

Lynching goes further astray

Put a lid on it by all means

ONCE again lynching has made news, but in a different setting where the mob was not the lord of all it surveyed. The police were on the spot and their guns trained at the criminals who have been wreaking havoc on the inhabitants of village Char Clerk in Noakhali. In progress was a perfectly commendable combing operation by a 300-strong police contingent. The police obviously needed the help of the local people and that's where it went wrong in the end. As the villagers were hunting for the criminals in aid of the police, the robbers holed up in a paddy field. As many as 2000 villagers cordoned them off beating the criminals to death.

One could say that the lynching was handing 'mob justice' to incorrigible criminals having had a field day thus far without adequate law enforcement in place. The argument is assailable, because a full complement of 300-strong contingent of armed policemen was at hand and actually conducting raids against the bands of robbers. The villagers did well to cooperate with the police insofar as ferreting out the criminals went. They should have left it at that, but they allowed their rage to take the law into their own hands.

Whichever way one looks at it, lynching is no answer to rising criminality in society simply because, it is a rabid expression of morbid lawlessness which can spawn anarchy out of its own dynamic. It is fraught with another danger: innocents could fall victim to it as had happened in the past.

Today, it is muggers and robbers who are lynched; tomorrow, it maybe anyone with somebody's finger pointed at him in public out of a vicious intent to exact a vendetta on him. Typically, the smashing of a car or the manhandling of a driver or an owner after a road accident can be attributed to the same destructive mob trait. This tendentious pattern of rowdy behaviourism on the part of a minuscule minority has to be checked and respect for law and discipline instilled in them.

There is food for thought for politicians, media representatives, law enforcers, sociologists and the civil society to put their heads together and hammer out an effective strategy to combat the menace before it blows out of proportion.

Mugabe quits Commonwealth

Sign of organisation's waning influence?

FACED with the prospect of Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth being extended for another year, Robert Mugabe on Sunday withdrew Zimbabwe from the 54-strong grouping of former British colonies.

The Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe in March 2002 in response to Mugabe's rigging of elections and continued persecution of his political opponents, and discussion of whether to extend sanctions and the political fallout therefrom has dominated the Nigeria summit.

In many ways, the debate that has been raging in Abuja, culminating in Mugabe's decision to pull out, demonstrates the tensions within the Commonwealth which suggest its growing irrelevance as a political grouping.

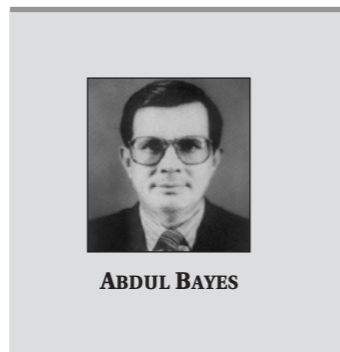
The spat over Zimbabwe has threatened to split the Commonwealth along north-south and black-white lines, and the body's inability to resolve the Zimbabwe situation is a troubling indication of division.

Ten African countries led by South Africa continue to maintain that the member states were unable to come to consensus on the thorny issue of Zimbabwe's reinstatement was a bad sign of the divisions that exist within the body.

The Commonwealth's inability to resolve differences between member states raises the question of its continued relevance, and whether the grouping together of countries that were once part of the British empire has any utility in today's world.

The summit was intended to focus on issues such as development, world trade, and the AIDS crisis that are of paramount importance to the member states. Indeed, by providing a forum to debate these issues and work towards joint solutions, the organization has much to potentially offer its member states. However, the current imbroglio reminds us that the Commonwealth is a long way from fulfilling its potential as an effectual and influential bloc.

Migration, money and management



ABDUL BAYES

MIGRATION is increasingly coming into the forefront of academics and policy planks as one of the big issues in our time. For many developed and developing countries, including Bangladesh, migration has become a key policy issue. While there remain considerable debates about different dimensions of migration, growing recognition seemingly centres round its necessity: migration is essential, inevitable and potentially beneficial component of the economic and social life of every state and every region.

'Push' versus 'pull' factors

Experts attribute this movement to push and pull factors. Push factors tend to prevail in a regime of widespread unemployment, lack of farmland, famine or war at home so that people are pushed out of their households for searching physical and economic safety. The Great Depression (1929-39) could be a classic case of a push factor when hard times hit Americans and encouraged more residents to leave US than move in. Likewise, in the 1990s and 1990s, hundreds of Africans were pushed out to neighbouring countries because of famine and civil war.

On the other hand, factors that attract immigrants -- or pull people from other countries -- include a booming economy, favourable immigration laws or free agricultural area where immigrants are required. For example, at present, the labour shortage of Japan is pulling record number of legal and illegal immigrants to fill in the low status, low paying and dangerous jobs that Japanese natives reject. USA or Canada sometimes invites willing immigrants to apply for residing in those countries. In Bangladesh, for example, non-farm activities are reported to pull agricultural labours in relatively high rewarding jobs. In all of these cases, a migration theory suggests that circumstances at the place of origin (such as poverty and unemployment) push people out of those places to other places that exert a positive attraction or pull.

A book with a difference

There were (and are) many studies on migration in Bangladesh. My memory recalls the works done earlier by Rita Afsar (BIDS), Professor Nazrul Islam (Dhaka University), Raisul Awal Mahmood (BIDS), Mahabub Hossain (IRRI) and other scholars that I sorely miss to name now. In this column,

however, I shall pick up few observations from a chapter of a forthcoming book "Rural Livelihoods system in Bangladesh: Changes and Challenges" by Dr Mahabub Hossain and co-authors. The analysis on migration in the book is based on information generated from two points, 1987 and 2000, covering 62 villages and more than 2000 randomly selected households from different ecosystems. The data have been generated by IRRI/BIDS and IRRI/PETTRA. The book discussed migration among rural households -- within or outside the country. While a thread-

period (1987-2000) to reduce the extent of migration.

Who migrate?

Among the "unlucky households" -- having no migrant member -- about 56 per cent reported to own less than 0.2 ha of land (called functionally landless). The share of this group was about 49 per cent in 1987. This means that incidence of migration (especially domestic) among these households declined between 1987 and 2000. Whereas, incidence of migration increased for all other land owning house-

other areas. But "push factor" does not seem to hold true for a large part of the poor rural households in Bangladesh. In fact, advent of modern technology in agriculture, a rise in land productivity and growing thickness in tenancy market might have propelled a pull-back. Therefore, some of the poorest of the poor households, possibly, postponed migrating towards an uncertain destination. It could be due to infrastructural development and NGO initiatives. Or, it might have so happened that very "temporary migration" by these poor households could not

migrant households are also observed to be involved as agricultural wage labour (16 per cent) compared to 9 per cent of domestic migrant households and 1 per cent of foreign migrant households. The figures thus show that agricultural wages selling households or poor households in rural context are mostly non-migrant households. Again, 52 per cent of the working force in non-migrant households embraces non-agricultural activities as primary occupation compared to 67 per cent and 71 per cent respectively for domestic and foreign migrant households.

household income structure, the authors noticed that more than half of the income of non-migrant households originates from agriculture (mostly land-based). The share of the same is about 44 per cent for domestic migrant households and about 29 per cent for foreign migrant households. It appears that other than remittances, the major chunk of household income of migrant households follow from non-agricultural pursuits -- obviously it is more relevant for foreign migrants than domestic migrants. This is quite evident from the figures that more than 70 per cent of household income of foreign migrants comes from non-agricultural sources. The share is 56 per cent for domestic migrant households and 48 per cent for non-migrant households.

The growth of per capita income in the case of foreign migrant household is estimated to be 99 per cent between 1987 and 2000 or seven per cent per annum. Domestic migrant households witnessed a growth of 71 per cent over the same period or five per cent per annum and non-migrant households had it two per cent per year. The per capita income growth for both domestic and foreign migrant households ran much above the national average of per capita income and population growth rate while non-migrant households also performed better than national average growth in per capita income. The data thus show that, in rural areas, all households experienced a positive per capita income growth between 1987 and 2000 but for foreign migrants, the performance was most spectacular.

Concluding observations

It appears that the per capita income level and its growth, among households with members working abroad, have been at an enviable level. Our national objective should be to send as many people to foreign countries as possible. It does not require very sophisticated education nor does it need an abundance of wealth to vie for foreign jobs. Some efforts at providing vocational training, computer skills, house keeping, gardening etc. could supply the manpower needed for foreign countries. Bangladesh should have technical training centers at Thana level. Besides, the remitters should be rewarded through incentive package. In fact Bangladesh should target to become an exporter of services in the international market.

Migration helps fetch more money for households. But more migration needs a better management at policy level. But, what about the income inequality and poverty in those villages? An important issue that I hope to take up next.

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bare discussion on all the issues would not be possible today due to time and space constraint. I shall come back with the remaining ones in subsequent installments for the benefit of researchers, especially for students.

Magnitude of migration

Between 1987 and 2000, the proportion of rural households that embraced at least one migrant member increased from 24 per cent to 26 per cent. However, the proportion of households with domestic or internal migrants almost doubled while that of foreign migrants marginally fell. In terms of both adult members and population of the households, the size of migration increased significantly over the period.

Where and why?

Inter-district migration, however, declined drastically from about three-fourths of total migrants in 1987 to about 57 per cent in 2000. On the other hand, migration overseas increased more than four folds during the same period of time. Again, during 2000, about 52 per cent of the migrants were reported to have migrated to reach jobs/services. The proportion was 34 per cent in 1987 implying, perhaps, that migration has increasingly been moving towards jobs. But over the same period, migration as wage labour declined from about 35 per cent to about 11 per cent. This possibly indicates, first, that economic desperation as a cause of domestic migration might have weakened over the periods and second, migrants move towards relatively more productive pursuits. However, domestic migration for economic reasons -- say, for jobs, wage labour and business all together -- stood at 66 per cent in 2000 compared to 77 per cent in 1987. It could mean that economic conditions of households have improved over the

holds. Further, it is apparent from data that, overall, "poorest of the poor" in landownership scale witnessed a wane in migration over the years. And the decline came mostly from domestic migration -- from 38 per cent to about 35 per cent -- while foreign migration remaining almost the same. Between 1987 and 2000, the share of households at the top of landownership scale -- having both domestic and foreign migrants -- declined and as a result, the share of non-migrant households in this group also increased over the period.

The picture is, however, different for small and medium land-owning groups who witnessed a rise in migration during the same period of time. This implies that, over the years, migrants mostly hailed from these two groups of households. It could have so happened that land rich households started to send their members much earlier and thus reached almost a saturation point by 2000. Or, it could be that small and medium land owning households gained affordability in sending members to foreign countries in the face of falling costs of migration overseas or for other favourable factors.

The data presented thus, point to two developments that took place in the realm of migration in Bangladesh. First, migrant households in rural Bangladesh are not the "poorest of the poor" as generally perceived of. Generally, small and medium households experienced the exodus. And second, by and large, migration to overseas has been increasing over the years irrespective of the landownership groups. The increased remittances from overseas are one of the pointers to this phenomenon.

The finding might sound surprising given the theoretic presumption that poverty might have increasingly pushed poorer households to send members to work in

be captured by the data set.

Any way, the observations from the survey of 62 villages do not seem to be far from that elsewhere. In Vietnam also, empirical evidences suggest that migrants are not the poorest of the poor. In China too, it is not the poorest of the poor who are migrating. Data from India suggests that a bimodal wealth distribution prevails, with migrants clustering in both wealthier and poorer groups. There is, of course, a distinct tendency for poorer groups to move locally or seasonally.

Education and migration

First -- and the foremost perhaps -- females from migrant households have more participation in education than those from non-migrant households. And this applies for all stairs of education -- from primary to university. But compared to males, they are ahead at primary and secondary levels and this also applies for all groups of households. By and large, the working age members of the migrant households are more educated than non-migrant households' members.

The observations on school participation rate, education of household heads and education of working-age members simply point to a possible connection between migration and education. Perhaps, the increased income from remittances might have enabled household to devote more resources to education of household members.

Occupational status

About 58 per cent of the working members in non-migrant households are reported to embrace agricultural activities as primary occupation. This compares with 33 per cent for domestic migrant and about 29 per cent of foreign migrant households. Within agriculture, a large portion of the working members from non-

Among non-agricultural pursuits, services activities seem to dominate as primary occupation of migrant households. This is evident from the fact that nearly 60 per cent of working members of foreign migrant households and 36 per cent of domestic migrant households are reportedly engaged in services as the primary occupation.

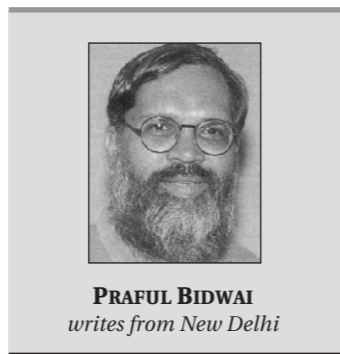
The book also observes that workers from non-migrant households undertake multiple tasks for eking out a living. For example, workers from foreign migrant households seem to have only one dominant source of income per worker while workers of domestic migrant households appear relatively less specialised. However, the working members of non-migrant households seem to carry out multiple activities to shield off from the risks involved in income generation.

Income structure

For 2000, the per capita annual income is estimated to be US\$ 447 for the foreign migrant households against US\$ 313 and US\$ 190, respectively, for domestic migrant and non-migrant households. The per capita income of foreign and domestic migrant households exceeds the national average, while per capita income of non-migrant households falls short of the national average. Relatively speaking, per capita income of foreign migrant households appears to be 1.4 times higher than domestic migrant households' income and 2.4 times higher than that of non-migrant households. Again, the per capita income difference between domestic migrant and non-migrant households stands around 40 per cent. The figures on per capita income reveal that migration is an important source of income differential among rural households.

Delving a bit deeper into the

Welcome ceasefire in Kashmir: Don't miss the bigger chance!



PRAFUL BIDWAI
writes from New Delhi

THEY say nothing succeeds like success! Alas, this rarely applies to India-Pakistan relations, with their sordid history of failure, followed by crisis, succeeded by hostility.

So it's good news that Prime Minister Zafarullah Khan Jamali's Kashmir ceasefire offer was quickly followed by Pakistan lifting its ban on Indian airliner flights through its airspace. India has welcomed both initiatives.

We citizens should actually celebrate them. Resumption of point-to-point air services and overflights should pave the way for restoring rail links -- and hence for more trade, on which India is keen. Greater citizen-to-citizen and commercial contacts are worthy in themselves.

The ceasefire, at minimum, will end the India-Pakistan practice of randomly, casually, callously shelling each other's territory. Both do this routinely -- not for strategic gains, but for macho effect.

The ceasefire will bring great

respite to the 200,000 Indians who have fled their homes as a result of artillery shelling which occurs thousands of times every year. Optimistically, it could lead to other confidence-building measures.

The overflight ban meant a diversion of India's West-bound flights and a loss of Rs. 100 crores. India was the greater loser because it operated 10 times more flights through Pakistan's airspace than the other way around.

Overflight restoration removes an irritant. Pakistan prolonged the ban to deny India aviation access to Afghanistan. This was the two rivals' hot-cold war spilling into Afghanistan.

Its end is welcome. Even more positive is the apparent change in

ies: it only eliminates their most irrational rivalry.

This principle should be applied to Siachen. Siachen is the world's highest-altitude conflict, and perhaps its most strategically irrational one.

India and Pakistan, two poor countries, each spend Rs 3-to-5 crores a day to sustain hostilities at 20,000 feet, where wind velocity can reach 150 kmph and temperatures minus 100 Celsius.

More Indian and Pakistani soldiers die at Siachen from frost-bite than from gunshots. Siachen leaves survivors scarred: with snow-blindness, high-altitude sickness and depression from loneliness in desolate places.

India and Pakistan are fighting only to deny each other a possible

action-reaction pattern of Pakistan's responses to India's recent overtures.

With this, Pakistan established its ownership of the peace process. One reason for this is growing Western pressure. The West feels that Pakistan is dragging its feet on fighting Al-Qaeda. Islamabad is acutely aware of this.

On November 20, Gen Pervez Musharraf told Pakistani journalists that the world doubts Pakistan's sincerity in fighting terrorism; it expects Islamabad to "do more" -- on pain of US punishment.

Compulsion may not be the only factor behind Pakistan's change of stance. There's growing recognition within its moderates that its covert intervention in Kashmir is

neighbours like Sri Lanka.

Mr Jamali's Eid initiative must be seen in this context as sincere. India must respond to it generously. It has much to gain by speeding up the peace process. It should look beyond the ceasefire, while ensuring its extension into the summer.

In South Asia, the processes of normalisation of relations and of transforming them can be simultaneous; they reinforce each other. India should explore both.

This may not quickly result, as Gen Musharraf demands, in a comprehensive dialogue through four steps: start talking; accept the centrality of Kashmir; eliminate whatever is unacceptable to Pakistan, India and the Kashmiris; and finally, reach a settlement acceptable

India can unilaterally release all visa-violating Pakistani detainees as soon as they serve their prison terms. India should unilaterally announce more tariff concessions, especially those it's offering Sri Lanka.

India could organise a goodwill delegation from Jammu and Kashmir to visit Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Even bolder would be a one-year moratorium on missile test-flights.

All this will need a mindset change. Essentially, we must choose between India remaining a prisoner to its hostility with Pakistan, and liberating itself to develop its potential and give its citizens a fair deal.

The first option unrealistically assumes that Pakistan and India are destined to remain enemies. Its proponents piously want Pakistan to disintegrate through internal ethnic conflict or economic collapse.

This is the favourite fantasy of Jammu and Kashmir Governor S.K. Sinha. But nothing of the sort is going to happen. Pakistan's economy is recovering, clocking 18 per cent industrial growth. Its ethnic tensions are not unmanageable.

On a sober, realistic view, Pakistan and India must learn to live with each other -- separately, but sanely and responsibly. Peaceful co-existence alone can produce positive results. India must contribute to it -- in the spirit of the October 22 proposals.

Praful Bidwai is an eminent Indian columnist.

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Islamabad's attitude. It recognises that it's ludicrous to inflict a loss upon itself only because that hurts India.

This establishes a simple principle: don't do anything to needle your adversary when you know it hurts you too. It's irrelevant whether his loss is greater than yours -- so long as you bleed yourself. This principle does not assume friendship between ene-

future chance to demarcate the Line of Control beyond point NJ-9842 in ways favourable to them. Siachen doesn't overlook any strategic area, nor does it lead to one. It's a dead-end.

Even on a cynical view, the ceasefire could resolve Siachen if the right moves are made. But one needn't take a dismal view. Mr Jamali's unconditional ceasefire made a clean break from the

turning counterproductive. It should explore cooperation.

This holds especially true of economic cooperation. The coming South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation summit is make-or-break. Pakistan can't further delay a free trade agreement (FTA). If SAFTA doesn't happen, India will turn its back upon SAARC and reach FTAs with Southeast Asian countries and with

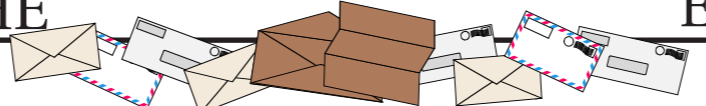
able to all.

This is not unreasonable. But Pakistan too must show it has stopped supporting Kashmir's *jehadis*. The ceasefire is a step in that direction. If it holds, India should make some unilateral gestures, including visa relaxation and doing away for, say, six months, with (the absurd) requirement of police reporting for visitors.

million Muslims of Bangladesh are staying in Arab states and every day a few hundred are coming back on a vacation. On a particular day, if a few hundred Muslims, after sighting the moon in Mecca, boarded the plane and landed in Dhaka after six hours only to hear that there was no sighting of the moon in Bangladesh, then what would happen to their fate. Would it be mandatory for them to begin fasting? If yes, how they will perform Tarabih, Shab-e-Qadr prayer and Eid-ul-Fitr jamaat?

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TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



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US and International terrorism

What is the root cause of international terrorism? It may seem like a difficult question but the answer is simple. Power corrupts all. International terrorism is the outcome of excesses and abuses of power by the US in the world affairs.

After the end of the World War II, we were charmed and fascinated by the amiable behaviour of the US. But following the dissolution of the former USSR, we are confronted with the acrimonious and greedy eyes of the only superpower on earth.

Millions of peace-loving people all over the world are surprised, frustrated and shocked at Washington's blind support for Israel which is occupying Palestine for over five decades and carrying out oppression, suppression and killing of the unarmed and innocent Palestinians.

Many people do not see any justification as to why the US has stationed its troops in far distant countries like Japan, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the Philippines, Jordan etc. for such a long time? Why don't they withdraw their troops from foreign countries?

Moreover, why has the US invaded and occupied Afghanistan

and Iraq? What are the motives and designs of the US?

The US may think that with its stockpiles of thousands of atom and hydrogen bombs, sophisticated missiles, rockets, war planes and tanks it is the mightiest in the world and no country can challenge and counter its activities.

But as a matter of fact the superiority complex and erratic mentality of the lone superpower have no logical basis.

The hatred and dislike of many people around the world for the US and its leadership have now turned into suicide bombing by the victims of its expansionism, which, accord-

ing to many, is no less dangerous and dreadful than the same country's dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, killing hundreds of thousands of innocent Japanese.

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Ramadan and sighting of the moon

This year's Ramadan began in Bangladesh after two days of the sighting of the moon over the sky of the holy Kaaba Sharif in Mecca. The reason is a Hadith of Prophet

Mohammad (SM) in which he advised Muslims to begin fasting after seeing the Ramadan moon and break it after seeing the Shawaal moon. The Prophet (SM) said this at a time when he was staying in Mecca and at that time the message of Islam did not reach beyond the boundaries of the Arab world.

On the first day of any lunar month, the moon is seen over the sky of Mecca. It is the wish of Allah that the moon will be sighted there to facilitate the Muslims to perform their rituals as per the tenets of Islam, since Allah declared in the Holy Quran that He would not have created the universe unless He created the Prophet (SM), and the

moon is created to serve him and his followers.

Unlike the sun, which rises in the east and sets in the west, the moon rises in the west and sets in the west covering only a few countries of the earth with little illumination.

After 24 hours, the moon rises again covering more countries with illumination, but at that time the moon is two days old. Those who have watched the sighting of the moon on the second day, have lost one day of the lunar month, because of the curvature of the earth where one cannot see beyond the horizon. But the fact is that the moon was sighted on the first day of the lunar month and the message can easily be

transferred to all Muslim nations

Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday as per beginning of Ramadan this year. Then what happens to Shab-e-Qadr night in which Allah revealed the Holy Quran to the Prophet (SM) and prayer on that night is more rewarding than one thousand months of prayer. When the Holy Quran was revealed, the Prophet (SM) was staying in Mecca and it is most likely that the Holy Quran was revealed on the night of 27 Ramadan as per sighting of the Moon in Mecca. In such a situation, the 27 Ramadan becomes 26 Ramadan for Bangladeshi Muslims for late beginning of fasting.

Nowadays more than half a