

Arms haul in deep forest

Once again seizure but no arrest

It is certainly good news that BDR was able to seize a large cache of arms and ammunition in Naikongchhari of Bandarban district on Monday, and kudos must go to the troops of the 40 Naikongchhari Battalion who were able to accomplish the capture. Indeed, raids in the CHT region have uncovered a significant amount of weaponry in the past year and a half, and the rate at which the caches have been discovered and seized must be considered a testament to the ability and diligence of those involved.

No one, however, was arrested in connection with the raid, and it once again remains unclear where the weapons came from and for whom they were intended. BDR sources suggest that the arms and ammunition were being stored temporarily in the forest hide-out prior to their being sent out to different parts of the country. It is also possible that the arms are connected to the unrest that continues in the CHT region. One downside of not apprehending anyone in connection with the seizure is that speculation will run rampant.

But one thing which is clear is that we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there are too many unauthorised weapons in the country. The authorities seem adept enough at finding arms caches every once in a while, but not at either preventing the smuggling in of the weapons in the first place, or of apprehending those involved in the clandestine trade.

Many questions remain unanswered about this latest haul, as is the case with all the major hauls of the last few years, including the mammoth arms seizure last April in Chittagong. It has been reported that in the latest case, the criminals could not be nabbed due to lack of coordination between the army, BDR, and police, and it seems as though the first step which needs to be taken might be better coordination between these entities.

This latest seizure reminds us that we still have not got to the bottom of the April arms haul and that when weapons are seized like this, invariably no one is held accountable. We hope that this latest incident impresses on the authorities the urgent need to redouble their efforts to apprehend those who are behind the arms trade and those who are the recipients of the arms. This is a serious problem which cannot be swept under the carpet.

'Amrao Pari' gives us a leap of the mind

Hats off to the young filmmakers

'Amrao Pari', a documentary film created by some Bangladeshi teenagers, has done us proud by winning the 32nd Emmy Awards given jointly by the International Academy of Television Arts and Sciences and the UNICEF. The award giving ceremony in New York was indeed a rare, shining moment for not only the cast and crew of the film, but also for all film lovers and connoisseurs. It is no mean achievement that the documentary was adjudged the very best among 100 films from 30 countries. The laurel is a true recognition of the ability of the new generation of filmmakers, who have already produced many good films. The films like 'Matir Moina' or 'Chaka' are good examples of imagination, artistry, and technical perfection.

'Amrao Pari' is the story of a little boy responding with great alacrity and presence of mind to an impending disaster. The train, as it were, is a symbol of humans travelling towards an uncertain future, where misfortune lies in wait and the little boy is the saviour. A child, usually looked upon as having no role in shaping the destiny of mankind, demonstrates that he is fully capable of handling a critical situation. Fellow feeling is the overriding factor that prompts the lad to react with extraordinary courage, nobility of purpose and sense of responsibility. This is an episode which will have universal appeal, particularly because it happened in a Third World country with a nondescript boy as its prime figure.

The documentary should be a source of inspiration to all and sundry. It is a silver lining in the cloud of our precarious existence. It has brightened the image of a country about which good things are rarely said.

The documentary has a message for the pessimists among us. Despite all that we are passing through, including the moral decay, there is still hope kept alive by the youths ready to serve humanity with a sense of commitment. The slogan 'We shall overcome' will really be translated into reality if we succeed in creating conditions in which the children and youths can bring their potential into full play. The makers of 'Amrao Pari' deserve a special round of applause for giving us a moment of rare glory.

Winds of change or a false dawn over Kashmir?



Brig Gen
SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN
PSC (Retd)

pendent status, condominium, which includes joint control, it can be UN mandate also," he said. "I strongly believe there are options and there is a solution. For the first time we see light at the end of the tunnel."

International observers it seemed that the Pakistan president had stolen the thunder, for he had broached solutions to the longest running international dispute that has the prospect of Pakistan losing on tactical and strategic grounds if it

exhausted capability? Has the military establishment come to realise, at long last, that in accommodation rather than confrontation lies the solution to the Kashmir problem?

Or is it because Pakistan is coming under increasing pressure from the United States to disassociate from the current insurgent activity in Jammu and Kashmir that is primarily waged from the territory of Pakistan held Kashmir?

Or is it, as some critics aver, only to divert attention from internal

formulations deserve a second look. In fact, one was heartened by the fact that even the guarded initial response to the proposal that emanated from the Indian official channel gave one the impression that India was not about to discard the latest Pakistani idea out of hand. The Indian State Minister for Home Affairs (J&K Affairs) expressed India's readiness to discuss the formula if formally presented, although asserting at the same time India's preference for the LoC for

was concerned, Pakistan stood at its original position of the UN resolutions passed in 1948, unless India showed some flexibility and moved forward from its present stance. And at the time of going to press nothing more than the restatement of both sides of their commitment to dialogue over the troubled region of Kashmir has become known. But reports prior to the arrival of the Pakistani Prime Minister from India had suggested that the Musharraf proposal was likely to be shot down in, in rejecting the Musharraf formula.

a blueprint in this regard for serious discussions with Pakistan as part of the composite dialogue which is underway between the two countries.

The opposition in India and the hawks in the Congress party are loath to entertain any suggestion that seeks to "redraw" the map of Jammu and Kashmir. Some in India also take recourse to the resolution passed in the Indian Parliament on Kashmir, according to which the J&K is the *atoot ang* (integral part) of India, in rejecting the Musharraf formula.

The Indian preference of the LoC as the permanent border does not find favour with Pakistan; at least that is the official position in Pakistan. However, there are mixed responses to the LoC formula among the various Kashmiri factions.

Shift in Pakistan position is noticeable. And by India's own admission there has been a reduction in separatists' activities in the valley. No doubt there are new signals on Kashmir. The positive indications emanating from both sides must be exploited. This is only possible through boldness and statesmanship on the part of the leadership of both the countries.

According to Arun Rajnath of the South Asia Tribune, India is seriously considering proposing to Pakistan to accept the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir as the international border. Under this proposal some areas of the Western Indian border region could be conceded to Pakistan, especially the areas a substantial portion of which are already under Pakistani control. Such areas fall under Rajauri, Cham Juriyan, Swarankot, Mandi, Kupwara, and Uri sectors. Furthermore: "Indian officials are preparing

No doubt there are new signals on Kashmir. The positive indications emanating from both sides must be exploited. This is only possible through boldness and statesmanship on the part of the leadership of both the countries. Any solution of Kashmir dispute would require purging the long-held positions of the parties. Fixation to old position will continue to hurt more than help the peoples of the two countries. We would like to believe that it is the winds of change rather than false dawn that will suffice the skies over Kashmir.

were to be accepted by India.

Although his position on plebiscite in Kashmir is not new, President Musharraf's remarks that the disputed territory might become independent, be subject to an Indian/Pakistani condominium, or be placed under a United Nations mandate, had caught India off guard, for a while at least.

President Musharraf had displayed a great deal of courage and indeed put his own future at risk when he deviated from the long standing Pakistan position on Kashmir by propounding what has come to be known as the "Musharraf formula." Consequently, he evoked criticism at home for his stance and all manner of motivations were attributed to his new position on Kashmir.

The Pakistan president has proposed a three-stage formula to bring about a "change of status" for Kashmir. He also said Pakistan would consider dropping its demand for a UN plebiscite on the region's future. "Change in status could be inde-

pendent" political developments in Pakistan that are unfavourable to Musharraf, and to keep the anti-Musharraf elements occupied with an emotional issue, which Kashmir is?

Or is it a ploy, as some in India contend, of President Musharraf, that "having failed to stake a claim on the state of the J&K, he has now made a direct claim over areas of the state that are legally and constitutionally integral part of the Indian Union."

Or perhaps the Pakistan president is moulding public opinion at home to new and changed circumstances that demand a shift from their long-standing position on Kashmir?

Whatever be his compulsions, President Musharraf has put his presidency and indeed his future on the line. He is either very brave or very imprudent, but whatever be the disposition of his personality, his

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Even more heartening was the Indian plan to withdraw troops from Jammu and Kashmir. Although it would be naive to think that the withdrawal is a consequence of Pakistan's demand for demilitarisation of the area, the announcements and the timing of the withdrawal indicated an attitudinal change on the part of the Indian government towards any Pakistani proposal on Kashmir.

However, in his remarks at the inaugural session of the 4th SAFMA (South Asian Free Media Association) Conference on Media and Reconciliation, President Musharraf said that as far as the Kashmir issue

formally during the meeting of the two Prime Ministers on November, if presented formally to India.

What then is the future demouement of Kashmir?

During his recent visit to the valley, the Indian prime minister had said that the government of India would not allow any partition within its territory.

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to the timing and motivation of the new age limit cannot be ruled out.

I am certain the BNP is also aware of the loopholes in the current law related to the caretaker government. And one cannot put it past the BNP, or for that matter any political party in Bangladesh, not to exploit the loopholes to its advantage.

It would be wise for the political parties to address the lacunae and rectify them, not with any parochial motives, but to make the system foolproof and effective. On that count one does not understand the reluctance of the BNP to discuss the issue with other political parties. As for the Awami League, it would do well for it to prepare for the next elections instead of crying hoarse on issues which appear to most as being motivated by petty parochial interests.

between "both sides" has merits, but I cannot but take issue with him when he assumes in his "both sides" that there are only two parties in the country that need to be taken cognizance of. He forgets that there are other parties that have notched up a significant number of seats in the parliament.

One cannot argue with the suggestions that there are loopholes in the current legislation that can be exploited to the advantage of the BNP.

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It is high time the political parties worked on principles, something that is missing from their lexicon, rather than on petty party interest and blatant expediency.

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