

Mission anti-corruption

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THANKS Heaven, the nation has been saved from the election showdown by the wise heads. A silent revolution we went through on 1/11 to prevent the people from going down the path of civil strife. We appreciate the supreme commander and his forces for the right initiative taken at the nick of the time. Relieved from a fictitious election that took the nation close to the grinding jaws of a disaster, the impediments must be removed before another one is scheduled.

The goodwill of the people the interim government enjoys now, which resulted from the disgust against the political culture of corruption and violence, is however conditional. The people welcome the action the interim establishment is taking against 3Ms- Dr. Fakruddin's coinage for money, muscle and misuse of power. Opportunity does not arrive everyday, nor is the initiative taken by loyal institutions of the state frequently possible. Everybody can cry in the face of a disaster and take solace behind 'act of God'. It needs lots of courage, determination and outstanding ability to convert a crisis into opportunity. The combination of these exceptional qualities is not bland ordinary. The nation appreciates the brave sons for their initiative, triggered entirely by conscience.

It is not surprising that some

politicians have already started crying hoarse for election to resume the ugly culture. Let them say what they may; the stolen treasure of the people is too important to hide under the abused blanket of democracy. The so-called democracy of loot and plunder has run aground, people would like to see it in the museum as a reminder of the bitter past.

We had many good starts but almost never a good harvest to take home. It was plundered along the way. Sure, the nation is in a mood to wait a while than risk lose a harvest this time too. Nobody wants judgement by crossfire or killing of the accused in the style of 'Bangla Bhai'. That way the crime is never established and the offenders go free. The court of law has to preside over the accusations. We have to wait that long for justice. There is no other way or byways around.

Punishing crime is important but more important is to expand the mechanism for prevention of crime. The nation must find a workable strategy to prevent the 3Ms. Violence is the illegitimate child of corruption. Instead of going for the limbs of this hydra-headed ogre, the interim government will have to focus on its heart. If the heart is squizzed, the limbs will collapse; the rights of the people will surface from under the debris of corruption linked with the powerful offices. The need of the hour is scavenging, sweeping the floor dirtied by the political governments. Lifting

of emergency and restoration of full democracy will be the final act of this government. How quick depends on how fast law presides over the crimes committed, and the tools institutionalised to prevent crime in the future. With emergency at hand, the backing of the people and the armed forces, excuses will be hard to find for a failed effort.

It did not look logical to demolish the shanties and footpath vendors first and then think about the rehabilitation of the homeless, jobless poor. The job best done would have been the other way around. In military terminology, these are called spoiling attack. The stakeholders may exploit the concern of the people to deflect the heat out of the anti-corruption drive. The government has a moral obligation to care for the poor; many big cats are in the dragnet, cannot afford precipitated judgements.

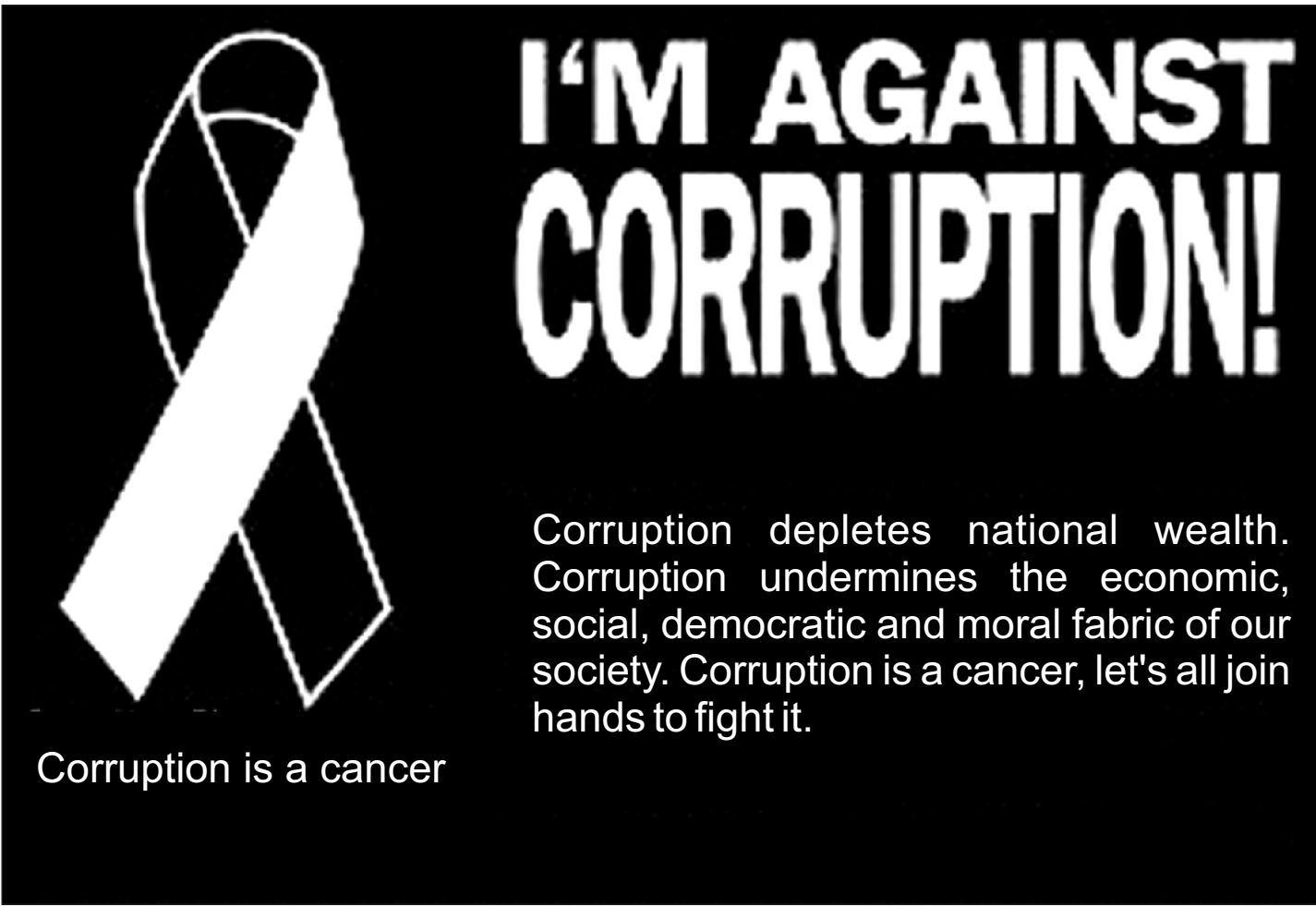
Dr. Debapriya pointed out that the only thing one can do without permission in Bangladesh is start a political party- no registration, no transparency, no accountability. Every political platform must have democracy within the party establishment to be eligible for public office. The newly appointed Election Commission hopefully, is taking care of that. Someone said politics is a stick in the mud that has been trying to stand in the bottomless pit of corruption. The interim government should drive the piles deep into the hard bottom for transparency and accountability

for all the time.

A farmer knows how much a piece of land produces- little more or less. If there is more than that piled up in a farmhouse, the extra is stolen produce. Aristotle is not need here; let us go by the matrix of a farmer in the phenomenal accumulation of wealth. Our constitution and system must announce boldly that we do not need dubious people in politics. If someone is interested in public office, his wealth, source and lifestyle cannot be hidden from the public eye.

I am glad, the slightly unnerved press is quickly settling down. Barrister Mainul has done a good job there. The press is the vibrant sentinel of the people. Their ever louder voice has finally aroused the conscience of the silent ones to go after the thugs stealing people's property. Long live the cooperation between the press and the uniform. Their life style and work ethics are different but they do similar jobs: one is speaking for the people while the other nabbing the criminals.

Some politicians are trying to intimidate our brave sons in uniform, occasionally seen on the TV screen performing their duties with the singleness of mind. They are usually shy of publicity, but not of action when the nation demands it, even to the peril of their lives. The hard military training prepares them for harsh environment. No other profession demands one's life in the discharge of one's duties. If you have a superior cause than what they are doing, please sug-



gest; if one knows a better way, he or she is welcome to present. When the whole nation is cheering them if someone is trying to arouse

a fear factor to intimidate the mission-oriented soldiers, my apprehension is, the tactic may boomerang. The purpose of the current

government is simple, to put the runaway governance system on the rail, to reimburse eroded goodwill back to public offices and

respect to the politician. If someone is corrupt it is another matter.

The author is a freelancer.

Ramifications of rise in China's defence budget

BARRISTER HARUN UR RASHID

ON 4th March, the Chinese government announced its defence budget. It would increase by 17.8% per cent to US\$ 58 billion this year. The sharp rise in military outlays follows a 14.7% per cent budget increase in 2006 as the People's Liberation Army (PLA) tries to streamline its massive ground forces (2.3 million) and deploys new warships, missiles and aircraft.

The budget represents the largest increase in military spending in five years. After double-digit increases in annual defence outlays over much of the past 15 years, most experts say that China is on track to become a major military power. Some military experts believe that China has been spending more on its military than the official figure.

The 350 billion yuan (\$58 billion) budget is spread around 2.3 million serving personnel requiring better gear and conditions, and an unknown number of pensioners and brigades of retired officers still clinging on to their living quarters, cars, drivers and servants.

Furthermore, China claims to spend more to upgrade its "weak" armed forces and counter any

threats to its security. It wants to bolster its defence capabilities by upgrading military equipment improving information technologies and funding more exercises. It says that it does not pose any threat to any country. It is purely for defensive purpose.

But the rise in military expenditure may be only half or even a quarter of total defence spending, according to estimates by Western think tanks, and does not include purchases of combat equipment. An indication of the latter came in a Jane's Defence Industry report on defence equipment exports by Russia. These hit a record \$US8 billion (\$10.3 billion) last year, with 70 per cent going to China and India. The Russians have orders worth \$US30 billion on their books, up from \$US23 billion this time last year.

Arms transfers to China last year included a new Kilo-class conventional submarine, a Sovremenny-class destroyer, and large numbers of anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-aircraft weapons. The ultra-quiet Kilo submarines and the Sovremenny destroyers, armed with super-sonic cruise missiles, are meant to challenge US carrier groups in the Pacific region.

Why the increase?

China's rise in military budget is likely to cause concern in India as India defines its security situation in light of China's military force and Pakistan in turn assesses its security situation against India's position. India and Pakistan might embark on an ambitious programme to match China. Defence budgets have also increased in South Asian countries. India has increased its defence budget by 7.8% per cent this year. Pakistan spends 4.5 % per cent of its gross domestic product on defence.

There are several reasons and some of them deserve mention.

First China's economic growth is getting a double-digit this year. China's surplus in trade is more than 55 billion last year. In 2003, China became the 4th largest trading nation of the world after US, Japan and Germany. China can afford to raise its defence budget as China has huge amounts of foreign exchange in reserve (more than US\$ 1 trillion). No country can be an economic power without commensurate military muscle.

Second, China perceives it is being encircled by US allies. It is being challenged by US' military presence in the Pacific region. The Japanese-US umbilical cord will snap if China can stand up to the US and the Chinese strategy is to build up a countervailing military power in the region.

China at present does not have the military resources to deter direct or indirect US threat to its security.

Third, India's military power is increasing and the recent nuclear deal between the US and India is of concern to China. India and China see themselves as rival regional leaders and their relationship is uneasy, although economic relationship has strengthened in recent times. Both countries have remained wary of each other's intentions.

Fourth, China considers Taiwan as its renegade province and part of China. Taiwan's ruling power has kept China in a dilemma whether it pushes for independence or not. Since 2000, Taiwan's President Chen has repeatedly upset China by playing up symbols of Taiwan's sovereignty and pouring scorn on Beijing's goal of unification.

China is determined not to let goal of independence happen in any circumstances. China's military build up is to counter any move toward independence. China is committed to reunification with Taiwan, which separated from the mainland since 1949.

Fifth, in case China uses force to unify Taiwan, it is aware that the US does not support use of force against Taiwan. Under an American law, (the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act) the US is obliged to defend Taiwan in the event of attack, although the US does not support Taiwan's independence. Against the background, China must be prepared to defend itself against the military power of the US.

Sixth, China will host the Olympic in 2008 and the focus of the whole world will be on China. Taiwan might take this opportunity to declare independence to

embarrass China at a time when every nation expects responsible behaviour from China. Any forceful action by China may lead many nations to boycott the Olympic Game in Beijing.

Besides, since the US Presidential election will be held in 2008, the US administration will be under pressure to deter China's use of force against Taiwan. China must be prepared to show its military power so that Taiwan does not dare to go that way.

Ramifications

China's galloping defence budget increase has caused deep concern to Japan, the US and other nations. Vice President Dick Cheney said in Sydney on 23 February that a Chinese test in January of an anti-satellite missile and the Chinese military expansion were "not consistent

with its stated goal of a peaceful rise".

On 4th March, the US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said that China needed to be more transparent in its military spending. He added, "it is important in our dialogues that we understand what China's plans and intentions are."

Meanwhile China expressed its firm opposition to the export and sale of weapons to Taiwan and the US maintaining official relations with Taiwan. China policy toward Taiwan is based on three "NOs", meaning, "No two China", No independence, and No representation".

China wants to buy 218 Amraam air-to-air missiles and another 235 Maverick missiles at an estimated cost of US\$ 421 million from the US to defend itself against Chinese armed aggression.

China says that the missile sale would seriously violate previous commitments made by Washington to reduce arm sales to the island. It appears that a chain effect of China's increase in military budget may cause tension in the Pacific region.

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force and Pakistan in turn assesses its security situation against India's position. India and Pakistan might embark on an ambitious programme to match China.

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Conclusion

On January 11 the Chinese military took the challenge to a new dimension, knocking out an ageing weather satellite by a missile hitting 865 kilometres above the Earth, its first demonstration of an anti-satellite capability. This technology may blind a US surveillance satellite in space with a laser beam.

Most defence analysts agree that the major thrust of the Chinese military spending is to build a force that could prevail in any conflict with self-governing Taiwan and to deter US forces from intervening in the Taiwan Straits in such a battle, if it occurs.

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Reunification of Korean Peninsula: A global reality

KHAN FERDOUSOUR RAHMAN

TWO Koreas will highly likely be unified by 2020" this is the prediction of Richard Armitage, the former US Deputy Secretary of State in a recent report. He further mentions, "It appears increasingly likely that the North Korean nuclear issue will be finally resolved only unification." In fact Korean reunification is the possible future unification of North Korea and South Korea under a single government. Both North and South Korea signed the June 15th North-South Joint Declaration in which both sides made promises to seek out a peaceful reunification. The Bush administration is also considering shifting its stance towards North Korea. Instead of insisting the North Korea completely and verifiably disarm and renounce nuclear weapons before agreeing to negotiations, as they have in the past, now they could consider negotiating a formal peace treaty with Pyongyang. In Washington, the Bush administration sought to ease concern among conservatives that the deal goes to easy on North Korea. The two Koreas remain technically at war since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a ceasefire and virtually are a long way away from unification.

Very recent cabinet level talks between two Koreas held in the North Korean capital Pyongyang from February 28 to March 02, 2007 aimed at improving relations, the first sign of easing tensions between them. The high level talks

are the first in seven month. Both the countries discussed over food aid to North Korea, family reunions and other inter-Korean issues during the talks. North Korean negotiator opened the talks by asking Seoul to resume humanitarian projects. On the other hand South Korea argued Pyongyang to quickly implement the nuclear disarmament treaty. The meetings have served as a forum for discussing Seoul's aid to the impoverished North, and could lead to a presumption of the regular delivery of rice and fertilizer to the communist nation. The hot issues touched upon concentration on food aid and attempt to connect severed families between the two nations. The food aid would come in the form of fresh food along with fertilizer to assist with the continuation of North Korea's depleting agricultural efforts. Earlier they also announced efforts to improve communication systems namely video conferencing, in an attempt to reconnect families that have separated after the war. It has been estimated recently that considerable per cent of the North Korea's population has died of starvation this winter, majority of them children and older generation. North and South Korea reached a deal on March 02, 2007 to resume reunions of families separated during the Korean War in a step at improving ties that were chilled by Pyongyang's weapons tests last year.

Earlier North Korea backed out of the inter-Korean talk in July last year after South Korea cut off its food aid to the North following its



missile resting. Both Koreas have held 20 high level meetings since 2000, but it was suspended after 19th meeting amid chilled rela-

tions following North Korea's missile launches in July and its nuclear test in October last year. The South provides the North with

significant aid and cooperative economic ventures and the two governments have cooperated in organizing meetings of separated family members and limited tourism of North Korean sites. However, the two states still do not recognize each other. In fact the disarmament pact reached February 27, 2007 among the two Koreas, China, Japan, Russia and the USA is worth about US \$ 250 million in aid to the North. It requires North Korea to seal its main nuclear reactor, allow international inspections and begin accounting for other nuclear programs within 60 days. In return, North Korea will receive 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil, a down payment on a promised one million tons of oil or aid of a similar value if it ultimately disarms.

Japan occupied Korea from 1910 until 1945. After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the UN developed plans for trusteeship administration of Korea. The Korean peninsula was divided into two zones of administration, i.e. USSR to the North and USA to the South. The cold war between USA and USSR resulted establishment of two separate governments in 1948. North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950, which is the beginning of Korean War. The war ended in a ceasefire agreement at approximately the same boundary with South Korea making slight territorial gains after three years of devastating fighting that involved the China, USSR and the UN led by the US. But the two countries never signed a peace treaty and thus are still officially at war. Only a

ceasefire was declared through a truce. North Korea, officially known as Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) is a communist country whereas South Korea, officially Republic of Korea (ROK) eventually became a capitalist liberal democracy and one of the largest economies of the world.

After the death of Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea, the both Koreas have taken small and symbolic steps towards a possible reunification of Korean peninsula. Of late South Korean Ministry of Unification made the announcement of moves being made to unify the North with the South of Korea. Such statement shows that there is a will and in some sense a need to unify the two nations, which is being initiated by the South Korean government. The other nations are also now entering into talks with North Korea. Australia is opening up with trade once again. John Howard, the Australian Prime Minister has also announced to send ministers over to the Pyongyang peninsula to discuss trade relations, which his government cut ties with North Korea in October 2002.

In the reunification process of both Koreas there are two schools of thoughts. The 'Sunshine Policy' was introduced by the Millennium Democratic Party under President Kim Dae-jung of the South Korea. The supporters argue that sanctions and threats from the US and South Korea have harmed rather than improved, prospects for reunifi-

cation and if the North Korean government does not feel threatened by South Korea or the US, it will have nothing to lose and everything to gain from dialogue and engagement with the outside world, and will have no reason to build weapons of mass destruction. On the other hand, opponents belong to 'Hard Line Policy' argue that dialogue and trade with North Korea has done nothing to improve prospects for peaceful reunification and helped bolster the North Korean government, which has no real interest in reunification and is only trying to ensure its own survival.

There are a few hurdles also in the process of reunification. The cultures of both the Koreas have diverged following the partition, even though traditional Korean culture and history are shared. Many families also have been split by the partition. Economic differences between them also are a cause of concern. North Korean economy is very weaker than that of South Korea. Poverty gap is rapidly increasing as the economy is stagnates, where as the South Korean economy is characterized by moderate to high economic growth. People of North Korea is far more culturally distinct and isolated because of non-receive of foreign broadcasting, read foreign publication or travel overseas; whereas South Korean people are open, free and globalized. In addition rapid reunification might also bring the South Korean economy to the point of collapse. Therefore, many South Koreans while desiring reunification in

theory, want to delay the process of reunification until the North Korean economy can be developed separately.

Recently in effort to promote reconciliation, the two Koreas have adopted an unofficial unification flag, which is used to represent all of Korea when both North and South Korea participate together in sporting events. The background of the flag is white (represents peace) and in the center there is a blue outline of the Korean peninsula including the island of Jeju-do to the southwest. The flag was first used in 1991 when the two countries competed as a single team in the 41st World Table Tennis Championship in Chiba, Japan and the 6th World Youth Soccer Championship in Lisbon, Portugal. The unified teams marched together under the flag in the opening ceremonies of the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney, the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens, the 2006 Winter Olympics in Turin, and the 2006 Asian Games in Doha though each of them competed separately in sporting events. It is likely that the unified team will march again under the same flag in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing.

Despite now being politically separate entities, both governments proclaim as a goal the eventual restoration of Korea as a single state. A unified Korea is a very important component of Korean national identity.

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