

## Morshed-Natwar joint statement

Time to start anew

IT has long been this newspaper's editorial line to support a co-operative relationship between Bangladesh and India. It is our opinion that good relations can only be of benefit to both countries, whereas poor relations have proved counter-productive for both. The bilateral relationship has been more confrontational than co-operative in the recent past.

Fences cannot be effectively mended unilaterally. It takes commitment from both sides. It is thus extremely heartening to see that both sides appear to genuinely desire a rapprochement. The joint press statement released by Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Morshed Khan and Indian External Affairs Minister Natwar Singh is the latest and most concrete of indications that the new Congress government is serious about reforming India's relationship with Bangladesh, and that the Bangladeshi government is committed to making sure that this opportunity does not slip through our fingers.

The crucial understanding which appears to have been reached is an acknowledgment that the relationship has foundered in recent years, and that this has not been to the benefit of either country. Equally important is the statement that bilateral relations should not be held prisoner to the past. In other words, both sides have pledged to let bygones be bygones and to start afresh from a position of mutual respect and understanding.

The assurance that matters of concern will be addressed with a co-operative rather than a confrontational approach is exactly what is needed. The corollary to this statement, that issues with an international angle will be decided only after due consultation and not unilaterally, is similarly welcome.

The simple truth is that there are many outstanding issues between Bangladesh and India that need to be resolved. In many of these cases, the interests of the two countries are in conflict. Nothing is gained from attempting to minimise this fact. However, surely the best way forward for both countries is to attempt to settle these differences amicably rather than confrontationally.

## The training camp jolt

Let's meet the challenge head-on

AFTER a long time, a massive police raid has led to the unearthing of a training camp of suspected Islamic militants at a remote wooded swathe in Chittagong. The police acted promptly and decisively on a tip-off tracking down the hideout, arresting a few, and confiscating training equipment including dummy weapons on Tuesday. The discovery has more significance than meets the eye. For, it cannot fail to remind us of some of the recent trends like hauling up of arm caches and on-going off-going bomb blasts. We also recall newspaper reports on clandestine training activities going a few years back.

Now, the question is not whether, but how the government ought to go about meeting the challenge of containing what is surely turning out to be a very potent source of trouble for, and destabilisation in the society. The approach we would like the administration to take should have three elements. First, the incident should be put in a broader perspective rather than seen in an isolated manner. In other words, a truncated approach should be avoided. Secondly, it must not be viewed through a political lens. Political prejudices and partisanship should not be allowed to interfere with the processes of investigation, prosecution and conviction. Last but not least, militancy must not be confused with religion. The reason why we emphasise the point is because extremism, especially of the armed and violent variety, is worse than an aberration of religion; for, it employs religion for sinister political purposes.

The government better not have any psychological barrier in dealing with the problem, thinking that some of its allies might be upset.

It is also imperative that the real character and content of such militancy is fully uncovered. The matter has acquired such grave import that the government shouldn't turn a blinkered eye to it; instead, it must go all out in plumbing the depths of any ideological connections or extraneous links this may have spelling further dangers of spreading tentacles in our country.

# Draft UN resolution on Iraq Occupation under a new name?



ONE can understand the compulsions of United States and Britain for tabling the recent draft resolution on Iraq in the Security Council. The proposed date of handing over sovereignty to the Iraqis is not far off. The Iraq operation, undertaken in complete disregard for world opinion, and in total marginalisation of the UN, has brought very little freedom to Iraq, if at all, and have even less chance of enduring given the serious developments in Iraq.

Assigning a lead role to the UN in overseeing the process to an elected government in Iraq, which the new resolution does, is an acknowledgement of UN's indispensability in Iraq's political denouement. This is, however, both a vindication as well as a

cause for concern for it, according to a high UN official. A vindication, one presumes, of the UN's authority as the sole arbiter of international conflictive issues. The concerns are justifiable. Any UN role in Iraq must be well defined and not be seen to be an instrument for legitimising US actions and continued presence after 30<sup>th</sup> June, in Iraq.

Concerns for the UN is addressed by inserting a proviso in

(MNF) is concerned.

The major misgiving of the other permanent members is about the proposed MNF on which the draft is deliberately ambiguous. The resolution, "Reaffirms authorization for the multinational force under unified command to maintain security and stability in Iraq and decides to review its mandate in 12 months or at the request of Iraq's transitional government...". Innocuous as it may appear in

posed resolution is designed to accord the Occupation Force the new designation of MNF and to allow its functioning as before. However, the issue of exit of the force has been addressed through the recent changes in the Draft.

It need no iteration that a UN force, if at all necessary, must have the consent of the host country, which in this case is Iraq, and must operate within specifics determined by the UN and under the UN

the draft to give "Iraqis the explicit right to decide if the troops should stay and that the Interim government should have a final say regarding extension of the force and on major actions to be taken by it", echoes the concerns of the other four permanent Council members. This has been only partly addressed by specifying the time of exit of the MNF that the British and the Americans have suggested in the changed draft.

desire to retain after 30<sup>th</sup> June its military occupation of Iraq under a UN umbrella. If Iraq is to be fully sovereign it has to be given absolute authority to determine, without duress, as to what sort of help it wants from the UN or for that matter any other agency. It must be allowed to run its own affairs without any backseat driving. It is the Iraqi government that has the sovereign right to decide if it requires foreign troops for its security, and for how long. Furthermore, such a security force assigned to Iraq under a UN mandate must be a part of the 'Blue Berets' only. Otherwise, it would be only an abridged sovereignty; the term 'UN mission' would lose its meaning and the troop contributing countries would have hesitations in being part of a phalanx that would in fact be comprised largely of the Coalition forces.

Although the Americans and the British have suggested several amendments to the original draft, several clauses in it need to be changed if they want to dispel the common perception that the new resolution would not be occupation under another name.

The author is Editor, Strategic and International Affairs, The Daily Star.

**If Iraq is to be fully sovereign it has to be given absolute authority to determine, without duress, as to what sort of help it wants from the UN or for that matter any other agency. It must be allowed to run its own affairs without any backseat driving. It is the Iraqi government that has the sovereign right to decide if it requires foreign troops for its security, and for how long.**

the draft resolution for a dedicated force for the security of UN establishments that might be in place in Iraq consequent upon the new resolution.

However, in spite of some changes incorporated in the draft resolution insofar as it relates to the new Interim government's full control over Iraqi security forces, it has been viewed with reservations by the other permanent members of the Council and with cynicism by observers. Even Britain and the US have differing views in so far as the proposed Multinational Force

print, the draft is silent on the definition of MNF and the meaning of 'unified command' is left to our imagination. What is worrisome is the silence of the proposal on the extent of control of the Iraqi authorities over the MNF.

Those with a modicum of understanding of a multinational force will realise the potential for disaster in a 'unified command'. In any case, one expects a UN authorised force to be representative of the UN and working under the stipulated UN setup. What one discerns between the lines is that the pro-

flag. How the new dispensation will qualify as a 'UN mission' when in fact the resolution is designed to endorse the continued presence of US troops as a part of a multinational force is difficult to understand.

The scope of operations of the new force is also left ambiguous, further confounded by Mr. Blair blowing hot and cold on the matter. The apprehension that the writ of the Iraqi Interim government would not extend to the MNF is, therefore, justified. In this regard China's proposed amendments to

Even the language of the draft betrays the psyche of the drafters in that while they suggest a very intimate role of the UN in Iraq's transition to democracy, it makes no mention of the need for consent of the Iraqi government to the proposed arrangements. It is absolutely necessary that the UN is wanted by, rather than imposed upon, a country, even if it happens to be Iraq, a nation defiled, a people subjected to the most degrading and inhuman conditions under illegal occupation.

In reality the draft betrays US

# President Bush's 'commercial' success

DR. FAKHRUDDIN AHMED  
writes from Princeton

PRESIDENT George W. Bush may be "incurious" on policy matters as his critics allege, but he is smart enough to know that to be "reelected" President he needs funds. Lots of funds. Ever since taking office, through the dark post-9/11 days, the President has consistently found time for one thing -- fund raising. Consequently, the President's "reelection" war chest is now bursting with an unprecedented 200 million dollars. And the President has not been bashful in putting the money to work for him, with much success. In spite of the horrendous news from Iraq -- mounting, unacceptable American casualties and the Abu Ghraib prisoner abuse scandal that has destroyed America's reputation -- and Mr. Bush's kowtowing to mass murderer Sharon which has destroyed America's credibility worldwide, in all the current opinion polls for presidential preference, Mr. Bush and the presumptive Democratic challenger John Kerry are tied. The reason? The 70 million dollars worth of television commercials that Mr. Bush has run in the last two months to define Senator John Kerry negatively to the American people.

The Bush family is very good at character assassination. Back in 1988 when pere Bush ran for President, he used the most despicable political commercial in the history of American elections, the infamous "Willie Horton" television ad, to destroy the front running Democratic candidate, Governor of Massachusetts Michael Dukakas. Massachusetts' law allowed convicts weekend furloughs. During one of those furloughs, a convicted black criminal, Willie Horton, had raped a white woman. Although the law predated Governor Dukakas who had nothing to do with its enactment, the Bush pere's ad, which showed the threatening picture of Willie Horton, implied that Governor Dukakas had no problem with

black criminals raping white women! Senior Bush knew that playing the racist ad would reap him an electoral windfall because white males, who overwhelmingly vote Republican, would be incensed! They were. (The last time a majority of the white males voted for a Democratic presidential candidate was forty years ago, in 1964, for Lyndon Johnson).

Taking a cue from his dad, the current Bush ran a series of television commercials to define John Kerry negatively. The ads blamed Senator John Kerry for everything.

dad, then a Congressman, who used his influence to get his son into the National Guard, which did not fight in Vietnam, in the process queue-jumping over 500 candidates ahead of Bush, who did not have similar political clout. Bush "did" his service by flying planes in the safe skies over Texas, where his attendance was spotty, and in Alabama, where there are no records of his attendance. Therefore, it is a tad hypocritical, if not outrageous, for Mr. Bush to dump on Kerry and to flaunt his own 'patriotic' credentials.

far, going to war for one reason, staying for another and layering contradictory facts with Sunday school rhetoric. Fallujah, a compromised compromise, becomes a sterling success in the president's mouth. A systematic failure to abide by the Geneva Convention becomes the kinky work of a few. The war over WMDs become one over terror. And Ahmed Chalabi, the erstwhile George Washington of Iraq, becomes Benedict Arnold virtually overnight. The Bush administrations rap on John Kerry is that he is inconsistent. The

"Let's put it this way, they are no longer a problem for the United States and our friends and allies," it should be no surprise that those below him in the chain of command take their lead from the commander in chief."

Princeton University Professor and The New York Times columnist Paul Krugman adds in his May 28 column: "People who get their news by skimming the front page, or by watching TV, must be feeling confused by the sudden change in Bush's character. For more than two years after 9/11, he was a

press criticism of the commander in chief."

Mr. Krugman concludes: "And some journalists could not bring themselves to believe that the president of the United States was being dishonest about such grave matters. Finally, let's not overlook the role of intimidation. After 9/11, if you were thinking of saying anything negative about the president, you had to be prepared for an avalanche of hate mail. You had to expect right-wing pundits and publications to do all they could do to ruin your reputation. The Bush administration, knowing all this, played the press like a fiddle. But has that era come to an end? A new Pew survey finds 55 percent of journalists in the national media believing that the press has not been critical enough of President Bush. More important, journalists seem to be acting on that belief. Amazing things have been happening lately. The usual suspects tried to silence reporting about prison abuses by accusing critics of undermining troops -- but the reports keep coming. The attorney general has called yet another terror alert -- but the press raised questions about why. (At a White House morning briefing, Terry Moran of ABC News actually said what many thought during other conveniently timed alerts: "There is a disturbing possibility that you are manipulating the American public in order to get a message out.") It may not last. In July 2002, according to Dana Milbank of The Washington Post -- who had tried, at great risk to her career, to offer a realistic picture of the Bush presidency -- "the White House press corps showed its teeth" for the first time since 9/11. It did not last: the administration beat the drums of war, and most of the press relapsed into docility. But this time may be different. And if it is, Mr. Bush -- who has always depended on that docility -- may be in even more trouble than the latest polls suggest."

## LETTER FROM AMERICA

**Mr. Bush is operating under the not necessarily unfounded assumption that American voters are somewhat gullible, have short attention spans, can be swayed by the right sound bites on TV and can be trusted to trust their "war President," which is how Mr. Bush defines himself. That is why Mr. Bush is still in a statistical dead heat with Senator Kerry in the opinion polls.**

Higher gasoline prices (now over \$2 a gallon)? Kerry's fault. The mess in Iraq? Partly Kerry's fault. This is reminiscent of Napoleon (Stalin) blaming Snowball (Trotsky) for everything that went wrong in George Orwell's "Animal Farm" (Soviet Union). The most outrageous ad, however, is the one accusing Kerry of being soft on national security and of flip-flopping on issues. John Kerry opposed the Vietnam War while a student at Yale in the mid-1960s. When his country called on him, however, Kerry enlisted, went to Vietnam, fought bravely, was injured and won a chestful of medals for his bravery and service to the nation. After returning home, Kerry was consistent and continued to oppose the war. George W. Bush was also at Yale in the mid-1960s and he SUPPORTED the Vietnam War. When his country called on him, however, Bush DID NOT enlist. Bush probably thought that only poor whites and blacks should fight and die in Vietnam. Instead, Bush called his

president's virtue, on the other hand, is supposedly his consistency. But to stick to the same rhetoric when the facts have changed, to insist on what is palpably false, to render black as white and to say it all with a childlike faith in civics class bromides is not commendable consistency. It is, instead, the mark of a narrow mind overwhelmed by large events.

Mind has always been one of Mr. Bush's problems. This was evident in the juvenile manner he had defined EVERYONE in the world: "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists." It is as though everyone in the world had to define themselves by either of the choices Mr. Bush had given them! A letter to The New York Times on May 28 holds Mr. Bush responsible for Abu Ghraib atrocities: "When (Bush) indiscriminately depicts our opponents as 'evil'; boasts that we will track them down 'dead or alive'; and in his State of the Union address in 2003 slyly observes of suspected terrorists who have been arrested or 'met a different fate,'

straight shooter, all moral clarity and righteousness. But now those people hear about a president who won't tell a straight story about why he took us to war in Iraq or how that war is going, who can't admit to and learn from mistakes, and who won't hold himself or anyone else accountable. What happened? The answer, of course, is that the straight shooter never existed. He was a fictitious character that the press, for various reasons, presented as reality. The truth is that the character flaws that currently have even conservative pundits fuming have been visible all along. Mr. Bush's problems with the truth have long been apparent to anyone willing to check his budget arithmetic. His inability to admit mistakes has also been obvious for a long time. So why did the press credit Mr. Bush with virtues that reporters knew he did not possess? One answer is misplaced patriotism. After 9/11 much of the press seemed to reach a collective decision that it was necessary, in the interest of national unity, to sup-

transparent in the dream world. The proof of the pudding lies in the eating not when others eat it away!

Imaging the Eden Buildings Secretariat in Dhaka carrying out the daily work at digital workstations. The policies and instructions would flow out so speedily that it would create confusion and chaos in the attached offices armed only with pens files and *punkha-pullers* (fans without electricity).

Before that the political masters (and brokers) have to digitalize the masses for better and faster feedback. The question is whether the hardened fossilized and traditionally closed-minded politicians would like this flow of two-way communication (including feedback) from the voters. Reality is unpleasant most of the time. Specially in under-developed pockets (gun intended).

In the digital world promises cannot be hidden under sweet analogue wraps (all final outputs are used employed or utilized in the analogue form: enjoying a romance music and cultural activities the body's external functions good food and company). In politics the hidden culprit is the private CPU (central processing unit as used in computers) confidentially processing political schemes behind closed doors and thereafter presenting

the people with sugar-coated versions of the same. Watch the plight of Blair today.

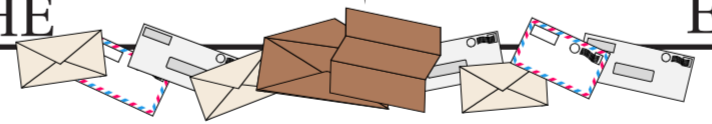
The philosophical question arises: why like the supreme Creator there should not be only one political party to take care of all the problems. Another man-made invention comes in: democracy (now linked with economic theories converting capitalism and materialism). Socialism withered away as money circulate faster than ideologies.

But there is no politics in the high heavens: hence one artificial prop on this Earth needs other props to maintain the infrastructure (same with the greenhouse effect). Man at the lower levels seeks options. While the autocratic dictators claim "I am the state": while the Sufis maintain that there should be no option left in a life of simplicity (discard not add). Take your choice and make the others happy (not your own happiness).

The goals of the two major political parties in Dhaka are more or less the same: everything (*jaan maal*) for the people by the politicians. Never in the history of civilization was so much at stake by so few for so many (or so much)!

AMMA'ahad  
One-mail

# TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

## Bangla Bhai

I could not stop myself from writing on the above subject, after reading today's (30 May) editorial about the infamous Bangla Bhai. Do you want the readers to believe that the law enforcers were ordered to arrest him? I could not buy your comment. This so called Bangla Bhai in the crime world is not new at all. We saw his picture in the dailies 5/6 months ago when he was coming out of a meeting with the SP of Rajshahi. From that time we heard peoples' outcry about the crimes of this man.

My question is, why he was not arrested at that time?

Mir  
One-mail

## On ADP report

I read in the DS, May 21, about ADP report titled "ADP Implementation Progress Review 2002 -- 2003" by Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry. The major points and corollaries of the report are as follows:

Drawing tender money without actually implementing the work, procuring and supplying low quality materials, misusing project vehicles and other facilities.

Even some key organisations have credibility gap.

The water resources ministry

and power sector are corrupt as usual.

I don't have any doubt about the report. To develop the country or to change our fate, all of us should struggle hard and contribute to development. If we have the habit of bluffing ourselves, then how can we hope for a better future? The key projects should be run by honest and efficient people.

For any country, ADP indicates how much progress has been achieved, and a rough estimation of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) can be calculated by summing up all the progresses. Thus I want to conclude that ADP is an important issue for us, and not merely an academic matter.

Md. Ariful Islam  
Dept. of EEE, RUET

## Case against Kazi Faruk

DB police arrested Dr Kazi Faruk Ahmed while he was coming out of the High Court on 22 May. He is the president of Proshika, an NGO, and also chairperson of ADAB. Proshika is playing a vital role in rural areas through non-formal primary education, poverty alleviation, sanitation work, human resource development and credit, functioning smoothly for about three decades in Bangladesh.

I would request the government to take into consideration the contributions made by the president of Proshika and let everything proceed according to the law.

Ghalum Zillani  
Mahaderpur, Naogaon

## Stop brain drain

We have some public universities where seats are limited for graduation and post graduation students. So, many good students do not get a chance in the admission tests.

We have also many private universities where tuition fees are very high. And there is little chance to afford the tuition by doing a part-time job because of the tight scheduled of classes and lack of scope. But such opportunities are available in foreign universities. Again, if we give a look at the public universities of our country we can see the poor condition of these universities due to student politics, session jams, lack of security etc. So, those students who dream of building up a shining carrier go to foreign universities for acquiring degrees. After finishing their study there, they try to find a good job and want to live permanently. It is a great loss for our country. It is being deprived of the services of its best sons.

For halting this process, our government should allow foreign universities to establish their campuses in our country so that meritorious and rich students can fulfill their dream staying in their homeland.

Proshenjit Ghosh  
Khulna University  
Khulna

## Security at airport

Airports are the most sensitive places of any country. Foreigners have the first impression of a country through its airports and seaports. Airports, particularly international airports and seaports, being the gateways deserve special attention in all respects by any government. There are more than half a dozen agencies looking after the safety and security of ZIA, such as, civil aviation, security, Biman security, customs and immigration vigilance team, NSI, DFI, DMP etc. In spite of vigilance of so many agencies, it is surprising that security hazards and lapses of alarming dimensions are taking place at ZIA every now and then. The incident that took place after arrival of BG079 (DC-10 A/C) on 2181/04 from Hong Kong where 5 Indian citizens were discovered from the rooftop of toilets after 16 hours has again unfurled our sheer negligence of duty and most inefficient and irresponsible handling of the

Gulazim  
Cafeteria, Dhaka

## Digital politics?

Our politics is slow. Outdated, charismatic and street-based. We are developing slowly and incrementally distracted and diverted by other sights and goals (closer to the other private heart). Cannot keep pace with the digital age of diverse choices. Hence perhaps we need digital politics (adapted for the LDCs). Now software is available and our IT whiz kids can come up with some deshi version to confuse the wily political pundits who count materialistic beads.

The old analogue politics cannot be processed fast enough and adapted for new enhanced applications in these fast-chapping times. The mindset needs digital