

FOCUS ON PAKISTAN

Sind Situation Remains Explosive

SAARC Forgets its First Lessons in Co-operation

by Prof. C. Suriyakumaran

The Plight of Shopowners

Nothing could reveal the hollowness of the home minister's claim that the law and order situation was under control than the strike by the city shopowners on Sunday. Driven to desperation by extortionists, local hoodlums and terrorists the retail traders inflicted loss upon themselves (for when shops are closed the biggest losers are their owners) to drive home the point of their precarious situation. Literally driven to the very end of their patience they had no better way of expressing their frustrations than to go for the type of collective action that we saw the other day. Important trading centres like Baitul Mokarram, New Market, Elephant Road and the wholesale market of Moulvibazar, to mention only a few, wore a desolate look while the home minister basked in the self-proclaimed success of having controlled crime in the city.

In the southern province of Sind, the military operation enters its second and most decisive phase. The Pakistan army which has been given constitutional powers to bring normalcy to the strife-torn province were given additional powers this week. The new law now goes a long way in fulfilling the demands of the army which needed extra powers to search and arrest law breakers. The second phase, senior military officials believe, would be a tricky one, and impossible to implement unless there was cooperation from the federal and provincial governments.

Mariana Baabar writes from Islamabad

Staff, Gen Asif Nawaz who declared that the army would remain in Sind till the law and order situation becomes normal. This is a far cry from the constitutional provision given to the army which clearly indicated that the army operation would remain in force for only six months. Together with this the government is now being approached by the military that they should be given additional powers under Article 245 of the Constitution which basically gives the army rights to try prisoners in military courts.

chief minister does not resign. According to Bhutto, Shah has no moral justification to remain chief ministers when he has, according to her, lost his majority in the assembly. For Bhutto, this would be also a test of her claims to be a popular leader. Not since the '90 elections has Bhutto come on to the streets to prove her strength. Together with this, Bhutto is holding the national assembly resignation card close to her chest - she has threatened last week that she together with other opposition members, including those on the treasury benches, would resign from their membership in the national assembly. The prime minister has welcomed the resignation of the opposition saying that he would go according to the Constitution for by-elections.

THE Eleventh SAARC Foreign Ministers Conference has just concluded in Colombo, with still some difficulties in advancing on trade co-operation - for quite understandable reasons. In a recent Article, I had specially praised the President of Sri Lanka's suggestion of Trade expansion by import from within the Region, of goods now obtained from outside. It was the only approach to viable trade co-operation in the situation of our countries, and in fact recalled an approach developed in UN ECAFE during the Seventies. It was a Programme that substituted an impractical regime of expansion by tariff dismantling committed to 'import commitments' to one of 'Export expansion', with commitments to increased domestic production. The change was from a system of 'Tariff relations' to 'Commodity relations', as the basis of Trade expansion. The Asian Development Bank too was established by ECAFE (in 1965) with clear Charter Clauses precisely to promote 'Regional Co-operation'. But we may leave them aside for the moment, and hope they will strike the attention of the SAARC Ministers.

The amazing immediate failure by SAARC has been on its declared steps for co-operation on Environment. It has commended itself for some partial initiative it has taken in this area, completely overlooking, or deliberately passing one over another, another longer established Inter-Governmental Organisation, precisely for Environment, whose Articles of Association have

also been lodged with the United Nations, and whose Governing Members are none other than Ministers of the SAARC Countries themselves. What makes the action worse is that the Organisation, SACEP (the South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme), had quite major Programmes over a wide area of Environment and Resources Management, some even funded by International and other Organisations.

It seems it is time that the Countries here become serious, both about Environment, and about "Co-operating" with their own Mechanism, and its goals - unless they are not serious about co-operation itself.

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The Nawaz Sharif government has halfheartedly agreed to the military's demands that terrorists, kidnappers, murderers and other law breakers would be arrested, no matter to which political party they belonged. A senior army general commented, "If we would arrest four cabinet ministers of Muzafar Shah's government in Karachi, his government would fall..." Lists have been exchanged between the military and the civil government, where the president, Ghulam Ishaq Khan has also been taken into confidence. This was important because pressure is now building on the army from their own officers involved in 'operation clean-up', to arrest and detain the son-in-law of the president, Irfanullah Marwat who works as an advisor with the Shah government. The military intelligence has compiled reports about Marwat's 'excesses', which he committed while the former chief minister of Sind, Jam Sadiq, was still alive.

Charges range from rape, kidnapping and reselling stolen cars. High on the list reportedly are members of parliament both from the national assembly and provincial assembly. Besides members of the MQM, the names also include those from the Pakistan People's Party. Also disappointing has been the fact that only a very small number of arms and ammunition has been recovered. The delay in sending the army into Sind by the Sharif government, because of political compulsions, gave a lot of time for the arms to be hidden and many MQM workers to go underground.

Rethinking "Japan's Experience and its Relevance to Bangladesh"

by Qazi M. Fazal

THIS is written in response to Dr. Mustafizur Rahman's post article titled 'Japan's Experience and its Relevance to Bangladesh'. (The Daily Star 29-7-92). Dr. Rahman rightly points out that Bangladesh and other developing countries have a lot to learn from Japan's past in order to help achieve high levels of economic growth. The government and the people of a nation need to have a strong unified vision of economic reality and the willingness to enact unpleasant policies that are beneficial in the long run, as he suggests. However, why must Japan be our role model? Are the economic and social 'preconditions' that brought about the burst of economic growth in Japan relevant to Bangladesh? Is the growth formula as simple as passing appropriate industrialization laws or tariff protection or subsidies?

The answer to the first question is easy. Japan is the first non-European country to achieve sustained high levels of economic growth. It let the rest of the world know that industrialization is not necessarily equivalent to westernization. Japan's value for Bangladesh does not lie with the notion that its position as the world's second largest economy has been achieved in less than a hundred years. Germany and the Scandinavian countries can boast similar feats of industrialization in the nineteenth century about the same time as Japan. Dr. Rahman quite correctly points out that Japan's spurt of growth began after the Meiji Restoration in 1868 when the government decided that Japan would be a 'rich country and have a strong army.' But it is important to emphasize the difference between the 'spurt' and initial level of GNP. Japan was by no means an impoverished country during the Tokugawa Shogunate before the Meiji Restoration. The Tokugawa Shogunate enjoyed a very efficient bureaucracy and tax-collection system that the Meiji government inherited. The Japanese cities from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century were highly developed even in comparison to their European counterparts. The country as early as mid-nineteenth century possessed a high literacy rate (as high as 70% according to some studies). Even Japan's rural populace, according to famous Japanese economic historians such as Rosovsky and Ohkawa, were well-acquainted to such 'modern' luxuries as soap, several sets of clothing, lamps, etc. It seems, by general comparisons, Bangladesh has not even reached the level of economic well-being that Japan possessed in 1868. How can we begin to emulate Japan's industrial patterns of 1950's and 60's, as Dr. Rahman suggests, when we can't even compare with Japan's social and economic conditions of 1868?

To the Editor...

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.

Senile ramblings

Sir, Will some Angels of Mercy kindly rush to our police establishments with a plentiful supply of Vitamin A? The guardians of law and order, poor things, are going blind. For sometime now, they have been unable to see the numerous mastans, hijackers, car smashers, bus burners and others of their ilk, who infest our streets. Despite a permanent and forceful presence in our universities, they fail to see the vast array of arms in broad daylight, or to identify those who carry and use them with impunity. Periodical raids to different Halls are held but each is an exercise in futility. The proverbial 'last straw' was the show of force at the Press Club recently after which even the Hon'ble Home Minister was forced to admit at the Jatiyo Sangsad that the police were 'unable to differentiate between friend and foe' (Do they still have any friends?). Possible these 'visually handicapped' coppers felt safe to put up a physical show on the Fourth Estate, who can, after all, only shoot back with a canon, unlike the cannons used by our more violent elements elsewhere (shades of Fatikchhari).

Valuable minerals

Sir, Huge deposits of valuable minerals monazite, ilmenite, zirconium and rutile

Kindergartens, tutorials etc have proliferated all over and possibly, are the fastest growing industry in the country today, perhaps, because they have not

It may be mentioned here that in a couple of years the valuable minerals may be lost for ever which would undoubtedly be a great loss for a poor country like ours.

O H Kabir Dhaka