

Yet another bomb blast!

Result of too many wake-up calls ignored

THE bomb explosion at Dirai in Sunamganj spilling blood at a political party meeting is a pointer to a freer rein being enjoyed with each passing day by professional killers and saboteurs of public peace.

We have written *ad nauseum* about the need to address the cases of explosions in a forthright and earnest manner. Only the other day in this column, we expressed our concern that, failure to bring to a positive conclusion the investigations regarding sensational cases, would provide a fillip to the perpetrators, to continue with their anti-state and anti-people activities.

Unfortunately investigations of none of the bomb blast cases have been concluded as yet. More often, these have been mired in political blame game and attempted slant to implicate the opposition. Yet again we see the usual blame game. A political party has already blamed another for perpetrating the incident in Dirai. This is another factor that creates impediments to proper, objective investigations of important cases, such as this.

For over a decade now we have been pre-occupied with the problem of proliferation of small arms in Bangladesh. In the process, we have overlooked the very serious issue of indigenous explosive devices (IED) that have been so frequently used over several years, with devastating effects. The casualty statistics at a glance shows us that more lives have been lost due to this device than to the conventional small arms and light weapons.

Admittedly, IEDs are easy to put together and transported without difficulty from place to place. They can also be moved about in a knocked down condition and assembled at short notice. Some crude devices can also be put together without much technical know-how. All these beg the question of professional investigation of previous cases, constant surveillance over suspected groups as well as maintaining a data base to conduct productive investigations.

It is time the government addressed the issue of IEDs seriously. It is imperative to bring the culprits and perpetrators of these abhorrent acts to book. We are sure that professionalism in investigations is bound to lead to arrests.

But above all, to bear any fruit, investigations must steer clear of any political interference.

Residences of Speaker, Dy Speaker in JS complex

HC order upholds public interest, sanctity of heritage

THIS is what we would call a benign manifestation of judicial activism. A High Court bench has responded robustly to a public interest writ lodged by architects and environmentalists seeking preservation of the sanctity of an architectural heritage masterpiece built on Louis Kahn's design. The HC has declared illegal the nearly completed construction work on the residences of Speaker and Dy Speaker inside the Jatiya Sangsad complex.

Now, the buildings face the prospect of demolition with an enormous cost to the exchequer -- thanks to the incurable stubbornness with which the plans were pursued by the works ministry despite the dissuading efforts by Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok (BPA) in tandem with the Institute of Architects, Bangladesh (IAB).

The chronology of events is a study in total insensitivity to public and civil society demands for abandoning the project since its very inception. At the planning stages, back in 1997, the architects and environmentalists had vehemently opposed the idea with the result that it got dropped at that time. That should have been the end of the matter, but it was not to be -- the appetite for land grabbing under any garb being a national pastime and the other trait being to present something as a *fait accompli* from which there will be no going back.

In October 2002, the construction work began in the open swathe left as a breathing space for the public in Louis Kahn's original design. Seven months later, HC in an order in May stayed the construction work, but three months on, the then Chamber Judge Justice Syed J R Mudassir Hossain stayed the HC order. Now, with the latest HC verdict, the defendant could go to the Supreme Court Appellate Division.

The latest High Court judgement is a fairly comprehensive one in that the government has been asked to declare the parliament building as part of national heritage. Kahn's masterpiece has already had a pride of place as a monument of world architecture. Let's preserve it in its entirety without further ado.

Why did Bangladesh lose the OIC race?



HARUN UR RASHID

former President Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, Pakistan, at the same time, put up its own candidate Ghulam Ishaq Khan (later served as President of Pakistan). Since two South Asian countries could not arrive at an agreement, the post went to a Tunisian, Habib Chatti. The second time, Bangladesh nominated its former Foreign Minister A.R.S Doha, and the third time it put up its former Foreign Secretary and Speaker Humayun Rasheed Chowdhury. Both the candidates were later

each. It is noted that Malaysia is the current chairperson of the OIC.

Turkish successful candidate is Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu (61 years). In the past, he was involved in the activities of the OIC. He served as the Director General of Islamic Conference Organisation Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), Istanbul, Turkey in 1980. He also served as the Secretary of the Islamic Conference Organisation International Commission for the Preservation of Islamic Cultural

diplomatic world.

Third, geographical rotation of an international post plays a significant part in election. In the past, candidates from Africa, Arab countries, South Asia, and South East Asia occupied the post. In the OIC, Turkey (South East Asia), Egypt, Senegal, Tunisia, Pakistan (South Asia), Niger, and Morocco (Africa) held the post of the Secretary General from 1976 until this date. Turkey was left out. Turkey probably canvassed that its candidate was well placed in the context of

Israeli-Palestinians and in stabilising the volatile situation in Iraq.

Finally, commitment to a candidate by a country is often illusory in diplomacy. A country's stand changes with the changing situation in the regional and global world. Secret ballot often offers an escape to alter a country's position at the last minute. Diplomatic experience demonstrates that a commitment, even written, cannot be fully relied upon. In the polite but wily diplomatic world, it is not uncommon that a country may change its position at the time of its voting, despite its previous commitment.

Conclusion

Bangladesh has had its share of failures in securing top positions in international organisations irrespective of the government of political persuasion in Dhaka. Bangladesh cannot ignore its inherent limitations. It is neither an economic nor a military power. It is a small-sized country and its current political instability appears to be a negative asset to its standing... The bottom line is not what Bangladesh thinks of itself, but how other countries perceive the strength and standing of Bangladesh.

BOTTOM LINE

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withdrawn as sufficient support was not obtained for them.

This time Bangladesh came first on the scene proposing its candidate. Subsequently, Malaysia and Turkey proposed their candidates and the dynamics of the strength of the contestants changed. Although the Secretary General has been appointed through consensus in previous occasions, this time no one was willing to withdraw its candidates.

Since its membership, Bangladesh has nominated its candidates four times to secure the top job of the organisation. As the consensus of the 56 members could not be arrived at for its proposed nominations, three times Bangladesh had to withdraw its candidates.

For the first time, in 1979, Bangladesh proposed its candidate

Heritage (ICPICH), Istanbul, for seven years (1983-2000). He received many honours including medals from Egypt, Jordan, Senegal, and Iran for his contribution to Islamic history and heritage. He speaks four foreign languages: Arabic, Persian, French, and English.

Why did Bangladesh lose the race?

First, in the past, Bangladesh candidates failed to get elected to the top position in the international organisations. For example, Bangladesh put up its candidates for the top job of the UN Common Fund, FAO (Food & Agriculture Organisation) and the Commonwealth, but the candidates were unsuccessful.

earlier, although it was keen to obtain the position. This being the case, Bangladesh naturally knew that it was placed in a difficult position to secure the post given the contestants from Turkey and Malaysia.

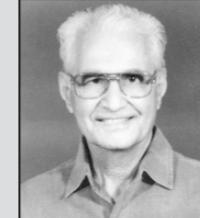
Second, ordinarily in the international top job, the winning candidate tends to be either widely known for his or her contribution to the organisation, or the candidate is publicly supported by influential members of the organisation. It has been seen that a candidate must represent the country repeatedly in the organisation so that the candidate is known and is widely respected. Lobbying helps, but if the candidate is not widely known among its members, it does not ultimately cut ice in the

geographical rotation.

Fourth, Turkey's strategic location helped it to win votes. Turkey is a bridge between the Middle East and Europe. It is an active member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). Given the prevailing turmoil in the Middle East, many members of the OIC imagine that Turkey, a neighbour of Iraq, Syria, and Iran, will be able to play a meaningful role for the OIC with respect to Middle East issues. Furthermore, Turkey has maintained good diplomatic and strategic relations with Israel (Egypt and Jordan also have diplomatic relations with Israel). Given the geopolitical advantage of Turkey, it was perceived that the role of the Turkish Secretary General might be a useful "go-between" between

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FATA: Conundrums galore



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

be enough to cause serious trouble to the security forces.

All in all it is an ugly situation. The American pressure on Pakistan to take out these former supporters of Taliban, some of whom might be linked to al-Qaeda, can only be implemented by traversing a political minefield. Times have changed. There is a new motivating force in FATA areas that the British colonials never encountered or certainly not this kind of Islamic fanaticism. It is the feelings generated

ture has grown up. Until 2001, Pakistan's military rulers have made free use of this emerging mentality and helped heighten its emotional content. It was a monster they created, though the US had encouraged the same process for many decades for its own reasons.

Islamic extremism is not a simple phenomenon. These are not simply pious folks trying to live a pure life. They are highly charged fanatics ready to kill or get killed in

Egypt. Pakistan's military rulers administering other elements.

The solution is in fact simple in

concept, though difficult to execute by the present set of rulers

whose vested interests may stand

in the way. It is this administration

-- and the real government behind it

that spawned the MMA. Did

anyone tell Mr. Musharraf that by

employing MMA's FATA MNAs as

mediators after the military cam-

paign had been stopped long

before it could succeed, what was

the message to FATA people? The

minds.

There are other conundrums. FATA area has been kept deliberately backward -- a continuation of the British colonial policy. It has never been brought under Pakistan's laws and normal administration. The Army kept it as its own backyard in which what it did was not known to civilians. It has functional control over the Political Department. What advantages the Army finds in this policy is hard to say. But from around Gen. Zia's time, the Army has used this area as a staging post to meddle into Afghanistan affairs. It has also been used as an area of joint play by western intelligence agencies. Time was when Peshawar used to be the largest MI6 centre in the Subcontinent and now one supposes it is CIA's, with our own outfits hosting all of them cordially.

So far it has been an area where a witches' brew was being cooked, all related to Afghanistan, revisiting the Great Game and other cold war activities. The needs of the poor people of FATA area were neglected. The fact is they actually want normal social services and would gladly accept the few privileges and many liabilities of Pakistan's citizenship. But no one has ever seriously thought of incorporating the area into the rest of Pakistan. The FATA area has been used against foreign powers, all related to Afghanistan, revisiting the Great Game and other cold war activities. The needs of the poor people of FATA area were neglected. The fact is they actually want normal social services and would gladly accept the few privileges and many liabilities of Pakistan's citizenship. But no one has ever seriously thought of incorporating the area into the rest of Pakistan. 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