

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Vietnam shows the way

Shun mindless retribution

Come to the path of dialogue

IT seems that the government has lost its sense of proportion, a precarious state to be in for a government that is led by the oldest party in the country. It is difficult to conclude otherwise from the absurd step it has chosen to take several opposition leaders to court for creating violence during hartal on Sunday

Reportedly, two cases have been filed against BNP leaders Fakhru Islam Alamgir and Ruhul Kabir Rizvi and LDP President Oli Ahmed and several other leaders and activists of 18-party alliance. In fact as many as 73 leaders of the newly formed alliance have been made accused in several cases including the cocktail blast at the secretariat and bus torching case.

To say the least, we find this utterly weird that party leaders belonging to the opposition are sought to be taken to the court accused of creating violence. Not that such action is the first of its kind. It had happened in the past which only exacerbated the situation

Not only does the government action appear irrational, there is little doubt also that the move has been motivated more by a feeling of vindictiveness rather than the government's wish to curb violence. And at a time like this, when the situation is turbulent, and when the need is for a more coolheaded approach to defuse the prevailing situation that has the prospect of escalating further, it seems that the government is itching for a confrontation by ratcheting up the level of confrontation.

We feel that the opposition for its part is only helping to make matters worse. Continual hartal for six days in the last fortnight, with more possibly in the offing, has brought suffering to the people. Not only has the economy suffered, look at the trouble the HSC examinees have had to face because of this.

We have said in the past and repeat that hartal will not take a political party anywhere; rather it will make public life miserable. We suggest both the parties engage in dialogue rather than in confrontation without further delay. The country can ill afford another spate of political uncertainty which will have the most deleterious consequences on the country.

Living by May Day spirit

Strive for greater dignity to workers

HOW far have we come from this day in 1886 USA, when police killed several people after firing on workers demonstrating for the eight-hour workday? Since the riots on this day some years later, since demonstrations for workers' rights every year since then -- how much have things changed?

Well over 100 years later, here in Bangladesh, workers are still having to fight for minimum wages, let alone fixed working hours. This, too, in industries which profit in the billions annually, making significant contributions to the nation's economy.

While the rich get richer and the poor get poorer in times of recession even, the quality of life of the working class has improved very little. While our leaders are busy with their high-sounding speeches in parliament and destructive activities out on the street, the people on whose labour our economy, our growth as a nation is based, sweat away in their suffocating work environments during the day, only to return to their homes in the slums teeming with undernourished, uneducated children, at night.

The trade unions which should be fighting for workers' rights are also often divided along political lines and rival companies, thus cutting short organised movements for workers' rights even before they begin. It is unfortunate but true that against an increasingly capitalist, materialistic and politicised society where vested quarters put their own selfish interests above everything, the working class must come together and stand on their own strength in the battle for rights. This May Day, our commitment towards workers', indeed human solidarity must be renewed. In a shift from our regular politics, fight the greed and corruption of a minuscule minority, breaking down the system of exploitation and growing inequality between the classes, towards a rights-based



SALEEMUL HUQ

LAST week, the government of Vietnam hosted over 300 international delegates from over sixty coun-

tries over seven days at the sixth International Conference on Community Based Adaptation (CBA6). The delegates spent the first three days in eight groups visiting community based adaptation projects across Vietnam, from the Mekong delta in the south to the coastal areas of central Vietnam to the mountains in the north.

The international delegates saw examples of successful community based adaptation in which local communities, NGOs and local government have collaborated to make the communities more resilient. At the end of the conference a "Solidarity Award" was given to the best CBA project, which was a combination of community based disaster risk reduction and adaptation to climate change run by school children with support from Save The Children and the government of Vietnam.

After the field visits were over the delegates spent four more days in Hanoi at the conference where over 100 papers were presented on vari-

ous aspects of CBA, including water, agriculture, gender, children, and many others.

The overall theme of CBA6 was "Communicating CBA," and this was done by sending tweets which

questions of the participants in Hanoi. Several thousand people, who were not able to attend the event, were thus able to follow it in real time.

CBA6 was thus the most success-

ation of CBA as well as in linking adaptation with disaster risk reduction. A new emerging area is a focus on community based adaptation in urban as well as rural communities.

Bangladesh's role:

Bangladeshis played a significant role at CBA6 in several ways. Firstly, there was significant presence of Bangladeshi participants from both civil society as well as government. They made a number of presentations in the different sessions. Secondly, Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies (BCAS) was one of the two international co-organisers of CBA6. The other was the London based International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). Thirdly, Bangladesh was selected to host the seventh international Conference (CBA7) in April 2013. Thus, Bangladesh will have the opportunity next year to showcase its CBA activities.

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A.M. AHAD/ DRIK NEWS

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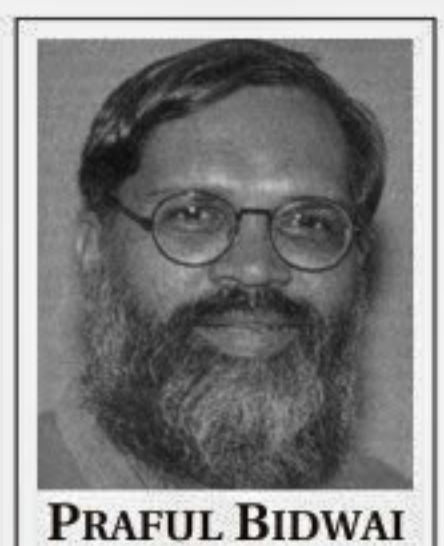
were followed by tens of thousands of people around the world, as well as blogs and video-blogs (vlogs).

There was also a daily live web-cast from Hanoi where people from all over the world were able to ask

ful of the series of international conferences on CBA that have been held over the years. There were a number of areas where new learning and experience had emerged, including on monitoring and evalu-

PRAFUL BIDWAI COLUMN

Nuclear missiles don't give security



PRAFUL BIDWAI

INDIA'S Agni-V missile launch, followed by Pakistan's Hatf-IV-Shaheen-1A launch, were greeted with deplorable machismo and

sabre-rattling in both countries. But the missile race will destabilise this region.

In India, praise was lavished on Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) personnel for their "scientific achievement," without asking how replicating a 1950s-vintage technology constitutes something original, and why such "achievements" are confined to mass-destruction weapons.

Sections of the media euphorically termed the Agni-V a "giant leap" and a "game-changer." Even the hostile reaction from China's state-owned *Global Times* didn't generate sobriety. The paper said India was being swept by a "missile delusion," but stands "no chance in an overall arms race with China. India should also not overstate the value of its Western allies and the profits it could gain from participating in a containment of China."

Clearly, China views India's missiles as a threat. The Agni-V is designed to reach Beijing and cities in eastern China. China's retaliation will extract a heavy price. But nobody talks about this.

India's Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme, to which the Agni belongs, doesn't warrant euphoria. It was launched in 1983 to develop the Prithvi, Agni, Akash, Trishul and Nag missiles by 1997.

Ten years after that deadline, and with a 400%+ cost overrun, only the short-range Prithvi and three crude Agni versions were ready. There were serious problems in switching from liquid-fuel to solid-fuel propulsion. Costs and time-schedules went haywire. Critical components were imported as indigenisation failed. The DRDO has never completed a

major project on time. It declares that a missile's development is complete after two or three test-flights, however successful. Other powers don't induct a missile unless 8 or 12 test-flights prove its reliability.

India's armed forces faced trouble in operationalising several missiles. Finally, the IGMDP was scrapped in 2008.

Last November, India tested the 3,500-km-range Agni-IV. The DRDO added a third stage to it, creating the 5,000-km-range Agni-V, and terming it an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile. This still falls short of an ICBM's range, generally defined as 5,500 km-plus. The DRDO itself says the Agni-V is only 80% indigenous.

The claim that the Agni-V can be launched from a truck, giving it better mobility and protection, is questioned by Chinese experts. They

for the 1998 nuclear tests.

Nuclear weapons have made India and Pakistan more, not less, insecure. Millions of civilians in both are vulnerable to, but defenceless against, attacks by nuclear-capable missiles. Both are stockpiling large quantities of bomb fuel. Pakistan is building new plutonium facilities even as it expands its uranium enrichment programme.

There is no worthwhile arms control process between the two states. Pakistan is reportedly busy dispersing its "nuclear assets" to prevent the US from getting hold of them so they don't fall into extremist hands. This will create new uncertainties.

Ultimately, the greatest danger in this region lies in its leaders' smug faith in nuclear deterrence. This doctrine holds that security is achieved through a "balance of terror" -- deterring an adversary's

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say India's roads and bridges cannot handle its 50-tonne weight.

The DRDO boastfully says it wants to MIRV the Agni-V, or equip it with Multiple Independently Targeted Re-entry Vehicles (warheads). It wants to use it as an anti-satellite weapon.

However, miniaturising warheads for MIRVing would be hugely expensive and violate India's nuclear doctrine based on a "credible minimum deterrent" with "no-first-use" of nuclear weapons. Anti-satellite weapons run counter to India's well-reiterated opposition to the militarisation of space.

It's out of order for the DRDO to announce such decisions/intentions. That's the prerogative of the political leadership, which must not get bamboozled into further developing the missile programme. India paid a heavy price in loss of security

nuclear attack by threatening him with "unacceptable damage" with your nukes.

For half a century, India maintained a principled stand against nuclear deterrence. It termed it "morally abhorrent," because underlying it is disregard for life, and preparedness to kill millions of civilians. India also argued that deterrence leads to an expensive arms race -- and greater insecurity.

This captured the truth about the Cold War, with its furious nuclear build-up, missile rivalry, and spiralling arms spending in the rival blocs led by the US and the USSR. Nuclear warheads in each multiplied from a few dozen in the early 1950s, to several hundreds in the 1960s, to many thousands in the 1970s.

Their number reached an astounding 70,000 in the mid-1980s, enough to destroy the world 50

times over. This made the world irredeemably unsafe, causing hundreds of accidents, strategic misperceptions, false alarms, and hair-raising confrontations like the Cuban missile crisis of 1962.

We now know from recently declassified documents that the Cuban crisis was much worse than thought. More scarily, neither the Kennedy nor the Khrushchev leadership knew of its true gravity. On many other occasions too, deterrence nearly broke down.

Deterrence assumes perfect transparency about adversaries' nuclear capabilities and doctrines, no accidental or unauthorised use of nuclear weapons, no strategic misperceptions, and no conventional conflict between them.

In the Cold War, there was very little transparency. All kinds of accidents happened. Nuclear submarines collided with ships carrying nuclear weapons. Weather rockets were mistaken for missiles. Counter-strikes were ordered -- to be called off in the nick of time.

Nuclear states do fight conventional wars -- as the USSR and China did in the 1970s. More infamously, India and Pakistan fought the mid-sized Kargil war one year after their nuclear blasts. This involved tens of thousands of troops, top-of-the-shelf weaponry, and hundreds of casualties, with potential for nuclear escalation.

Nor do nuclear weapons prevent a conventional arms race. India and Pakistan have raised their conventional arms spending three- to four-fold since 1998.

Tragically, India has unlearned the truth about nuclear deterrence and is replicating the Cold War-style behaviour pattern. It's rushing headlong into a missile race with China which is three times bigger in economic size and military expenditure. India must rethink -- and use diplomatic options to de-escalate rivalry with its neighbours.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

May 1

1886 Rallies are held throughout the United States demanding the eight-hour work day culminating in the Haymarket Affair.

1948 The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is established, with Kim Il-sung as leader.

1960 Cold War: U-2 incident Francis Gary Powers, in a Lockheed U-2 spyplane, is shot down over the Soviet Union, sparking a diplomatic crisis.

1961 The Prime Minister of Cuba, Fidel Castro, proclaims Cuba a socialist nation and abolishes elections.

2003 2003 invasion of Iraq: In what becomes known as the "Mission Accomplished" speech, on board the USS Abraham Lincoln (off the coast of California), U.S. President George W. Bush declares that "major combat operations in Iraq have ended".

2011 Barack Obama announces that Osama bin Laden, the suspected mastermind behind the September 11 attacks is killed by the United States special forces in Abbottabad, Pakistan.