

From zero to hero

NAEEM MOHAIEMEN

CAN there be anything more bizarre than the emergence of Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia as oppressed heroines in our long national nightmare? As soon as the story of Hasina's barring from a British Airways flight hit the airwaves, I knew it was going to be a big story. The contours of the Hasina confrontation had the perfect masala for round the clock coverage. The sight of a British bobby standing next to her as news cameras crowded around, well it would stir even the coldest heart. And on top of that, it was British Airways -- not Emirates or Biman.

On the other side of the aisle -- an angry blogger wrote "A Dirty Dirty Trick" about Khaleda's potential departure to Saudi Arabia (that arid *moru desh!*). Ma and widower, giving it all up for her sons -- heartbreak, Bangla style.



The "minus two" solution attempted to short-circuit the laborious, time-consuming court process of corruption investigation by expelling the two Begums. But Bangladesh is not Pakistan,

and now these clumsy maneuvers have even brought two blood enemies back to talk of an alliance. The same two people were ripping each other (*and desh*) to shreds only months



ago? Truly, Selucas ...

Hasina-Khaleda/BNP-AL: two entities that ran the country for fifteen years as their own private fiefdom. Two politicians who ruthlessly wiped out all demo-

cratic dissent inside their party and surrounded themselves with sycophants. Two groups that crippled a country through a fifteen year program of death-by-thousand-hartals, I-will-make-

YOUR-politics-difficult, and plain old incompetence, corruption, nepotism, and runaway greed.

But now, thanks to the bull-in-china-shop tactic of the army-backed CTG, both of them have become temporary heroines. We are the ultimate society of spectacle.

In another part of the map, jute workers went on massive strikes in Khulna, demanding Tk 6 crores of wages (can we auction off abandoned SUVs to raise that cash?). "I'll commit suicide if the government doesn't pay my dues. The government should pay or kill us," said jute mill worker Delwar Hossain.

The CTG's response was as heavy-handed as BNP-AL before it. Instead of listening to the demands, the police filed charges against 2,500 striking workers. Once again the working class of this country is on the short, brutal end of neo-liberal policies that have no plan for re-training, creating new jobs, or a safety net. Where are Khaleda-

Hasina on these issues? Busy plotting the demise of CTG, after which their gladiator wars can resume.

I wrote earlier (in "Why Are They Smiling?") that if the courts try to ram through kangaroo court cases against BNP/AL without due process, the whole thing will fall apart (if not now, later). We see signs of that already in the debates about bail hearing, due process, and now with the case against Khaleda's "house arrest."

Little by little these things could add up, and the AL-BNP could regain the upper hand. It seems astounding after the endless revelations of looter state, but there is already come clucking of sympathy for the begums. With either party back on top, and in vengeful mode, *deshbashis* have a lot to fear.

I'm exhausted by the endless telenovela of Hasina-vs-Khaleda (marked by the *jehadi josh* with which Mujib-Zia photos are exchanged every five years), and

want something different. Not the army, but something new within democracy.

I was intrigued by third force forays like LDP and Nagorik Shakti. Maybe they could be better, let's see. But with the CTG's ban on political organizing, these nascent third forces are unable to hold meetings, raise funds, go out and build infrastructure, canvass support, or speak to issues.

The CTG has to decide what its end game is. If there is a genuine intention to punish the godfathers (within due process), separate the judiciary, and strengthen anti-corruption commission, all with an intention to guarantee clean elections and make the environment conducive to the rise of an alternative third force, then that's where the focus needs to be. Too much of their (and our) energy is being sucked up by these ill-thought out, poorly executed, back-door dramas.

Riding the tiger -- when and how do we get off?

Emergency Action Plan

MOHAMMED UDDIN

EMERGENCY action plans (EAP) give detailed information on what to do if you have an accident or emergency in high-rise buildings. All the facilities should have a copy of the emergency action plan, with all management plans or records, in place so responsible personnel can easily locate it.

The plan is designed to address emergency action in the event of a fire, bomb threat, chemical or biological incident, potential major disaster, civil disturbances, blackout, and workplace violence.

The purpose of emergency action plan is to outline evacuation procedures to be implemented by government agencies, such as the fire department or police department, in the event of a fire in a high-rise building. It describes the initial responsibilities, and actions to be taken, to protect all employees until the appropriate municipal or governmental agencies take over.

Evacuations necessitated by an emergency must be carried out in an orderly manner to ensure safety of all employees/tenants and visitors. Failure to follow instructions given by the fire safety director (fire department), building security or the police department may result in injury or death. Established evacuation procedures ensure that people who are most likely to be affected by an emergency are able to escape from harm as quickly as possible.

It is the responsibility of the

high-rise building staff, and the fire and police departments, to make sure that in the event of an emergency building occupants are directed to evacuate along a safe route, away from smoke, harmful chemicals, biological agents, bombs, or improvised explosive devices. The building owner can also take steps to protect employees from incidents of workplace violence.

It is vital that all tenants/employees working in the building know how they should respond in the event of an emergency. All such people should read the emergency action plan carefully. Questions regarding the emergency action plan should be directed to the building or fire safety director, and the building owner/coordinator.

All aspects of building evacuation, including evacuation to a specified floor, evacuation to re-entry floors, or complete evacuation to specified assembly points outside the building, will be implemented by the building owner in conjunction with the fire department, police department, and/or any other agencies having jurisdiction. In the event of a fire, the fire department is responsible for deciding whether the building should be totally evacuated.

Other incidents that might occur include bomb threats, chemical or radiological/biological incidents, natural disasters, civil disturbances, and workplace violence. During such occurrences, the building owner or his or her duly authorized representative, working in close cooperation with the police

department and/or other city or governmental agencies, is responsible for deciding whether the building should be evacuated; and where the assembly points should be located.

Instructions for evacuation during various types of emergencies, such as on hearing the fire alarm, tell evacuees to proceed to the nearest fire stairwell, as they had been doing during fire drills, and to remain silent and listen to instructions from the designated or responsible person; unless otherwise directed, all employees should evacuate to the nearest stairwell and proceed to the designated re-entry floor. Building occupants using stairwells to access re-entry floors should follow the directions of the fire safety director who will issue instructions via the building intercom system.

The immediate objective of these procedures is to remove all personnel from the fire or smoke to a safer location. Under no circumstances shall anyone be evacuated to a floor that is on fire. On-site safety or security personnel are responsible for ensuring the above. Only emergency personnel from the police or the fire department may over-ride instructions from the fire safety director regarding evacuation destinations.

All physically challenged individuals who are unable to use the stairways are to report to the closest stairwell lobby to obtain assistance from pre-designated assistants or authorized emergency personnel. However, those who are able to use the stairways

without obstructing others should do so.

In the event of other types of emergencies, including bomb threats, chemical, biological or radiological incidents, natural disasters, civil disturbances, or incidents of workplace violence, people in the high-rise buildings are to follow instructions given by the authorized emergency personnel. In these instances, the authority having jurisdiction may be the fire department, the police department, or other city or district governmental agencies.

Instructions for the complete evacuation of high-rise building occupants:

- Unless otherwise instructed, occupants should always proceed to the stairwell providing the most rapid exit. In most cases, this will be the nearest exit.
- Instructions may be received from the fire safety director via the building intercom system, or from the fire department. Designated building security personnel will also be available to assist with the evacuation.
- Once you leave your emergency stairwell, fire safety or security personnel will be posted to direct you to the designated assembly point.
- On leaving the building, unless otherwise instructed, all the people in the building should proceed to the designated primary assembly point.
- High-rise buildings should also have a designated alternate, or secondary assembly, point. When evacuation to the secondary assembly point is

ordered, building security personnel will be posted along the evacuation route to act as guides.

- A policy should be implemented by the building owner whereby designated representatives from each floor are responsible for accounting for visitors and employees who have evacuated their assigned work locations. When building occupants reach the primary or secondary assembly point, their names will be checked against a list of floor occupants to ascertain whether every person has successfully evacuated the building. In the event that an occupants's name is not checked, contact information is included on the accountability sheet at the evacuation site so that designated representatives can attempt to locate the individual.

Building owners shall designate the relocation as moving to the nearest internal assembly point floor. Employees working on all floors should remain on their floors unless instructed to do otherwise. Should an incident occur in the basement, or on the first or second floor, and the building environment is considered to be untenable, occupants should evacuate to the street.

Of course, in the event of a serious or life-threatening emergency, all building occupants will be evacuated to the street. All evacuations will be conducted via the stairwells. Separate instructions should be established in response to a natural disaster, civil disturbance, and violence in

the workplace.

There are security procedures in effect in high-rise buildings, to prevent an armed intruder from harming the occupants. At the present time, all visitors to a building must present photo identification to the security guard at the visitor's desk; they sign in and are then escorted to their destination by the employee they are visiting. Employees must present an access card to the access control reader, and proceed to their in-building destination.

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In a nutshell, the safe and expedient evacuation of persons from threatened areas to areas of safety is the prime objective of the emergency action plan and should not be hampered in any way. It is the responsibility of all employees or personnel to report any condition that might be life threatening, or which might prevent the evacuation.

The effectiveness of the plan

depends on persons who can exercise good judgment and remain calm during an emergency. A well-designed and implemented emergency action plan (EAP) can reduce the possibility of serious injury, property loss, or loss of life, and the potential for environmental pollution.

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The burden of Japan



CHRISTIAN CARYL

IT'S been a rocky six months for Shinzo Abe. Ever since he became Japan's prime minister in September, he's struggled to buoy his plummeting popular-

ity amid mishaps and scandals. But this month he got help from an unexpected quarter: Chinese prime minister Wen Jiabao, who came to Tokyo to warm the two countries' frosty relations.

Wen's visit, payback for a

Abe is a revisionist himself -- or at least used to be. He caused a firestorm back in 2001 when, as a senior Koizumi cabinet member, he was accused of pressuring Japan's public broadcasting company to tone down a program blaming the military for the comfort-women system. He has also suggested in the past that he rejects the verdicts of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal. Even if Abe has since moved away from such views, his power base still holds to them, which could limit his room for manoeuvring.

trip to Beijing Abe made shortly after coming to office, has boosted Abe's approval rating by 4.3 percent in the past month (to 44.2 percent, according to the Kyodo news agency). And it points to the one way Abe may be able to bail out his government. Though he's failed to articulate any sort of coherent domestic program, an increasingly assertive foreign policy may prove Abe's salvation.

At least, he seems to hope so. Abe plans to build on Wen's visit by heading to Washington and Camp David next week, where he'll showcase his friendship with George W. Bush and reaffirm the US-Japan alliance. Next, he'll fly to the Middle East, the biggest source of Japan's oil, where he'll stop in several gulf kingdoms and Egypt.

Coming on the heels of a landmark defense treaty Tokyo signed with Australia on March 13, the moves suggest Abe is

on something of a roll, and before his departure, he granted NEWSWEEK an exclusive interview on his new foreign policy (following story). Despite his successes, however, international affairs could still prove his undoing. The same principles that have fueled his victories have also led to some of the worst controversies. Abe, at heart, is a conservative Japanese nationalist eager to reassert his country's standing. But the world may not be ready for this, at least not unless Abe deftly navigates very tricky waters.

Witness the storm he has caused over the "comfort women" who were forced to serve in brothels patronized by the Imperial armed forces during World War II. The long-simmering issue came to the fore this year when the US Congress began deliberating whether to demand that Tokyo apologize.

Abe responded by attempting to minimize Japan's responsibility and seemed to cast doubt on an earlier apology issued in 1993. This led to international outcry, and on March 11, Abe -- clearly hoping to make the issue go away before he left for Washington -- said his government would stand by the 1993 statement.

That apology might help, but Japan's wartime record remains a major irritant in Asia's international affairs. The deep freeze in Sino-Japanese relations, for example, was a result of visits Abe's predecessor, Junichiro Koizumi, paid to the Yasukuni Shrine, which honors 14 executed Class-A war criminals (in addition to 2.5 million Japanese war dead). Abe has defused the issue by simply declining to go without making any promises one way or another. Yet he could prove to be far more vulnerable on the history front than many of his

predecessors.

For one thing, he's closely aligned to the historical revisionists in his own Liberal Democratic Party. He was a founding member of a group of parliamentarians that has pushed to downplay Japan's wartime crimes in school textbooks and to emphasize "patriotic education."

More to the point, Abe is a revisionist himself -- or at least used to be. He caused a firestorm back in 2001 when, as a senior Koizumi cabinet member, he was accused of pressuring Japan's public broadcasting company to tone down a program blaming the military for the comfort-women system. He has also suggested in the past that he rejects the verdicts of the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal.

Even if Abe has since moved away from such views, his power base still holds to them, which could limit his room for manoeuvring. As recently as February, meanwhile, one of his own senior aides suggested that Abe might visit Yasukuni after all. And his foreign minister, Taro Aso, proposed last year that the emperor himself should go. Either event would immediately derail the Sino-Japanese rapprochement.

The second problem Abe faces lies in his declared intention to pursue a foreign policy guided by "democratic values." Such an assertive, values-oriented agenda -- which rhetorically echoes the Bush administration's -- would position Japan as a model for and a potential ally of other democratic countries in the region, such as India and Australia, and an alternative to the authoritarian China. Sounds good. But setting the moral bar so high -- defining Japan as a "beautiful nation," in Abe's words -- will make it even more critical that Tokyo fess up to its history.

"If you're talking about pursuing human rights in various countries on one hand, and on the other you're denying that the Japanese wartime government violated human rights, it makes you look hypocritical," notes David Fouse of the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies. Abe's own missteps on the comfort-women issue suggest he has a long way to go before he can start capitalizing on Japan's soft power.

Yet Abe's delicate dilemma -- how to make amends for the past without alienating his base -- also offers a major opportunity. For one thing, as

a conservative, Abe may have the standing to issue an apology his more moderate predecessors could not afford.

For another, Japan is not the only country in the region to twist history for political purposes (sidebar). It would therefore gain enormous credibility if it made a clean break -- for example, by opening up still-secret war archives to researchers around the world.

That may be expecting too much. But some commentators have suggested that Abe simply could sidestep wartime questions, much as he has avoided the Yasukuni issue, leaving history to the historians. Doing so while standing by past apologies might prove a pragmatic step on the path toward the "normal country" Abe wants Japan to become.

Already there are signs that Japan's neighbors would embrace such a country. In his speech to the Japanese Parliament, Prime Minister Wen noted that Chinese and Japanese alike had suffered as a result of the war and vowed to build new ties that would focus on the future "with history as a mirror." If Japan can rise to the challenge, surely everyone will benefit.