

UN Leadership Enters New Era

Labour for Malaysia

The meeting between Begum Khaleida Zia and her counterpart, Dr Mahathir Mohammad of Malaysia, held in Harare, has produced good results. In the first place, there was an appreciation of the need for co-operation between the two regional groupings, ASEAN of which Malaysia is a leading member and SAARC, South Asia's own alliance. How the two bodies should proceed in setting up a linkage remains to be seen. To start with, it may be worthwhile to organise exchange of visits among senior officials of the two groupings to study prospects for collaboration in mutually beneficial fields. It will certainly take time to create the right kind of framework for this purpose. However, let us hope that a start can be made soon.

It should be much easier to strengthen the bilateral co-operation between Bangladesh and Malaysia, a subject discussed perhaps in greater details by the two leaders in Harare. For such co-operation, we have not only an existing mechanism — the Joint Economic Commission which is now due to have its next regular meeting before the end of the year — but also a moderate record of economic exchanges between Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur. Much can be done to raise the level of these exchanges, especially in trade and investment. In this context, it was good to know that Dr. Mahathir reiterated his government's interest in bringing in both skilled, such as doctors and engineers, and semi-skilled manpower from Bangladesh to meet its shortage in Malaysia. It is an on-going process which, in recent years, has not worked all that smoothly. It is said that while Malaysia's need for expatriate doctors, engineers and teachers has actually decreased during past couple of years, resulting in the phasing-out of contracts of professionals from this country, the demand for semi-skilled and unskilled labour, mainly for rubber and palm oil sectors, has been rising rapidly, a demand that Bangladeshi workers should be able to meet.

Here, again, several problems overshadow what some officials wistfully describe as rosy prospects. For one thing, an official intent — often confused for commitment in Dhaka — often lacks fullest backing of employers in Malaysia's plantation and construction sectors, sometimes for perfectly valid reasons. To put it mildly, there are divergences of views about the suitability of certain types of Bangladeshi recruits, such as matriculates and graduates with urban background, for agro-based industries in Malaysia. It is hardly surprising that, when sent out to Kuala Lumpur, many of them end up by getting lower-than-promised wages and then turning out to be victims of other forms of harassment by employment agencies in both Dhaka and Kuala Lumpur. Many of these problems can be resolved if the Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry, takes special care with the details. In carrying out any programme for the export of manpower to Malaysia — or, for that matter, anywhere else — it should also bear in mind the need for a dialogue with the private sector.

In this context, the idea for the setting up of a training institute for potential Bangladeshi recruits for foreign markets, as proposed to Japan by a local organisation, would help in increasing the acceptability of our semi-skilled workers. Crash courses in wide ranging technical and non-technical subjects, including in basic spoken English, Arabic, Japanese or Bahasa Malaysia would certainly raise the level, both quantitatively and qualitatively, of our young men and women who seek jobs in foreign countries. We should not wait for funding from Japan for establishing such an institute.

Lessons from China

According to a visiting World Bank official, there is a lot Bangladesh can learn about disaster management from China. Speaking in a seminar organised by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies last Saturday, Shahid Javed Burki said China had thousands of years of experience in water management, lessons from which would be of immense value to a flood-prone country like Bangladesh.

It does not need elaborating that Bangladesh has been a regular visiting spot for natural disasters of virtually every kind — cyclones, floods, famines. The current situation in the northern districts, with epidemic of diarrhoea and cholera coupled with famine taking a heavy toll of lives, shows that the necessary steps were not taken either to contain the damage caused by the floods of late August and early September, or to tackle the resulting health and food crisis.

Given the situation, we can assume that there is a great deal of structural problems which inhibit our ability to cope with situations about which we should have immense practical knowledge. To begin with, the centralised bureaucracy means we have to wait for Dhaka to react before any effective action is taken in the districts. Even at the district level, administrators have neither the capability nor the training necessary to mobilise huge numbers of people at short notice, in order to undertake rapid rescue, relief or emergency rehabilitation work.

This inability to react in time and effectively is in stark contrast to China which also suffers from recurring natural calamities. The lesson from China is simple: a decentralised administration can react much more efficiently to emergencies in a country where communication is vulnerable but where rural affinity is strong; also people readily respond to administrations that they can hold accountable and which, as a matter of routine, take them into confidence.

As well as finding ways to make local administrations accountable to the people our government may also like to give some thought to the idea of creating permanent disaster management task forces at district levels which would always be ready to take on rescue and relief operations immediately. The armed forces, including Bangladesh Rifles, should contribute manpower, logistical hardware and organisational know-how to task forces which should remain at the command of the civil administration.

WORKERS at the United Nations have been pruning trees and uprooting a strip of garden along First Avenue to lay in concrete an undetermined number of new flag poles.

During the 46th session, the guessing game at UN Headquarters is who will be the next new country member?

Membership has been up and done like the Dow Jones index for the past 12 months, with new members and the consolidation of old ones like the two Yemens and the two Germanys. The trend is definitely upwards, however, with the Koreans claiming two, the Pacific Trust Territory another, and the first of the freed Soviet Republics — Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, another three. At this stage, no one knows just where it will end.

Another guessing game, closer to the seat of power, is who will be the UN's new Secretary-General as the world enters into the last decade of this century?

The five permanent members of the Security Council will soon announce their selection of a new United Nations Secretary-General.

Javier Perez de Cuellar, the present UN Secretary-General, has said he intends to retire on December 31 after two five-year terms, forcing the five main players to pull another tame diplomat out of the hat.

Mr Perez de Cuellar's terms in office have spanned some of the most exciting and disturbing events in recent history, including the end of the Iran-Iraq war, the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the end of the Cold War, freedom for the Soviet Republics, and war in the Persian Gulf.

Mr Perez de Cuellar has been active behind the scenes in negotiations for the release of Western hostages in the Middle East and he has tipped across the world stage on a wide range of major issues without challenging public or political opinion. His style has been low key, if not bland, but in that respect he has been faithful to the tradition of

other Secretaries-General before him.

Breaking the Mould

While wishing him well, there are many who hope Mr Perez de Cuellar's successor will break this mould. They note that the world is a far more complex place than those who drafted the UN Charter could have envisaged more than four decades ago, and that dramatic new challenges demand vital new leadership of a different order. They feel it is also necessary to ease the lock which a handful of countries in the 15-member Security Council hold on the selection process.

For more than four decades of the UN's existence, ideological confrontation among the superpowers, accompanied by the politics of the major regional blocs, ensured that successful candidates for Secretary-General would be drawn from small and neutral nations. Past Secretaries-General have come from Norway, Sweden, Burma (Myanmar), Austria and Peru.

Their selection has effectively been made by just five of the 15 Council members — the United States, Soviet Union, France, United Kingdom and China — who have the power to veto candidates presented by others. As a result, the successful candidate has traditionally been a political unknown who is least offensive to all five.

That person has also been of European, Asian, or Latin American descent. There has never been an African Secretary-General, and there has never been a woman candidate, although there are lobbies for both this year.

In a study paper on UN Leadership prepared for the Ford Foundation and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation of Sweden, two former UN officials, Sir Brian Urquhart and Erskine Childers, say that the complex socio-economic and environmental issues on which the future of the planet now depend are reshaping traditional concepts of security.

Although the cold war confrontation is over, life as we know it is threatened by even more powerful forces such as

Ian Steele writes from the United Nations, New York

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global warming, which demand the negotiation of more complex solutions in the common interest. The study suggests that a new style of international leadership will be needed to bring divergent interests together and to generate ideas large and practical enough to match and manage new global developments.

The study foresees a need to restructure the UN Chain of Command, with the Secretary-General performing the functions of an executive, delegating to three deputies who would manage peace and security affairs; economic and social issues including the environment; and administration and finance.

Seven-year Term

The Secretary-General, they say, should be appointed for a single seven-year term after a worldwide search has uncovered the best possible candidates, regardless of whether they have had previous UN experience. 'Seven year' is regarded as long enough in the job to undertake far-reaching plans without having to resist the political pressures which accompany any bid for re-election.

Sensing perhaps that a post Cold War climate is more conducive to change, the Government of the Netherlands proposed earlier this year that a "search committee" be established on behalf of the Security Council to canvass potential candidates. The Council rejected the idea, however, reminding UN member states that its prerogative in this area is written into the UN Charter.

As on previous occasions, there are no publicly declared contenders for the job this time round although several are known to be running, and running hard. The job is a plum and after a decade in the

doldrums, the UN is again front and centre in world affairs.

The United Nations Association of the United States has compiled a list of 16 possible candidates, some of whom have been talked about as likely contenders for Secretary-General, and others who are obviously "wild cards," including former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher; former US President, Jimmy Carter; former Soviet Foreign Minister; Edward Shevardnadze; and a Swedish automobile executive, Pehr Gyllenhammar.

Others however, have compelling credentials and the potential to bring a new style of leadership and profile to the United Nations. That said, however, the history of deal-making in the Security Council augurs strongly for another surprise.

The UNA list, in alphabetical order, is:

* Sadruddin Aga Khan (Iran) who has spent his professional life in international service, including special roles with UNESCO and 12 years as UN High Commissioner for Refugees. He has undertaken a number of special UN assignments including that as coordinator for economic and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.

* Ali Alatas (Indonesia) was Indonesia's permanent representative at the UN through much of the 1980s until he became Foreign Minister in 1988. He has been a prominent spokesman for ASEAN and co-chairman of efforts to resolve the Cambodia conflict.

* Oscar Arias Sanchez (Costa Rica) was President of his country from 1986 until 1990 and won a Nobel Peace Prize for his leadership in shaping a peaceful settlement to wars in Central America. He also has strong credentials as

an advocate for the environment.

* Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway) a woman and three-time Prime Minister. She gained international recognition as chairman of the UN World Commission on Environment and Development (1983-1987) and her name is on the widely cited report "Our Common Future."

* Jimmy Carter (USA), former President of the United States, has gained in popularity internationally with his advocacy for the environment, his leadership of monitoring teams for elections in Panama and Nicaragua, and his unsuccessful mediation efforts between the Ethiopian government and rebels in 1989.

* Bernard T G Chidzero (Zimbabwe) is an economist who served in a number of UN posts including a period as deputy secretary-general of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). He is currently Zimbabwe's Finance Minister.

* Kenneth Dazie (Ghana) was a prominent spokesman for a new international economic order in the 1970s and chaired a major exercise for the restructuring of the UN's economic and social sectors. He has been secretary-general of the UNCTAD since 1986.

* Jan Eliasson (Sweden) has been Sweden's permanent representative at the UN since 1988 and first attracted international attention as Perez de Cuellar's mediator in the Iran-Iraq negotiations.

* Boutros Ghali (Egypt) is a distinguished Professor of law at Cairo University who was a key figure in Anwar Sadat's efforts to reach a peace agreement with Israel. He was Egypt's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs from 1977 to 1991 and this year became the Deputy Prime Minister for Foreign Relations.

* Pehr Gyllenhammar (Sweden) is non-traditional candidate who comes from the business sector without political or diplomatic experience. He was chief executive officer of Volvo before becoming chairman of its board in 1983.

* Thong Bee 'Tommy' Koh (Singapore) was Singapore's permanent representative at the UN for 12 years before being appointed Singapore's Ambassador to Washington. He is a highly respected diplomat and was president of the third UN Law of the Sea Conference from 1981-1982 when he helped to broker the final landmark agreement. He is a strong advocate of UN reform.

* Olusegun Obasanjo (Nigeria) is the first African military head of state to voluntarily relinquish power to elected civilians. He has retired from active domestic politics but remains involved with several international panels and helped with mediation efforts in Namibia, Angola, Sudan and South Africa.

* Olara Otunnu (Uganda) was educated at Oxford and Harvard and opened a law practice in New York before returning home to join an interim parliament in 1979-1980. He was Uganda's permanent representative to the UN from 1980-1985 and Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1985-1986. He is president of the International Peace Academy.

* Eduard Shevardnadze (Soviet Union) became Foreign Minister under Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and held that position until his resignation. He was a prominent figure in the abandonment of Soviet cold war ideology.

* Maurice F Strong (Canada) is a wealthy businessman with connections to the oil industry. He was director general of Canada's External Aid Office in the mid 1960s and secretary-general of the 1972 UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm. He was the first executive director of the UN Environment Programme and is currently secretary-general of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

* Margaret Hilda Thatcher (Great Britain) a Conservative member of Parliament for two decades who was Britain's Prime Minister from 1979 until her resignation in 1990.

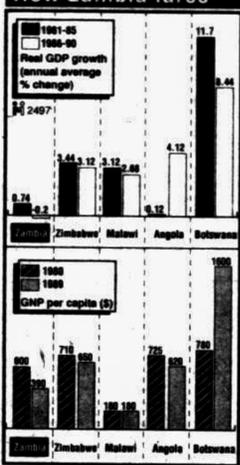
DEPTHNEWS ASIA

Aid Cuts Knock Kaunda as he Fights to Keep Power

Elias Nyakutemba writes from Mufulira

After five months of running battles with donors, Zambia's floundering economy has been cut off from Western aid. This has brought the country's Economic Adjustment Programme to a virtual standstill and jeopardised President Kenneth Kaunda's chances of winning the October 31 election.

How Zambia fares



can already be seen. The kwacha is subjected to rapid weekly devaluations. The shortage of foreign exchange has reached a critical stage, causing a sharp fall in industrial productivity and in the supply of essential commodities to consumers.

Canadian Jacques Bussieres, chief of the Central Bank, admits the future is bleak. However, like Kaunda, he believes that relations between Zambia and the donors "are still intact," even though the last foreign exchange disbursement was received in July from the European Community. This, he said, "has made it difficult for us to pay the World Bank arrears."

Total arrears to donors and international financiers now stand at about \$240 million for 1991 alone. Some economists believe the amount could swell to \$800 million or more by December next year if nothing is paid back this year.

Others predict that the budget deficit, K14 billion in August, could reach over K20 billion by end of the year, against the K4.3 billion set by the 1991 budget.

The food situation in Zambia is so bad that may agree with Kaunda that the country should be put under the emergency relief nations list. Kaunda has been negotiating with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to effect the changes.

Kaunda's earlier hopes, pinned on \$90 million food aid to import maize to supplement the seven million bags expected this season, appear hopeless. Some of the money, Kaunda hoped, could also be used to pay an estimated K1.4 billion owed to transporters for last year's crop haulage and to pay farmers for their current produce.

All these plans now seem shattered. Some economists predict that since Kaunda's Central Bank is in the habit of printing more money, it may do so again soon to meet the growing needs of state expenditure, fuelling inflation in the process.

Kaunda's 1991 budget set out to decrease money supply by 45 per cent and hold inflation at 40 per cent by December. Central Statistics Office sources indicate that the money supply will have grown by 100 per cent while inflation could hit 250 per cent under the same period.

The bottom line for all this is that Kaunda has never been one to sacrifice his political ambitions for a stable economy through adherence to tough, but necessary, economic ad-

justment measures.

In 1986, Kaunda broke off with the IMF, which was pushing him hard to adhere to the same conditions, because he could not risk losing the 1988 election. After crawling back early this year, Kaunda said that "everything was on course," but soon turned his back on major conditions. He refused to scrap or tax heavily lucrative allowances for public service workers.

Kaunda also continued to overspend the budget, failed to reduce the public workforce by at least 10 per cent as required and kept costly subsidies, especially on maize.

He already looks set to lose the election and meeting IMF and World Bank conditions beforehand could have further jeopardised his chances of survival. In early September, Kaunda increased the salaries of public service workers — by more than 100 per cent in some cases — and he continues to keep retail prices of mealie meal at the old levels, even though producer prices have shot up to K800 a bag.

The MMD accuses Kaunda of switching the nomination dates for presidential and par-

liamentary candidates from October 1 to September 30 so as to leave only three weeks of free campaigning. Four hundred parliamentary candidates and several presidential hopefuls are in the race for the expanded 150-seat National Assembly.

Kaunda himself seems the main target of public resentment and party rivalry. Once, his motorcade was pelted with tomatoes by soccer fans in Lusaka and even more recently, two of Kaunda's meetings were marred by booing mobs shouting "Kaunda, kuya bebele" (Kaunda, time to go).

Other problems face Kaunda. Under the new constitution, he says he has delinked the ruling United National Independence Party (UNIP) from the state. Yet the opposition complains that his old central committee members still run provinces in addition to cabinet ministers appointed by Kaunda to do the same job.

The situation in Zambia seems clear cut: if Kaunda wins, there won't be any aid; if Chiluba wins, he will inherit a ruined economy, but can expect aid. The situation is shifting the electoral balance to the opposition.

— GEMINI NEWS

ELIAS NYAKUTEMBA has worked with Zambia Information Services since 1974 and contributes to regional newspapers, magazines and national radio.

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

Two Presidential Candidates...

Sir, Hearty congratulations to Sabir Mustafa for his straightforwardness in speaking out one disquieting truth — the behaviour shown by two Presidential candidates by seeking blessings from Mr Golam Azam, allegedly a mastermind of mass killing of Bengalees in 1971 (Ref: Opinion: Two Presidential Candidates and One Foreign Citizen, The Daily Star, 7th October). To say that such courage in reporting is extraordinary in our country where the often-discussed and clamoured-about press freedom is reduced and side-tracked even by the newsmen themselves, is nothing more than demanding a sincere eulogy.

It is often stated that Golam Azam took part in the most heinous act of scheming and plotting for "annihilation" of Bengalees. That he lost his nationality of Bangladesh as a punishment of his unforgivable crimes, is also generally known to all. He, a Pakistani citizen, was allowed to come back to Bangladesh, de facto the first step of rehabilitation, and has been staying on the soil of Bangladesh approximately for the last thirteen years — an unusual case in the context of foreign office rules and regulations of any sovereign and independent country. That those politicians who declare themselves as the vanguards of sovereignty and independence of Bangladesh are rendering just only a lip-service in this case, is surely a first-rating irony of our nation's fate.

Visiting Mirpur Smriti Soudha and offering prayers ceremoniously, lately we have come to know, is completely incompatible with any genuine desire or attempt to fight back the so-called plotters of massacre.

Should a former Chief Justice turn so blind by the temptation of becoming the future President and seek for blessings from such a controversial personality, it is unfortunate and surely not at all justifiable in any dignified manner. It is also improper that the former Speaker of a freely and democratically elected Parliament should belittle his status by visiting such a person for his favour.

Mosharraf Hossain
Hrishikesh Das Road, Dhaka.

BTV's dance programme

Sir, New generation dance artist Bjuri Barkatullah's performance in BTV's "Nitter Tale Tale" on October 16 was magnificent. She along with other artists did quite well in the entire dance sequence, the programme was well directed and produced.

World lacks leaders

With the introduction of dance sequence on modern songs, BTV's dance programme has gained a new look and popularity.

Meanwhile, to bring variety in the dance programme, some dance sequences may be developed on the music of the world's greatest composers, for instance, Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky's "Piano Concerto No. 1" and "Romeo and Juliet." I believe that young artistes like Bjuri will perform very well on such compositions.

M Zahidul Haque
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Sir, Human, the rational animal is the best creation of God. But except some, this best creation is now living in worst condition throughout the world. Naturally the question arises why this best creature must live a worst life anywhere? In finding out an answer, we see that presently the political unrest is mostly responsible for making our life a hell. Undoubtedly it is true that we cannot do without politics, but 'nasty politics' cannot help bring any good to the common people. Some leaders often do not think that they are created and are promised to be destroyed again by the Creator. So they start doing every 'hell' in the name of so-called 'human' service after getting political power in hands.

After becoming a leader of the state he forgets to think that he is nothing but a simple man. Human community is like a tree and leaders are the branches. Their origin is one and they will have to serve the human kind. In taking this hard task on shoulder a leader must prepare himself with all the qualities that is needed and thus he should become wise, honest and noble and finally should have love for the people. He should be aware that it is always very tough and risky to exercise power. Since, he works for the millions, he must very carefully step forward in discharging his every duty, so that none gets pain out of his works. He must not do anything whimsically and selfishly. It should always be kept in mind that he is an important member of the human community. He must not forget that if he commits mistake, he will have to give high price for it. So he should always think good and do good. He should remember that greatness comes through noble works. He should have patience to the most and not forget that nobility and greatness originate from the holy mind. Let all our world leaders be noble and great so that we may be blessed with a noble world.

Though painful, it is true to say that many world leaders do not know how to bring peace, some of them do not want to bring peace, and some want to make the world muddy. In cases, their cruelty and devilry have made the world unfit to live. There must be an end of it. Only the quality leaders can do this function. Let us hope that leaders hence come with all the wisdom, honesty, nobility, and love for people to make this world a happy-home.

F M A Matin
Mirpur, Dhaka.