

KALEIDOSCOPE

Jamaat targeting police

Take suitable actions to deter

HERE could not have been a more graphic illustration of how the Jamaati mobs have targeted the law enforcing agencies, particularly the police, than the front-page picture appearing in this newspaper on Sunday. The picture demonstrates the bestial attitude of the party cadres who incessantly beat up a helpless policeman doing his duty.

We condemn the act in the strongest possible terms. It is absolutely unacceptable, and given the ratcheting up of the level of targeted violence of Jamaat since November of last year, we are constrained to say that this has taken terroristic character.

Admittedly, the police have been known for its high-handedness and ham-handed handling of a situation from time to time, but they have never had to face a situation like this. What we are witnessing now is a completely new phenomenon, to go after the police as a deliberate tactic. Or it might be also a strategy of Jamaat to provoke the police to take precipitate actions that would result in the loss of life and provide them with the opportunity to indulge in the politics of the dead body.

It is also, perhaps, their idea to show how easy targets the police are, and this will, we are afraid, apart from sapping confidence of the public on the police as the keeper of law and order, might also have a demonstrative effect, and other criminals might subject the police to the same form of attack. This is a dangerous scenario to contemplate.

While we commend the police for displaying a remarkable degree of restraint till now, the risk is that under such circumstances restraint may be short-lived and the reaction from the police may be violent too, which should not occur.

We suggest that the police should assume such policy, short of firing to kill, that would deter anyone targeting them for attack. And they must also revamp the operational procedures so none of their members is left singly at the mercy of a violent mob. There cannot be a more morale-sapping scene, both for the police and the public than that of the police seemingly helpless at the mercy of a violent mob.

For an effective river commission

Mere recommendatory role will not do

A river commission is in the offing. But by all sights and sounds, it is going to be a toothless body. Nothing by way of a single authority having control over river foreshores, regulating river uses and coordinating government agencies dealing with rivers is being envisaged.

The draft of National River Protection Commission Act 2013 which has already received cabinet approval will empower the commission with a recommendatory role on river conservation, not an executive one. Not only is a commission being formed after three and a half years since High Court judgment requiring it in 2009, but also it is likely to have little or no representation of the experts on rivers and the environment.

The reasons for having a strong authority to save the rivers and water bodies which have been encroached upon and polluted are too well known to bear repetition. In a discussion meet on the draft law organised by the environmental group Poribesh Bachao Andolon with civic movement group Jonoudyog, the participants have made a strong case for an effective river commission.

It would be self-defeating if the unwieldy government agencies such as Water Development Board, Inland Water Transport Authority and the environment department do not work under a single and unified command at certain level. For the experience has been that without being accountable to anybody these agencies often work at cross-purposes. What is worse, they blame each other for the dire strait the rivers find themselves in.

The way our water resources are dying and the potential for effective land use is being wasted, nothing short of a fully empowered, professionally manned, adequately equipped and autonomous commission can help us turn the tide.

We would therefore endorse the environmentalists' demand for a public hearing on the draft law of the commission. This will enable inputs from experts and stakeholders facilitating the process of forming an effective river commission.

Let it not turn out to be another avenue for just



SYED FATAHUL ALIM

The curtain has finally fallen on the saga of Padma Bridge Project with the World Bank (WB) loan. The WB president's remark at a

discussion in Washington reiterated the global lender's unambiguous stance that Bangladesh must carry through the probe into the allegation of "corruption conspiracy" regarding the bridge project to get the loan.

This, in effect, was a response to Finance Minister AMA Muhith's bid to meet him for expediting the loan processing for the bridge. And the WB chief's comment actually precipitated the government's countermeasure by way of a letter to the Bank seeking withdrawal of the earlier request that it had made for the loan.

But why was this step necessary at all?

Was the World Bank president's stance unforeseen? Has not the Bank been pressing the government for the graft probe long before cancelling the loan agreement on June 30, 2012? And did not the finance minister a day after the loan cancellation tell the Jatiya Sangsad (parliament) that "there has been no misuse, corruption or irregularities in the Padma Bridge Project" and that "the World Bank statement has humiliated the whole country...?"

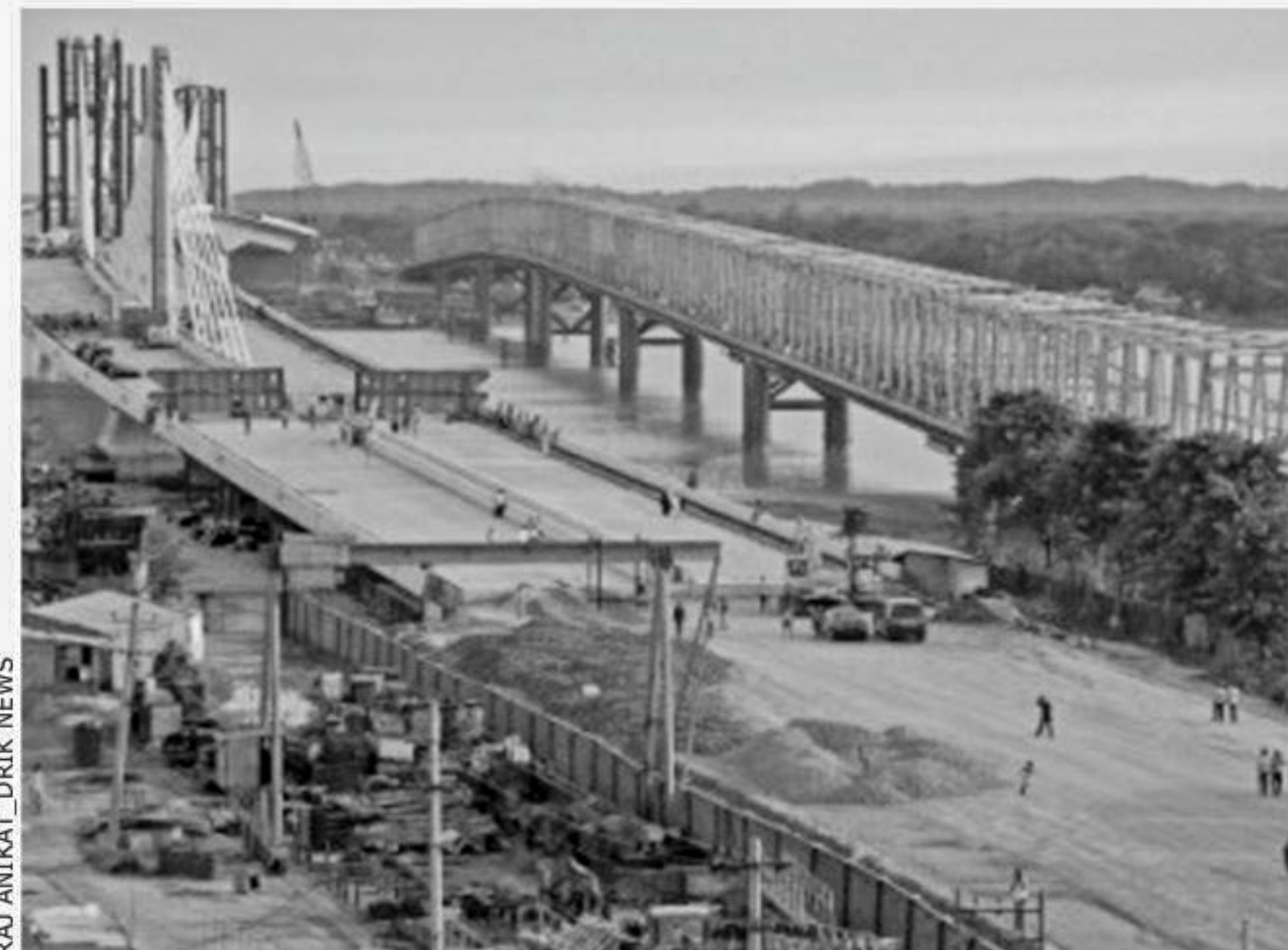
And everyone knows about how the government looked for alternative sources of funding, like Malaysia, while at the same time whipped up patriotic zeal over the issue and mobilised domestic funding.

Why was it then necessary to lick the dust and again approach the same global lender to reconsider the loan, agreeing to comply with its demand for conducting probe into what it termed "corruption conspiracy?"

The World Bank appointed an external panel to review the graft probe in its last letter to the Anti-

Making the possible impossible

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RAJ ANIKAT DRINK NEWS

corruption Commission (ACC), which made it clear that they would consider the probe as fair only when all their conditions were met without exception. In this respect, they picked no bones about their "unhappiness" over excluding the former communication minister from probe.

So, why should the government, now, mind when the World Bank president only reiterated its demand for completing the probe according as it has been wanting all through to qualify for the loan?

The government's responses to the emerging issues throughout the entire period -- from bringing the graft allegation by the bank to actual cancellation of the loan contract, to agreeing to WB panel's, reviewing the ongoing probe by ACC to the Panel's questioning the fairness of the probe (as the former communications minister remained beyond the grip of the law) and finally to WB president's comments in Washington -- did not reflect any sign of maturity.

On the other hand, at every step it betrayed its unprofessional attitude, ineptness, immaturity and inexperience. As a result, we are again back to square one. And ultimately by getting out of the loan deal, in such a manner, has the government been able to

vindicate the finance minister's earlier claim that there had been "no corruption in the Padma Bridge project?"

Clearly, the government's action was a face-saving measure. And to put a brave face on WB's regrets, the government has revived its old patriotic fervour that the bridge will be built with its own money.

At the same time, the government is also claiming that it will explore other sources of financing from donors such as JICA, IDB, as well as the governments of Malaysia, China, India and so on. But learning about the government's letter to the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) have also withdrawn their funding commitments.

So, the possibility of approaching these two large alternative donors has also evaporated. How far Malaysia, China, or India will get involved in the bridge project is anybody's guess.

The net achievement so far is that after wasting an opportunity, we have treaded into total uncertainty. A project that has been a popular demand since the 90s and given a go during the military-backed caretaker government, and which later became the

ruling Awami League's election pledge, and the preparations for which started at the inception of the present government, has fallen flat at its penultimate year in office.

What was at stake that pushed the government so far as to even seek withdrawal of the loan request that it had made to the World Bank?

Are the common people convinced of the government's dealing with the global lender and its final decision to withdraw the loan request? They are not.

On the contrary, they are flabbergasted about the way it has botched up the entire issue. They are finding it hard to accept that the dream bridge of some 30 million development-hungry people of the south-western districts of Bangladesh, and which was within sight of realisation, has been made difficult.

And now they are being told that the bridge construction work will start in two months!

The grand failure should at least remain as a lesson for the future governments: No government can succeed by placing partisan interests before the nation before national ones.

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The New York Times EXCLUSIVE

Work with China, don't contain it

JOSEPH S. NYE

CITING an escalating dispute over islands in the East China Sea, The Economist warned last week that "China and Japan are sliding toward war." That assessment may be too alarmist, but the tensions have bolstered the efforts of some American analysts who have urged a policy to "contain" China.

During a recent visit to China, I was struck by how many Chinese officials believe such a policy is already in place and is the central purpose of President Obama's "pivot" toward Asia. "The pivot is a very stupid choice," Jin Canrong, a professor of international relations, declared publicly. "The United States has achieved nothing and only annoyed China. China can't be contained," he added.

Containment was designed for a different era, and it is not what the United States is, or should be, attempting now. At the start of the Cold War, containment meant economic isolation of the Soviets and regional alliances like Nato to deter Moscow's military expansion.

Later, to the chagrin of George F. Kennan, the father of containment, the doctrine led to the "domino effect" theory behind the escalation of the Vietnam War.

Cold war containment involved virtually no trade and little social contact. But China now is not what the Soviet Union was then. It is not seeking global hegemony, and the United States not only has an immense trade with China but also

huge exchanges of students and tourists.

When I worked on the Pentagon's East Asia strategy in 1994, during the Clinton administration, we rejected the idea of containment for two reasons. If we treated China as an enemy, we were guaranteeing a future enemy. If we treated China as a friend, we kept open the possibility of a more peaceful future.

We devised a strategy of "integrate but hedge" -- something like Ronald Reagan's "trust but verify." America supported China's membership in the World Trade Organization and accepted Chinese goods and visitors. But a 1996 declaration reaffirmed that the postwar United States-Japan security treaty was the basis for a stable and prosperous East Asia.

President Clinton also began to improve relations with India to counterbalance China's rise.

This strategy has enjoyed bipartisan support. President George W. Bush continued to improve relations with India, while deepening economic ties with China. His deputy secretary of state, Robert B. Zoellick, made clear that America would accept the rise of China as a "responsible stakeholder."

Obama's "rebalancing" toward Asia involves moving naval resources to the Pacific, but also trade, human rights and diplomatic initiatives. As his national security adviser, Thomas E. Donilon, said in November, the American-Chinese relationship "has elements of both cooperation and competition."

Asia is not a monolith, and its internal balance of power should be the key to our strategy. Japan, India, Vietnam and other countries do not want to be dominated by China, and thus welcome an American presence in the region. Unless China is able to attract allies by successfully developing its "soft power," the rise in its "hard" military and economic power is likely to frighten its neighbors, who

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will coalesce to balance its power.

A significant American military and economic presence helps to maintain the Asian balance of power and shape an environment that provides incentives for China to cooperate. After the 2008-9 financial crisis, some Chinese mistakenly believed that America was in permanent decline and that this presented new opportunities. A result was that China worsened its relations

with Japan, India, South Korea, Vietnam and the Philippines -- a mistake that confirmed that "only China can contain China."

But America's rebalancing toward Asia should not be aggressive. We should heed Mr. Kennan's warning against overmilitarization and ensure that China doesn't feel encircled or endangered. The world's two largest economies have much to gain from cooperation on fighting climate change, pandemics, cyberterrorism and nuclear proliferation.

With China becoming more dependent on Middle Eastern energy, we should discuss maritime regulations to ensure free passage of ships and include China in Pacific naval exercises. We should help China develop domestic energy resources like shale gas and encourage China and Japan to revive their 2008 plan for joint undersea gas exploitation.

And we should make clear that if China meets certain standards, it can join the negotiations over the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a proposed free-trade agreement around the Pacific Rim.

Containment is simply not a relevant policy tool for dealing with a rising China. Power is the ability to obtain the outcomes one wants, and sometimes America's power is greater when we act with others rather than merely over others.

The writer, a professor at the Harvard Kennedy School and a former Pentagon official, is the author of the forthcoming book *Presidential Leadership and the Creation of the American Era*.

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THIS DAY IN HISTORY

February 4

1789 George Washington is unanimously elected as the first President of the United States by the US Electoral College.

1969 Yasser Arafat takes over as chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

1980 Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini names Abolhassan Banisadr as president of Iran.

2003 The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is officially renamed to Serbia and Montenegro and adopts a new constitution.

2004 Facebook, a mainstream online social network is founded by Mark Zuckerberg.