

In quest of a long distance runner

This transformation of attitude will not come about in a short span of time. That is why I am pinning my hopes on a long distance runner who will not fall short of the destination where humanity reigns supreme and freedom of choice is regarded as the elixir of life.

Z.A. KHAN

I was partially pleased to note that the Awami League (AL) has brought some new faces into prominence. I would have been truly satisfied if AL had gone a few steps further to give a fillip to their current (or improved?) practice of democracy both within and outside the party. It is a change, however. Changes are necessary to inject fresh ideas to improve upon the prevailing ideologies, which have evolved after intense deliberation keeping in view the need of the time.

In politics today, the term "supreme leader" seems undesirable. Exchange of views with new generation politicians reveals that although they are well disposed to any discussion with the senior leaders to share experience, they are least prepared to take things on a platter. They want to be convinced about the relevance of the senior leaders' points of views on power sharing, peoples' participation and on their prescription for development. They want to contemplate on the contemporary controversies and contradictions to complement emergence of compatible strategies of popular politics.

The new generation demonstrates apprehension about the globalisation strategy mapped (generally) by the afflu-

ent western countries. There have been attempts to put into action a prescription for economic development for less to least developed countries that promises arrest of the declining western influence, and to thwart the rise of non-western free thinking new generation politicians.

The leadership complains that the western nations on the one hand clamour for a safer world, draw rules to enforce nuclear non-proliferation, impose sanctions on obtaining modest nuclear capability for economic growth while, on the other hand, they remain silent when their cohorts develop the same facilities regardless of massive opposition from across the world.

They can look for weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in other countries, terming them as jingoists, while they deploy such weapons to protect themselves from an imaginary enemy. I think this is a misconceived apprehension. That is why they draw flak from all around the globe.

Territorial, environmental and food security is endangered insofar as providing of protection by the countries regarded as 'precincts of democracy' and developments is concerned. Their policies suffer from dualism, which has made the world imperfect. Publicity-

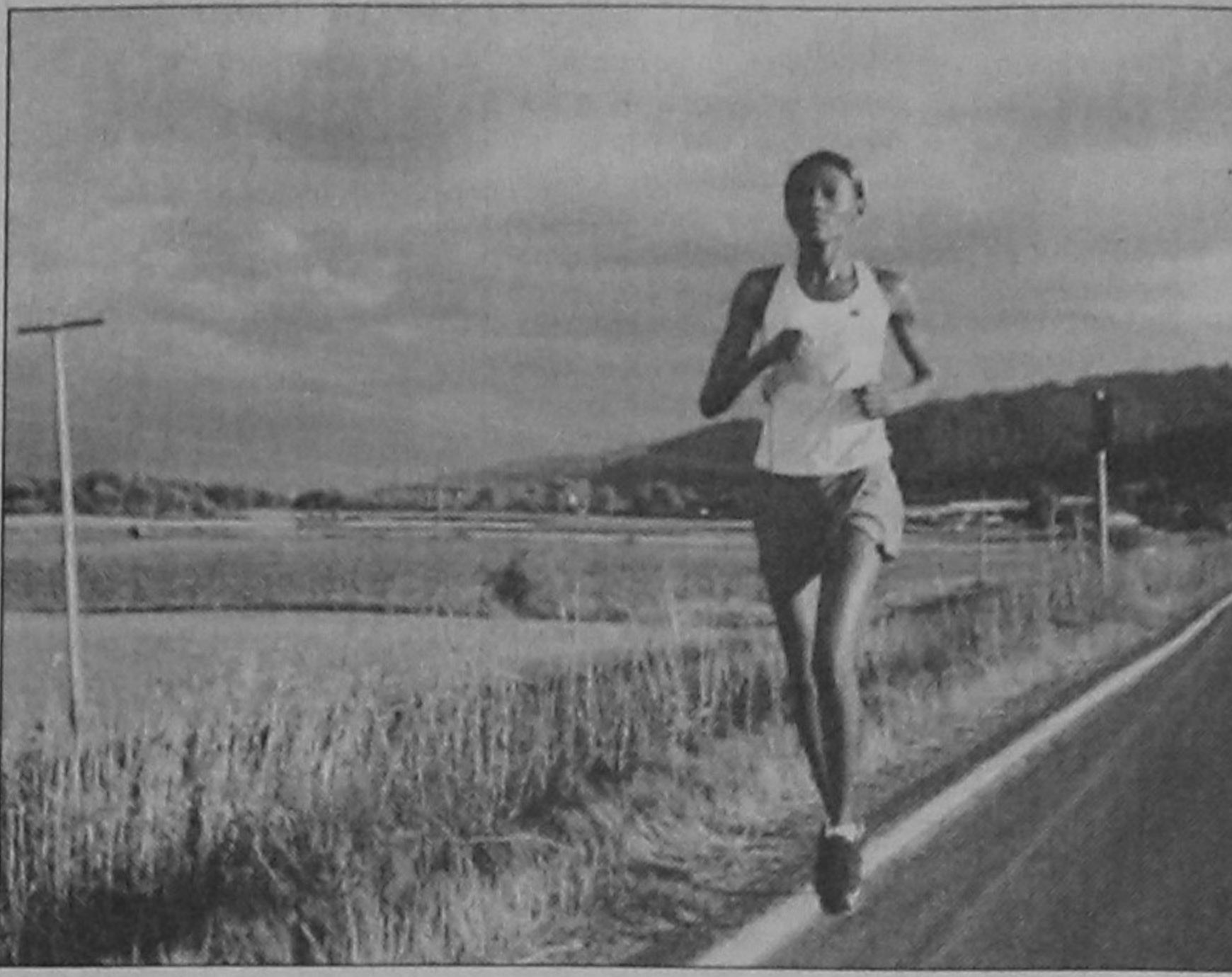
centric globalisation is a one-way communication, while the need of the hour is public relations, which is a two-way channel and very interactive.

A policy is judged by what it builds, but globalisation, as of date, seems to be gobbling up the strength, scheme and strategy of development of the countries of the southern hemisphere. The leaders that emerged in our part of the world in the post-colonial era have a vestige of imperial intolerance and arrogance. They are generally unwilling to accept opposition and criticism. They have been using the sate apparatus menacingly against those that challenged the wisdom and propriety of the leadership.

So the greater part of post-colonial 20th century witnessed dominance of a leadership that held the reins of power more by the strength of money and muscle, as taught by their colonial gurus, than their proactive concern for the people. Allegedly they either bought votes or fostered musclemen to steal ballots in the hustings and, therefore, hardly depended on the voters as much as they relied on their henchmen, cronies and musclemen.

The infrastructure of the institutions that help develop popular politics suffered an immense setback in Bangladesh, and one fears that it will never grow while the aging mandarins of our politics are still playing their part. Either they can be persuaded by popular will to mend their ways to fit into the call of the time, or they themselves should exit from politics lest they should face despondency of the growing number of dissenters against the captive politics.

I am happy to observe the rise of educated young political apprentices who are



Thomas Norrcout
Needed: Politicians with the energy and desire to go long distances.

wide open to constructive criticism and show meaningful eagerness to help people, not as a tool to win elections but as a party to right the wrong politics. This attitude of the young politicians should bring about changes in the political culture, in which democracy within and outside the political party will be accorded primacy. Building up a politics of passion for people's progress and protection, and bringing about harmonic convergence of political ideologies, needs patience, tolerance, accumulated wisdom and a high degree of commitment.

Those who believe that the cause of freedom of choice is a good cause will come forward with fresh commitment to

change the old order to invigorate our political environment. They are none but men of new blood with a new attitude and a new outlook that adores Lord Buddha's Nirvana which is "right view, right aim, right speech, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right contemplation."

This transformation of attitude will not come about in a short span of time. That is why I am pinning my hopes on a long distance runner who will not fall short of the destination where humanity reigns supreme and freedom of choice is regarded as the elixir of life. The emerging young leadership in the 21st century, even in the West, is sure to be in favour of change.

Recent election results in various countries, including US, have confirmed people's eagerness for change. Their preference for dialogue for concord over persistence difference is indicative of a change of mood. This may pave the way for humanity to take root.

We in Bangladesh should reckon with the fact that change will have to come about. Those who can tailor-make themselves to the need of the hour will surely survive the resistance that may be put in place by the opponents of change, who have the fear of being discarded. To materialise this dream of our nation would warrant rise of leaders with commitment, who can pursue their objective of injecting fresh dynamics to make it time and people-friendly. This may not come per se, but we will need to pursue it doggedly for a long time. This is going to be like an attack on an entrenched position in which the casualties are heavier on the attackers' side, and also more time consuming.

Therefore, politicians who are youthful and committed to upholding the freedom of choice should put their act together to set themselves to go without bothering about the distance till they reach the destination. Please join me when I welcome the long distance runner, for we want to enjoy our freedom of choice, which can be brought about through years of endurance, tolerance and resilience. To my understanding, this can be done by none but the ones who can pursue this mission for years with undiminishing zeal and unremitting commitment.

Z.A. Khan is a former Director General of Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies.

A climate for development

We know what needs to be done, and we know we collectively face choices. We can do nothing, or too little, or our world can take bold actions together to confront the climate change challenge. This December, in Copenhagen, I hope we will, collectively, summon the courage to act.

HELEN CLARK

A few months ago, Rwanda's President Paul Kagame stated explicitly that the continent's future depended on what came out of the climate change negotiations. He argued that Africa needed a strong climate deal, and quickly, so that global emissions could be brought under control as soon as possible. He also called for strong mechanisms to help the continent move towards a low carbon growth path and to strengthen its resilience to unavoidable impacts. President Kagame hit the nail on the head.

We know that the effects of climate change will hit the poorest and most vulnerable first and hardest. That is why the new climate change deal so many are working so hard for must also be a deal for development.

Fighting poverty and protecting our planet must go hand-in-hand. Receding forests, expanding deserts, changing rainfall patterns, and rising sea levels trap people in hardship and undermine their future. Studies in Ethiopia show that children exposed to drought in early childhood are more likely to be malnourished five years later.

Because of climate change, it is esti-

mated that up to 600 million more people in Africa could face malnutrition as agricultural systems break down; an additional 1.8 billion people could face water shortage, especially in Asia; and more than 70 million Bangladeshis, 22 million Vietnamese, and 6 million Egyptians could be affected by climate-related flooding. Worse, new scientific evidence indicates that ocean temperatures are rising to record levels. That will put further stress on coastal ecosystems and on the people depending on them for their survival.

Now is the time to push through both a vision and actions for a better, cleaner, and more sustainable world for us all.

We have only one planet to live on. We must ensure that the way we live and develop is consistent with keeping its ecosystems in balance. We must collectively find a different, more sustainable, way to grow our economies, and ensure that poor people and nations have the opportunity to create a better life for themselves.

While climate change presents great challenges, it also offers opportunities for us all to move towards sustainable development. If nations can make progress at the Copenhagen climate talks, that will lead to reductions in emissions; the development of less carbon-intensive production and consumption processes; directing climate financing to support global economic growth; and setting the world's poorer countries on inclusive and sustainable pathways out of poverty.

The climate change negotiations must, at a minimum, take the following three developing country imperatives into account.

First, developing countries must be able to develop and put in place what their citizens need for a decent life. Unless people have at least basic access to water, sanitation, food, and energy, as well as to institutions which work and a way to have a say in the decisions which affect their lives, they will not be able to cope with the additional burden of a changing climate.

Second, people in developing countries need targeted support to develop the capacity to adapt to climate change -- from the poor farmer who wants to grow more resilient crops, to the family whose home must be able to withstand increased flooding. This means helping countries to put climate change adaptation at the heart of all their efforts to tackle poverty, with proper attention paid to the needs of more vulnerable groups, including women and indigenous people. Adaptation efforts must be flexible and resilient enough to navigate the challenges which climate change may pose in the future.

Third, developing countries need the support of partners to move along a low-carbon development pathway. They need better access to carbon financing to pay for that, and the skills to put that money to work where it is needed. That includes driving private and public finance towards cleaner investments in energy, transport, and other infrastructure and in industry.

If developing countries are assisted in these ways, they will be able to contribute to global efforts to tackle climate change while also pursuing the development to which their people aspire.

Sealing a new climate change agreement will require unwavering political will, so that national interests do not obstruct achieving what is best for our planet as a whole. If the deal reached is also a deal for development, we could set the stage for future generations to live in greater peace and prosperity across our world. We need to invest up front now, to protect our climate and the lives of all of us and our descendants.

We know what needs to be done, and we know we collectively face choices. We can do nothing, or too little, or our world can take bold actions together to confront the climate change challenge.

This December, in Copenhagen, I hope we will, collectively, summon the courage to act.

Ms. Helen Clark is the UNDP Administrator.

The case against further N-tests

The advice was ignored. But its wisdom remains valid today. An H-bomb arsenal won't give India security. It will only raise our mass-destruction capacity and escalate the South Asian arms race. We must say no to further testing.

PRAFUL BIDWAI

WHY do we keep showering awards and honours upon the managers of our security and space-science establishment despite the shoddy results it produces after claiming stellar successes? "Missile Man" APJ Abdul Kalam got the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour, six years before economist-philosopher Amartya Sen did, for an infinitely richer contribution.

Doesn't the recent winding up of the Integrated Guided Missile Programme launched by Dr. Kalam in 1983 signify its terminal crisis? Why doesn't India have a reliable intermediate-range missile barring Agni-II? Why has the cost of the nuclear submarine risen 30-fold?

If the Defence Research and Development Organisation is the grand success it's claimed to be, then why has it never completed a major project without huge delays and cost overruns? Why did the Department of Atomic Energy have to get critical Russian designs and equipment for the N-submarine reactor after working on it for 34 years?

The DAE and DRDO have long been unmatched for their boastful claims, missed targets, unaccountability and excessive secrecy. Now, the Indian Space Research Organisation, earlier considered transparent and honest, has joined

their league.

ISRO's Moon mission has just been terminated because the orbiter got overheated, leading to the collapse of vital subsystems, including sensors that determine its orientation.

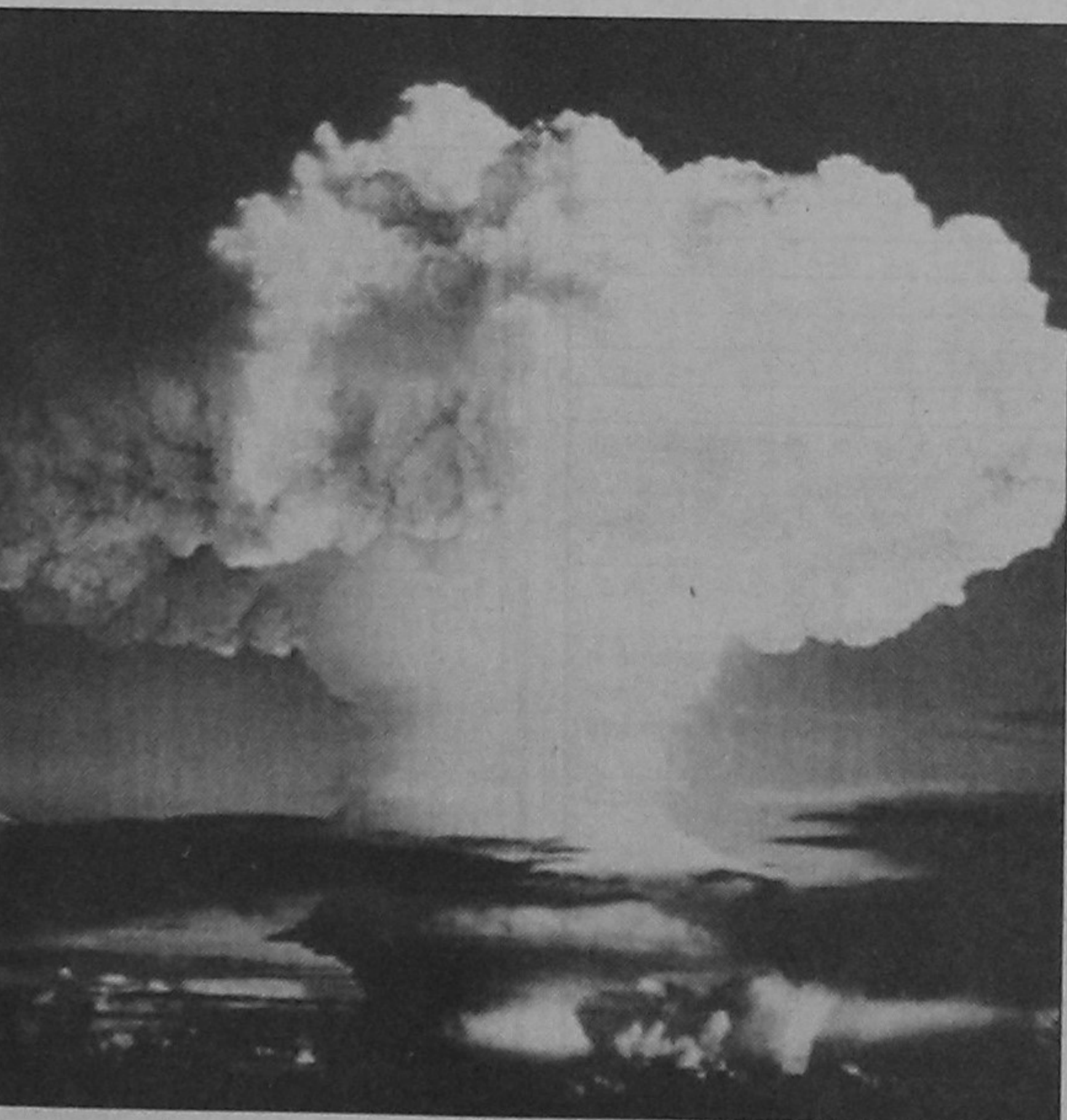
It's not the mission's premature termination, or ISRO's miscalculation of the craft's surface temperature, that warrants concern. Mistakes aren't uncommon in space programmes. ISRO did raise the craft's orbit to prevent overheating to no avail.

ISRO's real failure lay in misleading the public and its own scientists. It falsely claimed that the orbit was raised to enable a better view and "further studies" of the Moon.

ISRO didn't tell its scientists of the overheating crisis, noticed one month after launch, for over three months. It kept its overseas collaborating scientists in the dark for a month after the sensor failure.

ISRO's bosses also gagged its researchers. Yet, three senior ISRO officials asserted in May that there was "nothing wrong" with any of the space-craft's systems. It's this unethical non-disclosure of the whole truth that's ISRO's greatest sin against science.

Truth is an even greater casualty in the nuclear weapons arena: the holiest of the Holy Cows of national security. Anything nuclear bureaucrats do, such as India's May 1998 nuclear explosions,



Superstock
Deterrent, or inducer of arms race?

is described as a major scientific or technological feat.

Their greatest claimed achievement then was detonating a hydrogen (fusion/thermonuclear) bomb on May 11, when two other devices were also exploded: a fission bomb similar to that detonated over Nagasaki, which killed 70,000 people, with an explosive yield of 12 kilotons (12,000 tonnes of TNT), and a sub-kiloton device.

However, claims Dr. K Santhanam, a DRDO official in the Pokharan-II core team, the H-bomb fizzled out. Its fusion assembly, its heart, didn't ignite or did so on a minuscule scale.

Both DAE and DRDO strenuously and peevishly deny this. They have challenged Dr. Santhanam to produce hard evidence, knowing well that under the rules of secrecy, he's unlikely to possess it. National Security Adviser MK Narayanan

called Dr. Santhanam "a maverick." He may well be one, but that cannot demolish his claim.

What's the truth about the H-bomb? Does it warrant rethinking on India's nuclear testing moratorium, announced in 1998 and reiterated in 2005?

Dr. Santhanam isn't saying anything original. A US seismologist, using publicly available data, concluded that the combined yield of the three May 11 explosions was 10 to 25 kt, not the claimed 55 kt.

US Natural Resources Defence Council experts said the mid-point of the probable yields was about 12 kt. Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory analysts concluded that the second stage of the two-stage fusion assembly failed to ignite as planned. Some retired Indian scientists had similar assessments.

The DAE called these "baseless" and said the tests were "perfect" India had conducted their "full complement" and "obtained three robust bomb designs."

It claimed it had kept the yield "deliberately low" it normally should be 1,000 kt-plusto avert seismic damage to villages near the test site. It also contended, incredibly, that Indian and Western seismic readings differed because the simultaneous explosions caused "wave interference." But such interference would have reflected in India's sensors too.

I discussed this in my book (co-authored with Achin Vanaik) South Asia On A Short Fuse: Nuclear Politics and the Future of Global Disarmament (Oxford, 1999). On balance of probability, it seems that the H-bomb didn't perform as planned. Even if it did, a single test can't give weapons engineers enough confidence in its design.

States conduct multiple tests on a design under different conditions before

it's considered usable. But the DAE took shortcuts. DRDO has similarly declared missiles battle-ready after just one or two test-flights when technologically advanced countries conduct 10 or more test-flights.

Further debate is necessary on the "fizzle." But we shouldn't fall into the trap of demanding further nuclear tests. An H-bomb isn't part of India's doctrine of "minimum credible nuclear deterrent." Nuclear weapons are irrelevant to defence, and generate insecurity, instability and a potentially ruinous arms race. The world needs and deserves nuclear disarmament.

Even leaving aside the disarmament imperative, which India professes, there's no case for an H-bomb. India has over 100 fission weapons, each enough to kill up to 10 million people. This is deterrence enough.

There's a lesson here from the US. In 1949, a committee of top-level scientists - including Enrico Fermi and Robert Oppenheimer urged President Truman: "[A hydrogen bomb] would bring about the destruction of innumerable human lives; it is not a weapon which can be used exclusively for the destruction of ... military installations ... Its use therefore carries much further than the atomic bomb itself the policy of exterminating civilian populations."

The advice was ignored. But its wisdom remains valid today. An H-bomb arsenal won't give India security. It will only raise our mass-destruction capacity and escalate the South Asian arms race. We must say no to further testing.

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