

DHAKA MONDAY FEBRUARY 23, 2009

Fine-tuning foreign policy

FROM PAGE 36

will be predicated on the fact that deepening any relation would have the end result of selling more of our products to them and attracting more investments.

The disconnect between our existing foreign policy goals and the changing global realities must be overcome. We must consider carefully whether our foreign policy should be fine tuned now to closely support governments which are secular and democratic and which adhere to human rights as laid down in the Universal Declaration and follow the rule of law. Our policy options must support globalization but with appropriate checks and balances. Any move towards unbridled globalization must be resisted. But deepening globalization in trade, movement of humans and technology must be allowed to get traction. We must oppose further nuclearization of weapons and work actively towards elimination of all nuclear war-heads from the world.

Our existing policy of zero tolerance towards terrorism by non-state actors must be taken one step forward by a regional effort to establish South Asia as the first international terrorism-free area of the world. We must robustly address all issues relating to climate change and be seen to be the most forceful advocate of reversing the adverse effects of climate. We will use all means to bring benefits of technology- be it space science or ICT to the doorsteps of our people. Bangladesh cannot afford to relent in its pursuit of technology. This is so critical to our prosperity and to our future progress.

Bangladesh depends to a large extent on multi-lateralism to advance bi-

lateral goals. The emerging realities, as outlined earlier calls for greater use of multi-lateral mechanisms with use of bi-lateralism to pry concessions.

Let us take the case of technology transfer. This is a critical input which is essential for growth. But this is not cheaply available nor is it easily accessible. In Bangladesh our foreign policy apparatus must be tuned to use all multi-lateral fora to obtain technology. At the same time bilateral ties must be invoked to get funds and training for this purpose. A smart multi-directional tactics must be developed to bring home technology for quick industrialization and growth.

To tackle climate change a similar approach could be considered. This is so serious a matter for Bangladesh that policy makers do not even have the luxury of mulling over what strategy to adopt. They have to fix targets, sharpen negotiation skills to a world class level and move to win concessions through multi-lateral fora. These concessions must be in cash or kind for Bangladesh to adapt to climate change and reduce damage caused by its effect. Bilateralism will be resorted to ensure no harm is caused to the country due to specific action by any other country by disturbing the environment on land, air or sea.

But how is Bangladesh prepared to address the new paradigms of foreign policy? Firstly, do we have the leadership in various areas to take on these new challenges. It is too expensive and time demanding for the government to alone preside over these issues. Here we must invite the non-government sector to join hand to build capacities. The



Bangladeshi Diaspora must also be co-opted and be a part of this effort.

Secondly, we need to develop knowledge base on global issues. Government should fund studies and gather up-to-date data and policy papers on relevant issues.

Our Foreign Ministry apparatus must work overtime not only to acquire necessary skills and expertise on the changing realities, but at the same time build a formidable international network of friends and associates who can be of assistance to Bangladesh when called upon. It is ultimately this 'investment' that pays back when the country needs international support for its legitimate causes.

One other essential preparation is to

hook up very closely with the work of international organizations and bodies that formulate policies and implement work plans on the emerging global realities. We must not just covet positions in these organizations. We must study closely their programs, build strong links and know how to use diplomacy to bring their mandate to cater to our national needs.

The existing strength of our Foreign Office and our missions abroad is perhaps inadequate to meet the challenges of the changing global realities. A revamping of posts and their job descriptions is overdue. Today the total cadre strength is 261 officers (incumbents 187) manning 46 Embassies and 11 consulates. The staff strength is 375 in

all these missions and they provide just the administrative backup. The total Foreign Ministry and Missions budget allocation for FY 2008-09 is just Tk 391 crores (US\$ 55.8 million). Is this adequate to conduct a multi-faceted robust diplomacy to face the global challenges? We need serious rethinking of our national priorities now.

Very soon the Jatiya Sangshad is likely to form a Foreign Relations Committee to oversee the conduct of our foreign policy. This is well as long as the Committee system works. In the event that the system delivers results, it would not be amiss if it is required to initiate discussion on the goals and directions of our foreign policy to meet the changing global realities. A Foreign Policy Commission to address this difficult but important paradigm of governance could be a quick way out. We need identification of goals devising policy options, designing methodology for attaining the objectives and securing people and resources to deliver results. A system of evaluating the work done and what further needs to be done to reach our goals must also be put in place.

With every passing day, Bangladesh is losing opportunities which are emerging due to changing global realities. The government needs now to take a major decision to reformulate our foreign policy and to address globalization seriously. Our foreign policy apparatus must work in a way that 150 million Bangladeshis deserve.

Ashfaqur Rahman, a former Ambassador, is currently Chairman of Centre for Foreign Affairs Studies.

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যত দূরে যাই, কোন ভয় নাই
সাথে আছে যমুনা ব্যাংক এটিএম কার্ড

যমুনা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর সম্মানিত গ্রাহকগণ এখন থেকে যমুনা ব্যাংকের বুথ ছাড়াও দেশব্যাপী বিস্তৃত ডাচ-বাংলা ব্যাংক-এর ২৫০টি, ব্র্যাক ব্যাংক ও কিউ ক্যাশ মেম্বার ব্যাংকস-এর ১৭২ টি এটিএম বুথ ব্যবহার করতে পারবেন। যে কোন এটিএম বুথ থেকে ছুটির দিন সহ বছরে ৩৬৫ দিন এবং দিন-রাত ২৪ ঘণ্টা টাকা তুলতে পারবেন।

আজই যমুনা ব্যাংক হিসাব খুলুন এবং এটিএম কার্ড গ্রহণ করুন।

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