

# BSF acts doesn't help India

MOHAMMAD ALI SATTAR

India has pledged to stop killing innocent Bangladeshis at the border. This assurance came from Indian External affairs minister SM Krishna during a meeting with our foreign minister Dipu Moni on Feb. 7. Both were attending 2-day Saarc council of ministers meeting in Thimpu, Bhutan. We welcome the assurance. But quickly say assurances and pledges came many times before, although nothing tangible happened. Killings continued.

FOR Bangladesh India has been an important ally in the region and active economic partner. India played a key role in assisting us during the war of liberation in 1971. India sheltered 10 million refugees during the war time. Indian soldiers fought alongside our liberation army. India and Bhutan were the first countries to recognize Bangladesh as an independent nation.

Bangabondhu's first foreign visit as Prime Minister was to India and it was then decided Indo-Bangladesh relations would be guided by principles of democracy, socialism, nonalignment and opposition to colonialism and racism. Indira Gandhi too visited Bangladesh in 1972 and assured that India would never interfere in the internal affairs of the country. In 1972, both the countries signed a 'Treaty of Friendship and Peace'. An Indo-Bangladesh Trade Pact was also signed.

Then on, India has been playing a big role in our socio-political and economic life. She has been deeply involved in Bangladesh's trade and commerce, culture and education.

There's huge trade imbalance between the two, in favor of India. There have been imbalances in other areas as well. But by and large things have gone on well and people of two countries are getting along with whatever patience possible to muster. But somewhere down the line we feel ourselves at the receiving end. India's Bangladesh policy has been confusing at best. There are still plenty of areas which need repairs and massive improvement. This both Bangladesh and India should dig into.

Trade and visa complexity aside, the principle concern has been the indiscriminate killings of Bangladeshis at the borders by the BSF. BSF is committing murders at will. We have had many flag meetings including meetings of top government officials, where the border killing issues came up for discussion. Indian side would assure us that this will stop immediately. NOTHING happened. It shows that these issues had little or no imprint on them. How could they go on ignoring our plight?

We keep quiet about the cultural invasion that has been taking place, we don't raise our voice regarding not airing our programs on their TV channels etc., we don't talk much about the water issues

these days, we don't demand the territorial disputes to be resolved, we don't push ourselves for more trading opportunities in Indian market.

Poor Felani must be mentioned. Felani now has become a symbol of tragedy, of tears, of barbarity. The trig-

hung from the barbed wire fence.

One wonders as to what prompts the BSF to resort to killings in the first place. BSF kills with such impunity along India's 4,100-kilometre (2,550-mile) border with Bangladesh that it fails all senses.

were killed but the death toll is much less than killings in our borders by the BSF.

These unwarranted murders will not help improve our relations. India should understand our feeling and take serious measures to stop these killings. What would have

visit of the Indian premier to Bangladesh will fail to create a good feeling in our minds.

Some in India though expressed fear and grief over the killings of Bangladeshis by the BSF. Some called it callous and high-handed. Some condemned it. Reports also have that Indian government initiated enquiry into the recent killings.

Let's look at the scenario at the border. Why in the first place there is the illegal border crossing practice? Reports have it; the lure to work in India attracts the poor Bangladeshis to risk their lives in crossing into India. It is now a regular practice in the upper middle class Indians to hire Bangladeshis to work as maids and as casual labors. These employers get them in much cheaper price and promise them better living. These employers have agents who work for them against good emoluments. More interesting is other reason... "Politicians in border states, most notably in the Communist-run state of West Bengal, have been only too willing to provide illegal immigrants from Bangladesh with ration cards to enable them access to the state-subsidized public food distribution system. The acquisition of a ration card is usually the

first step toward acquiring citizenship and thereby voting rights. Since the immigrants are generally poor and vulnerable, they are more than likely to vote for those who enabled them to change their status..."

Given the complexity and seriousness of these issues (of killings and illegal border crossing) both India and Bangladesh need to address these forthrightly and not resort to pointless mutual recriminations. Apart from these, a major area of contention has been the construction and operation of the Farakka Barrage by India to increase water supply in the river Hoogly. Bangladesh is yet to receive a fair share of the Ganges waters during the dry seasons, there have also been disputes regarding the transfer of Teen Bigha Corridor to Bangladesh. Part of Bangladesh is surrounded by the Indian state of West Bengal. On 26 June 1992, India leased three bigha land to Bangladesh to connect this enclave with mainland Bangladesh. There is dispute regarding the indefinite nature of the lease. Militants in both countries like Banga Sena and Harkat-ul-Jihad also remains in the list. Recently India and Bangladesh had agreed to fight terrorism jointly.

Only inking of treaties and deals won't be enough. Government to government friendship will not suffice. The people at large expect proper treatment from the bigger neighbor. India needs us for her journey towards the greater world. She needs friendly neighbors to make the subcontinent a peaceful region and India solvent.

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ger happy soldiers of BSF cared less for this hapless girl. They destroyed a family, and most of all they have put the very relationship of the two countries on the wires (great test.). Our mutual trust hangs in balance as the Felani's body

According to Human Rights Watch, India's force has killed almost 1,000 Bangladeshis over the past ten years, that is a shooting every four days. Many who attempted to cross borders between two Germanys during the Cold War

happened in India if Bangladesh did the same to Indian nationals? Or if Indians killed any Chinese or Pakistani nationals? How would these countries react? Each time a killing causes genuine outrage in Bangladesh. The upcoming

## New Workshop Services Front Line Vehicles in Afghanistan

A purpose-built workshop for the in-theatre maintenance and repair of UK military vehicles was recently opened in Camp Bastion, southern Afghanistan, by Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox.

Staffed by around 130 military engineers and Defence Support Group (DSG) civilians, the multi-million pound facility will mean that vehicles no longer have to be returned to the UK for deep repair and maintenance, saving around £50m per year in equipment rotation costs.

The Equipment Sustainability System (ESS) facility can accommodate 26 armoured vehicles and is one of the biggest buildings built in support of British operations since World War Two.

The facility was opened by Dr Fox last month. He said:

"Ensuring our troops have the armoured vehicles they need to carry out their tasks is absolutely vital. This facility will reduce the time taken to repair vehicles and get them back out on the front line.

"I imagine this is the one of the biggest, if not the biggest, building in Helmand and it demonstrates exactly what we can do in terms of innovation and excellence."

Lieutenant Colonel Phil Croager, Project Officer based at the Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ), said:

"Front line equipment is worked extremely hard in tough conditions. This facility will allow us to bring vehicles in for deep maintenance, which will help to extend their time in theatre and increase their availability to operational commanders."

The DSG is a UK government trading fund owned by the Secretary of State for Defence. It aims to deliver wider defence objectives in support of key industrial strategy requirements and to be integral in future defence air and land systems acquisition and support solutions, wherever cost-effective and appropriate.

The DSG's mission is to provide expert in-house maintenance, repair, overhaul, upgrade and support services for the UK Armed Forces' air and land systems.

## Iran mass producing new anti-ship missiles

IRAN is mass producing a new ballistic missile which can travel at more than three times the speed of sound and hit targets on the high seas, top commanders said on Monday.

Commander Mohammad Ali Jafari, who heads the elite military force, the Revolutionary Guards, said the missile -- named "Persian Gulf" -- had a range of 300 kilometres (185 miles).

"Iran is mass producing a smart ballistic missile for sea targets with a speed three times more than the speed of sound," state news agency IRNA quoted Jafari as saying about the new missile.

He said the missile was "undetectable and can't be

neutralised by enemies," without specifying the name. "It has very high precision in destroying targets," Jafari added.

"As the enemy's threats will likely come from the sea, air and by missiles, the Guards have been equipped with capabilities to neutralise the enemy's advanced technology," he said, according to another Iranian news agency, ISNA.

Iran's missile and space programmes have sparked concern in the West that such advanced technologies, combined with the nuclear know-how which the nation is acquiring, may enable Tehran to produce an atomic weapon.

Tehran denies its nuclear programme has military aims.

The new missile can be fired "from surface ballistically and can hit enemy vessels from a high altitude," Amir Ali Hajzadeh, head of the Guards' air force wing told Fars news agency.

"The missile is named Persian Gulf...its warhead will carry 650 kilogrammes of explosives," he said, adding that the missile was powered by solid fuel and



designed by the Guards.

Footage on state television showed the missile being fired atop a mobile launcher from a desert terrain.

The announcement of the new missile comes as Iran holds celebrations to mark the 32nd anniversary of its Islamic revolution which toppled the US-backed shah. Iran uses the run-up to the February 11 anniversary to tout its scientific and technological achievements.

In a separate function, Iran unveiled four new home-built satellites and engines of a rocket.

Meanwhile the head of naval Guards' naval forces, Ali Fadavi, issued a warning that Iran will hit back if it came under attack.

"The Islamic republic has the ability of blocking the Strait of Hormuz if threatened," Fadavi told Mehr news agency.

"We will deliver a very firm response if any powers do the slightest thing to hurt the security of the region."

Iranian military officials regularly warn of blocking the Strait of Hormuz -- the route through which 40 percent of world's oil supply by sea passes -- in case Iran comes under attack.

The United States and Israel have never ruled out the option of military strikes against Iran to stop its nuclear programme.



WHEN an opponent declares, "I will not come over to your side," I calmly say, "Your child belongs to us already... What are you? You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community."

Adolf Hitler  
Speech November 1933, quoted in *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich* by William Shirer.

## Russia to unveil new air defense system...

A Russian firm will disclose information about a new mobile short-range air defense system based on the Strelets launcher at the upcoming Aero India 2011 air show.

"The [Kolomna-based] Engineering Design Bureau will present for the first time details of a new ultra short-range air defense system based on the Strelets launcher for the portable Igla missiles," Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation said in a statement on Friday.

The Strelets multiple launcher unit was developed for use with the 9M39 Igla (NATO SA-18 "Grouse") and Igla-1 (NATO SA-16 "Gimlet") missiles. It provides an automatic remote launch capability in either single-round or salvo modes when mounted on various launch platforms.

Aero India-2011, which will be held in the southern city of Bangalore on February 9-13, will attract the record number of over 600 manufacturers, vendors and suppliers from 63 countries.

Russia will be represented by 35 companies, including MiG, Sukhoi, Almaz-Antei and Engineering Design Bureau.

Source: defencetalk.com

## Contemporary Quotation

A most modern and insane revolt

*It is not a revolution, not in the literal sense of the term, not a way of standing up and straightening things out. It is the insurrection of men with bare hands who want to lift the fearful weight, the weight of the entire world order that bears down on each of us - but more specifically on them, these ... workers and peasants at the frontiers of empires. It is perhaps the first great insurrection against global systems, the form of revolt that is the most modern and the most insane.*

*One can understand the difficulties facing the politicians. They outline solutions, which are easier to find than people say ... All of them are based on the elimination of the [president]. What is it that the people want? Do they really want nothing more? Everybody is quite aware that they want something completely different. This is why the politicians hesitate to offer them simply that, which is why the situation is at an impasse. Indeed, what place can be given, within the calculations of politics, to such a movement, to a movement through which blows the breath of a religion that speaks less of the hereafter than of the transfiguration of this world?*

Excerpt from *The shaping of a New World Order*, Mark LeVines, aljazeera.



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