

JCD siege

The ruling party should act before it is too late

THE Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), the student wing of the ruling BNP, have taken control of the DU campus with the objective of not allowing their rivals, the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) adherents, to return to the university. JCD activists are now on the war-path and have made it amply clear that when they declared their rivals unwanted, they really meant it.

In an unprecedented display of muscle-power, JCD boys were guarding all the entrances to the campus to make sure that BCL supporters were kept out. This is no doubt student politics in its most belligerent form. It can only add to the nagging campus violence, which has already caused great damage to the academic interests of the students.

The development over the last four or five days have raised some questions in the public mind. First, what is the government doing when the ruling party's student wing is unleashing a reign of terror on the campus of the country's premier university? The government has been making some concerted efforts to enhance its capability to contain criminal activities. The main purpose of commissioning the special anti-crime forces was to curb the clout of muscle-men and hardened criminals. However, if the supporters of a student outfit are allowed to take the law in their own hands (how else can we describe their activities?), then combating crime would become a selective affair. Second, it is admitted on all hands that politicisation of police or the administration is a dangerous proposition and BNP has gone far in that direction, further than ever before. The allegation that the JCD boys were supported by the on-duty policemen when they chased out their rivals shows that some of the basic principles of democratic dispensation are being flouted by the ruling party. Third, can higher education and this kind of violence go together? The DU has unfortunately become the centre of student politics (or vandalism) of the most strident kind.

A madness of sorts appears to have gripped the ruling party's student wing. We are forced to warn the BNP leadership that they must immediately rein in the JCD activists. They must be aware of what happened to such parties before.

Heat hardship worsening

Make people aware of do's and don'ts

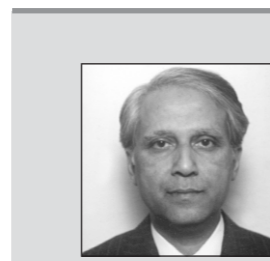
THE bad news is that the heat wave currently sweeping Bangladesh might be the fore taste of a more sweltering part of the summer to come. The mercury in the barometer has shot up to a record level of 43 degrees Celsius in Chuadanga. This happens to be already higher than the highest recorded temperature of last year in Rajshahi at 42.4 degrees Celsius.

The weather men have grown apprehensive of a longer and more excruciating heat wave this year given the extreme nature of the climatic pattern having been observed over the last few weeks. We are getting 20 per cent less rain than normal during the dry months. The heat this year might surpass the critical 45 degrees Celsius plus temperature registered in 1972, the highest benchmark during the last 30 years.

This prospect conjures up a dreadful scenario having regard to the fact that we are already smarting under the effect of the extreme weather. Sixteen people have lost their lives and thousands have landed in hospitals struck down by diarrhoea and a host of other afflictions and the diarrhoeal scourge which had started earlier this season than expected might only get worse with an intensified heat wave. With the plummeting subsoil water table in the dry season, potable water has become extremely scarce. Many people are having to make do with whatever water they could get regardless of its impurities. Safe drinking water supply is precaution number one that the government has to ensure. Meanwhile, the health ministry will have to make sure that intervenous saline and ORS are available and delivered in sufficient quantities in the affected parts of the country.

We believe, the administration, media, both print and electronic, the NGOs and the local bodies and communities will have to come forward in disseminating messages about avoiding dehydration, stale food of any kind and polluted drinking water. Lists of do's and don'ts need to be prepared and distributed among the people at the Wards and Union Parishad levels.

A more assertive Japan in the 21st century



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

JAPAN is slowly re-tooling itself after its decade-long slump. It is preparing for a future where each

Japanese can consider himself to be a global citizen. Japan believes that this is possible given the fact that they enjoy certain comparative advantages with the rest of the world in terms of economic opportunities, cultural and value orientations.

Japan has a homogeneous culture and a self-generating commitment to hard work. It enables them to organise their society in a manner that will produce the best results. They are setting their house in order. Their first step has been to move out of government-directed compassionate democracy to a more pragmatic approach in resolving problems. Their economic planners now accept that, as opposed to government intervention, the best way forward is to permit the private sector and market forces to drive economic growth. This has given them the necessary flexibility in the international trading arena and encouraged them to reduce government rules and regulations through an adaptive process.

The Japanese have been evolving over the last decade to maximize their chances of success. This has been quiet and consistent. With perhaps the best overall educated society in the world, they are now applying technology to the areas of energy savings and environmental issues. They have done this even more rigorously than the USA and many other advanced nations in Europe.

Japan has been preparing itself consciously for enhanced interna-

tional political power. Their leaders, for the last few years, have been leveraging their economic and military strength. They have watched from the sidelines and now want to be part of the action.

Japan has over the last sixty years suffered from in-built restraints. It's Constitution limits its use of military force and does not even permit the exercise of the rights of collective self-defence. This equation also limits the country's possibility of using nuclear power and its capacity to respond to military emergencies.

Nations has assumed a special position, given the fact that the next re-assessment of UN dues will take place in 2006. Japan believes that if it has to continue doing what it does, i.e., financing the UN in such a large manner, it deserves also to have its voice heard. It believes that obtaining a permanent seat will greatly expand Japan's diplomatic options in dealing with future international developments.

Japan has also been reiterating in various meetings this year that, when it comes to military obligations, there

mentioned positives, some of its neighbours, specially China, continue to claim that Japan is unqualified to be a Permanent Member of the Security Council because of shortcomings in its interpretation of history and acceptance of responsibility for its wartime acts.

We have already noticed how Chinese public fury was unleashed against Japan in early April (possibly with some official encouragement) because of the publication in Japan of revised junior-high-school textbooks that, the Chinese claimed, had

Bilateral trade between China and Japan has skyrocketed to over US dollar 200 billion (2004) but it has not calmed their 'sea of conflict' arising out of enhanced nationalism. China's asserting of its strategic interests has also led it to try to sabotage Japan's aim to become a new permanent member of the re-vamped UN Security Council. Japan has also in turn been trying to impede China's bid to become a member of the Inter-American Development Bank.

China-Japan relations have been increasingly acrimonious since last

that persuaded Koizumi to undertake his visits to both New Delhi and to Islamabad. India, for obvious reasons was glad that he came. In fact, over the last few weeks, India has hosted the leaders of China, Japan, Pakistan and the Secretary General of the United Nations.

New Delhi knows about the close relationship that exists between the US President and the Japanese Prime Minister and consequently preferred to take a neutral stance vis-a-vis Japan and China. It also reiterated the need for Japan, Germany and Brazil alongwith India becoming permanent members of the UN Security Council. It also hoped that Japan would be able to persuade Pakistan to drop its objections with regard to India.

Japan today is aware that it needs to coordinate with others to neutralise China and to move forward. It understands that it has to be more conciliatory if its efforts are to meet with success. This has been reflected in the recent statement of their Foreign Minister Machimura in New York 'Japan is not so egoistic as to ignore the realities' and understands that 'joint effort is better than going it alone.'

It is this realisation that will create support for Japan's new strategic focus on Global Partnership and deepen and widen its areas of cooperation in 'the New Asian Era.' Japan sees this today as a many-layered initiative encompassing diverse areas of inter-action.

I believe that the presence of a non-nuclear Asian civilian power like Japan in the Security Council will mean fuller exploitation of the immense potential of Asia. It will also consolidate economic ties with her Asian neighbours including Bangladesh.

Japan has been a true friend over the decades and needs to be firmly supported as a responsible partner. Our decision in this regard should be clearly conveyed to them during the forthcoming visit of our Prime Minister to Japan.

Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and Ambassador any response to mzamir@dhaka.net

POST BREAKFAST

The presence of a non-nuclear Asian civilian power like Japan in the Security Council will mean fuller exploitation of the immense potential of Asia. It will also consolidate economic ties with her Asian neighbours including Bangladesh. Japan has been a true friend over the decades and needs to be firmly supported as a responsible partner.

Today in the 21st Century, Japan's quest for security is persuading them to take a frontal role in the international political arena. It is this context that has led them to embrace the issue of UN Security Council reforms. It is now seeking a permanent seat on the Council.

They are supporting their claim by pointing out that Japan pays 19.5 per cent of the United Nations general budget, which is second only to the 22 per cent funded by the USA. In this regard, they are also pointing out that Britain and France provide 6 per cent each and China as a developing nation only 2 per cent. They have also drawn attention to the fact that Russia is contributing only 1 per cent. These statistics are being used to denote that aside from the United States, Japan contributes more to the UN budget than all of the permanent members of the Security Council combined. It is also being pointed out that Japan pays 19.5 per cent also of the budget for peacekeeping operations in keeping with its belief in maintaining international peace and security.

Japan's current involvement in the financial matrix of running the United

is no distinction between permanent members of the Security Council, non-permanent members and UN members that are not on the Council at all. Japan's Prime Minister Koizumi and Foreign Minister Machimura have also underlined last month during their respective visits to South Asia and the USA that Japan is prepared to confront danger of behalf of the world's common goals. They have also drawn attention to the fact that Japan, over the last few years has taken part in a number of peace-keeping operations since its first such action in Cambodia in 1992.

Similarly, the Japanese leadership has underlined that Japan is equally involved in the peripheral activities outside of purely military roles that are becoming increasingly important in the activities of the Security Council. As an example they have cited the resolution on Iraq passed by the Security Council in June 2003 (which called for multinational forces to provide reconstruction assistance) and Japan's immediate response to this.

Japan's quest has however continued to suffer from a historical image factor. Despite all the afore-

whitewashed Tokyo's World War II record.

The Japanese government reacted with speed. Prime Minister Koizumi issued the 'most public apology in a decade' for the suffering that Japan had caused Asian nations during the Second World War. This statement, delivered during the recently concluded Asia-Africa Summit in Indonesia was followed by a meeting with the Chinese President Hu Jintao where he repeated Japan's regret. This apology was the latest in a series of moves by Japan to patch up relations with Beijing.

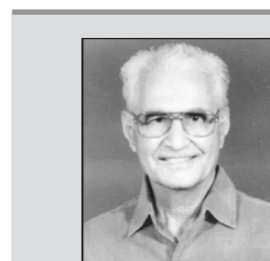
It was however clear that the simmering Japan-China dispute was not only about the War but also because of the increasingly vitriolic struggle of the two countries to dominate the economic, diplomatic and military future of Asia. Japan to its consternation, has not only found itself on the back-foot but also nervous with China's new-found diplomatic muscle. It is also realising that its foreign policy, anchored on pacifism is becoming obsolete given the competition introduced by China and India in securing new energy supplies.

November, following a military encounter on the high seas between Japan's Self Defense Force and a submerged Chinese nuclear-powered submarine, lurking in waters, not far from natural gas fields that both sides are racing to exploit. Around the same time, Japan issued a defense white paper specifically naming China as a military threat. Later, on 19 January this year, Japan and the USA, jointly declared that Taiwan's current de-facto independence was a 'common strategic objective.'

No wonder China felt unhappy. It was like waving a red flag in front of a charging bull. China's anger was reflected first through the demonstrations all over China in April and then in the discussions that took place between the Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and South Asian leadership during his visit to the region last month. The Chinese leader particularly went on a charm offensive in India, which he used as a base to last out at Japan's aspirations for the permanent seat in the Security Council.

Japan realised that it needed damage containment. It is this factor

South Asia's misfortunes



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

SOUTH Asia's future has been jeopardized by Indian and Pakistani nukes, politically and possibly physically, depending upon whether there will be a nuclear war between the two. Neighbours of India and Pakistan have no option but to helplessly wait for what will happen. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan resent being adversely affected whether there is a war or not.

How would there be misfortunes for non-nuclear countries, if there is no war? That is a function of mistrust between India and Pakistan. The current deluge of protocol goodwill and fomenting a feel good factor by the two governments under American prodding has not removed their mistrust. Which South Asian can ignore it? Their worry is reasonable.

Pakistani nuclear missiles are ready to be fired at Indian targets. It means India will suffer a few cities' incineration. Also, if the Indian nukes stand ready to be fired at Pakistan, which will take only a few minutes to get destroyed. Neither side will have the time for defensives measures. In the east-west cold war available time for decisions was 27 minutes. Both could read blips on their radars as missiles or geese or some debris. In South Asia, a missile's flying time to its

target is 3 to 5 minutes. No government can react in this timeframe and the scope for misunderstanding, wrong calculations and unauthorized launches by power-hungry groups or terrorists in both countries cannot be ignored.

Even if there is no war between the two adversaries and present no-peace-no-war situation continues, South Asians' future remains compromised. Because Indo-Pakistan mistrust preempts optimal regional cooperation. Fact is India and Pakistan have to remain at hair-trigger alert. If

Modern Germany accepts this Anglo-French apprehension and has chosen against ever becoming a nationalist or isolationist power. It has consciously anchored its revival in European entity away from pan-Germanic ideas that had led to three aggressions to 1939. Germany is happy to stay non-nuclear; Germans see their future in peace and look upon French and British nukes with part-unconcern and part-curiosity. EU example does not apply to South Asia.

Here, unlike Europe, the two nuclear powers look upon each other

between India and Pakistan, based on a resolution of disputes Kashmir, nukes and dams. Without resolution of disputes, resumption of hostile propaganda is waiting to happen. Both are capable of resuming confrontation. India and Pakistan being differently oriented, how can the South Asians read the deepening of détente by CBMs as making Pakistan and India lasting friends? Why does a true Indo-Pakistan rapprochement look difficult? Obviously what stand in the way is serious disputes.

This shows the current peace

The question of questions is what sort of Peace Process between India and Pakistan will, or can, succeed. There are forces in both societies that favour a lasting peace. Both governments have recognised popular pressures for peace. Both have called this peace process irreversible. But it is not, though it should be made so. Hitherto both bureaucracies have kept the peace process under strict control. Not one step has been taken that can enable popular aspirations and yearnings to reduce that control. Establishments running both states

Weapons Free Zone. When will popular forces overwhelm the establishments? It is not likely to be soon. Peace process is rather unsteady. That is due to entrenched vested interests in both countries. So far the two bureaucracies have had the last laugh; the visa regime is still restricted. Real concessions continue eluding.

Do South Asians deserve this Democle's sword over their heads? Obviously they don't. They are peace-loving and cannot be accused of doing anything that will disturb international peace. A possible India-Pakistan war is sure to affect them adversely. Indeed their ecology and climate might change, temporarily one hopes. But physical consequences include being subjected to radioactive rains and other consequences for unspecified time.

Even the present no-war-no-peace between India and Pakistan is adversely affecting South Asians. Why? because so long as India-Pakistan confrontation lasts, there would be no real regional cooperation and eventual integration. What the South Asians need are regional grids of communications, power, oil and gas, weather forecasting, investments and free trade, more cultural exchanges, regional arrangements to watch over human rights violations and may be regional courts to enforce human rights and so forth.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

PLAIN WORDS

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war does break out, some radioactivity is bound to fall on neighbours. And they would suffer for no fault of their own. For non-nuclear South Asians, both sets of nukes are a misfortune, requiring efforts to destroy them.

Some argue that EU is an example of regional cooperation and integration to follow. There are two EU members that are nuclear powers, viz. France and Britain. What is the rationale for French and British nukes? Apart from national grandeur or the desire to sit at the high table, the French and the British nukes are a strategic insurance policy against German power's resurgence. The Anglo-French nukes only make sense if Germany's aggressive instincts are assumed a priori.

as bitter adversaries. About India there may still be a few illusions that once it becomes a world power with American support: it may still promote peace in Asia by cultivating Russia, China and other Central Asians simultaneously. Insofar as Pakistan is concerned, it has yoked itself to US irrevocably. It would do what America wants, without ifs and buts. Since both countries listen to US with respect, the two will be able to put in many more CBMs while the main disputes may not get unresolved. That situation is fundamentally unstable: some PR-oriented cultural exchanges may coexist with no basic change of orientation.

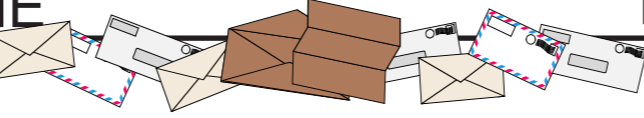
Other South Asians had better exhibit their preference for peace: one that promotes rapprochement

process to be shallow. Why? because it leaves out basic and highly emotional disputes. Thus fears of a possible war are not unwarranted in the rest of South Asia. It is for the Indians and Pakistanis to prove that there would be no war. They have to show it by the success of their Peace Process. One asserts that while Kashmir is likely to be left aside, and eventually disregarded, but not the nukes. They cannot be ignored. The very presence of nukes in India is an incentive to Pakistan to remain nuclear. If Pakistan remains nuclear, India's nuclear disarmament is impossible. Both want to utilize nukes for their advancement also: one wants permanent membership of the UNSC and the other wants to be a leader of Islamic countries.

refuse to permit socio-economic realities free play. Establishments importantly include local versions of industrial-military complexes that require hostility between India and Pakistan.

These two contending forces are the entrenched establishments in both countries and common popular yearnings to be friends and ensuring peace and cooperation between the two countries. Which would succeed and when? Possibly, the popular sentiments will someday overwhelm the two establishments to make up and do the right thing about their nukes. Democratic and peace lobby has to clear the road to nuclear disarmament to make South Asia a Nuclear

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE



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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.

"Local guests not allowed", "foreigners preferred"

"Local guests not allowed", "Foreigners preferred" these are phrases we unfortunately come across in our own country. I'm really at a loss for words here. I don't even know how to react to such blatant discrimination. We complain that foreign embassies and people of other countries discriminate against us, the holders of the 'green' passport, but what about us? We discriminate against our own race and fellow countrymen, how can we even think to point finger at others? Shouldn't we remember that when we are pointing one finger at someone else, three are pointed straight back at us? I'm not saying that it justifies prejudiced behaviour but I just find it shocking and appalling to come across such terms in our own country. Many well-established 'clubs' hold the policy of not allowing 'local guests' and most landlords

seem to 'prefer' foreigners. Just the other day I was reading in The Daily Star about a senior citizen being mistreated by a local girl at an embassy here and this is exactly what I refer to. Some of the people of our country who work for these embassies often seem to think that they are 'better' than the rest of the 'Bangalis'. I just don't get this attitude and/or behaviour. If we keep looking down on ourselves how can we expect others to have any respect for us? Why do we all accept these discriminatory policies or behaviour right. Why are terms and phrases like that allowed to be printed? I guess the 'Raaj' still dominates us whether we admit it or not.
Zeenat Gulshan

Appeal to immigration seekers

We all want a better life to live. Life should be safe and secure. Under unavoidable circumstances we feel

insecure. When our expectation doesn't match with the real situation we try to think for alternative with the hope of a secure, safe, and better life. We prefer living in a developed country. Immigration is the process to be there permanently. After securing qualifying points and facing interview one becomes immigrant. One common question is asked by the interviewer: why do you want to immigrate and leave country? In reply most of the candidates say that due to law and order situation, high crime rate, unstable political situation, unfair judgement, violation of human rights, no personal freedom one would like to leave country and become immigrant. Such statement may have negative impact on the interviewer and also hamper country's image. We love our motherland. We should always think to build up country's reputation to the outside world. We should not do anything that hamper our country's image. Without showing negative image about the country, the interviewer may be satisfied

if the question is technically answered such a way that in developed countries lots of potential opportunities to build up career, law and order and discipline, personal freedom and quality education system prevail. All immigration seekers should be more dutiful to the country.
Chandan Nath Talukder
Ibaraki, Japan

Use of acronyms

It's true what Minu Afza has expressed (DS May 19) that without elaboration an acronym, if published for public consumption, is not right, as per convention and for everyone's clear understanding. It must be deciphered once, then its subsequent abbreviation if and when used becomes appropriate and can be well understood, and that is what is done everywhere and usually in capital letters. But what I have been observing for sometime that you have been trying to introduce the acronyms in small letters

(e.g. Bac instead of BAC) which is not at all appropriate and in my opinion it's a bit odd in sight. Let's go back to the acceptable and appropriate conventions, please.
A F Rahman
One-mail

Chittagonian music

As I originated from Chittagong, I got great chance to enjoy Chittagonian music. Most of the lyrics are relating to river, sea, boat, boatman and love. But that type of folk songs are so enriched and have strong captivating power, melodious appeal to give pleasure to all people in general. In glorious age of Chittagonian music, Shefali Ghosh, Kallyani Ghosh, Shamsundar Baishnab were the legendary singers. The most appealing song were chuto chuto daew tuly pare, Bankalir maji o bhai, Ore Karnafalire, and so on. Still those are bearing the Chittagonian style of life and culture. But now in the multidimensional

cultural flows, glory of Chittagonian music is fading. It's really alarming for not only Chittagonian people but also for all Bangladeshis as we are going to lose our diversity of folklore and specially folksongs. So it's now high time take immediate step to nurture our Chittagonian music. I like to appeal to the music practitioners and fans of Chittagonian music to restore the glory of that, by taking care and focusing in right way.
Sarwar Kamal
Dept of philosophy, CU

Commuters' problem

Cities like London, New York, Tokyo etc. have the railway transit system to make up for its commuter and traffic problems. One would think the railway to be the perfect solution to the commuter problems we have in Dhaka. But, does our soil and land provide the ideal situation for underground railway system? Do we have the capacity to finance, build and maintain it?
First the planning is very impor-

tant but the fact that in Dhaka as we are plagued with everyday crime would we be able to maintain a safe railway system? Would we be able to generate enough revenue to support financing of the system and its continued use?

If the government or the private sector works to find answers for all these questions and more and are able to iron out all the kinks then a mass transit system would be the answer to all our commuters' woes.
Zeenat Z. Syed
UPS eDeployment

Superman or supercomputer

Downloading brain can avert death - seems to be out of this world! However, a British futurologist says so (May 23). Can it be believed? It is beyond imagination. One wonders what we have in store in the next fifty years? Superman was a comic book figure of the 1950's and fifty years on he is still in that role, though with a much larger audience -- thanks to

TV. But the way Ian Pearson the futurologist predicts, fifty years down the road computers will be the "do all and end all" in this world! Unlike Superman, Supercomputers will actually rule us once we programme the thought process and emotions into it! What a mind boggling scenario!

The only ray of hope is that like the meteorologist our futurologist may make mistakes in forecasts. Otherwise may be the next century will see us as slaves and not masters.

The masters will be the Supercomputers or Mastercomputers and we poor mankind will be at their beck and call! Will this lead to peace on earth or Superwars resulting in the ultimate extinction of civilisation? What does the superfuturologist forecast a century ahead? One shudders to imagine!
S. A. Mansoor
Gulshan, Dhaka