

A momentous deal struck with Iran

Triumph of multilateral diplomacy

AFTER years of protracted, often chequered, negotiations with Iran on nuclear regimen, a framework agreement has been inked between Tehran and US, UK, France, China and Russia plus Germany, known as P5+1. This preliminary accord outlines a formula of verifiable limits on Iran's ability to enrich uranium in exchange for phased but rapid withdrawal of sanctions on the country.

With the long-standing sanctions crippling Iran's economy, not only did the people suffer, the country's overall development was also stifled. Moreover, Iran felt encumbered in taking its rightful place in the region. Little wonder, therefore, that Iran's foreign minister Javad Zarif has described the deal as 'win-win' outcome. In fact, exemplary give-and-take scripted the historic deal.

Obama must be credited with having held his ground against Israeli resistance and a hostile Republican-dominated Congress. He also had to sell the deal to skeptical allies. In all, his tenacious and patient diplomacy, with Kerry at his side, and a responsive Iranian leadership staying the course, the forward-looking deal could be worked out.

Now the real challenge begins—to translate the framework accord into a comprehensive agreement by June 30 this year. That Iran and six world powers have been involved in finalising the preliminary deal kindles hopes for its sustainability into a final accord.

A questionable project on Sonai River

Save its natural course

ACCORDING to environmentalists, the construction of a 10-storey Future Park on the river Sonai, Habiganj would violate multiple laws and lead to the eventual demise of the river. The land is being grabbed by setting up border pillars inside the river, thus decreasing its width and encumbering the flow of water.

In 2009, the High Court directed that the water's reach during rainy season is to be considered when demarcating the river area, and an additional fifty metres on each side of the river is to be counted as the total area of the river. However, environmentalists allege that the building is being constructed in violation of the said directive. A photo taken by The Daily Star, during the last rainy season, corroborates the claim, showing the building is being established on what should legally constitute the river area.

According to port rules 1966, land management directives 1991, wetland conservation act 2000, and water act 2013, even if the land over which the river flows is privately owned, one cannot fill or building any structure there. Notably, the shipping ministry imposed a ban on the building last year, arguing that the structure was hindering the free course of the river.

We are concerned that instead of implementing this ban, another taskforce was formed, which concluded this year that the structure stands on private property and hence must be permitted. However, the taskforce's spot visit was conducted during the dry season, and not during monsoon, as directed by the law.

We urge the government to look into the issue and reconsider the taskforce's decisions in light of river-related laws. Furthermore, the 2009 HC order must be upheld, and wrongly placed demarcation pillars must be removed immediately if we are to protect our rivers.

COMMENTS

"Uproot terrorism" (March 29, 2015)

Zman7

"We'll have to provide security to the people." Yes dear PM, please do so otherwise the souls of the people who were burned alive by petrol bombs or other form of arson attacks will not rest in peace. They are moving around with pain crying not only for justice but also for the safety and security of their loved ones including their parents, children, friends and neighbours who are still alive.

"A legacy of excellence in public service" (March 29, 2015)

M. Obaidur Rahim

I appreciate Mr. Shams for presenting such an excellent article. I knew Mr. Razaq personally since 1966. I have been in contact with him from time to time for the last fifty years. I have admired him all my life. In my opinion he may be considered as a role model for any profession. I wish Bangladesh had more civil servants like him.

A shameful reality

STRAIGHT LINE



MUHAMMAD
NURUL HUDA

District. Reportedly, the first three of these 14 families left their homes following threats and intimidation from powerful groups in 2013 and the next two families in 2014; and the compounding tragedy is that on March 12, 2015, the rest of the families were also driven off their homestead land.

What is most disturbing is that the affected minority families were threatened and evicted over a protracted period without allegedly any action against the perpetrators. Quite clearly, criminal actions like destroying and looting of property after the terrified minority families left their homes have not been punished. Under the circumstances, one might ask if psychological harassment and material

A disturbing media report tells us about the plight of at least 14 Hindu families that have been evicted by land grabbers allegedly at the behest of influential quarters in Barguna

deprivation of minority Hindu population in some parts of the country shall continue to be a dangerously recurrent reality.

Attacks on Hindus and their property have demonstrated the immensely sad but blunt reality that even after forty two years of democratic pluralistic existence, the religious minority of Bangladesh have not been able to save themselves from the deadly embrace

has decreased over the years, particularly since the creation of People's Republic of Bangladesh in 1971? Has the mindset of the majority community really changed for establishing the ethos of an equal rights society?

We in Bangladesh need to ask whether it is religion per se or the politicization of religious identity and the mobilization of this identity for community and state ends that have

Attacks on Hindus and their property have demonstrated the immensely sad but blunt reality that even after forty two years of democratic pluralistic existence, the religious minority of Bangladesh have not been able to save themselves

of communal mischief. In fact, when the battered Hindu citizens proposed to disenfranchise the entire community by publicly asking to strike Hindus off the voters' list so that they can escape the wrath of politically motivated obscurantist elements, one could gauge the depth and severity of the wound.

Upon scrutiny of the ground situation one might say that it is time to find out why the number of Hindus

resulted in communal violence. We also need to find out whether the emphasis is on contests for power and resources.

Coming to specifics, in Bangladesh, why do we witness attacks on Hindu properties? Is creation of hatred a ploy for some of the majority Muslim politicians and influential people to grab Hindu property? The torching of Hindu houses over a petty altercation in the recent past quite clearly indicated the

malafide intention of terrorizing and dislocating the vulnerable minority. Simple common sense should tell that the ferocity of attack on Hindus is caused by the victims' weakness and the perpetrators' suspected immunity from the process of law. Are the patrons of the mischief-makers too powerful to be dislodged?

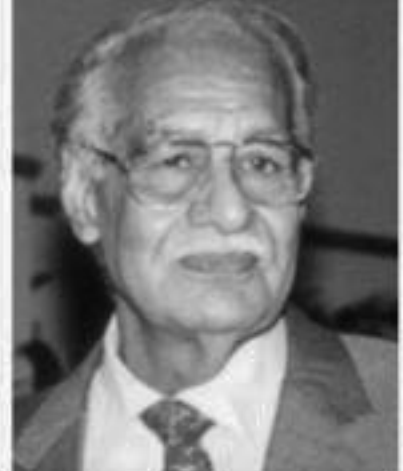
The immediate imperative, under the circumstances, is to effectively deactivate the vultures that are on the watch to grab the lands and properties of panicked Hindus. This requires political will and stern administrative measures for ensuring continued security. However, beyond that, the minorities need to politically organise themselves in such a manner that in the course of time, issues of their honorable existence become a focus of mainstream politics. Such course of action is expected to provide substantial relief.

The politicians cannot be part of a deliberate effort to realign state and cultural power in the interest of the majority because that will result in non-Muslim minorities being defined explicitly or implicitly as second class citizens of Bangladesh. The progress of a nation demands proactive action from the state to ensure the security and rights of all citizens.

The writer is a columnist of The Daily Star.

Improving police command

BETWEEN THE LINES



KULDIP NAYYAR

It is a travesty of justice. The court has let off all the 16 policemen, belonging to the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) of Uttar Pradesh on the lack of evidence. It was dark and it was difficult to

determine who from among the policemen fired at whom, says the court. Apparently, no real hard work was done to conduct the inquiry and fix responsibility. Yet how were the 16 accused separated from the rest in the first instance? Some criteria would have been adopted to reach the verdict.

In fact, the happening reminded one of the Jalianwala Bagh tragedies. At that time, the British officers blocked the only route of exit and killed nearly 1,000 demonstrators demanding independence. At Hashimpura, too, the five lanes where Muslims lived had no rear exit, so there was no escape route.

The army was also searching every house. Muslim men, old, young and children were coming on to the road with their hands raised. Women were on the rooftops, crying, begging the PAC to let go of their men. One top Army official has rightly demanded an inquiry.

True, the court had to let off all the accused. The killings cannot, however, be wished away. Naturally, the people are generally appalled over the acquittal of the accused PAC personnel. The families of those killed feel let down because, if only the perpetrators had been punished, they would have got some sort of justice.

By letting off the accused, without ordering a fresh probe or taking the police to task, the court may have done anything but serving the ends of justice. The case is yet another example to testify that the police do not go whole hog in pursuing an inquiry when it comes to its own force's involvement. If even after 28 years of investigation, the police have failed to produce before the court admissible evidence, it is time to reassess the effectiveness of the police. The cover up is obvious. I wish the court had commented on that.

Granted the law and order is a state's responsibility under the constitution, but the central government is equally responsible for peace in the country. It was incumbent upon New Delhi to have appointed an inquiry committee from its side so that the witnesses, who are telling the media their plight, can be asked to testify before it. The larger question that

the Hashimpura episode has posed is the lack of recourse when the police drag their feet and when the accusing finger is directed at the force itself.

The overall control of the Union Home Ministry has not worked effectively. State chief ministers do not care about its behests even if the same party is ruling in the state as well as at the centre. Reforms proposed by the Dharamveer Commission some 39 years ago are accumulating dust in the states which were asked to implement them. The commission's main recommendation was that the states should have a supervisory body,

system is to blame. The system cannot override the wishes of people. In a democracy, it ultimately depends on the representatives they return to the state legislatures and parliament. However, no consensus emerges even there because the institutions have become politicized.

In such a scenario, the judiciary is the only institution that still enjoys respect. If the police were put under its supervision, the force may act more independently than it is doing now. The police may find that the political interference is not there. It does amount to running away from the problem than finding a solution. But in the prevailing

execute what the political masters wanted.

The same type of obedience is visible now that the details of the Babri Masjid destruction are coming out. The police were willingly cooperating with the Kalyan Singh government which was, despite the Supreme Court's order to maintain status quo, determined to destroy the Masjid. It is encouraging to see that the apex court has issued notices to the top leaders of the BJP like L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti, to explain their involvement in the entire happening.

The BJP leaders would have to explain



PHOTO: THE INDIAN EXPRESS

The Indian Army rounding up some general people in Hashimpura, Meerut to hand them over to the Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) of Uttar Pradesh on 22 May 1987.

including the leader of the opposition, to keep an eye on the appointments and transfers of officers from SHOs and above. However, the commission's sole motive was how to separate the state from politics.

State chief minister did not agree to the proposal. Today, they interfere even in the appointment of a thana (police station) in charge. They want their own loyal officers in such positions so that they could make a telephone call to them directly, as they do, to influence the investigation of cases against the men of their party or even acquaintances.

It is too farcical an argument that the

political climate, there is little scope for anything working independently.

It is disconcerting that things have come to such a pass. Unfortunately, even by persisting with the status quo the system is not functioning properly. A new experiment is required. The police force under the judiciary may turn out to be a better experiment with commitment than the options we have at present.

The Shah Commission, which went into the excesses of the emergency, came to the sad conclusion that the police had become an instrument of tyranny in the hands of rulers. The force carried out illegal orders and went out of the way to

how for months they recruited kar sevaks, collected funds and carried out the destruction act at Ayodhya. It is sad that even after 23 years, there is no plausible explanation about how the police were effete to enforce the law and order. True, the history of the PAC is too well known as it had come to be influenced by religion and even built temples at the thanas. There was not even a word of reprimand and it was obvious that the top brass itself was contaminated. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor?

The writer is an eminent Indian columnist.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Disillusioned by state's indifference

When someone feigns to be asleep, it impossible to wake that person up; that is what exactly is happening with those who are in power. They must be fully aware of the hazards of nuclear power plants as experts and conscious citizens are urging the government to abandon the plan and save the country. If an accident happens in the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant the consequences

will be unimaginable. The building of the plant must be stopped.

The government is also planning to set up a coal fired power plant at Rampal which will destroy our heritage the Sundarbans, the world's largest mangrove forest. The plant will cause grave damage to the forest's ecosystem and wildlife.

Therefore the ruling party must pay attention to these serious issues, not only of how to remain in control.

Nur Jahan
Chittagong

Dhaka's pollution – getting out of control

Dhaka is one of the most densely populated and polluted cities of the world. Air, water, soil, sound, light etc. every kind of pollution can be found in Dhaka. These various kinds of pollution cause all kinds of health hazards – cancer, lung disease, deafness and so on. It's high time we all took necessary measures to reduce the harmful effects of environmental pollution to save the present and future generation. Appropriate policy of environment and health and its proper implementation can be helpful in this perspective.

Md. Arifur Rahman
Environment Counselor
Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority

Unabated coaching business

A few years earlier, the education ministry provided guidelines to curb teachers' involvement in coaching business. But this practice is still going on unabated in many cities and even in rural areas. Some teachers give lessons poorly in the classroom so that students have to join in the coaching classes. Even many of them force the students to join in coaching classes; otherwise they don't give marks in the exam. That's why many students succumb to the pressure of coaching and private tuition.

We don't want just policy; we want to see real action of the education ministry regarding this issue.

Samira
On e-mail