

Yes

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of tomorrow's referendum. Rhetorics apart, this is first and foremost a constitutional requirement...

The position of this paper is quite straightforward on this issue of national importance: the people ought to go out to vote and vote "Yes".

The presidential system, under which this country has been governed from January, 1975 till now, has proved itself to be wanting in many ways, leaving ground for the rise of despotic rule.

Whatever might have been the logic behind introduction and sustenance of such a system, that surely no longer exists. The country needs a change because change is imperative for our socio-economic development.

But now the people must play their part. If they fail to turn up in large numbers then a question mark will naturally appear over the credibility of the idea of holding referendums at all.

A "Yes" vote will ensure that parliament has the ability to hold the executive branch — the prime minister and cabinet — responsible to itself.

Who's Afraid of Crying?

One of the world's most comely presence is decidedly Diana's who is incidentally the Princess of Wales — the spouse of the heir to the British throne.

She now has proven to be as charming with her words as she is in person. And for the latest proof of her keenness of thought and expression she has chosen to berate the traditional British reserve — stoicism transported to modern times.

Adults should get of this if only because that would help understand their children better and set better examples before them. Emotional outbursts might be less dramatic or violent if a little steam was reasonably vented harmlessly.

HOUSING IN DHAKA

Identifying Land for Low-income Groups

by Dr Mahbubur Rahman

LAND is primarily a political issue and not a technical one. Urban planners are now convinced that the solution of the land problem is a primary condition to the solution of the housing problem.

Shortages of land in sufficient quantity and at affordable prices is a major barrier to proper housing development. Availability of suitable land remains the foremost condition of allowing the lower-income groups to bargain in the urban housing market.

Housing versus Other Use

Availability of land for possible housing development is restricted due to three particular reasons. The first reason is an obvious one where housing has to compete for land with other uses viz industrial, commercial etc.

Most desired use of urban land is the one that brings the highest net return in money and amenities to the owner/user over a period of time. To achieve this, the first phenomenon that occurs is the competition among optional uses.

Geographical Features

Dhaka, though strategically well-placed, is water-logged by vast flood plains in all directions except the south which is delineated by the river Buriganga.

Several sites-and-services projects were developed in Dhaka with an aim of benefiting the lower-income groups. But in the end, these fell in the hands of the high-income groups.

The main built-up area of Dhaka and its northern part is high land. To the west and south lie the flood plains of the Turag and Buriganga. These lands are inundated every year.

This suggests that development expansion would be minimum towards the north of the city which is by now almost fully engaged to different urban uses. The flood plain towards east is the next best location where different housing societies are competing with each other and the government to acquire as much land as possible.

Use of Zoning Regulations

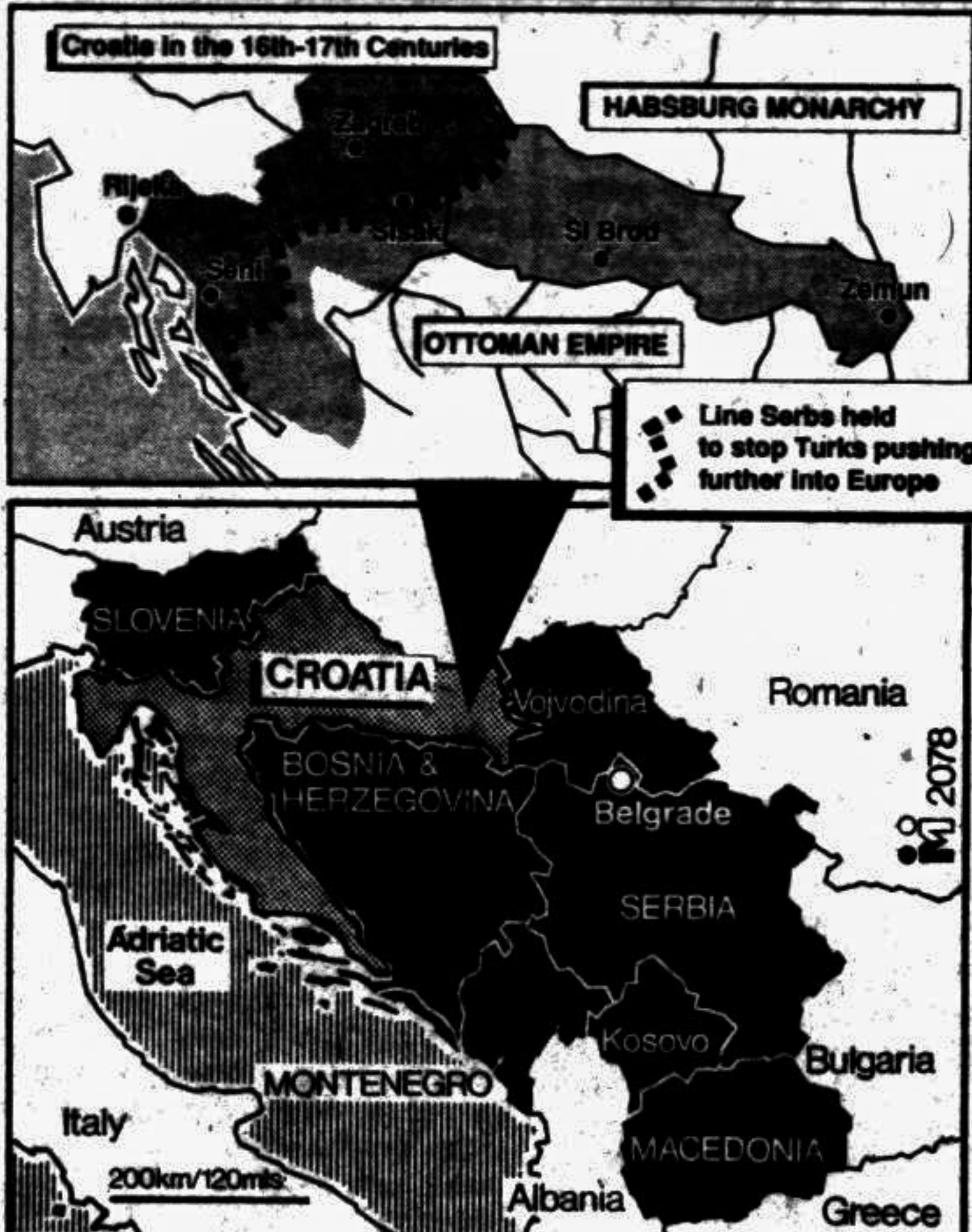
Zoning could be effectively used to prevent specific land parcels from being allocated to the highest bidder by imposing limited categories of use and by restricting unit density.

Serbian Sights Set on Ancient Borders

by Petar Hadji-Ristic

Four centuries ago, Serbs were in the frontline of a military frontier region established to halt the Ottoman Empire's further advance into Europe.

Croatia: ancient battleground



Autonomous regions of Knin and Western and Eastern Slavonia will eventually split from Croatia to join Serbia — the neo-communist regime of Milosevic would have realised another ancient Serbian dream — a warm-water port.

and which only a superpower would dare to confront.

Hundreds of railway wagons and trucks, protected by warplanes, have transported rockets, shells and other munition out of Slovenia, which declared its independence on June 25 this year — just after Croatia. Squadrons of warplanes have also been moved out.

Much of this has been moved into the central republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina, where some of the country's secret arms factories are located and which was once among the major arms suppliers to the Third World, including Iraq.

The consequences of the use of military force in an attempt to keep the Yugoslav federation together — or at least to grab the areas where Serbs have lived in the past and to redraw the boundaries between republics — have been disastrous for the economy.

Jaques Delors, President of the European Commission, puts the cost at a billion dollars a month, but the true figure is almost certainly much higher.

The military must have wanted to bring about the collapse of the Croatian economy — none of its new private enterprises has done any business this year — but the Serbian economy will also take decades to recover.

A hint of the economic catastrophe about to envelop the country is provided by the news that Serbian banks are paying 70 per cent more than the official rate of exchange for

price equal to the agency price bypassing the otherwise normal allotment by lottery. Yet this is beyond their affordability and rules them out of the process.

Land for the Poor

The price pattern of Dhaka's land suggests that there is no land suitable for the future low-income settlements other than those available beyond the city conurbation. Activities of the profit-motivated housing societies and the flood protection embankment have instigated the land price to go spiralling high even in the periphery.

Land, just identified as ideal for the low-income settlements, is sparsely populated and is large enough to accommodate a population more than double the present size of the city itself through proper planning. However, this would require a wise utilization of the fallow land within the built-up area.

The lowest-priced city land in worst location is also beyond the buying capabilities of most of the urbanites. For example, the price of 1 sq.m. of such land would be equivalent to a month's income by a rickshaw-puller.

their elevation above the known flood level. After adding these extra-expenses, the price still remains reasonably low at Tk 700/sq.m. This is less than half of the lowest price of the within-city land.

Conclusion: There is no easy solution to the problems of housing the low-income groups. The major urban centres of many countries would benefit from an effective land policy; few would benefit as much as Dhaka. After independence, the government declared a bar on the maximum amount of land one can hold and proposed to freeze land price in the city centres.

Through proper legislation, presently unused and underused land within the city can be brought to more productive utilization. Peripheral land can be developed at a minimum cost through plot reconstitution techniques.

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Yugoslavia, and both are likely to opt for independence.

This could mean yet more fighting — at least in Bosnia, where Muslims account for 44 per cent of the population, Serbs for 31 and the rest are Croats, some of whom are fighting in Croatia against federal-backed forces.

As in Croatia, Serbs might boycott the referendum and form local governments in the two regions in which they are the majority. They are already organising themselves there and the regions are bristling with weapons.

The same scenario as in the Croatian region of Knin would be played out, with fighters coming in from Serbia and the army providing them with weapons and the backing of military firepower.

"It's a miracle there has been no fighting so far in Bosnia," said one Serbian intellectual, who blames Milosevic for the breakup of Yugoslavia and for the rise of the highly nationalistic government of Franjo Tudjman in Croatia.

However, the prospect of trouble in Bosnia is a chilling one — even, it seems, for Milosevic.

In an effort to head it off, he made his "historic initiative" to Bosnia and the faithful Montenegro republic to join Serbia in forming a mini-Yugoslavia. The problem for him is that Alija Izetbegovic, the Bosnian President, wants none of it.

Never in its history has Serbia been so isolated. Faced by the prospect of an impoverished future and isolation in Europe — especially in the Balkans — it may be that the Serbs will come to their senses. — GEMINI NEWS

PETAR HADJI-RISTIC is a British journalist specialising in Balkan affairs and was previously based in Belgrade.

Corridor of friendship

Sir, Bangladeshi Foreign Minister's visit to India has brought in a "concrete outcome" including Tin Bigha Corridor, as all decks are being cleared for transfer of the corridor to Bangladesh by year-end.

Conquering that long-disputed link land from India's possession is indeed a super success for Bangladeshi diplomacy, although the (originally) allocated periphery of East Bengal (erstwhile East

Pakistan), present Bangladesh, has been a controversy ever since designing India-Pakistan territories. No matter the size, trading this land fragment will undoubtedly be a knot in the loose ties between these two peoples that may also be warming up bilateral relations from now on and does carry a strategic significance for disaster-prone Bangladesh.

In spite of a number of pending issues of mutual concern yet to be cleared up, steps toward amicable solutions to the problems like Tin Bigha will ease tension in their traditional relationship and will widen the corridors of Indo-Bangla interactions to "promote neighbourliness" in materializing SAARC objectives.

How much impact this merged patch of land will cause to this LDC is debatable, because the new voters as well as citizens of that portion of the country will be eligible for national rights and privileges. Bangladesh is already faced with as many shortcomings as her population size that have essentially complicated her to be extra-dependent for subsistence.

While the Theory of Malthus can be based as an indicator for the premises of national projects targeting the mushrooming landless citizens, economic re-settlement of the floating populace will yield profits for the nation. So will

Tin Bigha of Bangladesh, since something is better than nothing.

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Gulf war and Christian-Muslim relationship

Sir, Hundreds of thousands of American Christian brothers and sisters met many more Arab and non-Arab Muslims in the Gulf areas during Iraq's

occupation of Kuwait. This is a unique experience of inter-faith contact and will definitely help in achieving greater Christian-Muslim social, cultural and spiritual understanding for years to come.

We shall be grateful to hear in details, with permission to print, from all brothers and sisters having their such firsthand experience or from their friends and relations. A B M Shamsud Doulah President, Council for Islamic Studies & Research GPO Box 242, Dhaka-1000