Dhaka, Saturday, August 10, 1991

Help the Kurds

It is now apparent that the Turkish army, backed by air power, is involved in a major operation against Kurdish rebels deep inside Iraqi territory. On top of that, a Turkish government minister has gone on record as saying his country will carve out a five kilometre-deep buffer zone inside Iraq, and order its troops to shoot anyone entering the zone without permission.

Ankara is claiming that the cross-border raids are not aimed at Iraqi sovereignty, and therefore not an act of aggression. Turkey does have a figleaf with which to cover what, in anybody else's book, would be a flagrant violation of all norms of international behaviour. The "cover" is provided by a pact, signed after a major Kurdish uprising against Turkish rule in 1984, between Ankara and Baghdad, allowing armed forces of the two countries to carry out hot pursuits against Kurdish rebels across each other's borders.

The current situation, however, is nothing remotely like what the leaders of the two countries might have envisaged at the time. The Kurds in northern Iraq are under the protection of the United Nations — or so we were led to believe.

The United States and other Western powers committed troops into northern Iraq not so long ago to protect Kurdish Iraqis facing annihilation at the hands of Saddam Hussein's mauled but far from finished army. At present, US forces deployed along the border are said to be on alert to resist any attack from Iraqi forces, but doing nothing to protect Kurds from Turkish attacks.

Ankara's military actions have suddenly brought to the surface the fact that Kurds are fighting for freedom not only in Iraq, but in Turkey as well. The struggle of Turkey's 15 million Kurdish population has been a more low-key affair than that of Iraq's five million.

The question now arises is, how is it possible that Turkey is able to unleash its military might on its Kurdish rebels taking sanctuary in an area supposedly under UN protection? We cannot accept that the UN is merely there to protect "Iraqi Kurds," leaving Turkey free to come and bomb its own Kurdish refugees at will. There are already reports of hundreds of casualties among Iraqi Kurds from Turkish air raids.

By bombing Kurdish refugees, Turkey has shown a totally unacceptable disregard for the UN presence in the area. Furthermore, Turkish intentions to build a buffer zone inside Iraq is surely a violation of Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity. Now, was it not exactly the crime Saddam Hussein was accused of committing last

August? The world backed Western intervention and the UN role in the region because there is deep sympathy for the 20 million or so Kurds living in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The Kurds missed out on a historic opportunity to gain their own nationstate in 1918, and have suffered at the hands of ideologically diverse regimes in Ankara, Baghdad and Tehran.

Even if we accept that Turkey has some legal backing for crossing the Iraqi border, on the basis of the 1984 pact, that still leaves the question of the UN's role in the area unexplained. The UN presence was supposed to give Iraqi Kurds a breathing space, which they certainly gained. But now that Turkish Kurds find the same kind of treatment being meted out to them as Saddam did to his Kurds, where does that leave the UN? The world, having come to the rescue of Iraqi Kurds, now must make it plain to Turkey that such protection extends to their Kurdish rebels as well. The responsibility to make that protection effective naturally lies with the UN which already has a mandate in this regard.

More Hurting than Jamuna Devastations

There is bad news form Sirajganj. No. it's not about some more villages vanishing into the Jamuna. That's rather a regular affair over there. This is about something that hurts much more than the Jamuna on rampage. A scared newspaper editor headlined it—The Daily Star of August 8—Handloom industry faces closure. The size of the problem can roughly be grasped if one knows that there are 77,000 handlooms being worked in Shahzadpur. There are some 65,000 more in the Belkuchi and Ullapara upazilas. Bank loans forwarded to weavers in only one upazila -Shahzadpur

- remain unrepaid to the tune of Taka ten crore. The Pabna fabric, specially the coarse saree is the mainstay of the total textile needs — and not one or two textile mills, however big. How can you beat the production of the much depleted and still enduring 1.5 lakh looms in the three Sirajganj upazilas wherefrom the famous Pabna textile used to come and clad all the country women of the Bengal of British India — with the production of one, two or ten weaving mills? Our women in the villages use a special kind of saree that needs no undergarment and even a top. There are a number of weavers' pockets which specialise in producing such most useful fabric and Sirajganj is topmost among them.

Weaving is as old and as basic to human society This continues to be so with all modern societies —the poorer societies making the best of it by using it as a main employment-generating and labour-absorbing agency. Ours is a fitting case in point. Bungle the cottage textile situation and tens of millions will be hurt. Let the weaver live: the country artisan and his craft will live, culture will live and crores will physically live. It is natural that it should be particularly true in a land which had been down the ages drapers to the world-sup-

pliers of the finest raiments man has ever seen. The weaver's continued debacle is a measure of the ruling class's alienation not only from the toiling masses but also from the history and culture of the land, and more pertinently, the needs of the society. In Sirajganj now the scandal is about spurious handloom factory owners taking out all the money that the banks are offering there to weavers - naturally in collusion with bank people and other such desk men. There is money around the loom, but the weaver can hardly lay hand on it. The yarn, the dye and other chemicals are all controlled by middlemen and most times the looms are grouped under ownership of individuals who do not work them.

As long as the handlooms will be sick, the nation will hardly have a chance to recover from its present morass. Convinced of this we want to move the authorities concerned to take urgent measures to stop for all time to come the closing down of handlooms and the weaver changing over to some other profession or begging. .

Maximizing Growth of the Rice Economy

ICE is what we eat and what we grow. The economy is overwhelm ingly dominated by rice. The growth of the rice economy is therefore fundamental in our march from LDC to NIC. According to soil survey information, approximately 3.6 million hectares of land were potentially suitable for cultivation of high yielding varieties (HYV) of Aus and Aman paddy under rainfed conditions in the Khariff season. The soil survey data also indicate that out of 3.6 million hectares, both HYV Aus and Aman can be grown in sequence in 1.2 million hectares without irrigation and the balance area could be devoted to either HYV Aus or HYV Aman. Unfortunately, not more than half the potential has been realized so far.

Even in the project areas such as Ganges-Kobadak and DND near Dhaka, not more than 50 to 70 per cent of the areas was under HYV during Kharif season. In case of crop yields, the best farmers obtain over five tons per hectare while the average yield for HYV is half of that. What are the factors preventing realization of the potential output of 24 million tons of Aus and Aman paddy from the identified high growth land of 3.6 million hectares which is feasible if the best farmers' yield be-

comes the average yield? It is not possible because the best farmer is the owneroperator, retaining the value of his hard labour; while the average farmer is a Bargadar or owner-cum-tenant who must pay half the produce to the land owner. In the districts of Chittagong and Comilla, around three-fourth of the trans-

planted Aman area has already been switched over to HYVs while in the north western and south-western districts it is less than 20 per cent. This is because share-cropping with all its production-restraining influences which are much more severe in Rajshahi and Khulna divisions and at the same time because the major portion of the identified, rainfed high potential paddy lands

are located there. Bangladesh agriculture portrays the overwhelming concern to maximize food grain production. The total cropped area under rice and wheat for foodgrains only) increased to around 85 per cent by the middle of 1980s. Instead of diversification of crop agriculture, an inevitable characteristic of economic growth, farmers are compelled by basic subsistence needs to follow the regressive path of cereal concentration.

Aus and Aman

The expanding area under rice has been contributed by Boro rice cultivation on land which would be put to a complex rainfed double or triple cropping pattern involving broadcast Aus. broadcast Aman, and a range of Rabi crops like pulses, oilseeds, wheat, potato, sweet potatoes, chillies etc.

Rice is of overwhelming importance. The major source of its growth has been irrigated boro rice at the cost of a varieties of other crops including rice from other seasons. Over two-third of the rice crop is still Aus and Aman, but twothird of the increment to cereal production during 1985-1990 was contributed by Boro while cultivation of Aus and

Wheat showed a downward trend. The strategy of growth for rice should therefore be to concentrate on HYV Aus and HYV Aman crops so that the diversified cropping pattern during the Rabi season can be retained.

The accelerated HYV Aus and Aman production should be the future strategy to maximize the growth of cereal production. The high potential 3.6 million hectares should be the focus of attention where paddy production can be maximized without irrigation. At the average yield level of five tons per hectare already achieved in China, the 4.8 million hectares of total cropped

and irrigation - have been emphasized while the downstream components like post harvest losses, paddy processing and marketing were ne glected. The proposed strategy should emphasize proper har vest, drying, storage of paddy and its subsequent processing through minimum waste technologies. At present 10 per cent of paddy is considered as seed, feed and waste and therefore not available for con version into rice. This should be reduced to five per cent Secondly, the recovery rate of rice is taken to be 67 per cent while it is possible to increase to 70 per cent. Of particular

From LDC to NIC by Shahed Latif

area out of the net cropped area of 3.6 million hectares, can produce 24 million tons of paddy. With the removal of agrarian constraints, it should be possible to organize around three million, one to two hectare consolidated longterm lease holdings where given the supporting infrastructure (but without trrigation), credit, inputs and services, the projected yield must not be difficult to achieve within a five-year period. Once the production restraining influences particularly those induced by agrarian constraints are removed, the stage is set for an explosive growth. There ts no reason why it should be otherwise.

Another important aspect of the growth maximization strategy for the rice economy would be that in the past activities vital for paddy cultivation - inputs, credit and extension

narrowing the supply gap in edible oil through rice bran oil production and at the same time, obtaining high protein deotled cake as excellent poultry feed. In fact paddy can be the basis for integrated paddy processing and byproduct utilization complex which should attract the attention of the rural elite receiving investment compensation funds and /or assets for surrendering their lands, as proposed in my earlier agrarian reform proposals.

importance is the potential of

By-product Utilization

The proposed 24 million tons of paddy if channelled through integrated processing and by-product utilization complex can be decomposed into (i) 1.2 million tons of paddy (5 % of total paddy) as seed, feed and waste; (ii) out of the balance, modern processing enabling 70 per cent recovery would yield 15.96 mil-

lion tons of white rice; (iii) the 1.6 million tons of rice bran can be further processed into 287.000 tons of edible oil and 1.7 million tons of poultry feed where deoiled bran cake is 80 per cent of the feed content. Among by-product, husk could be mixed with grounded limestone from Sylhet and kiln-burned into low-quality cement, but good enough for low-cost rural housing. Earth dug-up for bricks, done systematically should give rise to rural acquaculture enterprises by the rice processing complex itself. Out-growing of poultry by the farmers producing the paddy or landless households could be a subsidiary source of income. The complex may buy-back the poultry, slaughter and package it for marketing. In the process, the slaughter waste can be recycled as a feed ingredi-According to preliminary

estimates, the 3.6 million hectares as planned under intensive Aus-Aman cropping system should give rise to around 400 such agro-processing complexes each with a fairly large capacity for processing 20 tons/hour of paddy. 10 tons/hour of poultry feed. brick field, cement kiln, hatchery, slaughter house, fish farm etc. In addition, 25 solvent extraction plants with capacity of 20 to 40 tons per day of edible oil will be required. Opportunities for investment in packaging materials for edible oil, rice and feed, straw boards would also appear. Most significant induced opportunity would be the prospect for investment in capital goods industries; for example, rice milling machineries through an overlapping second round

Due to lack of modern processing, the potentials of edible oil production from paddy has remained unrealized while the prospects for poultry feed could only be partially fulfilled through the present day rice milling system of Bangladesh. In order to maximize the growth of the rice economy. increasing the paddy yields are not enough - product processing as well as product use must also be considerably intensi-

The prevalent rice milling process has only gone up from Dhenki to roller-husking stage which is extremely wasteful in terms of product value. Not only rice tends to be mostly broken, the valuable fat and the protein in the bran are lost in the husk. The advocates of Dhenki on employment grounds are essentially prompted by welfare rather than economic considerations. But employment generation must be induced through going up and not climbing down the technology ladder. In fact, the growth maximization strategy suggested for the rice economy should also maximize employment for the landless in agro-processing and by-product utilization as well as from poultry farming and demand for farm labour.

Rice is what we eat and paddy is what we produce. But in order to maximize the growth of the rice economy not only edible rice, but a variety of other products should be processed from paddy. Intensifying product processing as well as product use is the golden strategy for the uphtil march from LDC to NIC.

Europe Runs Scared of Refugee Floods

didn't know where I was heading - till ■ I landed up here. I

was confused." The young Nigerian's flight into the great unknown ended abruptly here in Brussels, slapbang at the gateway to Europe, the capital of the European Community. Fate seemed to have smiled on him; he could have been pitched onto the tarmac of a country that would have sent him winging back

Today the young man is a statistic, one of a massive influx of 422,000 refugees who arrived in Europe last year seeking political asylum. Crammed into rusting ships on the Rhine, airport detention centres and even prisons, most are still waiting today for news of their asylum applica-

"I had to leave. I was in danger," is the only explanation the Nigerian would give for fleeing. Several other Africans standing with him backed away from an inquiring journalist rather than say anything that might wreck their chances of being granted refugee status.

Seven hundred asylum seekers live in a building called the Petit Chateau, crammed 12 to a dormitory. Some hardly know why they are there; others were thrust by their parents with false passports on to aircraft to get them away from civil wars.

A couple of kilometres away the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) was celebrating its 40th anniversary at a seminar with the European Commission. It was a day both for celebration and concern. The UNHCR has helped 27 million people to a secure future since the signing of its Convention in 1951, but another 15 million are still under its protection and the numbers are rising every day. It was also a moment for

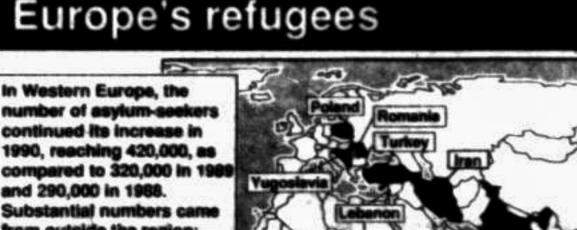
deep soul-searching. "The enemy is bigotry," said the chairman of Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board. "We are moving to excluding rather than including. We have to make sure the definition — a refugee is entitled to UN protection under the Convention if he fears perse-

cution — is liberally inter-

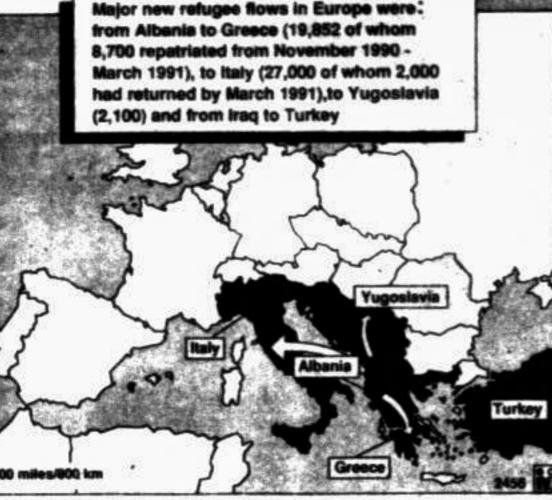
preted. "We have a wrong idea that

Political refugees are finding they are increasingly less welcome in Europe. As jobs become more scarce, the European definition of a refugee becomes more strict. Many believe the solution is to stop supporting regimes which cause people to leave their own countries.

Petar Hadji-Ristic writes from Brussels



and 290,000 in 1988. Substantial numbers came from outside the region: Sri Lanka: 17,869 Romania: 61,361 46,309 Turkey: 32,023 Yugoslavia: Lebanon: 28,295 13,771 Zaire:



an individual has to have personally suffered. What the convention says is that any person who fear persecution should have some kind of protection," he said.

The statistics bear him out. Eighty per cent of all asylum-seekers are successful in Canada, but only around 20 per cent in Europe, where they often have to wait years for an answer to their applications. The assessment process costs an estimated US\$5 billion a year or around 50 times what the UNHCR receives from European Community denors.

"I have unclosed files stretching back six, seven and eight years," Monique Blancke said during a tour of Petit

who were granted asylum in the first years of the conven-

'ban'-happy. They ban import

tion - in the days when anyone from Eastern Europe was granted asylum without question — would now be accepted because of the strict way it is now being interpreted, said Dr Harrell-Bond of Oxford University.

"What is dangerous about Europe's behaviour is that like a virus, restrictionism spreads. Racist attitudes permeate our establishments from top to bottom," he added.

Monique Blancke said the attitude also showed in the UNHCR's lack of funds. The organisation is so impoverished that some of those under its protection have been known to suffer from scurvy and infectious diseases.

What is the reason for the threat to the humanitarian Only ten per cent of those principles enshrined in the UN Convention on relugees? Much the same emotion, it

seems, that brings refugees to Europe: panie.

"Europe is scared to death," commented Jan Nielsson, who attended the seminar for the Churches' Committee for Migrants in Europe. "Rich people are always scared; they always have the feeling that someone is after their wealth." Unemployment in some European countries runs as high as 16 per cent.

Any mention of the millions who might be candidates for refugee status increases the panic. This is likely to increase still further given increasing political unrest in Africa, deteriorating economies and massive population increases.

Seventeen million people are now on the run in Africa, most of them fleeing internal disorder. Five million of these qualify for refugee status because they have crossed borders to escape persecution. The UNHCR Commissioner would like a special category of "temporary protected status" to include all those who cannot claim protection under the convention but are now fleeing for their lives.

The spectre of massive immigration from Eastern Europe is also causing alarm. Already young Poles are seen throughout Western Europe secking work as their country makes the difficult transition to a market economy. Close behind are Rumanians, Hungarians and Czechs.

Some experts are predicting 50 million Russians will be put out of work if the USSR radically reforms its economy, possibly double this figure if the reform programme fails. No border controls would be sufficient to stop them.

Britain's John Major expressed these concerns at a European summit in Luxembourg when he called for an urgent clampdown on immigration and expressed concern about the number of asylum applications.

Liberals charge that in face of the challenges Europe is withdrawing into a fortress. It

is shown to the south of

Cochin, whereas it is situated

is becoming increasingly diffi cult to enter the community and appeal for protection, and those who manage it sometimes have to endure years of waiting to know the fate of their asylum applications.

Currently the Dublin Agreement makes asylum seekers the responsibility of the country in which they land. Critics fear that as Europeans develop a common visa policy they will all end up following the policy of the most restrictive country.

"The procedures that are being used to determine asylum applications don't observe

tice," says Nuala Mole of inteRights, a lawyers' human rights group based in London. "Abuses of all kinds are tak-

ing place." Often asylum seekers have no independent appeal rights, such as is the case in Britain. Officials dealing with them

the principles of natural jus-

lack training and often do not truly understand their fears. Preventative action should take the place of unjustly tight controls, believes Dr Harrell-Bond. "Dictatorships creating refugees continue to be prop-

ped up by European and North American governments." By supporting such governments, western countries were actually contributing to the creation of the problems.

- GEMINI NEWS Petar Hadji-Ristic is a British Journalist currently making a television documentary on European migration.

Traffic Policing clear, Rickshaw parking areas Dhaka's Traffic Police de-

serve a pat for displaying patience and forbearance in the Herculcan task of controlling traffic in an area which can handle only one-tenth of the number of vehicles plying today; and where the majority of the drivers are illiterate and untrained, and many have no driving license. The numbers of fake licences and drivers caught possessing no licence have not been announced.

Large teams of TP are seen on duty at intersections (with or without traffic lights). This waste of trained manpower has to be temporarily tolerated due to the vicious habit of indiscipline of the impatient drivers, who are bred on the traditional Bengali attitude of defiance to authority, for centuries, as history bears witness.

So long the number of vehicles cannot be reduced, (the number of unauthorized rickshaws can be reduced if the political parties do not protest), the only option available is to be ruthlessly strict As a regular traveller on the Mirpur Road between Asad Gate and New Market, several examples are cited below for

Control can be divided into two broad areas: of the stationary vehicles, and of the vehicles in motion. The TP are not paying much attention to parking and halting. There are two main culprits, the rick-

shaws and the bus drivers. At the bus stops, the buses do not halt at the edge of the road. With more than one bus, there is 'double' halting (like double parking) blocking half the road, and flow of traffic in one direction is impede, forcing the vehicles behind to divert to the opposite lane of oncoming traffic. Buses must be made to halt in single file, and

not abreast. The parking of cycle rickshaws is absolutely uncontrolled, and is dangerous for traffic. The rickshaws bunch near the road intersections, three or four abreast. Parking within 20 metres of any road intersection should not be al-

should be designated. The Elephant Road and New Market areas are notorious for traffic jams due to lax parking or halting. Car passengers should be willing to walk a short distance from the parking lot. In fact, free parking in shopping areas should be discouraged (it is a supply and demand issue-no more free parking days!) At the traffic lights, the white line markers are absent

on the roads. There are three lines across the road, one lange is for pedestrian crossing, and the third line is the braking distance for safety of the pedestrians. The rickshaws are the worst offenders, and cross the red light to be in front, for a quick getaway, causing obstruction to those who wish to turn right. Speed breakers may be erected at the three lines for a limited "reformatory" period, so that all vehicles have to slow down when approaching a crossing. In Malaysia, for example, the road intersections have been so designed that it is not possible to change lane even if one wishes to, as 6-inch walls have been erected as lane guides up to a short distance, and right turns are automatically directed (by design) to specific lanes; hence the drivers cannot change lanes during turning.

The duration of the yellow light should be increased considerably (for the "training" period) so that vehicles have enough early warning for slowing down while approaching a crossing. Here the motorteed vehicles approach intersections too fast, and drivers accelerate to beat the red light, causing accidents (those turning right are also impatiently.

Paying attention to detail could solve or ease a number of problems. That is the job of the system analyst - let us assume the TP have SAs trained

locally or abroad. All the problems cannot be solved at once, but analysis helps in finding solutions, ad

> A. Mawaz Dhaka.

Individual's right

Sir, I heard from my friendly neighbourhood drugstore just the other day that calcium lactate tablets may soon be banned, or perhaps already have been, by the government.

My first reaction was a flash of sheer anger: what right has the government to infringe my right to take calcium lactate tablets if I think, that they are good for me? After I had regained some degree of tranquility. I reflected more calmly on the legitimate boundaries of state power over the individual. These are my conclusions.

Most Governments in Third World countries are far too

of books, magazines, often in what they consider the best interest of the people, blissfully unaware that such action sometimes constitutes a violation of the individual's inalienable right to choose for himself or herself. No doubt there are extreme cases, like heroin, where such action is very much justifiable. But the cost in terms of erosion of respect for individual liberty is high, and the government should be very certain that the benefits outweigh these costs before they resort to banning anything. Expert committees set up by the government, however competent, have the right to advise, persuade, propagandise, but not to force one

- unless it can be clearly proved to his/her satisfaction that the restriction on one's freedom to choose prevents grievous harm to others. Abu A Abdullah

Research Director, BIDS.

100% literacy in Kerala

Sir, I have the pleasure to express my appreciation of the article on the above subject published in your esteemed journal on July 13. But I find a blunder committed as evidenced in the map of Kerala published along with the arti-

In the said map, Ernakulam

actually to the north. This I know because I am a Keralite, now a citizen of Bangladesh, and have lived in Cochin for the first 11 years of my life. On the other hand, the place denoted in your map as Ernakulam is really Alleppey (Alappuzha in local parlance), about 60 km south of Cochin, and my birthplace.

Anwar Firoze

Babu Khan Road, Khulna.

The map was supplied with the feature by Gemini News, London The inadvertence is regretted Editor.

do not consider any further comment is necessary.

lowed, to keep the junction

hoc or long term.