

Dhaka, Friday, December 27, 1991

## How to Curb Smuggling?

The twice put off anti-smuggling drive is now scheduled to start from the New Year's Day. The very fact that the planned drive needed to be postponed on two occasions forces us to conclude that the whole scheme was not thought out well in advance. While we are fully behind the government's effort to curb smuggling, we wonder if going after the shopkeepers in the city and raiding their outlets is the right way of going about this important task. What is the rationale behind going after the sellers of smuggled goods only instead of going after the suppliers also? Obviously there are well established routes following which the contraband goods enter the country; there are carriers who bring these all the way and then there are the people who receive the goods at this end and ultimately sell them to the retailers. Some of the contrabands enter through the airport under the very nose of our Customs officials. Travellers from abroad bring in goods which later find their way into the local market. Without stopping these goods at any of these points, why has the government chosen to raid the shops in the city? After all the shops are the very last link in the smugglers' chain. The obvious method to curb smuggling would be to stop it at the point of entry — not after they have already passed through many hands and after the original culprits have profited from their action.

There are many reasons for smuggling to exist; the most important being economic. As long as there is effective demand for these goods in the local market, the authorities will be fighting a losing battle to stop them from coming in. The authorities can fight smuggling with punitive steps, with legal actions and with economic measures; the most obvious being improving our own productive capacity. But the problem is that largescale smuggling mitigates against that very prospect. Here lies the challenge for our policy makers — how to mix a package of incentives for our industrialists with effective deterrent measures for the illegal traders, so that smuggling is forever stopped.

Included in the list of banned items is the spillover into the local market, the garment products from our own industry which are meant for the foreign market only. The spillover occurs when there is damage in production or due to missed delivery deadlines. They are then sold in the local market at a very cheap price, enabling our poor and low income groups to afford reasonably good textile products. If these items are banned from the local market, then where are they to go? All these and other related issues need to be well thought out by the policy makers if effective steps are to be taken to contain smuggling. What we need is a comprehensive policy package, not stop-gap measures.

## Stinking Colombo Performance

A sport journalist reporting from Colombo for a national daily has written that he felt ashamed to cover the Bangladesh-Pakistan soccer encounter of Tuesday. Another national daily has asked for a national enquiry into this stinking sport scandal of losing to Pakistan consecutively for the second time in the SAF Games. As responsible professionals, they haven't so much rued over the solitary goal defeat which could very well have been a freak. They would not accept the way the defeat was fashioned — almost systematically and deliberately — right from the selection part of the stink-story to the inept performance of the coach during the match.

Pakistan should have, by the going of the game, won by at least there — they dominated it from start to finish. Is that believable? Our midfield was worse than absent for not only one of the duo remained busy with keeping away from the ball but the other gave a special show wrong passes. Goalkeeper Mohsin was completely beaten at least four times. That's a record for both a goalie to be beaten in such a match as also for the ball failing to get to the net even after well past the goal-tender. Pijush should be hailed as a national hero for clearing three out of these four.

What does our Colombo soccer performance signify? It is clear that our football has fallen deep into not-so-much a professional as a commercial hole. Are we caught up in the Calcutta soccer syndrome of stars being worshipped by millions and producing less than mediocre football? Our stars have long surpassed in the size of the purse — by as much as metres. And football madness here is fast catching up with that of Calcutta — with a matching concomitant rise in soccer corruption.

Losing to Pakistan is shameful enough — the latter being by assessment a far inferior side. The Colombo scandal was, however, about Bangladesh beating itself and quite shamelessly, why did they do it?

All of those involved in ridiculing our national image as a footballing country and stomping around with bulging bags of money must be made to pay for their part in it. But the clubs would intervene and save the culprits. The clubs and their federations have a very big hand in the making of all such cases of ignominious sport performance. The government, which foots the bill of all sporting activity in the country and also of all the outings made by our sportsmen and their managers, must take the Colombo humiliation, in soccer as well as in all other events, as an occasion for mounting a thorough overhauling of the whole sporting sector.

**B**ANGLADESH enters the decade of the nineties as it completes 20 years of its independence. The year, 1991, marked an end of a period of long authoritarian rule and initiated a process for restoration of democratic governance. This change was the result of a mass movement fuelled by widely shared perceptions that a democratic framework of governance was imperative for survival.

A transition to democracy in Bangladesh coincides with similar transitions in our own region and in other parts of the world. The scale of the change globally suggests that we might be at a juncture of history, which marks a transition from one historical epoch to another.

How will these tidal waves of global change impact on our society and our region in a question with which we must necessarily be concerned. Caught up in the midst of transition and change in our own societies, we are engaged in stock taking and soul searching, seeking new directions and strategies, which would help us to move towards fulfilling the survival needs of our people, and also their larger aspirations, which remain unfulfilled.

This South Asian dialogue, which we are initiating, provides a timely opportunity to share our concerns and in particular to assess the impact of these changes on our societies. At the global level there are assessments being made as to who will be the winners and losers in the emerging global dispensation. In these assessments most, if not all, of us in this region are counted among the losers. This should impel us to concert our efforts with a sense of urgency to make our own assessments. Together we need to explore the potential and possibilities that exist in our societies, and in our region, for strategies of

regional cooperation, which might improve our chances of being among the winners, or at any rate to shape things in a way, that the gains and losses from global change are more evenly distributed.

We need to evaluate our post-colonial experience the high hopes and aspirations with which we welcomed independence and the disappointments and frustrations leading in some cases to the disillusionment that is visible today.

In each of our societies, independence had promised freedom, equality and social justice. The post colonial state

was to represent people and promote the greatest good of the greatest numbers of bringing about social and economic change within a democratic political order.

As we evaluate four decades of experience, we find that there is a considerable gap between what was expected and what has been achieved. We need to ask whether the post-colonial state itself has measured up to expectations. While in some of our countries the state shed even the pretence of democracy and assumed an authoritarian character, in others though the democratic framework was preserved it has faced pressures from time to time from authoritarian tendencies and ethnic and sectarian conflicts.

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# Bangladesh and South Asia — Priorities for the Nineties

by Dr. Kamal Hossain

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to nurturing democratic values and an environment in which the rule of law, respect for human rights, a free press and other democratic institutions can gather strength. To make the State more responsive to people's priorities, we need to adopt strategies to empower disadvantaged sections of the population. We need to explore ways in which we can cooperate in strengthening democratic institutions in our respective countries. A recent practical step was the exchange of regional teams of observers in the elections held in

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priority needs to be given within our countries to resolve ethnic conflicts and to contain the growth of fundamentalism.

These efforts towards building an environment for regional cooperation are premised on the conviction that such an environment would open up enormous possibilities for all-round cooperation. Cooperation in generating the technologies of the future, in shared R & D and the development of South Asian centres of excellence must be an integral part of our survival strategies for the further. Developing common strategies

will enable us to secure our goals, national and regional, more effectively. Co-ordinated development strategies will help us to optimise use of resources and more effectively serve the shared goals of development for the benefit of all our peoples.

The challenges that face us and the possibilities that exist are well encapsulated in the words of George Verghese in his inspirational study on the WATERS OF HOPE: The glaring contradiction of the largest concentration of the world's most poor unable to garner the bounty of one of the world's richest natural resource regions in which they live is an indictment that can no longer be evaded. Not a little has been achieved over the past 40 years. But not enough. Political

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This is why our effort should be directed to improving the political environment in our region. We should move our governments to attach the highest foreign policy priority, if this not already being done, to a resolution of outstanding issues and removal of sources of tension. Ethnic conflicts and revival of fundamentalist tendencies in some of our societies not only threaten political stability, but by their very nature, also have a negative impact on relations between countries in our region. This is why high

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stability and the social fabric are threatened as populations multiply and justly demand equity and opportunity.

His recommendation that "on a large canvas the Basin of the great rivers has to become in ecologically responsible region in order to secure ecological security for all" can be extended to urge that we would better secure peace, security and progress for all our peoples by promoting cooperation within the broadest possible frame.

Thus while the problem which faces us are daunting and the record of the last four decades is one of many failures and missed opportunities, nevertheless, through these four decades, we have through experience arrived at a point where in each of our countries we are renewing our commitment to the common goal of peace and stability within our region and, in our own societies, to economic and social change in the interest of our peoples within a democratic political order. In pursuing these objectives, we believe more dialogues and increased interaction between our people and non-governmental organizations at all levels could significantly contribute towards building an environment for more effective regional cooperation in South Asia.

A former Foreign Minister of Bangladesh and a noted lawyer, the writer is a member of the presidium of Awami League. The article here is based on a talk delivered by Dr Hossain at the South Asian Regional Dialogue (SARD), a non-official forum of intellectuals from SAARC countries, held in Delhi on December 16-18. At this meeting, Bangladesh was represented by Dr Hossain, Prof. Rehman Sobhan, Dr Meghna Guha-Thakurta, Dr Fasil Uddin Mahab and Mr Fakharuddin Ahmed.

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## Cuba: Just Another Third World Country

Despite the proud rhetoric of President Fidel Castro, Cuba is on the way to joining the economically troubled majority of the nations of the South. Saul Landau, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Policy Studies, examines the response of the maverick island nation to the 'new world order' of the 1990's.