

## SUNDAY POUCH

### PM's welcome call to opposition

*BNP should join AL in this vital endeavour*

**W**E welcome Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's call to the opposition to join the ruling party to register their contributions to the forthcoming session that will concern itself with amendments to prevent grabbing of state power through extra-constitutional means. Her statement in the Jatiyo Sangsad on Thursday to associate the opposition with the process should be reciprocated by the latter. We believe that in the larger interest of pluralism and with a view to securing a democratic future for the nation, the BNP should take up the government offer. That this nation has paid a high price because of past instances of coups and counter-coups has never been in doubt. The need, therefore, is now for both the ruling and opposition parties to forge a consensus on effectively putting a stop to such adventurism by ambitious elements.

It is in the interest of both the Awami League and the BNP to ensure the continued survival and strengthening of democracy. Strengthening democracy entails, however, much more than an exercise of the ballot once every five years. The restoration of democracy in 1991 notwithstanding, we have observed that it is always the majority party which appropriates all power for five years while the opposition has hardly any role to speak of. Modern democracy is all about governing, and governing well through the ruling party keeping the opposition engaged on crucial national issues. Similarly, it is for the opposition to remain focused on its role in parliament as a shadow government. The culture that has developed, of the ruling party governing in arrogance and the opposition boycotting parliament, can never be conducive to making democracy strong and fruitful.

Democracy very much requires ensuring that all the institutions of local government, so well defined in theory, are made fully operative. It is only through empowering the many tiers of democracy, especially at local levels --- union parishad, upazila parishad --- that democracy can take deeper roots and its fruits can be enjoyed by the people. The prime minister's call should now be followed by concrete action on the part of both the ruling party and opposition.

### Our part of WC ends

*Elated to have hosted it*

**F**INALLY the curtain has fallen on the ICC world cup extravaganza in Dhaka. With the third quarter final match between mighty Proteas and the Black Caps finishing on the wires, the World Cup itinerary in Bangladesh is well and truly over.

Without dwelling on our teams performances, we can say that the way we hosted our part of the tournament is cause for gratification for us and appreciation from our guests.

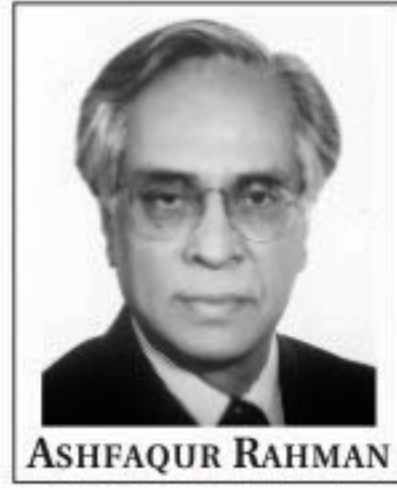
The organizing bodies and the members have successfully held the event with no major hiccups. The grand opening ceremony on February 17 at the Bangabandhu Stadium earned highest felicitation from all over the world. The striking display of light and sound kindled the hearts of cricket lovers the world over. Dhaka and Chittagong wore festive looks. Facilities and security provided to the players, distinguished guests, foreign visitors and the locals have been up to the mark even meeting international standards.

Match venues were no less gorgeous with all state-of-the-art facilities. The overwhelming response of the people of all ages, their appreciation of good cricket and their overall disciplined behaviour were marks of maturity. People's hospitality was praised by the guests and the players alike.

The only shortcoming was observed in the area of ticketing and ticket sales. There have been complaints that normal channels did not work efficiently as people had to undergo strains for getting tickets queuing up for hours together in front of the selling banks. Tickets slipped into the black market and sold at exorbitant prices. This shouldn't have happened.

It heartens to note that Bangladesh, as a co-host of ICC World Cup has played its part with passion, efficiency and management skill. This should encourage us to hold many more international sporting events.

# Between protecting and pulverising Libya: What next?



ASHFAQUR RAHMAN

**N**OW that the coalition of the willing led by the USA has imposed a no-fly zone in Libya and degraded its air defenses and air power, the big question is what next?

We recollect that the USA had imposed two no-fly zones in Iraq in the 1990's for a decade. But that could not take out President Saddam Hussain, just as the wish is now to dislodge Gaddafi from power in Libya.

Perhaps more notable is the instance of Nato's 1999 bombing campaign to force Serbia into abandoning the province of Kosovo. It worked, barely. Nato was about to launch a ground attack, when Serbia capitulated.

So why should one hope that this time round a no-fly zone will work? Let us look at what is different.

In Libya, the US led military intervention is now backed by a UN Security Council resolution. Ten votes were cast in favour of the resolution with no negative votes. Five member countries abstained from voting. Hence, there is now a greater legitimacy in imposing a no-fly zone over Libya.

There is a National Council of the rebels fighting Libyan leader Gaddafi, operating inside Libya. The Council is imperceptibly coalescing into a coherent body. France has already given it diplomatic recognition. There are, therefore, supporters of the no-fly zone within the country over which it has been imposed.

The rebels against Gaddafi have the major port Benghazi under their control. It has access to the Gulf of Sirte and thus to the Mediterranean Sea. They can bring in supplies from Europe without problem if they have funds. We are told that funds are available for now. A ground attack by Gaddafi on Benghazi may not be so easy now with a no-fly-zone in place.

Every Libyan has undergone a two year military training as is wont under their system. So all able-bodied men can use firearms. The rebels, though a rag-tag bunch, can now be converted very soon to a fighting force if they are provided with arms, equipments and training. They can operate at will with a no-fly zone in place.

So can all this bring about the fall of Gaddafi? Let us consider some of

the opportunities open to him at this stage.

To begin with, Gaddafi may still have an arsenal of chemical weapons. He will have no compunction in using them on the rebel forces if circumstances so warrant.

Gaddafi still has a string of tribes behind him. They may be disparate units, but could hold on to territory on the ground. This could in effect divide Libya into Gaddaf-held territories in the west and south of the country, and the rebels holding on to a strip of land to the east of Libya.

The Libyan population is Muslim. This is an ace up Gaddafi's sleeve. He has already pronounced that the

exists within the Arab League. Some think that the "jamming" of Libyan radar would be enough to impose a no-fly zone. The others think that degrading air defense installations and attacks on Gaddafi tank columns leads to "collateral damages" in lives lost and property damaged. This must therefore be stopped.

So if Gaddafi is able to contain the rebels can he carry on for a longer period at the helm in Libya? What are the options for the US in Libya now?

For the US, its involvement in Libya means it is now in armed conflict with three Muslim countries, i.e. Iraq, Afghanistan and Libya. By joining and enforcing the no-fly zone in

fact that the Libyan conflict could be tragically protracted. This could mean regional instability, humanitarian disaster or possible empowerment of extremes.

Two possible scenarios come to mind. The first could be like southern Iraq in the 1990's. Gaddafi reasserting control over Libya, but the rebels persisting with a component inside Libya and bases in other countries. Much external support for rebels would be required, including international funding, for forcing Gaddafi from power.

The other scenario could be like northern Iraq in 1990's, as the rebels carve out "liberated areas" under international protection, hoping for eventual reunification. The international community would have to give sustained military support by continuing to implement a non-fly zone.

There also has to be enough isolation of Gaddafi to prevent him from destroying the liberated zones. Inside these zones there has to be good governance to show that the rebels deserve international support. Over time, Gaddafi could be physically dislodged.

However, if Gaddafi is toppled soon under the weight of the present military intervention it could also present a messy scenario. Although there is a National Council it is not elected and consists of defectors and rabble. With no political infrastructure in place it would be some time before things would be sorted out. The new government is likely to be pliant to the US and European interests and could even lose control of its oil exports.

The Arab world would in any case have to pay back to the USA and others the expenses they are incurring now to enforce the no-fly zone. They asked for reimbursement of expenses after the Gulf war. Major legal and ethical questions would also have to be answered as to how regime change was effected in a sovereign country from outside.

Much of the clouds over Libya could clear if the enforcers of the no-fly zone declare their real intentions in that country. The US and Nato need to say why they are militarily intervening in a civil war. They should also sketch out to the world their exit strategy. Till that happens much of what is happening in Libya may stand suspect.

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Christian world has launched a "crusade" against the Muslims. He has called on all Muslims to rise against the infidels. If he is able to hold on to power for long he may have takers on his offer.

The Arab League which enthusiastically supported the no fly zone over Libya is now divided between two opinions. It has seen how the US, France and Britain have bombarded ground installations and caused deaths to civilians.

Thus a "schizophrenic" position

Libya it is yet to identify to US Congress or to the American people its game plan there.

Is it just to deter Gaddafi's assaults against his own people or to see that he is removed from power? Or is US seeking Libya's oil and money? President Obama seems to be saying that it is only to protect the civilians in Libya. The US House speaker in a letter to Obama has sought clarity on the goal of the US in Libya.

Barring a sudden collapse of the Gaddafi regime, all signs point to the

# Tsunami in Japan

A.B.M.S. ZAHUR

**A** tsunami is a wave of water that spreads through the sea, usually after a sub-sea floor quake. The tsunami that hits northern Japan created an enormous whirlpool in the east coast of the country. It was triggered by an 8.9 richter scale earthquake.

Whirlpools are very notable and frightening. They happen because of interaction between rushing water, geology of the coastline and seafloor. Some of the water overtops the shoreline and advances on the dry land in a manner similar to dam break wave. The impact of the tsunami also induces some very intense turbulent motion.

Tsunami whirlpools are nothing new. The great Lisbon earthquake happened in 1775. A retired seismologist of the University of Washington Ruth Ludwin and Ludwin's colleague Apela Colorado identified a petroglyph, which showed a whirlpool in the body of a sea monster. They wrote that according to the ancient tales the creature inundated canoes, made the salt-water boil, swallowed fishermen, and pushed fish into a cave.

The earthquake which hit Japan on March 11 is regarded as the strongest that hit Japan during the last 110 years. Apart from this, there were 150 aftershocks. The earthquake resulted in explosions in three atomic plants situated in Fukushima of Japan. As a consequence radiation spread around 20km of the atomic plants.

Some people have suggested canceling of Bangladesh project for pro-

two) nuclear energy producers would discuss about possible precautionary measures about their reactors.

Nuclear power is an unavoidable element of the energy mix. It is reported that the recent nuclear accident would create a "premium on safety" and support the case for building third generation reactors. One thing appears to be clear that there will be additional questions on

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ducing electricity from atomic energy. Such recommendation appears to have no strong reason. Europe's need to reduce dependence on oil, gas and coal means its multi-billion dollar nuclear new-build plans are unlikely to be hurt. Italy is the only member of Group of Eight industrialised nation without a nuclear power plant as it is prone to earthquakes. It is learnt that USA and France (number one and

safety.

Bangladesh health ministry has been advised not to be panicky because of explosion in Fukushima. However, the government should be careful about the danger of rumours about radiation hazard in Bangladesh. In the past, the then Bangladesh government, due to the panicky situation created by the Chernobyl disaster opened a cell in

the office of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) in 1986, though there was no possibility for spreading atomic radiation in Bangladesh.

Advanced nuclear powers appear to be coming forward for assisting Japan to overcome the present crisis. As per latest report available the heat in the affected nuclear plants is slowly cooling down. We hope that Japan will overcome the great crisis.

There has been a heavy blow to the Japanese economy due to tsunami and its aftermath. Preparation of final estimate may take a few days more. Due to this earthquake all the airports in Japan have been closed. The electricity connection in Tokyo has been destroyed in 4 million houses, gas line disconnected in 40 buildings, bullet trains have stopped running. 33 shelters have been set up in Tokyo city hall, university campus and different government buildings.

Japan is a close associate country of Bangladesh ever since its independence. We are in fact morally bound to assist Japan in whatever way we can. We may contact the Japanese government to assess the actual need of Japan.

The writer is a former Joint Secretary.

## THIS DAY IN HISTORY

March 27

**1854**  
Crimean War: The United Kingdom declares war on Russia.

**1958**  
Nikita Khrushchev becomes Premier of the Soviet Union.

**1971**  
Major Ziaur Rahman announces Bangladesh's independence on behalf of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman over Kalurghat Radio Station in Chittagong. His announcement follows one made earlier by M.A. Hannan. In Dhaka, the Pakistan Army continues killing Bengalis. The curfew is lifted for a few hours, during which time thousands of people leave Dhaka and head for the countryside. The army departs a number of foreign newsmen who had been holed up in Hotel Intercontinental (present day Sheraton Hotel).

**1981**  
The Solidarity movement in Poland stages a warning strike.

**1989**  
Millions of Russians go to the polls with indications that many Communist candidates have been rejected by the electorate.

**1993**  
Jiang Zemin is appointed President of the People's Republic of China.