

Prospects in the Midst of Asian Growth Miracle

For an Effective NAM

As the world has changed, so must NAM. But the question is, can it? The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that began as a reaction against the ideological rivalry between the United States and the former Soviet Union will now have to find a new set of objectives for itself.

To put it bluntly, NAM has lost its original political relevance. The appeal for being non-aligned, apart from raising the question non-aligned against whom, really evokes no interest. In fact there is a new urge for forming alliances for economic and cultural co-operation — more so the former of course.

But the fact is indisputable that nothing really came out of it all except volumes of papers and endless speeches. This happened primarily because the NAM had no mechanism to implement its resolutions.

It is our hope that all member countries will focus sufficient attention on setting up a proper mechanism so that NAM resolutions are given some sort of effect in terms of implementation.

It is our hope that Bangladesh, led by our Prime Minister, can play an effective role in pushing the NAM Summit in the direction indicated above.

Bringing an End to Piracy

Security of life and property on river and sea routes was never the administration's strong point. Recently, with the rising incidence of piracy — specially off the south coast — waterways along the coast of the Bay of Bengal have become fraught with particular risks.

While the piracy goes unabated, the authority concerned has been turning a blind eye to this crime. A vernacular daily reported recently that fishermen have been forced to flee the coastal areas due to the increasing threats from the pirates.

The pirates' attacks on fishing trawlers have already started taking their toll on the catch of sea fish. Panic-stricken fishermen feel constrained and a substantial decline in their total annual catch will be the natural consequence.

Admittedly, the scope for exploitation of marine resources is far wider than so far has been done in the area. High incidence of piracy is surely going to be a positive disincentive to the expansion of areas in sea-resource extraction.

There are only five job-seekers for every eight job vacancies in Japan. The average wage rate in Singapore has gone up to 1000 dollars per month. Hence the labour intensive factories from the island are moving out to locations in Indonesia where labour cost compared to Singapore is sixty per cent less.

As a consequence, labour in other countries have become more mobile. Legally or otherwise, thousands of job-seekers converge on these newly industrialising countries as well as Japan from elsewhere within the continent including Bangladesh.

That means around one lakh of our compatriots, mostly very young adults in their twenties or at best early thirties, all male, are working mostly as unskilled workers in construction and in industries where the dirt and the fume make the work quite unattractive to the locals.

But there is no denying that the number is substantial. This is borne out by the number of such young people transiting through Bangkok, in-between Dhaka and Tokyo, almost every day of the week.

FRICA'S attempts to renew its political systems — through promotion of human rights, respect for pluralism and encouragement of people with new and creative ideas — is beginning to affect the continent's predominantly state-owned radio networks.

The justification for 30 years of suffocating administrative and political control over the electronic media has been the need to build nations within often artificial national boundaries.

But people who have been forgotten by years of mal-development, and who no longer wish to be led by autocrats, are waking up. One change has been an explosion of independent newspapers and increased freedom for the journalists who work for them — a development which has further discredited government-owned radio services.

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.

Swinging the old ball

Sir, The hullabaloo created by the English players, press and the cricket authorities on the recent victory of Pakistan over the Mother country came as no surprise. The English have long been showing this "cry-baby" attitude. They didn't like the pace like fire of Lillee and Thomson in 1974, nor the thunderballs delivered by Roberts and Holding in 1976 — in both the cases they termed the bowling as intimidating.

behind and Taiwan is yet another destination for Bengali workers. Recently in Hong Kong, I met a group of women, all from Dhaka, working in a garment factory of Taiwan. This is indeed remarkable.

Job Opportunities

Bangladeshi workers, due to conditions back home, are prepared to work at relatively low wages so much so that, I was told, even the workers from other South Asian countries are not prepared to accept such remunerations. At the same time, the Asian growth miracle has opened up millions of job opportunities particularly in East Asia.

These young people should be the most admired persons of our country. They believe in hard work. They are convinced of the fact that life is a struggle but one must strive to the best of his or her ability; and, where there is a will, there is a way.

Bangladeshi working abroad often, under tremendous hardships, constitute the silver lining in the midst of the huge cloud darkening the future of Bangladesh. We must render all possible support to these people desperately trying to go abroad for work, practically any work at all.

A Patriot

An officer at the immigration told me, "I see everyday how desperately these young people are trying to get out of the country, what else they can do — I try my best to get them through by all means." I consider that officer to be the



greatest patriot of the nation today. Unfortunately, he is the exception rather than the rule. Our Missions abroad must consider it to be their foremost duty to assist the workers abroad; not the other way round that they must crave for the indulgence of the diplomats.

It is however true that legally or illegally there is a limit to the number of Bangladeshis who could be employed in the booming economies of East and South-east Asia. Perhaps a maximum of half a million of such youngsters may find jobs — which, in absolute terms, is a large number but given the massive size of the unemployed population, it is a drop in the ocean.

According to the recently published First Annual World Labour Report of the Interna-

tional Labour Organisation, the largest group of workers abroad is the 12 million strong Mexican workers in the United States. That is the sort of figure constituting not a drop in the ocean but a down-pour on the vast ocean of unemployment. Can we replicate the Mexican experience?

The possibility of workers not returning home but settling down permanently is the real danger perceived by the labour employing countries of the Asia-Pacific region. It is the danger of creating the existence of a minority group in the otherwise homogeneous population of, for example,



Japan. Obviously the ethnic mix up is not a tolerable situation if it can be avoided. In fact the idea of foreign workers is a very recent development and there are no established tradition of such employment except at the trading posts (for very few numbers) during the colonial times.

Basic Condition

Like in any new, pioneering venture, Government must endeavour to establish with the countries abroad as well as the job-seekers back home that the basic condition must be to work for five years at the most in any one country. The labour employing countries must be convinced that the intention is not immigration on a permanent basis but facilitating the employment of guest workers

purely on a temporary basis for a definite period of time not exceeding five years. It is like the Turkish guest workers employed by the German industries and mining enterprises. This is the first condition to be fulfilled.

The next step will be to enable the planned absorption of labour in the particular economic sectors which are suffering from shortage of labour. The first such case that comes to mind is agriculture in Malaysia where excellent paddy lands have degenerated into natural swamps because nobody is interested to grow paddy any longer.

A similar, if not a greater, degree of scarcity of labour affects the agriculture in the Northern Territories of Australia. The entire area, few times the size of Bangladesh, is a vast tropical wilderness where there are more crocodiles than human beings.

lands will again be few times the size of Bangladesh.

Three Destinations

Thus there are three destinations within the Asia-Pacific region where tropical agriculture on a fairly large scale can flourish provided the critical labour constraint is removed. If a regional programme is taken up through sincere inter-country initiatives, then few million Bangladeshis would find employment abroad as guest workers.

In the world today, there is surplus capital. Japan can finance the development of the plantations which in turn would tremendously boost the demand for farming as well as agro-processing machineries and equipment. The recession-ridden economy of Australia would receive a shot in the arm. The Malaysian agriculture will witness a regeneration restoring the balance between agriculture and manufacturing sectors.

Above all, our gain could be — at least a few million of us working abroad. The situation would then be close to the Mexican experience of working outside the Mexican territories yet remaining Mexican. I am sure, the question that is lurking behind in the minds of the readers is the feasibility of the proposal because of the need for very strong inter-country cooperation. Let us try it out first on a small scale. Then only we will know the answer.

Struggle in Africa to See Who Will Rule the Airwaves

Ibrahima Fall, a Senegalese journalist with Sud Hebdo from Dakar

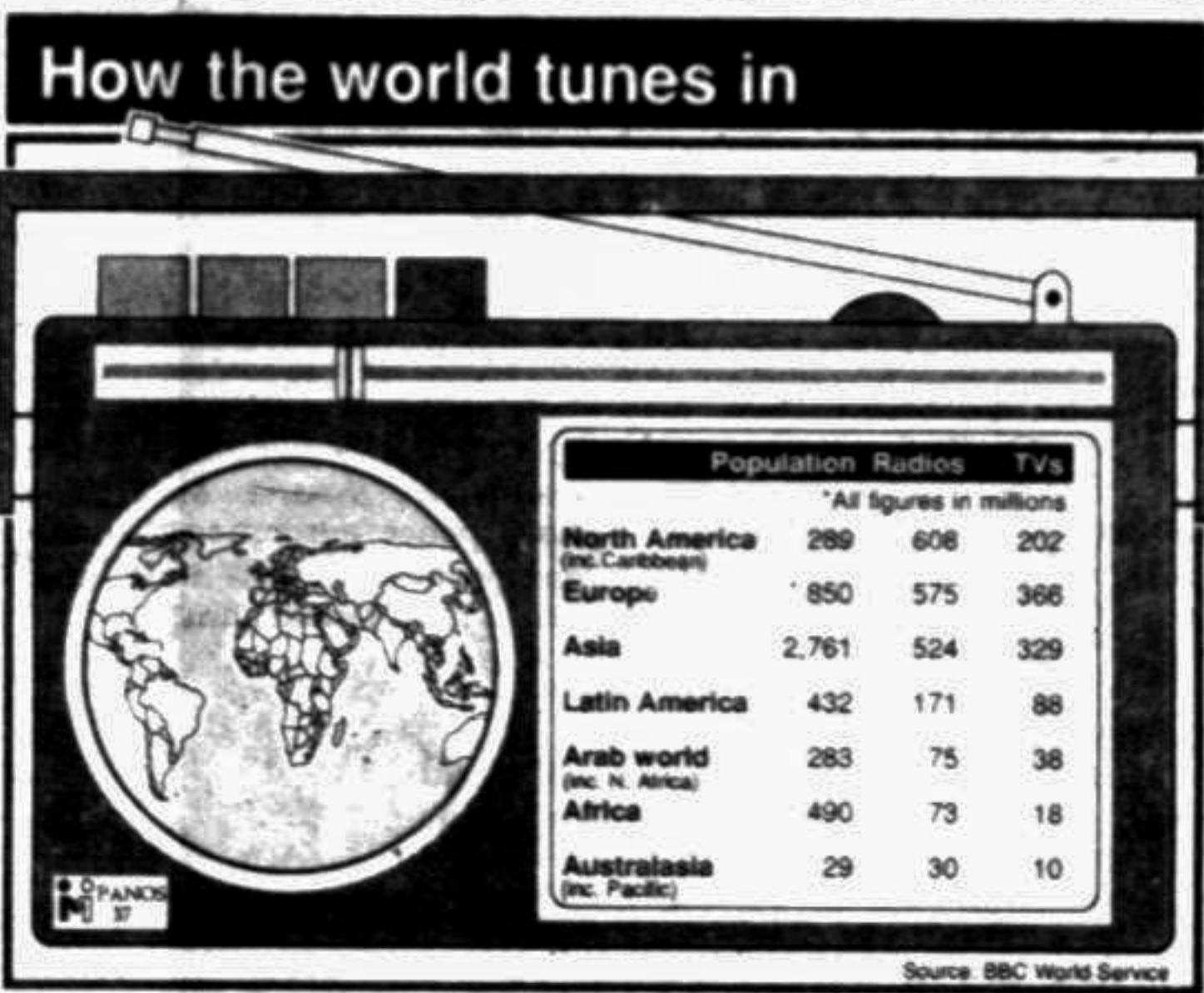
stand the liberalisation which is transforming the state and the independent press looks increasingly untenable. The futility of the idea has been demonstrated by foreign stations broadcasting alternative information and information which has been censored locally.

Mali has led the way with legislative changes, by democratisation of the national radio following the fall of the Moussa Traore regime in 1990, and by enabling three other stations to come into existence. A privately-owned television station is imminent.

But the first to challenge the state monopoly in the capital was radio Bamakan. Says director Modibo Diallo: "We took advantage of the legal vacuum to set ourselves up."

He notes that at one point the government wanted to close it down, but was deterred by the station's strong public support. It was catering for the main groups in the uprising which led to the fall of the dictatorship — young people, students and the unemployed.

How the world tunes in



June and is directed by filmmaker Cheikh Oumar Sissokho, and Radio Liberté, the only openly commercial station.

Burkina Faso, another pioneer of radio pluralism, has two commercial stations: Radio Horizon in Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso. Their accent is on music, games and sport. Founder Moustapha Thiombano — who sees himself more as an artist than a journalist — says a survey by the international station Radio Africa No. 1 showed that Horizon was more popular with the audience than international broad-

casts or the official radio, which he says, "plays nothing but drumbeats."

The changing situation is illustrated in Senegal, where a dynamic and professional press has contrasted with an inviolable state monopoly of the airwaves.

Now, however, Radio France Internationale and a local partner broadcast 40 hours of "world programmes" in addition to output from Radio Senegal. The Dakar authorities are also negotiating with a number of Senegalese proposers of commercial FM stations. (FM requires less

equipment than short or medium wavebands.)

Negotiations are most advanced with the group which publishes the weekly newspaper Sud Hebdo, but two other publications — the daily Le Soud and the satirical weekly, Le Cafard Libere — have submitted proposals. Negotiations with Sudcommunication, publishers of Sud Hebdo, have been tough because the government wants to treat local groups and international organisations on the same footing when it comes to renting airtime, and also seeks to place draconian restrictions on access to advertising.

Earlier this year President Abdou Diouf disclosed that the creation of a second radio and TV channel, like those in Kenya and Zimbabwe, was under consideration. Senegal also now has a radio and television council, whose responsibilities include managing airtime allocated to candidates during elections. Benin, Gabon, Niger, Togo and Congo have Communications Councils with varying powers and roles.

OPINION

An Ideal Solution

First I would like to express my deep appreciation to Mr S M Ali for his article, "A Correspondence That Could Change Our Country," published in your August 24 issue. I must say that this is the most probable solution to our current problems. What could be a better way of changing the country, than a proper means of communication between the two political adversaries of the nation? Their present method of communication is doing nothing but further aggravating the situation.

The 1990's democratic movement wouldn't have been possible without the mutual cooperation among the political parties. It was possible then; why can't it work now? The main reason behind all this is a lack of proper communication between the two eminent political leaders of the country. Two years ago they worked together to topple the autocratic government; now they can work together to lead the country towards prosperity. We all know that two heads are better than one.

The consequences due to the indifference between the prime minister and the leader of the opposition is in front of us: the violence on the university campuses, the killing of Ratan Sen, the attempted assassination of Rashed Khan Menon and many other related incidents terrorising the country. This is occurring because certain alien evil forces are working against the betterment of the country. These forces are taking advantage of the bitter relationship between the government and the leading opposition party. This is what our two pre-eminent leaders are unable to realise; they are too much busy in mutual recrimination. This is a very crucial mo-

ment for our country and it is high time for our political leaders to stop mud slinging at each other and cooperate in order to resolve the socio-economic and political problems the entire nation is facing. It is not the time for arguments but for implementation of policies which may change the political and economic climate of the country.

In his article Mr S M Ali has provided the readers with exemplary letters between the two political adversaries. I am sure, like me, my fellow citizens would also like to request the prime minister and the leader of the opposition to indulge in private confidential correspondence between them. If such a correspondence exists we believe, political stability, economic growth and proper law and order situation will be quite imminent. My plea to the leaders is that they read his article and give a quick thought to the proposed matter.

Behind every activity of ours, there should be one dominating motive and that is the preservation of the present democracy that we achieved after nine years of suppression. The need of the hour is that our two leaders should one again join hands and work as a team crushing the anti-democratic activities going on in the country. The whole nation is looking forward to their mutual negotiation that may create history. Otherwise, a miracle can only release us from the prevailing cursed situation. It is the two leading political parties whose joint-venture can instigate a change in the country. Why wait for a miracle, why not give it a try before it's too late?

Nusrat N Siddique Dhaka Cantonment RA

their poor public image by petty matters like using too many substitutes on the field or unnecessary appealing by the bowler and the wicket-keeper. Also the lack of sophistication of their top players and officials like Javed Miandad and Haseeb Ahsan has made them very unpopular with the British press.

The most noticeable allegation against the victorious Pakistan this time, however, deals with the fine arts of fast swing bowling, specially with the old ball. A long accepted thing about swing bowling is that swinging a ball becomes tougher as it gets older. It is commonly believed that the shine, shape, seam condition and dryness of the ball are most important in swinging the ball as well as a helpful pitch. There is also an aerodynamic factor involved in the swinging of a ball in the air and after pitching. According to aerodynamics, a ball is likely to swing more or less depending on the wind speed and direction, gripping of the ball, angle of delivery and the pace at which the ball is delivered. The ideal delivery speed of a ball should be between 60-70 mph for it swing prodigiously, of course, using the conventional grip on the ball. The greatest swing bowlers of our

times bowl or bowled at around this pace — Hadlee, Botham, Kapil. But during the early eighties, Imran Khan, bowling at a greater pace than the trio above, started to bowl a special delivery which came from way outside the off stump and went outside the leg stump. This was different from traditional in-swinger, because not only was it swinging at very high pace, Imran produced the delivery more often with an older ball. Richie Benaud rightly named this killer delivery as an "in-dipper". Hall, Griffith, Lillee, Thomson, Procter, Roberts, Holding, Snow — great fast bowlers that they were, they could never produce such a delivery with such great consistency as Imran, that too with an older ball. This goes totally against the traditional belief of a ball swinging less and less with the ageing of the ball. So why this anomaly? Have the Pakis been doctoring the ball all this time?

The real secret came to Sarfraz Nawaz one day while practicing at the nets in Pakistan. Almost like a prophecy Sarfraz suddenly knew how to grip the old ball in order to make it swing even more than a newer one. He immediately and unselfishly passed the secret to his pace mate and friend Imran, who bowling at a greater pace than Sarfraz, but using his (Sarfraz's) new found way of gripping the ball, became an unplayable bowler with the old ball. Imran, the great captain and motivator, taught his disciples the trick of the old ball. His star pupils, Wasim Akram and Waqar Younis, have thus destroyed many

a batting line-up using their very secret way of gripping the ball and delivering the ball at a very high pace. A question still lingers in the minds of the die-hard critics — doctoring the ball. Maybe, the Pakis doctor the ball while playing on homegrounds but how can they be fooling the scrutinizing eyes of umpires when playing away from home and winning as well? The English umpires are, arguably, the best, most efficient and most reliable in the world. So all credit is due to the Pakistanis for discovering the trick of swinging the old ball.

S M Shahrukh Motijheel C/A, Dhaka

Student leaders

Sir, It has been brought to my notice that certain bad elements who are actually committing the crimes of toll-collection, hijacking etc are trying to use the names of prominent student leaders of both opposition and government party's student fronts. In reality, majority of the student leaders are doing fair politics and under no way associated with any such offences.

I would request the law-enforcing agencies to keep strict vigilance so that actual criminals may not escape from the hand of law by impersonating themselves as prominent student leaders or their close associates.

M Zahidul Haque Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka