

An Ambassador's Warning

All experts, inside and outside the government, should take note of the warning by the Japanese Ambassador, Toshio Saiki that his country "must cut back its aid commitment" to Bangladesh if the unutilised aid, grants and loans were not utilised "speedily and efficiently."

According to Saiki, until this month, the size of the unutilised Japanese assistance to Bangladesh amounts to over half a billion US dollars, out of a total Official Development Assistance (ODA) from Japan estimated at about \$3 billion dollars.

This poor utilisation of assistance from most donor nations, including Japan, reached about all-time low during the Ershad regime. But judging by current indications, the level of disbursement has not gone up all that much in past two years.

One reason why someone like the Japanese Ambassador keeps his fingers crossed is because the factors which, in the past, were responsible for the poor utilisation of foreign assistance still exist.

In such a situation, it is unrealistic to expect a foreign envoy to offer us much hope as prospects for foreign investment and even for external assistance. Again, the chances of other countries in Asia, such as Vietnam, Cambodia and even Myanmar, emerging as rivals of Bangladesh in attracting not only investment but also ODA from Japan and other donor nations get stronger with every passing month.

For facing up to this competition, there are no short cuts for Bangladesh. It is a long haul. What we must do is to step up our efforts in tackling the problems which hinder our progress in the broadest sense, such as raising the efficiency of the administration and creating industrial and social peace in the country.

Young at a Hundred and One

One mitigating factor for the zamindari system was the base its beneficiaries laid for modern education in this country. Barring a handful, all the schools and colleges that were established in profusion all over our land at the close of the past century and at the beginning of the present were all endowment establishments.

The centenary of such an institution was held in Dhaka only this week. The Jagannath College materialised on the bequest of Kishorilal Roy Chowdhury - later came to be known as Kishorilal Jubilee for his exceptional contribution to the diamond jubilee celebrations of Queen Victoria.

In about two decades time the college, situated in the most prominent area of the then Dhaka - and only a stone's throw from the river bank - became a close rival of the Dhaka University. The difference between the two then - as well as it exists till today - is that the university was patrician and elitist while the college was plebeian and embraced even those that came from the social drosses - the people's very own seat of learning it was.

From the very start a hundred years ago it had always been doing just fine - both financially and enrolmentwise. Standard of teaching was, by universal agreement, higher than any other college in the land. It can be a matter of rewarding research as to why this college was nationalised, and what this act did to its standard of education.

One thing is certain, with the years Jagannath College has become a victim of student violence on an increasing scale. But so has the Dhaka University. It goes to the credit of the college that although it is neither pampered nor supervised by the state in the manner the university is done - its record of violence is rather on a low key - this good record was, however, marred by the ugly incidents of police breaking up demonstrations protesting President Biswas's opening the centenary celebrations of the college.

The memory of this small unpleasant occurrence will soon pass and Jagannath College will again be throbbing with vitality - at a venerable 101 years of existence. It was established on an ideal. Let it live up to it. We are confident it will.

NATO Shifts Attention to Third World and Former USSR?

by Mariano Aguirre

THE North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), long the linchpin of Western military operations in Europe, should be prepared to intervene 'out-of-area' - in the Third World, Eastern Europe and the former USSR. This was the message delivered in February by Michael Legge, NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Planning Policy and author of the alliance's newly approved strategic doctrine.

A few days later Gen. John Galvin, then commander of the US European Command of NATO, told a US congressional hearing that 150,000 US troops will remain in Europe indefinitely for two purposes: to counter ethnic and nationalist eruptions in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics, and to be available for rapid deployment outside of Europe, as they were in the Gulf War.

With the end of the Cold War, NATO is searching for a new raison d'etre. The worlds of Legge and Galvin reflect the tendency within NATO to find that rationale and mission in potential military intervention in the Third World, and in the threat of nuclear instability in the former USSR. The 1991 Gulf War provides a paradigm of future Western actions both in terms of an adversary - an oil-rich Middle Eastern country in a strategic location, with military forces capable of dominating the region - and in terms of the response - coordination between the US, European and regional allies, with financial contributions from Japan, Germany and wealthy Arab monarchies.

This debate over intervention policies occurs in a setting where the US intends to be the only power with global reach, in a period when Japan and Europe have emerged as economic powers. It reflects the economic weakness of the US and the consequent necessity for Washington to include

the ascendant economic powers in its scheme.

The US is working to maintain NATO as the body around which a post-Cold-War Western military system is organised, one embodying continued US leadership. Germany and France, though, consider Europe to have sufficient economic and political clout to organise its own defence and, furthermore, able to take military action in the Third World and Eastern Europe independent of the US.

Revived Debate

The Persian Gulf war highlighted NATO's long-standing preparations for 'out-of-area operations'. This NATO jargon refers to military operations outside the geographic boundaries defined in the 1949 Treaty of Washington - boundaries which run from North America to Germany, and from the North Pole to Europe's Mediterranean shores, including Turkey in the east and the Canary Islands further south.

Throughout the 1980s, the Persian Gulf was the primary out-of-area testing ground. In 1987 and 1988, during the Iran-Iraq war, US naval forces and those of several European countries under the command of the Western European Union (WEU) were deployed in Gulf waters, ostensibly to protect Kuwaiti oil tankers from Iranian attacks.

Two years later, European navies, ground and air forces returned to the Gulf as part of the US-led military coalition against Iraq. While NATO did not formally participate as an organisation in the Gulf war, the massive deployment of US forces (many of them stationed in Europe) depended heavily on the US of European bases, ports and air space, and on the participation of nearly every NATO country.

The question of whether NATO itself should act outside its statutory boundaries goes back to the establishment of the Atlantic alliance in the

With the end of the Cold War, there is a likelihood that NATO will find its raison d'etre in potential military intervention in the Third World, and in the threat of nuclear instability in the former USSR.

early 1950s, but took on significance in the late 1970s, as the mind-set of rapid deployment took hold in the Pentagon. The US began pressing its NATO allies to participate in out-of-area planning and exercises. After Vietnam, Washington did not want to repeat a unilateral major military intervention in the Third World without political and military support, even if symbolic. NATO provided one possible cover.

The entire globe is now NATO's concern, declared Alexander Haig in 1980, then Supreme Allied Commander Europe and soon to be Ronald Reagan's first secretary of state. In 1982, then Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger declared that 'NATO should begin to plan for this possibility (sending forces) in the Middle East... because access to the oil fields is vital. These debates focused on the deployment of US and European forces in Lebanon after Israel's 1982 invasion.

This coincided with the emerging consensus among strategists, economists, politicians and think tanks that a structural crisis was developing in the Third World with potentially dire repercussions. The industrial policies of the 1950s and 1960s had failed in many areas, and agricultural sectors were ruined. Demand and prices for natural resources fell. Revolutions in Iran and Nicaragua in 1979 capped a string of political reversals in the South that the US perceived as detrimental to the West.

The 1980s saw the deepening debt crisis, the increasing marginalisation of extensive

Washington has not disclaimed its concept of national security strategic planning reports and statements since the Gulf war frankly proclaim US aspirations to remain the sole superpower. But if Washington wants its allies' approval, legitimisation and money for interventionist actions, then it must offer a deal that includes them.

Larger Say

As the crisis of US leadership became evident in the 1980s, the political elites of Western Europe and Japan displayed an increased interest in becoming less dependent on the US, even to the point of acquiring more powerful military structures.

One expression of this was German Chancellor Helmut Kohl's May 1991 interview with Japanese reporters, in which he declared that by the year 2000 the world, for all intents and purposes, would be three leading zones: Japan and East Asia, North America, and Europe. Japan, he said, would have to work with a new united Europe, centred on Germany's 80 million people.

Kohl also expressed a readiness to change the German constitution to allow for a German military role in world affairs, under cover of participation in UN-sanctioned peace-keeping operations.

Japan's military budget has also been growing - it was \$32 billion in fiscal year 1991, and the Japanese Defence Agency is requesting an additional 5.4% in 1992, citing 'tension in the areas surrounding Japan.' Tokyo is also debating whether it should modify its constitution (dictated by the US, like Germany's, at the end of World War II) which forbids it from taking military action outside its borders and territorial waters.

In April 1992, Japan decided to assume responsibility as of 1993 for protecting ships carrying French plutonium

sold for Japan's nuclear programme. Since 1984 these shipments had been escorted by the US Navy.

Two months before Iraq invaded Kuwait, Japan has its first official meeting with NATO in Brussels to discuss security issues in the Pacific. The meeting included a discussion of how Japan could have participated in the Western naval deployment in the Gulf in 1987-88, and what role it might play in the future.

Possible participation in UN peacekeeping forces is linked to Japanese and German aspirations to achieve seats on the UN Security Council. In February 1992, Japanese Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa stated that 'it is important to consider thoroughly ways to adjust (the Security Council's) functions, composition, and other aspects so as to make it more reflective of the realities of the new era.' As two Japanese commentators put it in the London Guardian, 'if Japan is to bear an increasing share of the cost of keeping the world safe and prosperous, it also wants a larger say in how things are decided and run.'

German naval forces have been operating in the Mediterranean Sea since 1987, to fill the gaps left when the US Sixth Fleet transferred to the Persian Gulf. In May 1991, for the first time in nearly 50 years, Japanese navy minesweepers left their territorial waters for the Persian Gulf as part of the post-Gulf-war cleanup operation. Both countries helped the US economically in the Gulf war.

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(Translated from Spanish by Penny Fischer)

CHINA ceded Hong Kong to Britain by the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. In 1898 the New Territories, which consist of the area of Kowloon and other islands around Hong Kong were leased to Britain for 99 years. The lease is due to expire in 1997.

When Britain initially dithered in its bid to retain administrative control in Hong Kong after 1997, China took a firm stand insisting that an agreement should be reached by September, 1984, and on 26th September of that year, the Sino-British declaration on the future of Hong Kong was initialled in Beijing. Under the terms of that declaration, China would resume the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong from 1st July, 1997. Except in foreign and defense affairs, however, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region would have a considerable degree of autonomy, and for at least fifty years the social and economic system and 'life-style' of Hong Kong would remain unchanged.

In 1985 the British colonial administration began to give way to a form of representative government. The Chinese government, however, indicated its unhappiness about these developments. China stressed that in 1997 sovereignty passes to her and to the people of Hong Kong, whose form of government would finally be decided by Beijing.

China's shadow grows longer over the colony as the 1997 deadline nears. After a century of capitalism and spectacular growth, the health of the British colony depends increasingly on its ties with China and the mainland's political and economic scene.

As one analyst observed, 'Hong Kong's economy will

Hong Kong: Transition to Chinese Rule

by A S M Nurunnabi

largely although not exclusively, depend on the economic and political climate in China as we get closer to 1997. The traditional entrepot to China, Hong Kong relies heavily on the mainland for trade and as a source of cheap labour and raw materials. China is by far the biggest trading partner with bilateral trade totalling around 40 billion Hong Kong dollars a month.

Among the western powers, Canada and US share a broadly defined interest in Hong Kong, arising partly out of the Colony's role as an international city observing a western rule of law. But Britain's apparent inability to deal with increasing Chinese interference is creating what some diplomats see a potentially dangerous power vacuum.

When the Chinese crushed the pro-democracy protest in Tiananmen Square, the colony's 5.7 million inhabitants were gripped by a terrible nervousness. They became a little dubious about the prospects of democracy in the Colony. Hong Kong's then Governor, Sir David Wilson, by way of a moral booster, announced a \$16.3 billion Port and Airport Development Strategy that would be one of the most ambitious public works projects undertaken anywhere. But what was originally intended to build confidence and propel Hong Kong's economy well into the 21st century, instead increased anxiety over 1997. Angered at not being consulted and worried about the massive cost, Beijing at first refused to endorse the scheme. As a result, banks became reluctant to provide funding and the pro-

ject, as originally conceived, faced uncertainties. But the issue actually went beyond money to political control: it became a test case for Hong Kong's promised autonomy after 1997. China has not only wanted a say on the airport, but on any other matters that are concerned with the handover.

China's policy regarding Hong Kong might seem like toeing a hard-line approach. This is interpreted by some observers in the historical context. In the last century, China's sovereignty was whittled away by threats, small wars, bribes and treaties-including those which put the then barren rocks of Hong Kong under British control. Now China is viewed as exacting historical revenge. Just as the imperialists were never satisfied for long with concessions extracted in the preceding 'unequal treaty', so China appeared briefly content with concessions extracted from the British in respect of the comprador society with its liberal tendencies that is Hong Kong.

China's progressive steps in asserting herself in Hong Kong affairs seem to follow a calculated pattern. A Memorandum Of Understanding was signed between the Chinese and British governments in July, 1991. Although ostensibly an agreement to build the projected new airport, the memorandum initiated a new era in the way Hong Kong would be run by providing Beijing with a direct say in the territory's domestic affairs before the

handover of sovereignty to China. A new phase in Hong Kong's progress in political and economic fields was marked by the assumption by Chris Patten as the new Governor of Hong Kong. He has been giving serious thought to prepare Hong Kong for continuing success into the new century under new sovereignty. In his first policy speech to Hong Kong's

legislative council, he gave a bold and imaginative blueprint for the remain five years of British rule. He has announced measures to sustain Hong Kong as a thriving business centre with robust economic growth and financial stability. China has charged that Patten's plans go against the previous Sino-British agreement and deviates from the Basic Law, the Chinese-drafted document designed to serve as Hong Kong's mini-constitution

OPINION

Armed Forces as Pillar of Democracy

Coming from a rural area in Comilla where the sub-continent's first Sandhurst scholar was born, and having unique opportunities of enjoying the glimpses of a number of brilliant army generals during last four decades, I have a word of praise for your highly thoughtful leader (22.11.92) through which your esteemed daily volunteered a timely advice to the concerned quarters, perfectly in keeping with the mood of the nation vis-a-vis the country's armed forces. Indeed, you have echoed the feelings of the nation by exhorting the armed forces to make it 'forces of conscience, of patriotism and of humanism'. It was an irony of fate that our valiant armed forces which was born at a very critical time on a foreign soil but with all the blessings of the nation, at one stage showed the audacity to beguile the nation itself! It failed to come up to the expectation of the people and in a number of rash moves embroiled itself in open and ugly competition with the political authorities of the country, perhaps inspired by the examples of some swollen-headed officers of the third world countries, notably Pakistan. But still the fact remains that barring a few hot-headed officers the military generals, by and large, command high esteem from the general public all over the world. It is so because these fire-brand patriotic officers are ever-ready to make the highest sacrifice to protect the independence and sovereignty of their beloved motherland. The names of such world famous generals as Field Marshal Auchinleck, Field Marshal Montgomery ('Monty' to his admirers), General Eisenhower and General (Lord) Wavell are still in the lips of the people every where. They belonged to that vanishing breed of 'soldiers' who were honest, bold, patriotic, selfless and well disciplined in life. This is why they were loved by the 'jawns' as well as civilian population of their country. Incidentally, it may be of some interest to your esteemed readers to know that General Wavell, who commanded 14 Division of the British Army during the second world war, had his camp office at Comilla Victoria College. During the last phase of the war he led the operation

from the room of the Principal of the college. The people of Comilla town held him in great esteem and it was only natural because of his amiable personality. Much later (1950-51), they saw another amiable person in General Umrao Khan (then Brigadier commanding 53 Brigade) who was also held in high esteem and was considered to be a 'friend' and never a 'dushman'. The masses never compared him with the status of Akhtar, Hamid Khan or D M S K Dehlavi (ICS) or D M I Khan (ICS). Why all of them were equally respected? Because they were true servants of the State and busy in their own jobs. Can't we invoke similar spirit now?

Significantly, the observance of the armed forces day this year attracted more people than before for obvious reasons. Perhaps, for the first time a number of good write-ups appeared in newspapers on matters of defence and the armed forces, a subject hitherto forbidden for open discussion. If Kuldip Nayyar can do it in India why not our journalists? Are not the professionals partners of development? If there are problems why not speak up? There can't be any two opinions about the building up of modern armed forces as are being done by all other successor states. We want to build ours as, to quote you again, "an epitome of patriotism" and, above all, "pillar of democracy". With the passing of time our armed forces have certainly learned a lot from past experiences. If the mood of the armed forces during the people's struggle in 1990 and onwards to regain democracy is of any indication about its willingness to be 'pillars of democracy' and partners of development, then it will certainly usher in a good era for the nation. After all, who does not know that 'Cites, Thrones and Powers' are ephemeral things! You can hoodwink some people for some time but you can't hoodwink all people for all the time. Deposed ruler H M Ershad's 'clarion' call to stop smuggling or corruption; calling a sweeper, 'Pardeh' by name, to lay the foundation of sweepers' colony or riding bicycle to come to office on one of the week days as an austerity measure, or attending

Friday prayers with the credulous 'musallis' of the old town could not save him from the wrath of the people. The 'fake drama' landed him in the jail with heavy burdens of ignominy and a badly tarnished face!

Notwithstanding the inevitable truth about the 'people-power', utmost credit will go to those persons who will help in the re-discovery of the true spirit of the profession which is a specialised one and needs 'constant training', an oft-repeated cliché on formal occasions. In fact, guarding the borders is the foremost duty of patriotic armed forces. In a democratic society it is not a crime to have personal views on certain national matters, but on matters of defence there can be no two opinions. There can be one hundred political parties in a democratic country, but there can't be two armies! It is indivisible and also symbol of the unity of the nation. The nation has squandered away enough time and energy to determine the so-called 'role' of the armed forces. The jailed dictator Ershad wanted 'unusual roles' for them. The nation did not endorse it and finally he was compelled to abandon his 'ideas' under forced circumstances. The members of the armed forces are sons of the soil. Why there should be any clandestine or treacherous class struggle among the professionals? A commentator recently observed that the people's attitude towards the armed forces has undergone a great change in recent times just because a democratic government is in power now. Perhaps, one should trace the reason to the wisdom, though belatedly shown, by the armed forces itself by its reported desire to regain the lost prestige in the estimation of the nation. There is only one way to do it. Go back to profession and achieve excellence! The pressing demand for a general consensus between the ruling party and the opposition should serve as a beacon-light for the concerned quarters. My anticipatory 'hats off' to those who are now busy in working out a permanent solution to the vexed problem.

Abdul Kader Purana Pallan, Dhaka

Rice production in danger

Sir, I am worried to read the news item "Diminishing ozone layer may leave tropical crops at risk" published recently in the news media. Tropical cash crops, mainly rice, could be at risk from increased ultra-violet radiation as the earth's protective layer diminishes. Australian scientists warned, Jan Anderson of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization, Canberra showed that rice was among plant species that appeared to be impeded by increased doses of UV radiation. The shorter its wave-length, the greater the risk of damage to the living matter. UV-A has a wave-length of 320-400 nanometers, just beyond the spectrum of visible light and is harmless. UV-B has a wave-length of 280-320 nanometers and UV-C has a wave-length below 280 nanometers which cannot reach the earth's surface because it is absorbed by oxygen. But unfortunately small doses of UV-B get through the atmosphere affecting the plants like rice. Anderson said the plants exposed to UV-B may lose up to 55% of their chlorophyll, the compound which traps the

sun's energy. Plants not receiving UV-B actually increases their chlorophyll by 12% and this is why rice production is increasing in the world. This trend will be hampered if UV-B is not absorbed by ozone layer. But ozone layer is thinning due to emission of industrial gases like CFCs which is quite an alarming implication for third world countries like Bangladesh. Ozone layer is diminishing with increase of UV-B radiation. Developed and industrialized countries are responsible for the damage to the ozone layer. CFC gases are used in aerosols, air conditioners and refrigerators. These are not manufactured in Bangladesh and are imported by spending hard-earned foreign exchange. A good news for our industrialists and well-to-do people is that French industrialists are among first in Europe to start fighting against CFCs which are responsible for the damage of the ozone layer. On the other hand, our well-to-do people can minimize the use of aerosols, air conditioners and refrigerators to save foreign exchange, health and also the ozone layer. Use of air conditioners have some bad effects on the health of occupants, as the same air is recirculated again

and again without much oxygen. Real culprit may be the low relative humidity of refrigerated air. Knowing all these defects, I wish our well-to-do people will not enjoy air conditioners and other imported equipment fed by CFC gases to save ozone layer so that rice production may not decrease in coming years.

M Alauddin West Nakhla Para, Dhaka

Farmgate overbridge

Sir, The need of an overbridge at a busy highway intersection is beyond any doubt. Farmgate overbridge has definitely proved its worth to its users. But, as Farmgate itself is one of the most crowded points in Dhaka, the overbridge cannot now-a-days accommodate the escalating number of people each day. Therefore, I suggest, some renovations be made to the overbridge retaining the present structure and extend it to the end of the road on northern and southern sides to facilitate the growing number of pedestrians who wish to cross the busy intersection through the bridge.

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