

# Geneva accord -- an alternative peace plan



MUSLEHUDDIN AHMAD

Indeed, President Bush, following his father's earlier strong stand in the matter went to the extent of refusing to give guarantee on Israeli loan. Though the amount involved happened to be small, this indicates the displeasure of Bush Administration on the security fence.

Geneva Accord was signed in Geneva last week between

Palestinian refugees to be waived. However, Israel may consider the requests on case-by-case basis.

Sharon government reacted angrily on this. Indeed, when Secretary Powell agreed to meet the architects of the Accord in Washington, Sharon government said it would be a "mistake" on the part of Bush Administration. Secretary

remained committed to the Road Map. EU also gave support to the accord.

In Israel also people's reactions were positive as 54 per cent of Israelis gave support to the Geneva Accord as they are also fed up with Sharon government's handling of the Road Map and the peace process. There is no let up in the suicide bombings and Israeli killing of

make similar claims. However, Former Labour Justice Minister Beilin and his illustrious chief Yitshaq Rabin recognised this truth and felt that it was no use fighting on these historical claims. The best course would be to divide this great city between these two rival claimants on the basis of historical, religious and cultural facts and the present situations. This would allow both Palestinians and the Israelis to have their capitals in the respective parts of Jerusalem. It is too sensitive an issue to gloss over and to be left for future negotiation. There is nothing to negotiate about it; both Palestinians and Israelis have been fighting over it for hundreds of years and the same deadly fight will continue unless a practical solution is unofficially agreed to in the Geneva Accord is officially and finally accepted by all concerned with a view to burying the issue for all time to come.

In one of my comments on this issue some two years ago I ventured to suggest that let Jerusalem be appropriately divided so that both Palestinians and Israelis could have their capitals in this great city and the Prime Ministers of each state could drive down to the other side and meet even casually over a cup of coffee. Nobody knows whether these distant cousins could ever enjoy such a great day. Unfortunately history so far said something quiet different.

Here the role of the United States is extremely crucial. It should go by what the people of Israel want and not what Sharon government wants. At present majority of Israelis are totally fed up with Sharon government's handling of the peace process. Hundreds of innocent people on both sides have died because of ill-conceived visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount about three years ago. Should the US Administration support Sharon government which is bent upon going for more land grab and security barriers or go by what the people of Israel want? Majority of Israelis, as the recent reports show want peace and not occupation and death. Let the US Administration decide on the future course of actions -- occupation or peace! Once peace descends on Palestinian and Israeli territories, major part of the fight against terrorism by the US and the international community will be over.

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## SPOTLIGHT ON MIDDLE EAST

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Former Justice Minister Beilin and Palestinian Legislator Abed Rabbo. The Accord is based on agreements, among others, on the following major thorny issues:

(a) Two states -- Israel and Palestine -- shall live side by side in peace and security.

(b) Jerusalem to be the capital of both Israel and Palestine.

(c) Settlements to be dismantled to have contiguous and viable Palestinian State with major areas of West Bank and Gaza.

(d) Right of return of the

Powell remained firm and said, "As Secretary of State, I have an obligation to the people of America, to the President and to the colleagues in the Administration to listen to any individual or individuals having interesting ideas on the peace process. This does not undercut our commitment to Israel and does not undercut our commitment to the Road Map."

Later Secretary Powell met the architects and reportedly expressed favourable reaction on the ideas reflected in the accord but said the US

the Palestinians.

In Palestinian territories, however, there were angry reactions from the radical groups which remain committed to their right of return to Israel. But it is understandable that the Palestinians in general will give good support to the Geneva Accord as this gives them the maximum benefit under the present difficult situation.

The US should come out with the full support as this accord not only compliments the Road Map but indeed is a major step forward as the Accord pledges to solve all other most difficult issues which were left out by the Road Map authors. The most important is the division of Jerusalem along the acceptable lines -- East Jerusalem with adjoining areas to become the capital of the Palestinian State. This is the best solution as East Jerusalem belongs to the Palestinian people. East Jerusalem with the Temple Mount (Noble Sanctuary) including Al-Aqsa has to be under Palestinian sovereignty and Western Wall (Wailing Wall) where Jews pray, under Israeli sovereignty. East Jerusalem's inhabitants are all Palestinians. My visit to Israel some years back led me to believe that there is no chance ever for Israelis to rule East Jerusalem as Palestinians there will never accept the sovereignty of Israel.

The history of Jerusalem and particularly of East Jerusalem with Al-Aqsa and Dome of the Rock in the Noble Sanctuary is interwoven and intertwined with the lives of the Palestinians for thousands of years though the Jews also

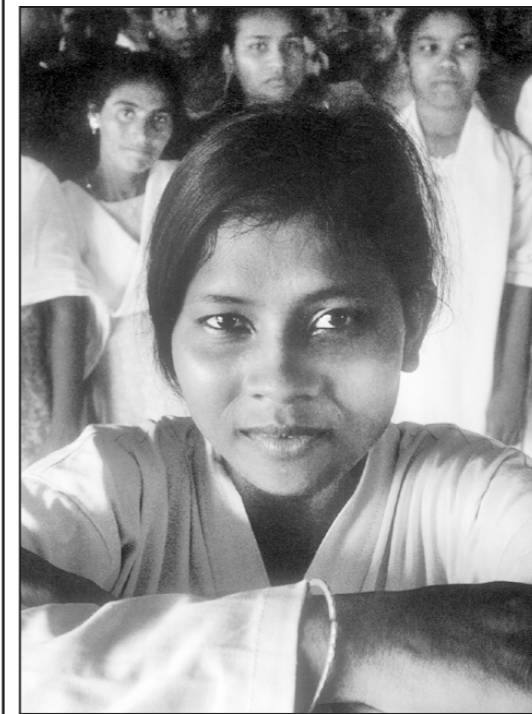
# The state of the world's children 2004

It has been one year since UNICEF launched the '25 by 2005 Girls' Education Campaign' to accelerate efforts to eliminate gender disparities in primary and secondary education. The campaign focuses on countries where girls' education faces significant challenges and where substantial assistance will be required to meet the Millennium Development Goal of gender parity by 2005.

In her report, The State of the World's Children 2004, Carol Bellamy, the organisation's Executive Director, calls for a human rights-based, multi-sectoral approach to development that will ensure girls an education, meet the commitments of the international community to education for all children, maximise benefits for families and nations alike and help achieve many other of the world's major development goals.



Carol Bellamy



as they are about boys and girls more visibly exploited at work. Governments must routinely and publicly report the number of out-of-school girls, and they should monitor and expand successful girls' education projects. Countries should consider an education tax or commodities surcharge to be used exclusively to get girls or boys into school until gender parity is achieved.

3. Allow no school fees of any kind. All primary schools must be free, universal and compulsory, and parents must have a choice in the kind of education their children receive. All primary school fees and charges must be immediately abolished.

4. Think both outside and inside the 'education box', integrating education policies into national plans for poverty reduction and scaling up programmes that work. Countries should take action on girls' education by promoting anti-discrimination laws, improved water and sanitation, HIV/AIDS prevention programmes, gender-sensitive early childhood programmes, and efforts to reduce violence and protect children from abuse.

5. Establish schools as centres of community development, particularly for children orphaned by HIV/AIDS and for children living in conflict and emergency situations. Schools -- proven to be the most efficient and cost-effective means of protecting youth from HIV infection -- must become the centre of efforts to combat the disease and other threats to the survival of children and young people.

6. Integrate country strategies at three levels: investments, policies and institutions; service delivery; and conceptual frameworks, namely of the economic and human rights approaches.

7. Increase international funding for education, directing 10 per cent of official aid to basic education, with programmes that benefit girls as the first priority. Industrialised countries must make good on their commitment to give at least 0.7 per cent of gross national product in aid, and at least 0.15 per cent to the least developed countries.

### Seven steps forward

The 65 million girls out of school will never command the world's attention in the same way that a war will, but their plight is nonetheless an emergency. Leaders from all levels of society must take the following practical, urgent steps:

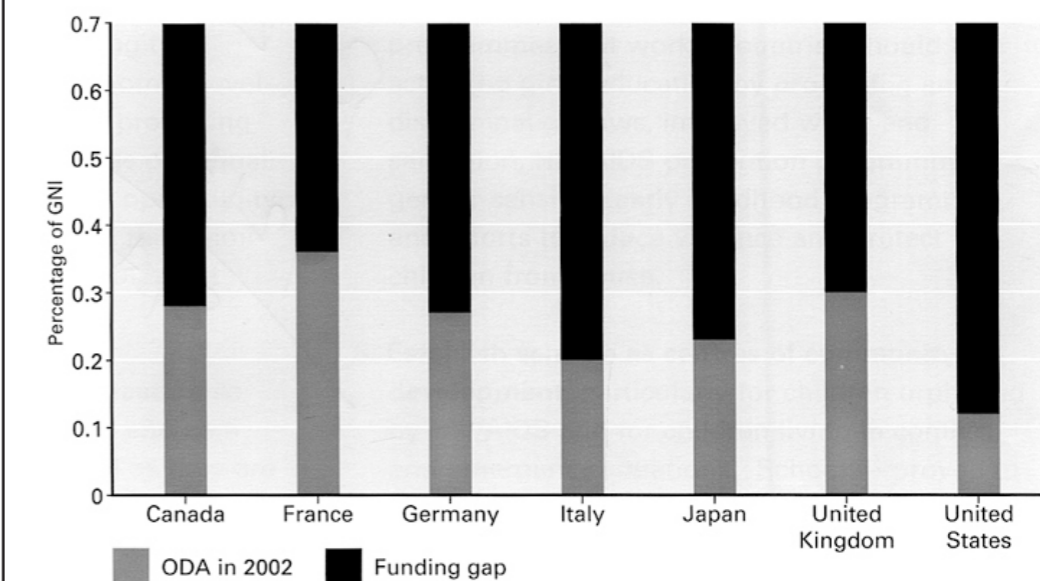
1. Include girls' education as an essential component of development efforts, ensuring that human rights principles inform economic development programmes, and explicitly protecting girls' access to public services. Focus on 'equality of outcome' as well as equality of opportunity, and respect the right of children and their families to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

2. Create a national ethos for girls' education so that communities are as scandalised and concerned about girls kept out of school

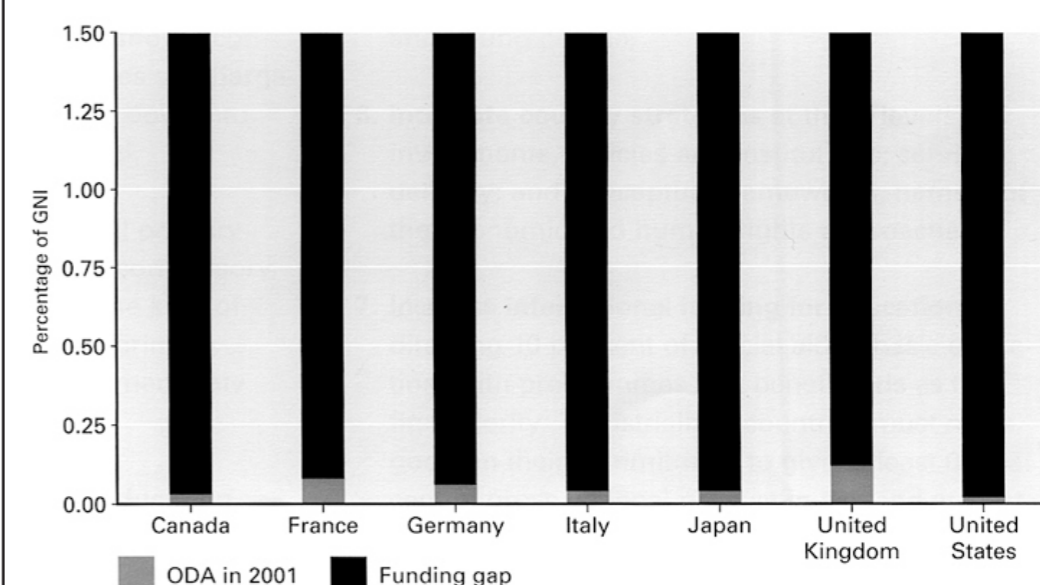
### Funding gaps

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries have committed themselves to the target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national income (GNI) for official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries. A special sub-target commits them to a 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNI for aid to least developed countries.

Net official development assistance (ODA) among G-7 countries as percentage of gross national income (GNI) in 2002.



Net official development assistance (ODA) to least developed countries among G-7 countries as percentage of gross national income (GNI) in 2001.



Source: UN Statistics Division, Millennium Indicators Database, October 2003.



# Of naturalist and mango lover

YASMEEN MURSHED

There are very few school textbooks that one finds enjoyable when one is forced to concentrate on them during the hot, listless hours of a boring school day. Luckily for me I fell in love with Gerald Durrell's "MY FAMILY AND OTHER ANIMALS" (pub : Penguin 1956) when it was prescribed as an English Literature text for the Senior Cambridge examinations half a century ago and have been an avid Durrell fan ever since.

This is the Gerald whose brother Lawrence, of the Alexandria Quartet fame, wrote mostly incomprehensible, gloomy and profoundly depressing novels which had little or no appeal to my taste. Gerald, the younger, naturalist brother has a much keener eye for observation and a gift for translating his observations into compulsively readable prose.

In this description of the family's departure for the Greek island of Corfu, with a few well chosen phrases, he draws a quick sketch of his mother and siblings that etches their character indelibly in our mind.

"When we opened our luggage for Customs inspection, the contents of our bags were a fair indication of character and interests. Thus Margo's luggage contained a multitude of diaphanous garments, three books on slimming and a regiment of small bottles each containing some elixir guaranteed to cure acne. Leslie's case held a couple of roll-top pullovers and a pair of trousers which were wrapped around two revolvers an air pistol, a book called 'Be Your

Own Gunsmith' and a large bottle of oil that leaked. Larry was accompanied by two trunks of books and a brief case containing his clothes. Mother's luggage was sensibly divided between clothes and various volumes on cooking and gardening. I traveled with only those items that I thought necessary to relieve the tedium of a long journey: four books on natural history, a butterfly net, a dog and a jam jar full of caterpillars all in

Mango" by Kusum Budhwar (pub : Penguin Books 2002). It was time that a biography was written for this delivery long regarded as the king of fruits. Ms. Budhwar writes of the history of the Mango and its travels overseas, its place in culture, art, handicraft and folklore concluding with unusual and delicious (I can vouch for that) recipes.

She regales us with mango trivia -- did you know that when Babur was contemplat-

tell of the fierce passion for mangoes that is attributed to Ghalib. A tip on how to inveigle a friend to part with a gift of mangoes the next time the season comes around may be taken from Ghalib's open invitation to the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar. He had been invited to stroll with the Emperor in the mango orchard on a summer's evening during the mango season and the ripening fruit of some of the choicest varieties hung from

A Mango tree that walks with time, the largest mango tree in the world, the oldest, the most fruitful, the one with most different kinds grafted and growing on one tree and many others find their places in Ms. Budhwar's book.

Apparently the nutritional uses of the mango are many and one in particular caught my eye. In these days of the slim even cadaverous figure this remedy prescribed for the Princess Zebunnessa to help her gain weight is straight out of dieter heaven. The royal Hakim wrote "To fully benefit from the nutrients of a ripe mango it should be taken with milk. The sugar of the mango is supplemented by the healthful contents of the milk. This mixture helps in gaining weight. It can be taken three times a day: morning, noon and night. Four to five seers of milk and two scores of mangoes should be consumed daily for at least one month". Would that this formula led to weight loss rather than weight gain!

The royal mango has a more humble but nonetheless beloved home in the friendly folk songs of the Hills. Verrier Elwin and Shamrao Hilvale's translation of Folk Songs from the Maikal Hills, (pub : Oxford University Press 1944) has this little gem. Love and mangoes - can one ask for more!

The dark shadows of the mango grove  
What did you say to me  
In the mango shadow  
Take me away my love  
And make me partner of your life.

Yasmeen Murshed is a full-time bookworm and a part-time educationist. She is also the founder of Scholastica School.

## TALKING BOOKS

**With deft facility and his naturalist's eye Durrell crafts personalities for all the creatures that he comes across in his long pursuit of interesting animals. From Golden Bats to Pink Pigeons and from Magenpies to Colubuses, he introduces his readers to myriad creatures each with a unique even quirky personality.**

**There are many stories that tell of the fierce passion for mangoes that is attributed to Ghalib. A tip on how to inveigle a friend to part with a gift of mangoes the next time the season comes around may be taken from Ghalib's open invitation to the Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar.**

imminent danger of turning into chrysalides."

With the same deft facility and his naturalist's eye Durrell crafts personalities for all the creatures that he comes across in his long pursuit of interesting animals. From Golden Bats to Pink Pigeons and from Magenpies to Colubuses, he introduces his readers to myriad creatures each with a unique even quirky personality. All this with a light turn of phrase that is ideally suited to whiling away a Ramadan afternoon!

On the note of Ramadan afternoons when Iftar assumes great importance I can recommend "Romance of the

ing helping the local leaders of northern Hindustan in their fight against Ibrahim Lodhi the inspiration for his decision to do so came in the form of mangoes. The Babur Nama recounts that in 1523 Babur prayed one day at dawn for a sign of victory in Hindustan. When his prayer ended and he sat down to breakfast the food presented to him was Mango "Murabba" -- half ripened mangoes preserved in honey. Since the tasty fruit grew in Hindustan, the emperor took it as a sign that he was being beckoned to that alluring country and of course the rest, as they say, is history.

There are many stories that

the trees all around. The Emperor was talking about fine points of poetry as they walked but soon noticed that Ghalib's attention was wandering as he wistfully looked at each tree and the treasure of its boughs. Seeing him thus distracted the emperor inquired what was the reason for his soulful glances. Ghalib replied at once "Your Highness, it is said that on the stone of each mango is inscribed the name of the person it is meant for and I am wondering if I could see one that might have Ghalib written on it". The Emperor took the hint and sent the poet a basketful of the best varieties the very next day!