

START: 'It's a Balanced Treaty'

The Real Test Lies Ahead

Mutual back slapping aside, now that we have the type of government we wanted, let us show the world that we deserve it. The intention is not to sound patronising but to remind us all that we have had such opportunities before which came to nothing because of the mistakes we made. Hence this reminder. We are not altogether unfamiliar with democracy and the parliamentary form of government. Neither are we unaware as to what makes democracy work. Where we seem to falter is in the day to day practice of it. Our patience seems so brittle when it comes to listening to the other person's views and having heard it, tolerate it for whatever its worth.

The shape of our government provided for in the new order of things is not perfect. There are always loopholes in any constitutional provision about forms of government. Should we exploit them to create crisis in functioning of our government and thereby weaken the system as a whole? Or should we try and build on the positive aspects of the new form of government and make up through practices the gaps that exist in the form?

At the risk of repeating the obvious it has to be said that democracy is much more than a form, an institution, a set of legal principles or an act of the parliament. It is a culture, a way of running a society and in a profound sort of way, an attitude of the mind. It is a way how we behave within the family, with our neighbours, in our work place and last but not the least, how we behave politically. We will have to learn to distinguish between conscientious, as compared to convenient, allies and build partnerships on principles and not populist positions. For we cannot afford to forget that in democracy along with freedom comes responsibility. It is in the fine-tuning of these two inseparable elements of democracy that its stability and effectiveness lies. We must face the fact that in demanding freedom our record is far more impressive than in exercising responsibility.

So far the parliament has set a good trend. In the competition between the desirable and the possible, our members have shown commendable sense of responsibility and have given us a blend of it all, that gives our revived democracy a very good start. Our parliamentarians will now have to set a new standard of our politics for the future generation to emulate. Any future lapses, especially of the shoe waving kind should be removed with the stringent of measures.

The role of the political parties can hardly be overstated in the new circumstances. Their public utterances must become more and more rooted in facts and their line of action far better thought out, not only in terms of immediate party gain, but more so in terms of national interest. It is crucial that political parties begin to exercise greater inner party democracy so that they themselves become training grounds, as they must, for the democrats of the future.

The mass media must play a more responsible role in this context. We cannot be oblivious of the fact that there will be partisan views. But even while presenting such views truth does not have to be thrown to the winds and opinions do not have to be divorced from facts.

The real test of our democracy lies in the future. In how we practice it. More importantly, it will depend on how we use the collective wisdom of the people to provide for them a decent living which constitutes their fundamental democratic right.

No More Hiroshima

Japan commemorated Hiroshima Day on Tuesday, by staring at the ground silently and remembering those tens of thousands of innocent people who perished on that day 46 years ago. Some say they died as sacrificial lambs at the altar of scientific innovation; others still defend the bombing, saying it was necessary in order to achieve a quick surrender of Japanese forces and thereby save lives.

Whatever the case might have been, one fact is inescapable: that man's ingenuity, which succeeded in splitting the atom and extracting such astonishing force of energy, was used in the way scientists would never have wished had they been given the choice in the first place.

Atomic weapons have now become the scourge of the human race. Reports of people still contracting cancer and other incurable diseases in Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a direct result of the radiation emanated by the two bombs dropped on those cities on August 6 and 8 respectively, cannot but make people shiver at what might happen if a nuclear war were to break out.

It is little wonder, therefore, that most people everywhere view nuclear weapons but as an unmitigated evil. The thought that a simple political miscalculation on somebody's part — perfectly possible, since to err is merely human — or even a technological malfunction could trigger a worldwide nuclear exchange, makes the majority people of this planet reject the idea of the very existence of nuclear weapons.

The signing of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty on July 31 in Moscow between the United States and the Soviet Union marked first, but significant, step on the road to nuclear disarmament. But we still have a long way to go. Even after START I, both the US and USSR will retain enough nuclear warheads and delivery vehicles to burn the planet many times over. On the other hand, China is yet to even commit itself to nuclear arms limitation, let alone disarmament. Britain and France continue to maintain their arsenals, while smaller states such as Israel, Pakistan, South Africa and India are known to have build up such a capability.

The next decade or so will, therefore, be dangerous and crucial. We can only hope START is the start to worldwide nuclear disarmament which will come about as we wake up to the reality of our planet. Until then, we hope and demand that there will be no more Hiroshimas.

QUESTION: The treaty contains more than 800 pages of closely printed text. The political significance of this document is known. But what about its purely military aspect?

ANSWER: It is difficult to divorce the military aspect of the treaty from its political significance. It reduces the level of nuclear confrontation between the USSR and the US, strengthens strategic stability and thereby reduces the probability of a nuclear conflict. The important thing is that the treaty embraces all components of strategic offensive weapons — land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) and strategic aviation, including its air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs) and other nuclear armaments. It is a treaty which for the first time in history not only limits but also reduces strategic nuclear weapons.

The overall number of deployed ICBMs, SLBMs and heavy bombers is being reduced to 1,600 and the number of warheads to 6,000, according to the official data which we have exchanged. The USSR currently possesses 2,500 nuclear delivery vehicles with 10,271 nuclear warheads assigned to them. The US has 2,222 delivery vehicles and 10,371 warheads.

We are reducing the overall number of delivery vehicles by 900 units or 36 per cent, of which 154 units will be heavy ICBMs which we alone possess and which we are cutting by half. The US will reduce the number of delivery vehicles by 622 units or 28 per cent. Under the coordinated counting rules, the overall number of warheads on both sides will be reduced by 4,271 (USSR) and 4,371 (USA), or by 42 per cent on each side.

The concrete number of ballistic missiles and heavy bombers to be reduced or taken off operational duty will depend on the structure and the composition of strategic



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nuclear forces which the sides will deem necessary for them to have by the end of the reductions within the framework of the coordinated levels. Tentatively, the USSR intends to reduce the number of its ICBMs by approximately 400 missiles (30 per cent) and of SLBMs by 500 missiles (50 per cent); there will be practically no reductions in the number of Soviet heavy bombers (HB).

After the reduction the total throw weight of the deployed ICBMs and SLBMs will not exceed on each of the sides the level which is equivalent to approximately 50 per cent of the present total throw weight of all Soviet ICBMs and SLBMs. The heavy ICBMs of the existing types which are due for numerical reduction can be modernized within the agreed-upon criteria, whereas the development, manufacture and deployment of new types of heavy missiles is prohibited. Each heavy bomber carrying nuclear weapons will be counted as one missile delivery vehicle and included in the allowable limit of 1,600 units. One warhead will be registered with each of the bomber aircraft which are supplied with

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A Star Exclusive

nuclear bombs and "air-to-surface" missiles with a range of up to 600 kilometres and included in the allowable limit of 6,000 units. Ten warheads will be registered with each of the US heavy bombers that are fit to carry long-range (more than 600 kilometres) nuclear air-launched cruise missiles and eight with similar Soviet bombers.

Sea-Based cruise missiles with a range of more than 600 kilometres are not subject for reduction under the START. They are limited in accordance with the binding political statements of the sides concerning the deployed long-range nuclear SBCMs. Throughout the operation of this treaty each side may not have more than 880 such missiles.

The reduction of ICBMs, SLBMs, heavy bombers and their armaments will be carried out over a period of seven years in three stages (the first stage will last three years and the second and the third stage — two years each), in accordance with the procedures which have been coordinated, the long-range nuclear weapons subject to reduction will be either re-equipped or scrapped. It is allowed to use ICBMs and SLBMs for launching objects into the upper layers of the atmosphere or outer space.

This treaty has been signed for 15 years. It can be extended every five years thereafter if it is not replaced with a new treaty before its original expiration date.

QUESTION: How do the US and we stand to gain by this treaty?

ANSWER: Our partners consented to honour the 1972

ABM treaty. This is important because deep cuts of strategic offensive weapons are impossible without a ban on the development and deployment of a new large-scale ABM system.

Second, we have managed to limit the range of air-launched cruise missiles to 600 kilometres. Why 600 kilometres? There are several reasons. The most important is the possibilities of our ABM system. If these missiles were allowed a longer range, the US could then deploy them on its tactical aviation aircraft and thereby hit our targets without actually entering the zone of our anti-missile defense.

Of great importance are the restrictions on sea-based cruise missiles (the range — up to 2,600 kilometre and the height of their flight — 50 metres). Combating such missiles is a very complex task. SBCMs pose a serious threat. The US has a big advantage in such missiles.

We have come to agreement that the SBCM problem will be settled beyond the START treaty. The accord reached sets the ceiling of 880 SBCMs for each side and restricts their range to 600 kilometres.

It goes without saying that it was very difficult to come to agreement on this problem. Both sides had to make certain concessions. The Americans first insisted on a complete ban on the manufacture and any launches and modernization of our heavy ICBMs. But then we would be deprived of any possibility to match in any way a large-scale ABM system in the event the US deployed it.

As you know, we have agreed to halve our heavy ICBMs, not to create, test and

deploy new types of such missiles, but we have a right to modernise them.

Our mobile ICBMs shall be preserved. At the same time we have agreed to reduce about 50 per cent of the aggregate throw weight of our ICBMs and SLBMs, and to count every heavy bomber with low-yield nuclear weapons and nuclear bombs as one delivery vehicle and one warhead.

There are also other conditions. I want to stress the main thing: The START is a sufficiently balanced document that guarantees equality and equal security for the sides.

QUESTION: Why have the sides agreed to a 40 per cent reduction when the initial aim was to halve their strategic offensive armaments?

ANSWER: The thing is that the preliminary agreement on the number of remaining nuclear weapons and delivery vehicles was reached in 1987. It was assumed that by 1991 there will be more delivery vehicles than we actually have now. But life has introduced its own changes, and this is not surprising. I think that the 40 per cent reduction of nuclear weapons is a great achievement for both countries.

QUESTION: Who can guarantee that the treaty will be implemented?

ANSWER: The guarantees are in the experience we have accumulated while implementing the INF treaty, the strict verification procedures which include the use of national technical means, on-site inspections, exchange of data and notifications, as well as the lifting of limitations on access to information broadcast from ICBMs and SLBMs during their

take-off. Verification procedures also provide for the presence of inspection groups at the facilities that produce mobile missiles and their trips to the deployment areas, as well as some other conditions compliance with which will maintain our trust in each other.

QUESTION: The START has been signed, what next?

ANSWER: I think that the next stage of guaranteeing international security might be a qualitatively new stage in the cooperation of the Soviet Union, the USA and other countries. To begin with, we should activate political structures. I would single out two main directions: European-American and global. We have the best results in the former. We could continue by setting the goal of going over from individual major agreements to the creation of an effective system of mutual security, or standing structures of European security.

I mean, we could create a standing body (a kind of European Security Council) that would have broad functions, probably on the basis of the conflict prevention centre, which would assimilate the existing military structures. In the course of this process we could continue reducing strategic nuclear weapons, agree on the further reduction of conventional forces (Vienna-2) and tactical nuclear weapons. We should also include naval forces into the negotiating process.

The second direction is the solution of major, global problems, above all concerning relations with developing countries. Its essence could be the maintenance of stability, prevention and settlement of regional conflicts, hindering the proliferation of nuclear and other mass destruction weapons, missiles and missile technologies, and the reduction of trade in military hardware and armaments.

THREE months ago, the Greek ship 'Alice', sailing under a Jamaican flag, got stranded in the Dutch port of Dordrecht, its cargo of 1,500 tonnes of cement spoilt in heavy weather. The 22-member, all-Filipino crew has been left to sink or swim.

The Greek owner is now fighting with the insurance company over the damage claim and is desperately trying to find a new buyer for the cement. The crew is not covered in the discussions.

"We are fed up and lonely", said one of the sailors, who asked not to be identified. "It's been weeks since we had any mail. Our April salary has not been paid. We haven't got a cent left, so it's no fun to be out on shore leave. I don't like window shopping."

Their situation could be worse. At least they have a Filipino captain who is not too bad," said Nonyo Laconico, of the Philippine Seaman Assistance Programme (PSAP).

Laconico is the only paid employee of the PSAP, a 10-year-old Rotterdam-based organisation that tries to protect the rights of some 130,000 Filipino seamen in the international merchant fleet.

At this moment, Filipino crewmembers of three other ships are in serious trouble in the Netherlands alone, in need of legal and social aid.

Philippine seamen are popular with foreign shipowners for their willingness to work for low wages and lack of organisation.

Their numbers have increased, their working conditions have worsened," said Laconico.

The official minimum wage fixed by the International Federation for Transport Workers (ITF) is US \$82 a month, but the junior sailors aboard the 'Alice' receive only US \$200, less even than the standard minimum of US \$276 decreed by the International

Labour

Seamen Left to Sink or Swim

The plight of a stranded all-Filipino crew in a Dutch port illustrates the conditions under which seamen recruited from Third World countries are forced to work. Jolke Oppewal of IPS reports from Rotterdam.

Labour Organisation (ITF).

Filipino seamen also suffer other hardships. "I am the only Filipino in a completely Bulgarian crew," said a 60-year-old boatwain who walked into the PSAP office. "I can only communicate with my hands. The food is horrible."

His contract expires in two months, but he wants to go home immediately. He is afraid to involve the ITF, as his contract forbids him to get in touch with the union on penalty of being blacklisted by the shipping agents.

The fear of being blacklisted is very big. If the seamen's documents are not properly signed by the agency at the end of his contract, it will be very hard for him to find a new job," said Wim van Wijk, PSAP chairman.

For the Philippine government, the export of marine manpower is a welcome source of income.

The government regards us as a nice way to earn hard currency," said the captain of the 'Alice', who also asked for anonymity. Most seamen are contracted through a manning agency in Manila. Their wages are paid to their families in local currency, while the government keeps the hard currency.

Racism is another source of abuse. Filipino sailors were recently forced to clean the deck of the German ship 'Sam Hunt'

by their European captain, "so they could better feel the dirt," one Filipino seaman wrote in 'Parola', a bi-monthly newsletter published by the PSAP.

Until recently, Dutch shipping companies were not allowed to sign on foreign seamen for a wage less than that of an able-bodied Dutchman. Many shipowners decided for that reason to register under another flag.

The Dutch regulations were mitigated in 1987. Today, Filipinos form one third of the total labour force on the Dutch merchant fleet. The savings for shipowners are tremendous.

A tugboat with a crew of 10 Filipinos would cost half a million dollars less a year than one with a full Dutch crew, the Smit Lloyd salvage company calculated.

Filipino sailors themselves can do very little to protect their rights, said Paul Chapman, founder of the US Centre for Seafarers' Rights. So many national laws and regulations are involved in international navigation that it is an impenetrable legal jungle for the individual seamen, Chapman said.

Meanwhile, competition among seamen from different Third World countries is hampering efforts to protect their interests.

As soon as the wages for one nationality of seamen rise,

OPINION

Free Market Economy and Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants

The much awaited industrial policy announced recently at a press conference by the Minister of Industries has been widely acclaimed and termed pragmatic in the context of the global economic developments and changes. Market competition and thereby market economy are the order of the day. Adoption of this concept in the East European countries including the Soviet Union and also our neighbour India bears adequate confidence of the adopters in free market economy. In revitalising their economy shattered by the age old socialistic/state controlled economic system which failed to deliver the goods.

Though some steps were taken previously in this direction in our country, yet a lot remains to be done. Import and export freedoms are a prerequisite for a workable free market system coupled with the freedom to invest/set up industries in any sector. We still have some sectors reserved for public sector investment only and a list of goods whose import/export are controlled/banned.

Petroleum oil and lubricants are not in the reserved list yet the import/export of petroleum products and lubricants barring crude oil, lubricating oil additives, liquid paraffin has still been restricted to the Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, owned by the government, following an arbitrary cabinet decision taken in 1985 by the autocratic past government. Not only is this flouting the declared policy, but the essence and substance of the Petroleum Act of 1974 and the BPC Ordinance of 1976 have been twisted to cover lubricating oils and give the BPC exclusivity in its import notwithstanding the fact that the Petroleum Act of 1974 does not apply to lubricants since it does not occur naturally within the exploration zone covered by the act nor does the ordinance under which the BPC came into existence give this exclusivity to the corporation which, according to the ordinance, is a company like any other company whether private or government owned

under the Companies Act.

Bestowing the corporation with such unilateral protectionism, much against the universal trend of market economy strongly professed by the government, is beyond comprehension particularly when one compares the petroleum operations/marketing within the country to that in other countries. Even the USA/EEC/Canada/Australia etc who are industrially developed and worldpowers both economically and militarily, leave the Petroleum, Oil and Lubricants (POL) operations to market economy with a buffer stock maintenance for emergency situations. If market economy in their case has been able to ensure a reliable supply of petroleum products and that too in very large quantities, one fails to understand why this should not work here particularly when one recalls the fact that POL operations in this country were in the private sector since the 1950's till the 1980's (early part). Market economy benefits the consumer who pays the price based on competitive market mechanism and not based on an arbitrarily fixed basis with a build-in cushion for inefficiency. The people of the country have been paying a very high price for POL products and the difference between this price realised from the consumer and the cost incurred in its importation and distribution by the BPC have been boldly shown as operating profit of the corporation and deposited to the national exchequer with kudos claiming the operating success of the corporation at the expense of the whole country and its poor captive customers. If an analysis of the effects of this arbitrary pricing of POL products resulting from the monopolistic activities of BPC on the national economy are analysed/studied, economists would be stunned at the economic loss the nation is unwittingly incurring.

sugar, salt, pharmaceuticals, fertilizers, etc. The marketing and distribution of fertilizers within the country till mid March 1989 was monopoly of BADC. Thereafter, initially marketing of urea fertilizer was opened to the private sector on an equal footing with the BADC. The success of this operation and the resultant savings to the Government as well as benefits to the farmers in terms of availability, lower price and customer service encouraged the Government to permit private sector to distribute fertilizers imported by BADC and eventually import the same. Recently fertilizer imports have also been successfully done by the private fertilizer distributors. If what has been achieved by the private sector in the fertilizer sector is some indication of their capability, resultant as a direct outcome of market economy implemented by BADC in unison with other agencies, perhaps its time that the BPC takes a similar attitude in the greater national interest, since oil is a prime mover of the national economy, without which industrialisation will be a far cry.

The annual turnover in the fertilizer sector in Bangladesh at the wholesale level is approximately Tk 1200 crores whilst at the retailers level at the farm sites approximately Tk 1300 crores growing annually at the rate of some 10 to 12 per cent. This is today being done by the private sector and in terms of value it is very close to the annual turnover of the POL sector.

The above is just one example of market economy. Let all those in authority and those interested in economic development of the country ponder for a while and translate the policy of the government into reality. There is no harm in being late, but remaining indifferent knowingly is a crime for which those responsible should be taken to task. Let, like other sectors of the economy, petroleum, oil and lubricants be in the free sector, in practice, with operations/marketing / import / export completely decontrolled.

A Reader Shantinagar, Dhaka

To the Editor...

Smoking
Sir, It is often published that smoking is a great health hazard and 'NO SMOKING' sign is exhibited at many important public places. But, to my utter surprise, it was a different story altogether when I watched the recent 10th Asian Club Football Tournament held at Dhaka Stadium. There was smoking all around and the attractive pictures of cigarettes of various brands were magnificently displayed around the gallery of the stadium. It looked to me as though we are publicising against 'NO SMOKING' whereas it should really be the other way round.

I wonder how the health conscious people of the country will react to this contradictory situation.

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Govt. housing project

Sir, As per an advertisement in the daily newspapers on 4/6/87 of the 'Griho

Sangsthan Adhidapter' (Housing Directorate) one of my colleagues along with many others submitted an application in prescribed form which cost an amount of Tk 350/- (non-refundable) for a flat (apartment) said to be constructed by the Directorate. An amount of Tk 30,000/- was charged as security money from each applicant.

Now after five years, my colleague, when contacted the Chief Engineer of the Housing Directorate, came to know that the plan of constructing those flats has been abandoned due to the non-availability of the required fund of Tk 100 crore. It is understood that the Planning Commission didn't approve the project. My colleague has been advised by the Directorate to get his security money refunded.

But some questions are being raised by those who applied for the flats: (i) Why the Housing Directorate floated the ad without having prior

approval of their project by the government? (ii) Who would compensate the financial loss caused to the applicant by withholding their security money for such a long time? Had they kept this money in a bank, they would have received interests. (iii) What about the non-refundable Tk 350/- which they paid for no reason since the authorities have abandoned the projects?

Isn't there any means to execute the project? According to the latest reports, a lot of government money have been either misused in unproductive sectors or borrowed by banks and ingenuine borrowers.

Can't we afford only one hundred crore taka for erecting small apartments for poor government employees?

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