LATE S. M. ALI

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13th JS session

Acid test for the government

ARLIAMENT resumes today, and, once again, our plea to both the government and the opposition is to have the maturity and forbearance to permit the parliament to run in the manner in which the Constitution contemplates and that the people of this nation deserve. This means that the opposition must attend parliament, but the lion's share of responsibility for the effective functioning of the JS must lie with the government, and it is the government and its actions that will be under closest scru-

The government must be prepared to take all reasonable steps possible to ensure that the parliament functions properly. The opposition must be given full leeway to speak on the issues that it wishes to address for as long as it wishes. In the aftermath of August 21, the government has called for national unity and sought the cooperation of the opposition, and the 13th JS session is the perfect forum for it to show that its professions of unity are

One way in which the government can signal its commitment to positive change in the running of parliament is for it to permit the parliament to be pro-active in extending a helping hand to getting to the bottom of the carnage of August 21. The government has yet to win the confidence of the opposition or the nation in its handling of the incident, which has certainly left much to be desired. The 13th JS session is the chance for the government to put its recent missteps behind it and to regain the trust and the credibility of the people.

In the past three years, the government has made many overtures to the opposition, each time pledging to amend its high-handed manner in parliament. Each time, we took the government at its word and pleaded with the opposition to return, only to see that the government failed to live up to its promises. This time, too, the government is making the right noises and the signals it is sending about cooperation and conciliation sound very

But the government must follow up its words with action. This is the acid test for it. It must do everything in its power to make the parliament a functional body again. The nation deserves nothing less and anything less could have catastrophic consequences. Our plea to the government is to do what it takes, to bend over backwards to be accommodating, to avoid even the appearance of unfairness, and to not get provoked. What is at stake is the democratic process itself.

Remembering 9/11

War on terrorism must not be misdirected

HE sad memories of 9/11 still haunt, and will continue to haunt, people around the world, the US in particular, in the years to come. The day saw over 3,000 people, including Bangladeshis, perishing in an unprecedented terrorist attack on the Twin Towers. We join the mourning for the victims of this crime against

The world has changed ever since the towers were blown up. The concern over international terrorism brought the international community together to forge a common policy to contain the menace. There was a consensus on fighting terrorism, but none on how to achieve the goal. The consensus sprung up both from sympathy for the innocent victims and the urge to make the world a safer place to live in. The US invasion of Afghanistan was seen as part of the broader strategy of countering terrorist threats, as it was a direct assault on al-Qaeda. The nations were rallying behind the US which spearheaded the anti-terrorism campaign. The unity stood up to that point, but it broke down when President Bush decided to inflict the same blow to Iraq.

The rationale behind the war on Iraq was far from convincing and it finally became clear that the very premise that Saddam had WMD at his disposal was based on lies. The war deprived the operations against terrorists of moral authority and legitimacy -- no doubt a major setback to the proponents of peace.

The result is that the world has not changed for the better, despite the heavy US engagement in Iraq. Terrorists are active on many fronts and there is yet no sign that they are going to give up.

The war on terrorism was planned rightly but it has not been carried out with due caution and a clear sense of purpose and direction. By targeting Iraq, the US has actually shifted global attention to a new phenomenon -- security of smaller nations in a uni-polar world.

We remember the victims of 9/11 with a deep sense of loss, but are also worried about the US action against Iraq. We believe the global consensus on fighting terrorism should be revived, which certainly entails rethinking by the US on its current posture.

United Nations and peacekeeping

KAZI ANWARUL MASUD

HE term peacekeeping does not exist in the UN Charter. Dag Hammarskiold referred to it as belonging to "chapter six and a half" of the UN Carter because chapter six provided for mediation and fact finding while chapter seven provided for more forceful measures such as embargoes and military intervention. UN peacekeeping has been described as nonaggressive use of military force to help nations in conflict to reach a settlement. The peacekeepers play a neutral role by going into a conflict area as observers to ensure that agreements reached between combatants are being followed They can provide a buffer zone between warring parties by physically interposing themselves in the middle. They can negotiate with military leaders on both sides and thus provide a channel of communi-

The first UN peacekeeping operation was undertaken during the Suez crisis (1956) at the suggestion of Canada's Lester Pearson to send an international force large enough to keep peace in the area until a settlement could be worked out between the parties. The UNGA took his advice and the UN's first peacekeeping force was born. This, however, was possible due to convergence of policies of both the US and the USSR on the Suez crisis. While Nikita Khruschchev threatened to use long-range rockets in support of the Egyptian army who were fighting the Anglo-French-Israeli forces, the US government vowed to stop all further oil shipments from South America to Europe. Finally, a strongly worded cease-fire resolution passed by the UNSC forced the aggressors to withdraw their forces and agree to the deployment of the UN peacekeeping force. The Suez crisis finally contributed to ending the short-lived Prime Ministership of Anthony Eden (1955-57) as his decision to attack Egypt caused wide spread controversy.

The UNSC authorises the deployment of peacekeeping forces

and determines its mandate. Such decisions require nine votes in favour including those of all permanent members. The Secretary General recommends how the operation is to be launched and carried out and reports on its progress. The guidelines for the peacekeeping force established by Dag Hammarskjold so many years ago

enjoyed by incoherent and structurally violent states. Some of these erstwhile subalterns who had been asphyxiated during the communist regime began their quest for western political models and to ingest western libertarian values. Often this quest caused intra-state friction due to opposition from the hitherto ruling class and the existential

ment as being potentially intrusive in their domestic affairs worried some Southern governments. This Southern wariness can be explained by their apprehension of greater due to disappearance of Cold War bipolarity: greater awareness of G-8 countries of global interdependence and that democracy deficit in any

on peacekeeping than New York Fire and Police departments.

Susan Rice, a senior State Department official in the Clinton administration, however, contends that notable, even dangerous weaknesses remain in the UN's capacity to mount and sustain effective peace operations. In particular, according to Susan Rice,

Madeleine Albright feels that traditional UN peacekeepers lack the mandate and the might to succeed

where combatants oppose their presence. She recommends an international system of crisis management that is pragmatic, episodic, and incremental, necessary to deter people with guns by people with more and bigger guns. While such operations may yield results, one has to be vigilant that the P-5 does not hijack the global desire for peace to serve their own political interests.

still remain valid. Under the guidelines, the UN forces may only initiate peacekeeping activities if the parties to the conflict agree to their presence; the troops may not use violence but only negotiation to accomplish their mission; the troops must serve under the exclusive command of the UNSC: all member nations must financially support the peace operations; and the peacekeeping force can only fire in self-

Since UN peacekeeping operations can only be undertaken with the authorisation of the UNSC, its effectiveness during the Cold War period was dictated more by super power interests than by the needs at the flash points where more often than not "fire" was extinguished by unilateral actions by one or the other superpower. The following figures will be illuminating. Between 1948 and 1987, only 13 UN peacekeeping operations were started as compared to 25 in between 1988 and 1995. In 1994 alone UN peacekeeping operations involved eighty thousand military personnel. The end of the Cold War has resulted in greater international appreciation of lack of peace and need for conflict resolution as an important agenda in world politics.

Increase in global violence has partly been due to the disintegration of the USSR and the consequent disappearance of support so long

structural inequities in the subaltern's society in the form of ethnic, tribal, or religious differences. The post-industrial societies partly put to shame by their own people after seeing on their television screen graphic pictures of unspeakable human rights abuses, and partly to defend themselves from refugee onslaught on their soil, became more willing than before to opt for UN/regional organisation-supported peacekeeping operations.

Paradoxically, the states that would have benefited from international humanitarian operations were often the ones opposing these operations. The recommendation for enhanced UN capacities for peacekeeping in the Brahimi Report, produced by the UN panel set up after UN inaction resulting in massacre at Srebenica and genocide at Rwanda, was seen by some of the Southern governments as a Trojan horse for rampant intervention by the North. Even though the Brahimi Report was broadly welcomed by the Millennium Summit and endorsed by the UNSC Summit (2000), its critics saw the attention given to peacekeeping as distraction from priority that should have been given to social and economic

Besides the report's suggestion that stronger and more centralised analytical capacity was needed for conflict prevention and manage-

part of the world if tolerated could fuel conflicts adversely affecting their interests; and increasing possibility of the West by-passing the UN if necessary (as in Kosovo and Iraq). Added to these newly emerging factors was the fact that over several decades UN declarations on strengthening humanitarian assistance had stressed the principle of state sovereignty and the need for consent of the state requiring humanitarian assistance.

Admittedly since the Cold War the inadequacy of peacekeeping force as an effective instrument has been felt in places where civil war is still in progress, where consent for the presence of the peacekeepers is fragile, and they are accused of being partisan. In such cases, the Grotian doctrine justifying forcible intervention to protect people from genocide has been advanced. But such intervention need not be without UN blessings. As UN Under Secretary General Shashi Tharoor points out, peacekeeping remains exactly the kind of mission where using the UN has advantages because (a) UN peacekeeping allows burden sharing, (b) UN peacekeeping has brought peace and democracy to Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, and East Timor, and eased US burden in Haiti and Afghanistan, and (c) UN peacekeeping is highly cost effective as the UN spends less per year

the UN continues to fall short in the realm of rapid response to crises -- a weakness which can be overcome through the adoption of early warning and preventive response to conflict; rapid deployment of trained, equipped and capable forces, civilian police and civilians to respond to swiftly unfolding crises: and political will of the UNSC members to respond effectively to crises and to finance peace operations. Susan Rice and Shashi Tharoor appear to be on the same wave length in their assessment that while regional organisations/ individual states may try to mitigate crisis and stabilise conflict zones (Australia in East Timor, Britain in Sierra Leone, and France in Cote D'ivoire), there is no substitute in the long term for the

Difficulties faced in the implementation of the Brahimi Report should not be underestimated. Early warning and preventive action through intelligence gathering, for example, is treated with suspicion by many who are fearful of empowering the UN to "spy" on them and meddle in their internal affairs while members having the capacity to gather significant intelligence are reluctant to share with the UN lest heir methods of intelligence gatherng and sources are compromised Even if such difficulty is surmounted lack of political will of P-5 may hinder swift deployment of peace operatives. A case in point is the

quick US response in the case of Haiti to stem the flow of refugees while civil war in Sierra Leone in the mid-90s was allowed to continue. Likewise failure to promptly address the Rwanda conflict resulted in one of the worst genocides in the history of mankind

The UN still remains the preferred destination for initiation of collective security actions. If that is to be maintained and conseguences of the doctrine of preemption, making the UN irrelevant, are to be averted, as happened in the cases of Kosovo and rag, then the strengthening of the UN peacekeeping operations will better serve the interest of the developing countries. It is noteworthy that the three South Asian countries -- Bangladesh, Indiaa and Pakistan -- together account for 20 per cent of UN forces stationed in various parts of the world while Zambia alone puts more troops at the UN's disposal than the combined troops contribution by the US, Germany, and Japan. In the ultimate analysis the developing countries, in particular the smaller states, have to be cognisant of the current thinking in the West on methods to respond to humanitarian crisis.

Madeleine Albright feels that traditional UN peacekeepers lack the mandate and the might to succeed where combatants oppose international presence. She finds one possible solution in the UNSC authorising an appropriate major power to organise a coalition and enforce the world's collective will e.g. US-led intervention in Haiti, the Australian rescue in East Timor, and British action in Sierra Leone. Albright recommends an international system of crisis management that is pragmatic, episodic, and incremental necessary to deter people with guns by people with more and bigger guns. While such operations may yield results, one has to be vigilant that the P-5 does not hijack the global desire for peace to serve their own political interests.

Kazi Anwarul Masud is a former Secretary

Blame game is on



KULDIP NAYAR writes from New Delhi

did not write on the bid to kill Bangladesh opposition leader Sheikh Hasina earlier because I wanted to first talk to her and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia. I have returned from Dhaka a couple of days ago and I have met both of them. Not that I can say with certainty who were the assassins. But I can give the versions of both.

Nonetheless, the blame game is going on and many names are being bandied about, India, Pakistan, and the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), even the Awami League and, of course, Al-Qaida. This has only made the confusion more confounded.

Let me first reconstruct the incident. The Awami League, headed by Hasina, planned on August 21 a rally from its party office which is located in the heart of Dhaka. The rally was about to move with the culmination of her speech around 5 pm when eight grenades from all sides were lobbed at her, standing on a truck's makeshift podium. The security men as well as her supporters made themselves into a shield to give her a cover. She was forced into her bulletproof car, which was also fired at. She miraculously escaped all that, but 18 people died

in the attack. Among them were her two close associates in the Awami

It was a professional job. Those who threw the grenades knew how to do so because it involved extracting a pin within three to four seconds before throwing it. Those who shot at the bulletproof car were also trained hands. And there is no doubt that all of them, said to be 30 to 35, had one target: Hasina

Till I was in Dhaka none had been arrested: none in the police was suspended and no one at the top

stan too had some role to play.

"This was an attack on secular democratic forces," she said. "I would say that those who could not kill me and my sister on August 15. 1975, when they assassinated my father, tried to implement their unfinished agenda." She had no faith in Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's government, nor in the judicial commission which she had already boycotted. Hasina was unnerved when I met her. But she had no doubt that more attempts would be made to "finish me." One of his nise any," said Hasina, "Because my glasses were broken when I was pushed into the car." Where do we go from here, I asked her. "I wish I knew. But they would not rest until they have killed me." she said.

The version of Prime Minister Khaleda was entirely different. She disowned all allegations. She said that something tragic had happened and "we must find out who are behind it." She appealed to Hasina to help her get at the bottom of the crime. She said she had allowed a full parliament debate on the murblame on India, I asked Khaleda. "That is not true. Some people are saying that." Still she did not say that India was not to blame even when I asked her whom did she suspect. "The investigation is yet to be completed " is all that she would say. After a pause, she said it was the iob of "outsiders." When I asked who she said that there were "some Awami League members in Kolkata. They would be questioned on their

Do you suspect them? "We have to know everything," she said.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh He was a good administrator. "That is what a government requires." She said she was happy with former prime minister Atal Behari Vaipavee as well. She wanted good relations with India, but she complained "some newspapers in your country were hurting the process by misinterpreting the August 21 incident (the attack on Hasina)."

Could that be the reason why Khalada's Foreign Minister Morshed Khan said at a seminar that India could not pick up "one party for support?" He did not mention the name but his reference to the Awami League was obvious. Law Minister Moudud Ahmed defended Morshed's outburst thus: "When the Indian Prime Minister ring ups only Sheikh Hasina after the incident and not also the prime minister, as US Secretary of State Colin Powell did, what inference should we draw?"

When I told Khaleda how people to people contact between India and Pakistan was changing the climate in the two countries and cited the example of lighting candle on the night of August 14-15 at Wagha border, she said she would like a similar thing on the India-Bangladesh border. "I am all for the people to people contact."

People to people contact between India and Bangladesh will take some time to mature. But people to people contact within Bangladesh is the need of the hour. The nation is more sharply divided after the August 21 inci-

Kuldip Nayar is an eminent Indian

BETWEEN THE LINES

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had any clue either. The government has appointed a judicial commission but has done little to collect evidence. The two unexploded grenades, which could have provided a lead, were defused soon after. The police used teargas to disperse the crowd which included the assailants who apparently used the opportunity to escape. The police first returned the truck to the owner but retrieved it later following the public outcry.

Hasina, whom I met first, had no doubt that it was the job of the army which she alleged was against the liberation of Bangladesh. She suspected a deep conspiracy in which the highest in the ruling BNP were involved. She said that Pakiassociates present during the meeting mentioned the name of Tarig. son of Khaleda. He also said that the BNP and the Jamaat-e-Islami were out to eliminate "our charismatic leader.

Hasina was not opposed to the FBI and the Interpol which had already swung into action to find out the culprits. "But from where will they get evidence because the government has destroyed all?" she asked. The FBI and the Interpol are banking on the footage of BTV, perched on a third floor in a nearby building, that filmed the incident from the beginning. Many faces have been blown up into huge pictures, some of them reportedly known criminals. "I cannot recogderous attack "I wrote to her and wanted to

meet her but she refused to even respond." said Khaleda. ("I did not invite her to my place," said Hasina, "Because anything could have happened when relatives of the killed were sitting all the time at my

I told Khaleda that Hasina alleged that you were behind the attack. She said in reply: "Tell me what will I gain by killing her? I am doing well and in control of things. The country is peaceful. We have done a tremendous job in rehabilitating 40 million people who were affected by floods. Why should I do something that could upset everything?"

I believe you are putting the

unity in the country. "I have talked to some editors, ex-bureaucrats and others to bring us together. I hope they will help me in this task because the country is bigger than

Khaleda went back to her theme of

Sometimes, I fear, I told her, that the army might walk in again. She said: "We are a democracy. The army has no business to interfere. So many tragedies havetaken place all over the world. Did the army come in after the 9/11 incidents in America? In your own country even parliament was attacked. The government dealt with it. Why should it be different in Bangladesh?'

Khaleda was full of praise for

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TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE

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.

BRAC does it

Article 77 of the Constitution of Bangladesh provides that parliament may by law establish the office of Ombudsman. In 1980, at the initiative taken by the then government, the Jatiya Sangsad passed the necessary act providing for the establishment of the office of Ombudsman. But the then government did not put the act into effect. Successive governments followed the same trend. The office of Ombudsman has not been established in more than 24 years since the passing of the Ombudsman Act. There is no denying the fact that it is absolutely necessary to do whatever is possible to control the overt and covert powers of the traditional bureaucracy and to make it accountable to the people. The governing board of BRAC has taken a significant innovative step in order to enhance its overall governance performance. They appointed a former secretary to the Government of Bangladesh, as their own Ombudsman . And he has become the first Ombudsman in Bangla-

Aftab Ahmed LLB (Hons), final year University of Chittagong

A closer look at the civil service

Our civil service (in Dhaka) is facing basic problems in the day to day working environment, which is polluted in various ways (not difficult to decipher). The dedication and

motivation need a close review, as the society is steadily sinking into corruption and terrorism. Lax reward and punishment attitude will deteriorate the situation further. Time to nip the problem, before it goes out of control. Some feel the situation is already out of control. The next regime may note it

But the sicknesses of the bureaucrats were not being much publicized, and the authorities do not seem to be keen to start Operation Clean-up (start with some filter effects, then prepare a road map for sustained campaign, to restore the good image of the civil service). The latter is in public interest, as these officials are public-servants, and are expected to process their assignments as per well established

procedures, which are covered by

rules and regulations.

Our officers are experienced and well trained, as the tradition comes from the British Raj days, who ran one-fifth of the world for two centuries. Our training institutions are second to none. Then what's the problem?

The problems are in the human factor area, and most of it is imposition by the superiors, leaving hardly any option for the officer under duress. The former include the political masters, which change

from time to time, as regimes do. Political polarization is a hidden evil in the system, or environment. The initiators do not admit it, and the victims cannot openly complain. It means that the internal forces cannot isolate issues and take impartial remedial measures. But

there are ways and means for cleansing a closed system.

The steel frame can be retrieved but human laundering is not that easy and simple. Humans react, while materials do not. The head and the heart have to be in tune, and act synchronously. It is more reorientation than repair. The cosmetic aspect comes later.

Once started, the operation should work. But who will cast the A Mahasen, Dhaka

Is democracy thin?

Thick Democracy or thin democracy? Spread Democracy thin, and it dilutes the morals also, specially in the emerging nations, as we notice in Dhaka, and other new capitals. Thick democracy is thin Autocracy

and goodies, which attract the wrong type of public service volunteers. After sometime, these amiable volunteers grow thick hides, which darkens transparency, and we are reminded of the filmi jingle "parde ke piche kia hai?" (what is behind the veil). Decentralization has in-built

veneered with layers of cosmetics

bugs. No FP (family here) here, as the culture spreads rapidly, to infect the rich, and the not so rich. The race is unequal, because the disparity widens. Today the practitioners in the judiciary also seem divided into political parlours. Remember the Anarkali culture of training the young generation of mehfil etiquette? Today's baitak-khanas have bigger back doors, for anonymous service. The commissions are high

for the omissions demanded. It is quiet trading, unlike the street demonstrations, which distract through diversions of the other kind.

Thick tears (glycerin) need cosmetic effects, unlike the natural tears, which flow spontaneously for the right causes. These days it is the effect which matters.

How to redefine Democracy for the starters in the Third World? AZ. Dhaka

Chandrima or ZIA Udyan?

On September 1, The Daily Star published a news report on BNP's founding anniversary. Under this title there was a statement-- wreaths will be placed at Zia's grave at Chandrima Udyan. But here's a

this Udyan? Is it Chandrima Udyan or Zia Udyan? As far as I know, it is popularly known as Chandrima Udvan to all and it is one of the biggest recreational places in Dhaka city. After coming to power the BNP government changed its name to Zia Udyan. Now the question arises, what will be the future name of this place when other parties come to power? We, the city dwellers as well as

question. What is the real name of

optimistic that the place will have one permanent name Md. Reza Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural Univer-

the countryman, are very much

sity, Dhaka-1207