LATE S. M. ALI

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Send Hasina abroad for medical treatment

Further delay could do irreparable damage to her health

VER the last two months, the question of whether Sheikh Hasina's health conditions, especially her hearing problem, are treatable at home or these required specialist care abroad has been a subjectmatter of verbal duel between the top physicians of the country and the jail authority.

In all that time, medical specialists examined her thoroughly and recommended, both individually and collectively, for her urgent treatment abroad. This was necessitated in her complicated state of multiple ailments with her fast diminishing hearing capability owing to lack of adjustment of her hearing aid installed through software available in a Florida hospital. It was there that she was treated in the wake of the damage to her ears wreaked by the August 21 bomb blast. Readjustment of her hearing aid does not brook any delay if she is not to turn stone deaf.

The authorities for their part vacillated and oscillated in regard to where to treat an ailing former prime minister in their custody, something that devolves a special responsibility on the government for her wellbeing. At first they insisted on her treatment locally but when it came to Hasina's own desire to stay back at Square hospital where she had been taken for a medical check-up, security reasons were cited for whisking her back to the sub-jail an hour later. But now she is in Square hospital with a panel of seven doctors unanimously concluding: there is no alternative to sending her abroad if she is to avoid 'permanently impaired hearing'

We think that stalling and waffling on something that requires decisive action are extremely inadvisable for a government. That it would have been wiser for Abdul Jalil to have been sent earlier to Singapore must be dawning on many now in the knowledge that his condition has 'deteriorated'. Even emergency procedures need some lead time to be applied successfully. Ultimately, the government might be sending Sheikh Hasina to the USA for treatment. But that must be done before it is too late.

Teachers who go missing abroad

Such conduct is patently unethical

N a civilised society, it is the teaching community from which flow the high ideals that people aspire to. Unfortunately, given what has lately been happening regarding the conduct of a section of teachers at Dhaka University, we are constrained to say that some in the teaching community have disappointed us beyond measure. The other day the authorities of Dhaka University took the action of dismissing twelve teachers from service because they have overstayed their periods of higher studies abroad and indeed did not deign to inform their parent organisation of their plans. It is a situation we have gone through before and yet our surprise at teachers doing such disservice to themselves and to their students and institutions remains. It is shocking that in recent years, a very large number of

DU teachers, having finished their higher studies abroad, have failed to come back home. It is a situation that is not to be found elsewhere across the globe. When these teachers did not return home and instead found avenues of continuing their stay abroad, they simply threw to the winds the moral principles upon which we expect the teaching community to work. The fact that it was their responsibility to return to DU, from where they continued to draw their salaries in all the time they have been away, did not seem to upset them at all. Just how painful, for us, the situation is can be gauged from the fact that altogether 96 teachers now abroad simply cannot be traced. Which is why the Dhaka University authorities have now been compelled to post their names on the website in the expectation that they will respond. The question, though, is whether such action will have any effect on their behaviour. In the recent past, as much as Taka 54,00,000 was deposited in the DU treasury by missing teachers (who had gone on drawing their salaries and other benefits) only after the university authorities warned them of penalties should they not cough up the money.

It is time for Dhaka University and all other public universities to rethink the entire process of what needs to be done about teachers who go abroad and then fail to return home. Obviously, recovering their undeserved salaries and dismissing them are some of the ways to deal with the malaise. But might there not be room for legal action considering that fugitive teachers are actually engaging in a breach of contract?

National Security Council



SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN ndc, psc (Retd)

ATIONAL Security Council (NSC) is in the news again. In Bangladesh it is hardly possible to talk about NSC without it being seen as a mechanism for providing a role to the military in the governance of the country.

It is difficult to take issue with those that are motivated by the perception that the NSC is but a ploy to ensure a perpetual say of the armed forces in the politics of the country, given the history of the country's political past, where military rule was interspersed with democratic politics in brief, and regrettably, less than fully rewarding interregnums. By the same token it is hardly possible to talk about security without giving the impression of something very ominous related with the word.

Security is related to human safety; and, in spite of the changed sensitivity that scholars and practitioners ascribe to the subject, it is hardly possible to convince many that security under the changed concept has only a fractional bearing with the military. And under the changed concept, the primary

STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

Without going into the argument of whether NSC is at all necessary for us, the issue here is whether it is absolutely necessary for the caretaker government, which has its plate full as it is, to have another issue on its agenda that has all the recipe for a new controversy, particularly because of the way it has gone about it. One would think not. It would be in the fitness of things to avoid anything that is likely to detract the unmitigated attention of the current regime from its only primary task -- to hold a free fair and acceptable election -- and create the ground for the handover of power to the people's representatives.

focus must be put on the individual, without whose wellbeing the structure of the state will remain weak and continue to be so till such time all the threats to human security are identified and policies formulated to tackle those. Without assured human security, all the talk about the security of the state rings hollow.

Our politics did not deliver the benefits that we expected from the democratic dispensation either, and some extraordinary developments, with the armed forces acting as the deus ex machina (unlikely agent), prevented the country from going over the precipice, but only just.

However, an unlikely agent (which the military is) can save the situation once: it cannot be expected to do so every time there is a political faux pas, to put if mildly, to step in. If a situation has been retrieved through an unconventional arrangement, any proposal, even though motivated by an honest desire to prevent repetition of the same situation, that

might carry the impression of formalising the role of that "unlikely agent" in the country's future political process, must be avoided.

And however virtuous and innocuous the proposed arrangement might be, it must be done in a transparent manner that would engender confidence rather than cause apprehension in the minds of the people.

The idea of NSC is not new, but the fact that the concept is being resuscitated, during such a time when the extraordinary nature of impossible to make an intelligent the situation demands that extraneous issues do not clutter the agenda of the caretaker government, has caused quite a stir amongst various sections of the society, cutting across party lines among the politicians and the media and the civil society. The misperception has been further reinforced by comments of a section of our civil society, which include some scholars, in various forums, propagating the idea, in an oblique manner though, of participation of the armed forces in the

management of politics in the

There are certain issues in respect to the NSC that need to be addressed on an urgent basis. And there are misperceptions regarding it that must be cleared in order that the proposal is acceptable, most of all to those whose interest it is meant to serve -- the people.

Admittedly, very little is known of either the structure or the terms of reference of the proposed council. And, therefore, it is well nigh examination of the proposals. And that is what begs the question. If there are misperceptions about it, quite a bit of it is due to the government's predilection for maintaining a hush-hush attitude on the

Interestingly, this is perhaps the only issue about which no definitive comment has been made by any of the advisors as yet. All that we know about it is that a draft has been prepared, and is being scruti-

focusing on some of the apprehensions expressed regarding the NSC

The primary objection of many is that the council may be predominated by one particular agency over the others and that it would, not merely by implication but also substantively, formalise the suggestion of a permanent military role through the NSC, in the country's politics. Without going into the justification of such a view, let it be said that such a perception stems primarily from a lack of detailed knowledge as regards the make up of the council and its

Apprehension about the intention behind forming such a council has been further reinforced by such propositions as, "somonnito netritto" (a poor translation of which is joint/coordinated leadership). And, apart from the political realm, they also contend that leadership should also be provided in other spheres of national activities too, an arrangement that would be infused, if one has understood their premise correctly, through the mechanism of the

Because "politicians do not understand everything, they are ignorant on matters of important national issues" there must be an alternative source of leadership, that will be infused extraneously.

The task of the National Security Council is not to provide alternative leadership. While one would agree that politicians do not know everything, is there any mortal who can lay claim to omniscience? And At this point it may be worth those who talk about alternative

forms of leadership in politics have a different idea of politics and leadership.

All such apprehension must be dispelled. Honest intentions, if not accompanied by transparent action would defeat the purpose itself. However, the issue of the National Security Council is too important to be glossed over. It would be ill-advised to carry it through with haste, without involving the people: in other words the politicians who represent the people, must be involved in its formation.

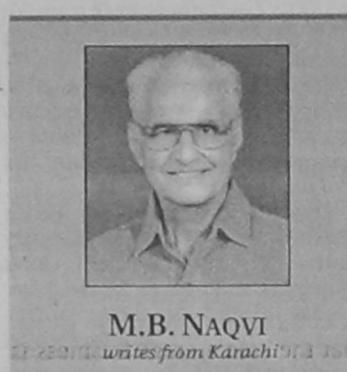
Without going into the argument of whether NSC is at all necessary for us, the issue here is whether it is absolutely necessary for the caretaker government, which has its plate full as it is, to have another issue on its agenda that has all the recipe for a new controversy, particularly because of the way it has gone about it.

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NSC has relevance to Bangladesh now, and will continue to have in future. But it should be the people's representatives, who provide the overall leadership to the nation, that should decide on how best to go about it.

Brig. Gen. (retd.) Shahedul Anam Khan is Editor, Defence & Strategic affairs, The Daily Star.

Such hopes and so many fears



AKISTANIS remain enveloped in euphoria after the February 18 election. The electoral process is being prolonged needlessly, and the new governments are still weeks away. But the sense of optimism is palpable almost everywhere.

One could say that Pakistan has been reborn, a feeling that was seen in 1970, 1988 and now. Why? Because a reasonably free and fair election has taken place. But then this delay can change the mood and Pakistan can still come to grief because of not accepting the results of a fairly fair election.

The year-long tumult in Pakistan has not died down. The lawyers' movement, to get the judges that were deposed on November 3 last year by Musharraf re-instated, is going strong. Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League, the main winners, have signed a pact to form coalition governments at the centre and in Punjab.

Both are under pressure to restore the deposed judges by an act of parliament. Asif Zardari's support for this demand remains tepid, though he has made the commitment that this will be done within a month of taking over.

PLAIN WORDS

One could say that Pakistan has been reborn, a feeling that was seen in 1970, 1988 and now. Why? Because a reasonably free and fair election has taken place. But then this delay can change the mood and Pakistan can still come to grief because of not accepting the results of a fairly fair election.

But Nawaz's political wisdom lies in having championed the lawyers' cause, which was the reason he has won so handsomely in Punjab to become the second largest party in National

Nawaz could see what people wanted, and has succeeded. Asif committed, while Nawaz's PML is raring to go at the problem quickly; PPP's pace is sure to be

Pakistan has to tackle the long history of military domination. Musharraf is the head of the state. The Americans insist that Musharraf be kept in the job, and his supporters in the government should burnish Islamabad's democratic face. That would serve the western purpose of a wholehearted Pakistan fighting the War

The Musharraf presidency is also not inactive. It is conspiring to create maximum trouble for the new parties, though he remains true to the deal he made with Benazir Bhutto -- to reconcile PPP and Musharraf so as to prosecute the War on Terror more or less

Nawaz's position is said to be ambiguous; his strong advocacy of the deposed judges' case, support for the lawyers' movement for ridding Pakistan of Musharraf,

and making sure that military domination finally ends by firing Musharraf, has made him a colossus in Punjab.

American's main reliance has always been with the Pakistan continues to gather strength.

Zardari's PPP is lukewarm though hollow rhetoric; given half a ment. But restoring the judges chance they would favour dealing with a dictator rather than with elected representatives. Their record is sordid; they have bankrolled all Pakistani military dictators, while support for civilian governments was half-hearted.

> Still, the Pakistan military has its own interests; it is the largest economic activity, and its assets amount to some \$25 billion. Its requirements are so great that it is now obliged to keep control of the entire governmental apparatus.

But the current Pakistan army chief has actually publicly distanced his army from Musharraf and has promised to support the civilian government, especially knowing that Americans wanted to associate PPP and, if possible, Nawaz's ML and miscellaneous

That has deprived Musharraf, weakened and politically isolated, of any constituency that can sustain him against the elected representatives of the people.

Pakistan faces an immediate

crisis. The immediate action that can make and break things is the lawyers' agitation for an independent judiciary and separation All said and done, the of powers to ensure rule of law. It cannot be wished away; and it

The new civilian government Their support for democracy is cannot run away from its commitwould be a fateful step.

Everyone recognises that Musharraf, the commando he says he is, has also a commando's years. mind: he is obstinate and is determined to stay in power, despite his supporters being defeated and his policies rejected.

All realise that should the judges be restored, Musharraf will have to go home. If Musharraf stays in office, the judges will have to stay in confinement or at home.

Since there is no middle way, the army's role was thought to be critical. But General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani has plainly said he would support the government and would keep to his own sphere. His message to Musharraf is: find your own equation with the newly elected government.

Musharraf, however, continues to insist that he would stay on, and that none of the actions he took in his second coup would stay on the statue books; and the superior courts he has reconstituted would also stay, meaning that the

deposed judges will have to businessmen and, of course, remain deposed. How can that happen when the

new government takes office and does what it has promised? Musharraf's position is impossible, and he can either agree to be a titular head or go and plays golf at leisure, after being sacked. This is not the only problem

Pakistan faces. There is Pakistan's own war against Islamic militancy under the generic name of Taliban; they are actually numerous smallish groups that have their own small fiefdoms.

The name Taliban gets them more attention and recognition. The Pakistan army has fought them off and on; it mounts offensives, scores successes that do not last and has lost more than a thousand soldiers during the last few

The army has suffered in morale and discipline; many of the lower ranks refuse to fight men of their own faith and ethnicity. The Pushtoon personnel cannot be expected to fight like the Americans fight against Iraqis or Afghans or al-Qaeda.

Islam has to be redefined, as it has been in the subcontinent for a thousand years in peaceful coexistence with non-Muslims, and had emerged as a civilisational entity in which Muslims and non-Muslims could share.

There is the perennial problem of the central government's powers. Since the days of AIML in the pre-1947 period, a shallow Muslim nationalism was evolved that suited the social and economic elites of north India and Pakistani Muslim feudals or successful professionals.

Rich industrialists, bankers, M.B. Naqvi is a leading Pakistani columnist.

feudals in Pakistan like a strong central government, and want to cheat and suppress the smaller provinces that are persistently demanding more autonomy.

Pakistan had come to grief on this subject, and the emergence of Bangladesh proved that Islam alone cannot override facts of ethnicity, and is not a strong enough glue to hold a multinational state tightly together.

In the fight between Islamic militancy and the Pakistan army there is a dimension of ethnicity also: it is Pushtoons' rights that the Taliban also represent, while an ambiguous central government is establishing its writ with its hollow Muslim ideology. This suits the supporters of a strong centre, in the military and in the economic and social elites of Punjab. There is also the insur-

gency in Balochistan. It is likely to remain a slowpaced insurgency, without necessarily exploding into something terrible -- unless foreigners take a hand in it.

The economic mess bequeathed by eight years of Musharraf poses hard problems, all manner of disparities of income and disparities of development have been aggravated by high inflation.

The growing rich-poor divide is becoming worse. The economic paradigm Pakistan has followed was dictated by US administration. Under it, Pakistan is losing fast to its creditor nations. It is sleep-walking into a debt trap, with all the major macroeconomic deficits pushing it into

Craig Baxter: Friend of Bangladesh

MIZANUR RAHMAN SHELLEY

EACHER, scholar, diplomat, and institution-builder, Professor Craig Baxter, was a devoted friend of Bangladesh. He retained lively ties with Bangladesh until he breathed his last on February 7.

He walked with elegant ease in the worlds of diplomacy and academic pursuits. He began his career as a diplomat in the 1960s and served in various important positions in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Craig spent nearly a year in the early 60s in Washington, learning Hindi and Urdu to help his work as a diplomat assigned to the sub-continent.

A graduate of the University of Pennsylvania, Craig obtained his PhD for his work on the Indian Hindu-revivalist party Janasangh. In course of his career as diplomat he made many friends in various countries of South Asia, Among these friends were mighty politibusinessmen, famous academi- macy to resume his career as an

cians, and reputed media persons.

During the historic days of the glorious War of Liberation, Craig was holding charge of the Bangladesh Desk in the US State Department. He later recollected with great pride that he was the only one authorised quietly by US decision-makers to speak and deal with Bengali diplomats and activists who had defected from Pakistan and engaged in pro-liberation activities on US soil.

Craig got an opportunity to serve in the US mission in Bangladesh during the late 1970s as deputy chief of mission. He played a great and important role in cementing the friendly ties between Bangladesh and US. That was the time I first met him. This encounter was the beginning of a long and enduring friend-

After returning to US at the end of his tenure in Bangladesh, he served in the State Department and was later assigned to work at the West Point Military Academy. Shortly cians, top bureaucrats, leading thereafter he left the world of diplo-

academician. From 1980s he served as professor and chair of political science in Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

It was during this time that he initiated the process of building an enduring bridge between the scholars of US and Bangladesh. With the assistance of a number of US teachers and scholars interested in Bangladesh, he founded the American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS) in 1989. He also succeeded in securing valuable and steady support on both Bangladesh and the US for the institute.

As envisaged and built by Craig and his able colleagues, AIBS was an association of a number of reputed universities and institutes of higher learning in the US interested in Bangladesh studies.

The main objective of the institute is to promote educational exchange at the advanced scholarly level between the peoples of Bangladesh and the US. Research grants were provided on a regular basis to American scholars to pursue research in Bangladesh on studies and projects aimed at administration development in

understanding of the history, politics, economy, society and culture of the country.

Grants were also provided to Bangladeshi scholars for reciprocal purposes, under the parallel program initiated in July 1993 with financial assistance from the State Department, AIBS operated its activities in Bangladesh through the Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh.

Seventy-one grantees from the US have completed their assignments during the period from 1990 to May 20'05. Among the universities/institutes currently affiliated with AIBS are Universities of Pennsylvania, California at Berkeley, Columbia, Chicago, Cornell, The Pennsylvania State, Lock Haven, North Carolina State, Rowan at Glassboro, New Jersey, Southern Illinois, Syracuse, Texas at Austin, Washington, and Wake Forest.

The supporting program provided dollar funds during period 1993-2004 to finance 17 short-term grants to Bangladeshi scholars. The grant is also designed to support a seminar every year for faculty and



public and private universities and other higher educational institutes in Bangladesh.

AIBS has been running since 1994 a program of orientation visit to Bangladesh by undergraduate students teams from various US universities and colleges. The teams were led by faculty members and visited Bangladesh for a period of three weeks. Up to June 2004, 10 such teams composed of 67 students visited Bangladesh.

He worked as the president of AIBS for more than a decade since 1989. He also visited Bangladesh almost every year and interacted with concerned government leaders, top civil servants and diplomats and reputed academicians to improve and expand the areas of AIBS activities. By the year 2000, when he retired as president, the institution he created had become a vibrant link between the academic worlds of the US and Bangladesh.

Institution-builder and seasoned diplomat as he was, Craig Baxter was in essence a dedicated scholar. He had specialised on South Asia. The thriving process of life and politics in the region never ceased to fascinate him. His friendship with important actors in the political, administrative and diplomatic sectors of the South Asian countries equipped him with a penetrating insight not easily available to external observers and analysts.

One of his greatest academic contributions was the textbook on South Asian politics that he coauthored. This helped graduate and

and elsewhere to gain better understanding of political developments in the sub-continent.

He wrote several books on South Asia, including a few on Bangladesh. Dictionary of Bangladesh, the revised third edition of which was published in 2004. He also edited and co-authored books on Pakistan. In the twilight of his life he edited the diaries of former Pakistani presi-

dent Field Marshall Ayub Khan. In many ways Craig was a citizen of the world. Despite his staunch loyalty to his American identity, he spread beyond the shores of the US. He was not only a steadfast friend of Bangladesh and other countries of the sub-continent, but also a faithful and warm companion of many individuals of these nations. He regularly invited scholars and reputed persons from these lands to

Craig served Juniata College until undergraduate students in the US his retirement. He made

Huntingdon his home and spent the closing years of his life in the quiet town where everybody greeted him as Professor Baxter. When Barbara, his wife and school-day classmate, The most notable among these was died a few years ago, he became Bangladesh: A New Nation in an Old lonely. His son Craig Jr. and daugh-Setting. Another significant work ter Louise were away, living and that he co-authored with Dr. Syedur working near Washington. Craig Rahman was the Historical found congenial company in the town he loved and continued to live there until the very end.

> One remembers the delightful time in his well appointed but somewhat quiet home where he loved to sip his favourite drink and recollect fondly the details of his days in the sub-continent. He loved books, good food, and people. He reached out and made friends comfortable by his easy and simple behaviour. In essence, Craig's unique personality radiated the warmth of a culture that was truly global. In his demise, Bangladesh in particular and South Asia in general have lost an invaluable friend.

The author, is a noted thinker and social scientist, the founder Chairman, Centre for Development Research, Bangladesh (CDRB), Editor, quarterly Asian Affairs, and first Overseas Director of American Institute of Bangladesh Studies (AIBS)