

## Errant traffic police behaviour

*Our judges must be given the highest respect*

**T**HE incident in which a judge of the High Court found himself at odds with a gross violation of behavioural norms on the part of on-duty traffic sergeants has to be viewed in the broader perspective of a culture of disrespect. What is at stake is the dignity of the judiciary.

The judge himself complained that his car at a busy intersection in the city was stopped by a traffic sergeant to allow the vehicle of a police officer to pass by. The traffic sergeants not only violated the official warrant of precedence but also waxed arrogant not to apologise to the judge even after he pointed at the flag that spoke his identity. That was objectionable behaviour at its worst, for the flag symbolised the highest judiciary, a time-honoured, sacrosanct public institution. The errant traffic sergeants, through their failure to show due respect to the judge, undermined the judiciary in public eye.

Clearly, the norms and decorum that once formed the basis of the behaviour insofar as government functionaries were thrown to the four winds in this particular case. When it comes to the law enforcers, adherence to set behavioural standards, should be a matter of paramount importance and necessity.

Two of the five traffic police officers have been exonerated of the charges, but legal proceedings are on against three. Obviously, the law has to take stand against those undermining the high institution of judiciary.

The dignity and importance attached to the judiciary and the judges have evolved over time. The righteous assertion of the judge on an issue that undermined the position of the judiciary must be taken note of, because it has brought into focus how the standing of the judiciary was lowered by none other than the law enforcers themselves.

The lesson to be learned here is that society cannot afford to compromise on the position of an exalted institution

## Middle East peace

*Signs of progress visible*

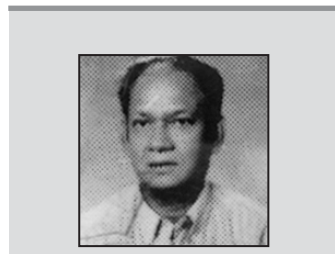
**F**OR the first time since the Middle East peace plan, known as the roadmap, was announced two months ago, the world sees some progress made towards implementing it. The tangible signs of a forward movement are noticeable from the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza strip and the Palestinians gradually taking control of northern and central parts of the occupied land. At last the Palestinians have started taking charge of areas which rightfully belonged to them. Withdrawal of Israeli forces from the West Bank and pull-out from Bethlehem are in prospect. All these are indicative of a build-up for an end to Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands.

Significantly, the headway in terms of implementing the roadmap owes it to a ceasefire declaration by three leading Palestinian militant groups -- Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Fatah faction. The US welcomed it for it is worth. President Bush's adviser Condoleezza Rice in a visit to Middle East might have helped to iron out some of the residual differences between both sides. The declaration of a three-month-long suspension of attack by the Palestinian militant groups on Israeli occupied positions is an indicator of support for the roadmap on the part of the former. Israel's initial dismissal of the declaration notwithstanding, they have kept their word on withdrawing troops from Gaza.

There is still a long way to go before peace efforts gather momentum. So, the responsibility on both sides has only increased with the increase in stakes. A continual reciprocation from Tel Aviv of the Palestinian gesture will give peace a real chance. Witnesses have said that some Israeli soldiers are still visible in the occupied territories. If it's true, then the Israeli government needs to take care of it immediately. All concerned must realise that a golden opportunity for ME peace has arrived. They cannot let it slip away.

# Wind of change in India-China relations

## Tilt moving east on the world stage?



ARSHAD-UZ ZAMAN

**A** historic agreement has been signed by the two most populous nations of the globe, China and India. India has acknowledged Chinese sovereignty over Tibet and China has in return acknowledged Indian sovereignty over Sikkim. In one go after half a century India and China have buried the hatchet and started a fresh journey. As time unfolds the historic importance of this event will become clear.

Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee has just completed a visit to China, where an Indian head of government was returning after exactly a decade. Interestingly Vajpayee as Foreign Minister of India had visited China a little over two decades ago and started successful negotiations in order to settle the long-standing border dispute left over by history. Vajpayee has been euphoric while describing the Sino-Indian agreement. He has described it as a 'win-win situation'. According to the text of the Joint Statement, the two sides will appoint special political representatives which Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha described as a 'very big development'. Sinha described the visit as the 'beginning of a new era'.

Exactly forty years ago India and China became embroiled in a military confrontation over the largely undefined mountainous border. China, with her massive army trained to fight in the moun-

tains struck across the high Himalayas and made considerable inroads into Indian territory. China had no intention to hold Indian territory and promptly withdrew. She made forcefully the point that the long border needed to be looked into. The 1962 border conflict left a bad taste in the mouth. Those were the days of 'panchsheel' or five principles on which the Non-Aligned Movement was based. The slogans everywhere used to be Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai (Indians and Chinese are brothers). The 1962 conflict was a severe blow to the majestic march of the Non-Aligned Movement.

It is to the great credit of these two great nations that they have maintained peace between them and have worked patiently for all these years in order to reach a settlement. To complicate the picture for India the highest Buddhist spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, sought refuge in India and India gave him not only a home but treated him with the utmost regard, due to the exalted office he held. The western media has tried over the years to play the Dalai Lama card but to no avail. India was careful that the Dalai Lama does not fall in a trap and play politics from his new home in India.

Indian media has lauded the agreement between India and China. The Hindu a major independent daily of India wrote appreciatively: the Joint Declaration of 'the seal of formal approval

## THE HORIZON THIS WEEK

**From a bipolar world which lay buried at the last decade of the last century emerged very briefly a unipolar (in the shape of the US) world. The world today appears more like a rudderless ship than with many definite centres of power. With the elimination of possible conflict between the two most populous nations of the globe -- China and India -- the tilt moves to the East.**

to pragmatism and proven step by step approach to problem solving'. The two sides have anchored their bilateral relations to greater trade and investments. In this day and age of globalisation, it is wise to keep an eye on trade and commerce.

The big leap forward in the bilateral relations between India and China will have profound and far reaching consequences. It is well known that for several decades China has maintained friendly relations with Pakistan, with whom India is locked in a long standing

noisy dispute. Although China has not significantly moved away from Pakistan, nor is she prepared to underwrite any adventure in which Pakistan may land herself with India. China has consistently advocated moderation with her Pakistani friends. Now that China has taken the decisive step to normalise relations with India, this trend is bound to be accentuated. Pakistan, which has suffered from a 'siege mentality' will have to review the whole situation. Both India and China are players on the world stage to which Pakistan will not be able to match.

Since 11 September 2001, the US lost her superpower status although retained the position of the most powerful country on the planet. Thanks to her careless action in Iraq, to which Tony Blair, the Prime Minister of Britain has willingly joined, the world has been thrown into chaos. The Security Council stands divided and the closest allies of the US, namely France and Germany, have been estranged. At the time of writing, the US is striving to recruit soldiers from poor countries like Bangladesh and India to replace US soldiers. The burden of the war

appears to be too heavy for the US. The US continues to believe in an unipolar world, whereas events have moved very swiftly forward.

As a centre for power outside of the US, there is Russia, which has been considerably weakened by her collapse a little over a decade ago. She fell from the superpower pedestal. Yet she is the largest country on the planet and covers a huge part of the globe. In military strength, in technological advancement, specially in the field of space she is a strong competitor of the US. Then comes the growing European Union (EU). It is daily gathering strength and moving in the direction of a Federal state. It is already a grouping of 25 countries and is continuing to expand. A former French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, has just presented a document whose target is to become eventually the Constitution of the Federation of Europe. Europe by its size, population, highly developed in every field of human endeavour, has the potential to become another powerful centre.

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Arshad-Uz-Zaman is a former Ambassador.



# Gujral's comments on Bangladesh gas

**NURUDDIN MAHMUD KAMAL**

**T**HE visit of Mr. I K Gujral, former Prime Minister of India, in late April 2003, did not go unnoticed in Bangladesh. But, there was no ripple in the media on his remarks on gas export. That puzzled me. So I wrote an essay expressing my sentiments in May 2003. I now tend to believe that the script might have got lost. So it is being published now.

I regret I could not meet Mr. Gujral in Dhaka in April, whom I met only once about three years ago through the courtesy of Prof. Rehman Sobhan. That was when we were attending a regional cooperation meeting in Katmandu. I thought as a most sensible Indian leader he never played international diplomatic poker and would never stoop to a bluff, nor he would try to bluff anyone.

We do not have many friends in India but being a very respected person in the political circle of the sub-continent Mr. Gujral is known to be a well wisher of Bangladesh. Apparently, the US's Iraq domination syndrome (IDS) has influenced Mr. Gujral as well. Otherwise, how could a person of his stature say, "I don't want to tell you that you should export gas to India, you can export gas to any country of your choosing (DS, April 28, 2003)". It is beyond a common

man's understanding that a former PM of India can make such overt suggestion as to what we should do with our gas. Otherwise, why on earth he is reported to have said in a meeting organized by South Asian Human Rights (SAHR), "You have to ensure proper use of gas. Either you export it to any country or set up gas-run chemical plant." At least Mr. Gujral is on record that he did not interfere in Bangladesh's internal decision rather he endeavoured to resolve interna-

The country would thus find itself exhausted of the current reserve of gas even before 2019. The National Gas Committee (as per its report submitted to the government in August 2002) indicated the depletion of present gas reserve in the next 11 to 12 years. Apparently the government is quietly sitting on the "recommendation-less" 273-page report for the past about nine-months. The government did not offer any formal position regarding acceptance or rejection of the

Committee also arrives at the finding, after in-depth examination, that under the short and mid-term demand-supply projections, there is a problem of short supply which militates against export of gas from the current reserves" (Page XIII GUC Report, August, 2002)? The important second aspect highlighted by the Committee was that they constantly kept in view the paramount requirement of energy security, particularly in the backdrop of the demand-

nebulous idea. The limited export concept has neither been quantified (50 million cft/day or 500 million cft/day) nor has been analysed from any perspective. Mr. Azimuddin's long civil service career might have influenced him to incorporate such a statement. To my knowledge, no one ever examined this "limited export" but the hon'ble State Minister for Energy has found the expression "export of gas" and immediately bought the idea for his consump-

June 2003) since there is no other alternative source of energy in the country. In India, for instance, almost 55 percent of total primary energy is accounted for by coal and the share of oil is 31 percent. Gas has witnessed a major gain to notch up to a share of 8 percent by 2002. Besides, India's hydroelectricity potential is large. Through bilateral arrangement, India imports electricity (hydroelectricity) at a very cheap price from both Nepal and Bhutan. India is now pursuing import of natural gas in LNG form or piped gas from Turkmenistan-Iran via Pakistan. Like the United States, India's appetite for energy is huge. And they would like to import energy from any country. Did Mr. Gujral ever inquired whether India has ever thought of sharing surplus electricity from Farraka power plant (perhaps 2100 megawatt under one umbrella) with Bangladesh? Incidentally, India's Energy Security Plan cover 50 years but Indian experts (even some Bangladeshi experts) consider a 50-year energy security for Bangladesh as absurd. It is unfortunate that India is consciously lobbying for import of gas on a priority basis from Bangladesh.

Nuruddin Mahmud Kamal is a retired government official.

# Should we send troops to Iraq?

**ABDUL HANNAN**

**F**OREIGN minister Morshed Khan reportedly has said (The Daily Star 26 June) that Bangladesh government 'is studying Chapter Four of the UNSC Resolution 1483 to see how it covers sending troops as stabilisation force in Iraq'. Clearly there is some confusion and misunderstanding. Chapter four of the UN charter deals with the organisation and functions of UN General Assembly and it has nothing to do with UN Security Council resolutions. A Security Council resolution has two parts, preamble and operative paragraphs and nowhere in the resolution 1483 there is any mention of sending troops to Iraq. It would be misleading the public to confuse chapter four with the Council resolution at issue. There is no scope for invoking chapter four for interpreting UNSC resolution 1483 on post war Iraq dispensation. There is no mention in the resolution of sending troops as stabilisation force to assist the Anglo American occupation forces now engaged in security 'operation scorpion' to search and ferret out the pockets of Iraqi resistance.

Needless to say, stabilisation force is not UN Peace Keeping

Force which is sent explicitly at the request of the office of the Under-secretary General of the Department of UN Peace Keeping at the UN headquarters in New York, in pursuance of Council resolution. This was reiterated by UN secretary general Kofi Annan on 25 June in London after his talks with Tony Blair when he said, 'Until Security Council gives us a new mandate we are not really talking of a UN force'.

The resolution among others called on member states to assist Iraqis in the reconstruction of their war ravaged country. Assistance to Iraqis involves rebuilding the shattered Iraqi infrastructure of roads, bridges, buildings, ports, oil facilities, hospitals, and utility services which of course is a privileged preserve of winners of the war with attractive contract awards. The work of the UN representative in Iraq is apparently sidelined to overseeing the humanitarian work of the UN agencies and various charity groups and NGOs.

There is deep discontent and anger among the Iraqis over short supply of jobs, food, water, electricity, sanitation and health care and the Iraqis blame the occupying powers for their sufferings. There is widespread

resentment and resistance against the occupation forces who are increasingly suffering casualties almost daily by Iraqi guerrilla sniper attacks. Caught in a situation of Vietnam type quagmire and fearing backlash on high incidence of body bags of soldiers at home, America is trying to assemble what it describes as an international stabilisation force to replace the

meeting with Tony Blair that the 'occupying powers' had the responsibility to provide security and effective administration to the people of Iraq

According to press reports America has requested for one division Indian troops as stabilisation force. During recent visits of Indian deputy prime minister LK

recent meeting with him not to send troops to Iraq. India so far has been reluctant to accede to the proposal but signs are that it is going to yield to American pressure finally as India is a strong US ally who counts on US support to stop cross border terrorism by Pakistan militant forces and contain Pakistan's not so infrequent belligerent posture over Kashmir.

and forgoing of huge debt repayments in the wake of Pakistan's support and cooperation with America for its war against Afghanistan and the ongoing campaign against Al Qaida terrorist fugitives in Pakistan. Besides, Pakistan is beholden to US support for solution of the festering Kashmir dispute. It may be truly difficult

carrot of duty free market access of Bangladesh products to America under the proposed 18-nation Middle East Trade and Engagement Act 2003 now being debated in the US Congress.

Nevertheless, the stabilisation force, for all intents and purposes, will be a combat force to engage in security and search operations against Iraqis suspected to possess hidden arsenals and harbouring hostile intents and may well be vulnerable to dangers of spiraling hit and run guerrilla attacks now being directed against Anglo-American occupation forces. There is no way we can put our troops in harms way to bail out the besieged occupation forces for a mess of pottage. Besides, the government has all along opposed war on Iraq without UN approval as a matter of principle and indicated several times that it was willing to participate in peace keeping operation in Iraq only under UN aegis. Now sending troops to Iraq to work under the command and control of Anglo-American coalition forces will be an ignoble climb down to legitimise the consequences of the war.

The reinforcement of coalition troops or their replacement by an

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coalition forces. Besides, the objective may be to add a Muslim and Asian face to the occupation army to give a look of legitimacy for acceptance by the Iraqis. But Iraq has been destabilised by America led invasion and occupation. The chaos, mess and muddle in Iraq is their own creation and it is their responsibility to fix it, not by so called stabilisation forces from outside. Secretary General Kofi Annan has rightly said after his

Advani, foreign minister Yashwant Sinha and national security adviser Brajesh Misra to Washington, the US Administration including President Bush, defence secretary Rumsfeld, national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice and secretary of state Colin Powell reportedly discussed the issue. According to a report in the Indian Express circulated by AFP, the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has told Yashwant Sinha in course of his

President Bush recently sent a team of high level Pentagon officials to Delhi to discuss the questions raised by the foreign ministry about command and control of the stabilisation force.

Pakistan President Musharraf has received favoured nation treatment at Camp David retreat of President Bush and a pledge of 3 billion dollars aid package in addition to generous economic assistance of millions of dollars for Pakistan not to oblige with the American request.

Abdul Hannan is a former Press Counsellor, Bangladesh UN Mission in New York.