh as a liberal democratic and moderate state. One may assume that the US source of information is at least as good, if not better, than the EU parliament. It is also interesting to note that the Jamaat and the Islamic Oikya Jote being members of the 4-party alliance have exercised restraint and been kept within the orbit of the moderate policy pursued by the mainstream party, the BNP. Furthermore, allegation was made that "no members of the Jamaat have been seized," though "this movement is renowned as being equipped with a considerable amount of arms." Does it imply that the army is partial to the Jamaat as compared even to the ruling BNP? It is a meaningless and sinister accusation. If the source of the Parliament is so authentic, it may also perhaps point out who in the Jamaat are keeping arms. This would be of great help for the army to hold them and retrieve their arms.

The parliament, however, made one good recommendation. It advocated establishment of a National Human Rights Commission. The BNP is committed to that and the pledge is incorporated in the party's election manifesto. The Minister for Law and Justice recently went on record by stating publicly that the draft law had been under preparation. We hope this would be duly enacted and the Commission established soon.

In conclusion, one may say that the European Parliament passed this resolution by allowing itself to be fed with false information and exaggerated facts by certain motivated quarters. This has not only tarnished the image of the parliament, but sought to damage, especially by hurling a veiled threat, the edifice of excellent relations Bangladesh enjoys with countries of the European Union. People will, therefore, urge the European Parliament not to act in haste in future and without testing, at least by their official representatives, the veracity of information, which has a bearing on its relations with a sovereign, friendly country.

M. M. Rezaul Karim, a former Ambassador, is a member of BNP's Advisory Council

Muttahida re-engages



IKRAM SEHGAL
writes from Karachi

THE MQM just learnt one of the primary rules of aerial combat, in a dogfight you never ever leave your wingman. And if you do, you not only put into dire peril your partner but invite all sorts of trouble for yourself. Seven days ago Muttahida opted out of the Jamali coalition for a solo flight, it is now back on station "unconditionally". And that means that with respect to the Sindh Government, there will almost certainly be a coalition of the MQM with GNA. The swing vote of "the man for all seasons", Pir Pagaro, will certainly go to the person most likely to be Sindh's Chief Minister. As the majority party in Sindh the PPP-P had the first right of forming a government. By delaying announcing its candidate officially, the PPP-P allowed the pendulum to swing in favour of PML (Q). Moreover it neither has a Provincial leader, or for that matter a reliable ally. As the elections for the PM's post has shown, Ms Benazir does not seem to trust Makhdoom Amin Fahim.

One cannot understand why the most potent and consummate of all politicians in Pakistan by far, Ms Benazir Bhutto, is so insecure. While her brother Murtaza was alive one could understand her apprehensions in a male-dominated society, but very few politicians of the third world can match her charisma. In her first term as PM Ms Benazir proved to be a good enough administrator despite the strait-jacketed circumstances she was forced to accept, macro-managing affairs of governance reasonably well. For sheer raw talent no political party can ever match the PPP of 1970, the momentum carried on in 1977 and even upto 1988. Even today PPP has the maximum number of votes cast in the Federation. What is tragic is that PPP is now out in the cold, its present political limbo can be traced back to the one person who should be the last one to feel politically insecure, Ms Benazir. While the game of politics inculcates the art of compromise, one cannot be all things for all people and she has tried that once too often. To her credit she almost pulled it off through her single-minded puppet-on-a-string manipulation of Maulana Fazlur Rahman but ultimately the present trend of the present world environment against so-called "fundamentalists" caught up with her. No one can run things by remote control for long. Something had to give; not only was Ms

Benazir out-manipulated, frankly she out-smarted herself. The defection of PPP stalwarts like Rao Sikandar Iqbal and Faisal Saleh Hayat must have hurt; how many more are waiting in the wings to bolt from the once "un-breakable" party? Almost her entire cabinet of 1988 is gone! In human resources her major political asset is now her husband, whose six years in custody counts for something, the charges of corruption against him notwithstanding. Those who remember the high

12, 1999 and the nation's foreign exchange coffers bare, the way back to economic stability and foreign cash liquidity has been hard and slow. We cannot afford a relapse just because political immaturity gives greater weightage to self-interest rather than the vital needs of the nation.

Our Armed Forces spent nearly one long year on the borders with the Indians having an overwhelming numerical advantage arrayed in attacking formations. They simply

AS I SEE IT

To be credible to the world it is important to get our domestic house in order. That is why it is crucial to have the last cog, the Sindh Government, in place for Pakistan's democracy. We need our politicians to come together in the national interest to combat the perils we face not only internally but, more importantly, internationally.

political ideals that motivated the motley group that met at 21 Edwards Road in Lahore in the late 1960s will not recognize PPP as the same political entity.

Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali has squeaked through relatively unscathed, his gratitude (other than that to the President), must be directed at the political acumen of Ch Shujaat Hussain who had the good sense to remain a king-maker rather than aspire to be king. Ch Shujaat is now engaged in crucial discussions with MMA and the pragmatism in Balochistan is likely to be emulated in the Centre and in Sindh, with or without the MMA joining the Federal Government. Already forcing a change of heart in the MQM, it will certainly help Government formation in Sindh. The move to the in-between "transition phase" from military regime to full democracy will than be complete. Bringing a deep sea diver up from the deep has to be in stages so that the "bends" are not fatal. Out in the cold for some time, politicians have to be acclimatized to the realities of good governance in the third world before aspiring for the full freedoms of the first.

Unlike popular perception and genuine public anxiety notwithstanding, Pervez Musharraf was never been in any sort of trouble during this metamorphosis from a military to a political regime. He has been giving ground gracefully to his chosen political position. Germany's World War 2 withdrawal genius Field Marshal Henric would have been proud of him! Contrary to normal public belief, withdrawal is the most difficult of operations and if one can avoid losing command and control or any significant amount of one's forces in the process it is counted as a success. The President had to disengage without losing "hands on" control. The economy was in a shambles on Oct

stared the Indians down, any sign of weakness would have had the enemy indulging in adventure. No sooner have the bulk of Indian forces started to withdraw than Deputy PM of India LK Advani, with Gujarat State elections impending, is on the warpath again, spouting a tirade of anti-Pakistan venom, actively advocating war with Pakistan. One can understand why the BJP needs to play the Pakistan (and the Muslim) card, it is fighting for its political survival. How else can one reason CM Modi of Gujarat reminding Hindu voters of the Godhra incident, knowing quite well that it may again set off on bloody anti-Muslim carnage? What is more worrying for Pakistan is the ridiculous item in the "New York Times" about Pakistan giving nuclear help to North Korea as barter for ballistic

missile know-how. Hardly had Pakistan denied the unsubstantiated story, than President Putin of Russia, on his way to a State visit to India, had got into the act by saying what his hosts wanted to hear, his fears of Pakistan's nuclear assets "falling into the hands of terrorists". Can Russia really talk about responsibility without having any real inventory about its nuclear arsenal? Putin conveniently forgets that the Russians have been selling nuclear material on the black-market for years to all and sundry. Russia will sign a defence agreement with India, how come no one in the west protests why India is arming itself to the teeth, to fight China? Muslims tend to rail against the US for any number of reasons, particularly because of Israel's putting down of the Palestinian Intefada. Can you compare Israel's targeting, or trying to target, militants only to the wanton murder of Chechnyans by the Russians? Why don't the Muslim countries take notice of the vicious Russian atrocities in Chechnya? And what happened in Afghanistan? How did the Mujahideen become Mujahideen? Russia will always be the enemy and Pakistan is a particular target because of the defeat the once mighty Soviet Union suffered in Afghanistan. One can be forgiven for suspecting a "conspiracy theory" here, when deliberate lies and disinformation are used to undermine a country's international credibility.

To be credible to the world it is important to get our domestic house in order. That is why it is crucial to have the last cog, the Sindh Government, in place for Pakistan's democracy. We need our politicians to come together in the national interest to combat the perils we face not only internally but, more importantly, internationally.

Ikram Sehgal, a former Major of Pakistan Army, is a political analyst and columnist.

Treat the cause, not the symptom

DR FAKHRUDDIN AHMED writes
from America

F LUSH with an unprecedented victory in the mid-term elections in early November, President Bush, along with the Republican Party and the whole nation has taken a sharp turn to the right. The ramifications of this rightward tilt will be felt for a long time to come, and will be manifested in election of right-wingers to judgeships, loosening of environmental protection controls and attack on civil liberties.

Where are the left-wingers, and the endangered species also known as the Democrats? Petrified of attacking the popular President (who was busy trashing the Democrats), the Democrats presented themselves as Republicans lite. Afraid of attacking the President even on the slumping economy, the Democrats hoped to win the election by default. They managed simply to default! Traditionally, Jewish Americans lead the American left. With the war on terror and the impending war on Iraq benefiting Israel enormously, they left the left flank and joined the ranks of the right. Dissension has become as rare a commodity as caution, and it is scary how American public opinion has solidified behind one point of view.

A heinous crime was perpetrated against American civilians on Sept. 11 by Al Qaida terrorists. The whole world supported America's justified attack on Afghanistan's Taliban, Al Qaida's hosts. Unfortunately, it appears that the noble agenda has now been hijacked to serve America's oil and Israel's strategic interests. The Republican strategy in the November election was to repeat the same mantra or allegation over and over again, even if it was not true, until people believed it. For example, the Democratic Senator from Georgia, war hero Max Cleland, who lost both his legs in Vietnam, was portrayed by his Republican opponent as unpatriotic. The Republican won! In an exercise in mass deception, the administration put out the word that Iraq has "weapons of mass destruction," a mantra that is repeated over and over in the media and by all "experts" as though it is the ultimate truth. In truth, it is the ultimate falsehood. The writer's stockbroker said the other day that the market would soar after Iraq is attacked,

because "fighting Iraq is like fighting a five-year old." The only nation that possesses the weapons of mass destruction (chemical, biological, nuclear and conventional weapons) in the region is not Iraq, but Israel. Of course, speaking the truth about Israel is treasonous! The other nations to possess the weapons of mass destruction are Russia, China, America, Britain and France.

It has been a dream of the Zionists to disrupt the friendly relations between America and Saudi Arabia. They are on the verge of succeeding. A Congressional report accuses the wife of the Saudi Ambassador to America, Haifa al-Faisal, of funding two of the Sept. 11 hijackers. What happened was this:

more important Zionist dream of railroading America on a collision course with the Islamic world: after all, Saudi Arabia hosts Islam's two holy sites, and the country, not necessarily the monarchy, is very special to Muslims all over the world.

The Jewish Americans never had it so good. The Jews worked very hard to stop Bush from being elected President. Now Bush is telling the Jews: look, you made a mistake, I am such a good friend of the Jews and Israel! Muslim Americans, on the other hand, worked so hard to get Bush elected President. Through his actions inside and outside the country Bush is apparently telling Muslim Americans: you

executed about 60 Chechen insurgents, half of them women, after they were knocked unconscious by lethal gas at a Moscow theatre recently, there was no condemnation of Russian barbarism whatsoever. Yet, Russian President Vladimir Putin has the nerve to tell President Bush on his recent Moscow visit that he doubts the sincerity of Russia's traditional enemies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's commitment to fight terrorism! The flip side of Senior Bush's words of wisdom is: "Ill-will begets ill-will."

While hosting an Iftar party at the White House for the ambassadors of Muslim countries recently, President Bush said all the right things. Actions, however, speak

building the lost Jewish temple in their place, that Israel is grabbing more Palestinian land and building illegal Jewish settlements on those, that Israel assassinates any Palestinian it wishes, that Israel demolishes the houses of the relatives of suicide bombers, and that Israel gets away with murder solely because of America's financial, military and diplomatic support. And that America suffers Sept. 11 for its blanket support of Israel.

On top of the billions Israel receives from America annually, last week, Israel asked America for 4 billion more in military aid, and 10 billion more in loan guarantees, which have been used previously to build Jewish settlements on Pales-

increasingly non-whites and Muslim. There is a feeling of unease in the western world about Pakistan's nuclear bomb ("one that got away") and the determination to make sure no one else, not certainly an advanced Muslim nation like Iran that supports Israel's enemies, will ever get the bomb.

Lot of the western calculation is predicated on the stupidity of the Muslim world. In this regard the Muslim world has obliged America by believing what President Bush says rather than what he does. All that the Muslims ever asked for was fairness to the Palestinians, and lifting of UN sanctions on Iraq. What they got was 100 per cent backing of Israel and more punishing UN sanctions to decimate Iraq. As Americans are fond of saying, if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it must be a duck! If President Bush believes that the more Muslim nations he attacks, the more Muslims will fall in line with him, he is mistaken. It will only swell the ranks of the Al Qaida.

Muslims, too, have behaved badly and stupidly. Although for some reason there is this insatiable Christian hunger to insult Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), this is no reason for the Muslims to go on a rampage in the holy month of Ramadan, and kill 200 people as happened in Nigeria. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would certainly NOT have approved THAT! Deaths arising out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Palestine are understandable. But killing Israeli civilians vacationing in Kenya and trying to shoot down an Israeli civilian airplane, full of innocent Jews, in the holy month of Ramadan no less, is worthy of full condemnation. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would certainly not have approved that!

Behind the stern face, one hopes and prays that President Bush is addressing the issues that give rise to the terrorists like Al Qaida. As President Carter's National Security Chief Zbigniew Brzezinski so wisely said, every terrorist group has some genuine grievance. If the President only treats the symptom, not the cause, the disease will only spread. There is a better way for America to fight terrorism. If the inherent fairness of the American people is reflected in America's foreign policy, Al Qaida and all other forms of Islamic terrorism will be a distant memory.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

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the Ambassador's wife routinely gave money to needy Saudi students in the US. Two of those students may or may not have had known (the FBI did not charge the two students after talking to them) two of the Sept. 11 hijackers. Everyone admits privately, that even if money did end up with the two hijackers, it was definitely not the intent of the Ambassador's wife. After all, a terrorist assassinated the father of the Ambassador's wife, King Faisal, in 1975. Still, led by self-righteous, Israel-first Jewish Senators Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and Chuck Schumer of New York, there is a rising crescendo of demand to punish Saudi Arabia. As with Iraq, the Saudis are now being asked to prove their innocence. Now that the US can smell Iraqi oil, perhaps the Saudis are dispensable. And the Zionists would like nothing better than to disrupt the historically friendly relations between America and Saudi Arabia, one of the few nations that give funds to Israel's enemies. This also accomplishes the much

also made a mistake; I am primarily a friend of the Jews and Israel!

It was President Bush Senior who once said that, "Goodwill begets goodwill." Many an opportunity has been missed to show Muslims goodwill. When Hindu mobs burned Muslims alive, raped Muslim women (all reported in *The New York Times*) in Gujarat earlier this year, no American embassy personnel visited Gujarat to condemn the atrocity. As China floods Xinjiang, its only Muslim province, (which it annexed in the 1940s) with Han Chinese, restricts mosque-building and worship, the US calls the indigenous Uighur Muslims, opposed to Han Chinese invasion "terrorists," to appease China. Historically, the Muslim Caucasian region has not been a part of Russia. Yet, it appears that Russia has destroyed every house in Grozny, the Chechen capital, in response to Chechen insurgency. After Sept. 11 America has now adopted the Russian view that the Chechen freedom fighters are "terrorists." When Russian Special Forces

louder than words. Leaders of President Bush's biggest evangelical Christian supporters, Reverends Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson and Franklin Graham (who recited the invocation at President Bush's inauguration) have been saying awful things about Islam's holy prophet and the religion of Islam itself. It would be nice if the President condemned them. The President refuses to meet with Yasser Arafat, even as he rolls out the red carpet for the "Butcher of Sabra and Shatilla" Palestinian refugee camps, Ariel Sharon. The President praises Israel for its democracy. As the rest of the world knows, in the Israeli "democracy" Jews vote to empower Jews to obliterate the Palestinians! As with the private indiscretions of the late President Kennedy, in the American media it is taboo to criticize any act of Israel. But the rest of the world knows that Israel was founded on the forcible expulsion of the native Palestinians, that Israel is occupying Islam's third holiest mosque, Al Aqsa, and the Dome of the Rock, with the hope of

tinian lands. As Israel's main sponsor, and financial and military backer, America clearly bears a moral responsibility for the Israeli atrocity against the Palestinians. To underscore the point, Republican Majority Leader in the Congress Dick Army said recently that an "attack on Israel is an attack on America." If that is the case, then it can be argued that an attack by Israel on the Palestinians is an attack on the Palestinians by the Americans! There is a better way for Israel. Withdraw to the pre-1967 border and witness the disappearance of terrorism and the ushering in of peace and tranquility.

If one is cynical, it now appears that the world is headed towards racial and religious conflict. With the fall of communism, the Caucasians have patched up their differences and are united. Did anyone ever believe that in spite of sabre rattling to get better terms, France or Russia would veto action against Iraq? With the armies of the West integrated, it is harder to pinpoint such racism. But the targets are