

Dhaka Global Dialogue: An innovative construct



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THE recently held Dhaka Global Dialogue, organised jointly by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS)

and the Indian independent think tank Observer Research Foundation (ORF) was an innovative exercise for pursuing interactive, participatory and broad-based public diplomacy. The Dhaka based Australian and the British High Commissions were also actively involved. It created an opportunity for policymakers from Bangladesh and India as well as representatives and practitioners from a wide-range of disciplines, to interact freely amongst themselves and with the attendant audience, share their experiences and offer possible solutions on issues that impact both their societies. The candid, objective and open manner of the deliberations enriched the proceedings.

The event was inaugurated on November 11 by the prime minister, thereby giving the process a strong seal of political endorsement from the Bangladesh government. The presence of Mr Ram Madhav Varanasi, National Secretary General of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party of India, and of Mr Manish Tewari of the Indian National Congress Party, as panellists, signalled the bipartisan support of the Indian political establishment to the process. Speaker of the Bangladesh Parliament Shireen Sharmin Chaudhary's keynote address on the second day focused on the role of parliamentary diplomacy in strengthening people to people relationship among countries. A host of cabinet ministers and parliamentarians from Bangladesh, including the



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina poses for a photo with dignitaries and organisers during the inauguration of the three-day "Dhaka Global Dialogue-2019".

PHOTO: BSS

foreign minister, took part at various sessions, deliberated substantively on their respective subjects, talked of the challenges ahead and answered questions from other panellists and from the participating audience.

Although the principal participants were from Bangladesh and India, the canvass of discussion covered a much broader space. Issues of major geo-political importance like the US-India-Japan backed Indo-Pacific Strategy and the China sponsored Belt-Road Initiative and their broader implications were discussed at length among politicians and diplomats, as were issues that present clear and imminent danger like climate change, violent extremism, hate crimes and migration. Social issues like health, the importance of renewable energy, the opportunities and challenges of a digital world also found prominent space. Discussions on the role of

culture and commerce in the clothing industry added to the diversity of the discourse. Women's role in politics and policymaking were deliberated extensively with participants from diverse parts of the world like Bangladesh, India, Afghanistan, Argentina and Brazil, among others.

The multifarious angles of the Indo-Pacific regime and its geo-politics, however, was the dominant theme of the exercise, taking up as many as six panel discussions.

The Dhaka Global Dialogue, the first of its kind, was rounded up with a substantive panel discussion captioned, "Convergence of Regional Initiatives for Optimising Common Benefits". This is of critical importance for a country like Bangladesh, placed as it is in a sensitive geo-political region.

Geographically, Bangladesh sits on the top of the Bay of Bengal and shares its maritime and land boundaries with

India and Myanmar. It is the coupling in the chain that connects South and South East Asia and is linked through the Bay of Bengal to the Indian, and by extension, the Pacific Oceans. It is this very location that gives Bangladesh its geo-political relevance. This also poses a challenge for Bangladesh as it strives to position itself in this evolving geopolitical scenario and aims to preserve and protect her national interests while maintaining healthy relationships with key countries.

On its part, Bangladesh has much to offer, beginning with the fact that it is on the verge of graduating to a middle-income country. The country has recorded enviable and consistent economic growth in recent times. The middle class is among the largest in the region and growing. Bangladesh can rightfully boast of having a secularised society with a positive track record of girl's education and women's

empowerment. In the area of foreign policy, Bangladesh believes in the principle of using diplomacy as the primary tool for promoting its national interests and for resolution of disputes. It has been a strong advocate of mutually beneficial bilateral, regional and trans-regional relationships. Its commitment to combating the threats posed by climate change and global warming has been consistent. Bangladesh's policy of zero tolerance on extremism and terrorism has been amply demonstrated. Bangladesh has a sizeable military that is professional, disciplined and has developed a global character. It is widely respected for its disaster management capabilities and for keeping peace under the United Nations in far off lands. More recently, Bangladesh has earned universal accolades for providing shelter to more than a million Rohingya refugees fleeing extreme persecution in Myanmar. In sum, Bangladesh has earned recognition as a responsible neighbour and an important regional player.

It is in this context that the Dhaka Global Dialogue has assumed special significance for Bangladesh. The initial exercise was a major success. It had all the ingredients for becoming an annual event that could have a wider participation. Having a full panel discussion on the role of the media, for instance, would give it added dimension. Involvement of the newer generation in the exercise gave the three-day event greater traction. Scope should however be created to enable enhanced interactive participation for the audience and not restrict them to asking cryptic questions. The new generation are curious, they have an opinion about their future and would welcome the opportunity to share them unhindered.

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Pink ball, espionage and beating India

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

MY earliest encounter with the razzmatazz colour, discounting my childhood *chushni* (more about that later) was due to my kindergarten

Mahmudullah and Co. with the red ball in daylight. We also fell for the Indore bait because seriously our Board understood that the First Test would be played indoors, as would be the second half under lights with not many people watching, something of a casino milieu. No wonder we were hardly in the pink of the game at Kolkata.

According to our man Clouseau, the Indians practised long hours with the pink ball, but in secret because it looked silly; one reason why half the match was arranged to be played in the dark. They could not be losing against Bangladesh in front of a boisterous and passionate daytime home crowd. However, the presence of our prime minister drew the huge crowd of plus-forty thousand, a record for a contemporary Test match. The West Bengal chief minister in attendance looked on with watery eyes, but there was still no confirmation about sharing the Teesta flow.

BCB bosses had not a clue. They were busy hiring a coach for this and a coach for that instead of a much-needed detective. A Dhaka-Kolkata luggage party gifted one sample, but none of our boys so much as touched the ball because it was too feminine. They read somewhere that pink is the official colour for little girls, symbolising sugar and spice and everything nice.

Ignoring such a tawdry fairy-tale narrative, the Board should have had the foresight to purchase several dozen pink balls to give our boys the feel and a sound preparation on a 'bouncy wicket'. The latter should have been reported had BCB employed professional cricket spies instead of relying on shopaholics of the other



Ishant Sharma celebrates after completing his five-wicket haul.

PHOTO: BCCI

kind. As a result of gambling with destiny, our boys played with a pink *chushni* in their mouth. No threat to hygiene, as there were several.

Given the difference in playing standard between the two teams, the colour of happiness was perhaps destined to make a cricket-loving people lose interest in the war of cricket. Make that two nations because the Eden crowd of plus 60k had fizzled by the second day, was a trickle on the third, and (little surprise) there was no fourth day in the promised five-day face-off between cricket's Goliath and a Board opting to gleefully remain nonentity.

Apologies to Anarkali and Salim, Shah Jahan and Mumtaz Mahal, Golapi and Milon... As most love affairs are,

this colour of unconditional love was seemingly portrayed one-sided at the home of the Cricket Association of Bengal. Despite extending an invitation, because pink represents friendship, Narendra Modi did little justice to the office of the Indian prime minister by failing to receive his counterpart, Sheikh Hasina at Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose or anywhere in the City of Joy. Now NRC may be Amit Shah's WMD (*Woh Mardala Dostana*), but Modijee, Sheikh Hasina is our prime minister. By another definition of course, pink is the colour of love or "oneself". I rest my case.

Other denominations of the colour pink, affection and harmony, transpired aplenty at Kolkata in and outside the stadium because we are Bangalee on

both sides of the eastern Radcliffe Line. After the game is done and dusted, all that matters is an exchange of Padma's Eelish, and sweet Langcha. Inner peace, however, as defined by the colour rejuvenated by a ball battered and bettered by India, belonged to Virat Kohli and his men.

Pink is the sweet side of the colour "red". And that is what many will see in the first day-night India-Bangladesh Test and two-days' rest. To begin a brand-new innings, Bangladesh cricket administration, team management, technical advisers, and curator and (slow) grounds men, need a complete overhaul. Some tested, but tried (and tired) officials need to be shown the door if they cannot see one. How many more years of experience they need, one wonders. There are top officials dis-serving the game for three to four decades. One assumes they have no other interest here other than the lost game of gentlemen.

A new elected board (manned by persons of sporting pedigree), a fresh team management (based on unsullied track record), a thinking captain (especially after winning a toss), cricketers abounding in confidence (even after the opening pair is out for two, or going for twenty in the previous over), a head coach who does not justify grossly erroneous decisions, and after hundreds of hours of batting, bowling and fielding practice with the pink sensation, we are now in a position to beat India hollow. Yup! I am talking about Year 2050. Or earlier, if good sense and sincerity prevails.

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ON THIS DAY IN HISTORY



December 1, 1955
Rosa Parks's refusal to relinquish her bus seat

This day in 1955, in violation of segregation laws in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to surrender her bus seat to a white passenger and was arrested, sparking a 381-day bus boycott led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Uneven hairdo
- 5 Seasonal song
- 10 Robust
- 11 1990s veep
- 12 Helper: Abbr.
- 13 Anchor place
- 14 Question at a reunion
- 16 Question asked in a foggy state
- 20 Benders
- 23 Sign of approval
- 24 Clergy's counterpart
- 25 Chase in the movies
- 27 Baseball's Mel
- 28 Mason's tool
- 29 Question to a
- 32 Question to an anxious sort
- 36 Avg. size
- 39 Dissolute fellow
- 41 Writer Ferber
- 42 Window sections
- 43 Glade grazer
- 45 "Pygmalion" writer
- 46 Diner dish
- 47 Too
- 48 Goes out in the rain
- 49 Plain to see
- 50 Banded rock
- 51 Hold up
- 52 Mine yield
- 53 Question to a
- 54 Grill waste
- 55 Those folks
- 56 Fresh
- 57 Chess turn
- 58 Pastoral poem
- 59 Sluggish
- 60 Trail
- 61 Singer Coolidge
- 62 Rowing team
- 63 Paid tribute to Cook's mint
- 64 Binding need
- 65 Ruffians
- 66 Took the bus
- 67 Celtic letter
- 68 Calendar span
- 69 Atlas page
- 70 Longoria of TV
- 71 Bear lair
- 72 Went ahead
- 73 Those folks
- 74 Fresh
- 75 Chess turn
- 76 Pastoral poem
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