

## Production Alone Not Enough

If tomato sells at Tk 10 per 40 kg, as has been reported in the press, the price is more than comparable with that of Sayesta Khan's time. When most consumer items, including the daily necessities, are forbiddingly dear, market forces keeping the price of tomato as low as Tk 0.25 a kilo is an impossible proposition. But the impossible and the unbelievable happen here, disproving the economic proselytising. Here is the paradox we have not yet come to terms.

It is not a problem of surplus either, nor of tomato alone; but of several agricultural produces. In fact when certain perishable goods bring their prices down beyond any rational level just because of their glut in some pockets, the rest of the country either remains starved of their supply or has to weather an abnormal price index. The seasonal produces moreover disappear from the market or consumers' dishes after a brief supply in abundance and also a huge wastage. This happens in case of a whole range of vegetables, pineapples, mangoes, jack fruits, bananas, orange and hilsa fish. Even where the produces are not easily perishable, the producers are mostly fated to be at the losing end.

The problem is not unknown either. After all this is not the first time, nor are Khalishpur and Maheshpur of Jhenaidah alone that have made news for such abnormally low prices of agricultural produces. But the market mechanism has remained as inefficient as before to reward the farmers for their production boom. Part of the problem can be explained by the lack of a sound transport system; but there are other equally important—and so long unattended areas necessary for allowing the market forces to work. Sure enough, the difference of prices at the growers' level and the end point is an acceptable rule. But it cannot be as big as would prompt the whole system of production and marketing look like a mockery. Yet this is what is exactly happening here. Production cost sometimes becomes higher than the selling price, defeating the very purpose of self-sufficiency in not only cereals but other eatable and consumer goods.

What has gone amiss is the support that both production and marketing of farm goods need. The support, however, has not necessarily to be in the form of credit; but through the creation of infrastructural facilities compatible with the potential supply of the raw materials. It is time that we really went for agro-based industries in raw-material-rich regions. One area of sure success in this regard is the canning of fruit juice and fruit processing. Our local market of this item is big enough — we import canned fruit juice, tomato paste etc — and in case of large production, export of the item cannot be ruled out. Distribution of high yielding seeds and imparting of improved method of cultivation has helped the farmers to raise production several times more but all will come to nothing if there is not a reasonable profit margin for them to savour. With a flurry of activity, the agro-based industries — supported by local produces — stand to be an answer to the local unemployment and lean supply of money in the outlying areas of the country. Private sector must wrest the initiative but the programme cannot succeed without the improvement of the country's law and order situation.

## A Tribute to Hepburn

Among all the goodwill ambassadors who have served the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Audrey Hepburn occupied a special place. She brought to the world of hungry, ill-nourished kids, the gentleness and charm which she had once brought to her films, especially to her very first one "The Roman Holiday" which had earned her an Oscar.

When Hepburn passed away on Wednesday at her home in Switzerland after a long battle with cancer, at the age of 63, the photograph that many of her admirers remembered most vividly was not from any of her films. It was a picture that was taken rather recently in Somalia showing the UNICEF ambassador holding the skinny hand of an African child. It was a picture of compassion and love. Some two years ago, the famed actress who had retired from the film world nearly two decades ago had also visited Bangladesh and won the hearts of our children.

What is it that made Hepburn an "extraordinary" ambassador for the UN Children's Fund, as a UNICEF spokesman said on Thursday to mourn her death? It was more than just her charm and gentleness. The obituaries have now brought up the facts about her own childhood which seldom got much attention during her life time. It was a childhood, spent in Nazi-occupied Holland, that was bruised and scarred by fear and hunger during the Second World War. While carrying out the job for UNICEF, she probably saw in the eyes and faces of impoverished children in different parts of the world the same fear and insecurity that she had experienced herself some five decades ago.

It will be difficult, if not impossible, for UNICEF to find a right substitute for Hepburn. But the show must go on, to bring to the world of children, in Somalia, Ethiopia, Bosnia or Bangladesh, the same compassion and love that the actress gave to the unfortunate millions. The best tribute one can pay to Hepburn is to care more and more for the children that she gave so much of her time for, and to help in saving as many of them as possible from hunger and malnutrition. This is the legacy of Hepburn that we — and, above all, the UN Children's Fund — must cherish.

FOR Somalis committed to peace and reconstruction in their country, the US military operation "Restore Hope" has so far had precisely the opposite effect to what its name would suggest.

If we turned back the clock a few weeks, we would see a Somalia lit up with many signs of hope. Throughout the country, ordinary Somalis were taking the initiative to bring the future of their country under control.

There were many frustrations and failures, but also a few remarkable successes. For example, on October 5, the clan elders of Somaliland met and signed a peace agreement that brought to an end many months of conflict in that region.

The warlords who had dominated Somaliland were marginalized by the sustained efforts of a group of clan elders who were determined that their country should see peace, not conflict.

In the south, there were no such dramatic breakthroughs. But a series of local agreements were making it possible for emergency relief to be delivered with unprecedented success to different parts of the country.

In the town of Baidoa (the heart of the famine zone), for instance, local agreements

# Saving Somalia Without Somalis

IPS Special Report from London

Former Africa Watch officials Rakiya Omaar and Alex de Waal write that far from "restoring hope", the US military operation in famine-stricken Somalia has so far spelt disaster for Somalis working to restore peace in their country.

made it possible for food to be trucked from the airstrip to the town and local villages, with very low rates of looting. Meanwhile, in the area around Baidoa, truckers were succeeding in bringing in food supplies, so that maize and sorghum were plentiful and cheap in the local markets.

There were some serious incidents, such as the looting of a warehouse and a relief convoy. But the basic fact was that things were clearly improving. The region's death rate fell by 90 percent between July and November.

At a higher political level, there were signs of optimism, too.

For the first time in several years, elders and intellectuals from a variety of clans were meeting and beginning to agree that it was essential to isolate the warlords, and instead to develop the structures of Somali society that displayed some accountability to ordinary people.

Hawiye elders who had formerly supported General Mohammed Farrah Aidid were increasingly of the view that their interests were better served by isolating him. During October, Aidid's power was

visibly eroding as the clan elders became more assertive and independent.

Another promising, albeit low key initiative, was a series of meetings for intellectuals and elders sponsored by the European Community.

This was the first casualty of the US military deployment — as soon as President George Bush announced his intention of sending troops to Somalia, the situation became so unstable that the initiative had to be called off.

Although Somalia does not have a central government, important political, economic and social structures remain in place, however battered.

The key personnel in the relief programmes are Somalis. Without the expertise, political know-how and hard work of clan elders, doctors, nurses,

relief officials, truck drivers and volunteers, international programmes would have stood no chance of success.

How many elders, professional and humanitarian workers have been consulted about the US plan? None.

Those we have spoken of are appalled by the prospect of foreign troops arriving without consultation and without a well-thought-out programme toward political reconciliation, disarmament and reconstruction.

The failure to consider them is not only an insult; it undermines their credibility and damages the recovery of Somalia's civic structures.

As the US military operation pushes through the country, it is becoming clear many other initiatives are foundering too. The delicate web of nego-

tiated agreements that had sustained the progress in Baidoa broke down.

This happened for two reasons: one was that Aidid's militia, fleeing Mogadishu in advance of the US Marines, went on a last-chance looting spree in Baidoa. The second was that each politician and warlord is now vying to see what advantage can be gained from the US military occupation. Under these circumstances, negotiated agreements mean nothing.

The result was an orgy of violence in Baidoa, killing at least 70 people, the displacement of many thousands of civilians, and the forced closure of the relief programmes. Death rates have shot up from about 40 per day to about 100 — the cost has so far been four to five hundred lives.

But the most troubling episode to date has been the much acclaimed diplomatic "coup" in which Aidid and self-proclaimed interim President Mohammed Ali Mahdi embraced each other. Careful observers of Somali politics noted that the seven items of their peace accord amounted to precisely nothing.

When Kiftani visited Soma-

land recently, he behaved in the abrupt and undiplomatic manner that Somalis have come to expect of UN officials.

Speaking to a committee of elders whose patient negotiation had brought to an end many months of bloody inter-clan strife, he arrogantly commanded them to produce a full agreement within two hours. The elders ordered Kiftani out of their territory. They were right to do so.

How will the United Nations respond to the threat to its authority posed by the successes of the elders in Somaliland?

Doubtless in the same way as it has done in the southern half of the country — by a mixture of military force, justified by a misleading portrayal of the situation, and inept diplomacy, embracing the opportunists who come forward to welcome the US generals.

Rakiya Omaar, a lawyer from Somalia, was dismissed on December 2 as director of the human rights organisation, Africa Watch, for opposing the deployment of US troops in Somalia.

Alex de Waal, the Associate Director of Africa Watch, resigned in protest when the parent organisation, Human Rights Watch, welcomed the US initiative.

## Why START 2 is Not a Farewell to Nuclear Arms

by Daya Kishan Thussu

IT is fitting that Bill Clinton, the first of a new generation of United States presidents too young to have fought in World War Two, should inherit a foreign policy agenda in which the nuclear arms race has its lowest priority in more than three decades.

George Bush leaves office the nominal victor of the Cold War, having helped make the world a little safer by signing the Start 2 nuclear disarmament treaty.

The most far-reaching nuclear treaty ever follows his other two successes in halting the arms race — the 1991 Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START 1) and the 1990 treaty to reduce conventional weapons in Europe.

The latest drastic cuts, announced in Moscow in early January during Bush's summit with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, confirm the US position as the sole superpower in the post-Cold War world. The treaty also marked the culmination of the process which led from détente in the 1970s to nuclear disarmament in the 1980s and 1990s.

How much the world has changed was evident from the fact that it took only a few months of talks to sign START 2, in contrast to the 15 years it took to finalise START 1.

Bush called the treaty, which codified the agreement between the two presidents in Washington last June, a "great step forward for mankind" while Yeltsin called it "the treaty of the century".

Under START 2, Russia and the US are to cut their nuclear arsenals by two-thirds, to a maximum of 3,500 warheads on each side by the year 2003. All land-based intercontinental ballistic missiles, notably Russia's SS-18 multiwarhead

The START 2 arms reduction treaty, referred to as the deal of the century, is the culmination of superpower detente which began in the 1970s. Under the treaty, Russia and the US are to cut their nuclear arsenals by two-thirds. The "balance of terror" that helped keep the peace in Europe for nearly 50 years may be giving way to nuclear proliferation in the post-Cold War world. The focus of nuclear attention may be shifting towards the Third World.



missiles, the pride of its nuclear programme, are to be eliminated. However, submarine-launched missiles, an area where the US dominates, will only be reduced by half.

START 2 can operate only after the ratification of START 1 under which each country was due to cut the number of strategic nuclear weapons by 30 per cent.

The new treaty will have to be agreed with the other nuclear powers of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) — Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan. All three are committed to ratifying START 1, but so far only Kazakhstan has done so.

START 2 has also to be rat-

ified by a Russian parliament increasingly hostile to Yeltsin, and already nationalistic voices are being raised protesting at Russia's loss of superpower status. Iona Andronov, deputy head of the parliament's foreign affairs committee, called START 2 "not the treaty of the century, but the treachery of the century".

The treaty makes it hard for the other nuclear powers — Britain, France and China — to justify their nuclear weapons programmes when nuclear superpowers are stating that an atomic war is inconceivable.

Europe's two nuclear powers say they must maintain their nuclear capacity against a possible future unfriendly

regime in Moscow. They also justify their independent nuclear deterrent because of the risk of nuclear proliferation among Third World countries.

For this reason the nuclear powers want to strengthen the 1968 Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT), now signed by 155 nations.

However, some developing countries, notably India, argue that the treaty is discriminatory and have refused to join. They say nuclear powers continue to stockpile nuclear arms while asking the developing countries not to acquire nuclear technology. Third World critics allege that the nuclear states also violate the NPT by refusing a permanent ban on nuclear testing.

Developing countries such as India, North Korea, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and South Africa have nuclear ambitions, although they maintain that their nuclear programmes are for peaceful purposes.

However, in the changed international environment, the West is more worried by the danger of nuclear proliferation than by the size and nature of arsenal of its Cold War adversary.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the decline in its defence industries have generated fears that nuclear material and skilled workers are being transferred to Third World countries.

Cash-strapped Russian nuclear scientists are being

headhunted for jobs abroad. Western analysts fear that some of them may end up working for anti-Western regimes in the Middle East. The fact that some of the highly skilled Soviet scientists have migrated to Israel is rarely mentioned.

Disarmament has its dangers, too. When warheads are withdrawn or dismantled their fissile material can be re-used in new weapons. One tonne of fissile material can be used to produce scores of nuclear warheads. There are fears that some of the estimated 200 tonnes of weapons grade plutonium and 1,000 tonnes of uranium 235 that the two superpowers will have to deal with, may end up in the wrong hands.

The signing of START 2 does not herald the end of the nuclear age. The superpowers will still have enough nuclear warheads to destroy the world many times over. And new kinds of deadly weapons are being developed to meet changing strategic needs. The West now sees threats to its interests coming from the Third World.

In the 1991 Gulf war, the Pentagon "experimented" with "air-fuel explosives" — the so-called "poor man's atom bomb".

Also, a new kind of nuclear bomb is reportedly being planned in the US for specific use in developing countries. According to a report pub-

lished in the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, one proposal is for a so-called "micro-nuke", with a small destructive force of high explosive, which would intercept low-range ballistic missiles.

With the increasing "privatisation" of the Third World, sharper divisions are likely among the world's haves and have-nots. This could lead to large-scale unrest, threatening Western interests and provoking a military response in which such a nuclear weapon may be used.

Last July, British defence analyst Paul Rogers quoted from a US report by the Joint Strategic Target Planning Staff which talked of a "Nuclear Expeditionary Force", primarily for use against "Third World targets".

The report was commissioned by the US Strategic Air Command in 1991, whose terms of reference argued that: "the growing wealth of petronations and newly hegemonic powers is available to bullies and crazies, if they gain control, to wreak havoc on world tranquility."

American analysts believe that in the post-Cold War world low-intensity wars will grow and the US will have to protect its economic and political interests by quick and "clean" military offensives.

One result of this increasing instability has been a spurt in conventional arms sales to the world's "hot spots." In the very week START 2 was signed and Bush hailed as a peacemaker, Washington announced plans to sell \$4.5 billion worth of arms to Kuwait.

— GEMINI NEWS  
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## 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.

Welcome '93

Sir, Our country is a poor one. The living standard of the people is very low. Still we have our people living in USA with US citizenship of permit. We have most deprived middle class families and slum dwellers. We have also the class of rich people. But are they all happy? Probably not. Upper class people are not happy with their bank-balance, they want more. The condition of the middle class is horrible; they don't have the money to buy a pair of shoes but they will not go to the office without shoes. Slum dwellers or the poorest of the poor, simply don't have anything to lose. They do not live with any expectation, either. Is the new year for a change to them? Perhaps not, because they have seen decades of no change.

No doubt the middle class in the society are the most suffering people. The moment the price of necessary items increase they become the victims. Because the rich have the purchasing power and the poorest just don't think of purchasing. The moment terrorism spreads its hand towards the society the middle class become the victims. Because the rich can buy a safety elout and the poorest are exploited rather than annihilated. But this middle class people constitute the majority in the society and have perhaps the major contribution in things that matter. Yet what a fate they as well as the poor have; don't they belong to the

nation? Staring with a long expectation their fate has rotated through '71 to '92. Nothing but poverty, terrorism, violence and insecurity have been gained over this span of more than two decades. But the wheel of time moves and so we with it towards a future — from an unfulfilled past to a vacant future, so to say.

Yet, let's welcome '93 and wish a transition from crises.

Pintu Zikatala, Dhaka

Double standard

Sir, On 14th January, BTV did telecast a very meaningful heart-touching drama written by Humayan Ahmed which was also thought-provoking. It correctly depicted the nature of our people living in a society where we are all maintaining a double standard. Theme of the drama is that most of us are against injustice, unfairness, cruelty being initiated by the influential and the stronger, established, wealthy ones and do not care to protest that openly. We criticize others for doing something which we ourselves are doing instead of fighting effectively against evils of the society. Whether in the political field or in the social atmosphere, we maintain a double standard. Very recently, after the communal disturbances in India, a prominent, social worker of Bangladesh was criticising me for my intention for going to India to join an international organization's institute. I could not go. But to my utter surprise, he

himself went to join a function in India upon invitation of a cultural organization of an Indian State. It happens everywhere. In our political field, we often listen to the members of the political parties criticising their leaders whenever they get a chance; but in front of the leader they maintain a posture of very good loyal disciples. In our family life, we find some husbands complain against the wives and the wives against the husbands, in absentia; but somehow or other they continue their marital relationship and pose to be happy couples.

To think the reason behind this behavioral patterns of our people, I must say that as a nation we are coward, selfish and not honest to ourselves. We do not want to fight for our own selfish reason. We are all like the wife of the wicked influential wealthy man — a character of the drama — who could have revolted, take action effectively against the husband when he was planning to kill an innocent and honest person, rival of her husband in the social life of a village. She did not do so because of her own security, safety and comfort. We most of the time behave like her who in absence of her husband abused the agent who was to kill the good man. She expressed her hatred for the agent who was a killer by profession but could not show her anger and hatred because of her husband, for her own interests were tied with him, although in her mind she disliked the evil doings of her wicked husband.

It is not that we don't like dishonesty, unfairness, corruption; it is something different. It may be called opportunism, or weakness of our character. We never want to be disturbed! We never want to be omitted, displaced from our comfortable positions! That is

why we accept something which we really do not like. We make peace with evil. We grumble like a weak person, but do not dare to straighten things up. We talk behind one, abstain ourselves from speaking the proper and right. On top of these, we discourage a person who wants to show courage to fight the evil; and call him a stupid. The result is — all good things of our life and society is being annihilated.

Muntra Khan  
Green Road, Dhaka

BTV's  
"Sandhikkhaney Amra"

Sir, May I humbly request you to give me some space in your esteemed paper to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the BTB authorities for presenting us a magnificent drama titled "Sandhikkhaney Amra" on the auspicious occasion of the Victory Day last year. As far as I can twist my memory, this drama was one of the finest dramas ever shown on the mini-screen of the BTB. In this drama, the real scenario has been vividly manifested. A highly praiseworthy endeavour has been made to project in its microcosm the true history which has for some known and unknown reasons been officially shelved; the historical backdrop of the Liberation War; the agony of those who suffered to the point of extreme to stand for a shingle dream that had become intertwined interminably to the question of freedom and absolute freedom as the Pakistanis unleashed the black dogs; that is Bangladesh.

"Sandhikkhaney Amra" had also been a marvelous piece of art. I had been dumbfounded to see a nice piece of touching play-acting. This play-acted

narrations of the challenging souls of a *shahed* family. One at the very hour of Liberation War and another at a time when rehabilitated, defeated forces claim victory in their most ignoble attempts to bury the true history of the 1971 Liberation War, have been well-written.

In the mini-screen, the beginning of the genocide of '71 came alive to our mind as we all had to rush to the villages to save our life. Conspirators' character has been exposed. Anybody recalling those days, the genocide can see a very close semblance of those times brought in the drama.

Remarkably, the motto is a noble one: let us challenge untriedly the attempts of the hyenas to efface history and face truths without any fear and favour.

Although belated, my sincere adulation to the producer, no less adulation to the playwright. The troupe of artistes deserve a lot of congratulations. For yet another occasion, I have no regrets for spending an hour to watch a BTB programme.

Unquestionably, the history of the Liberation War needs to be told, loud and hold, and I believe that our poets, playwrights, story-writers and the journalists have got a far greater role to dispel the misconceptions whatsoever have been resulted from the ill-willed propaganda of anti-liberation quarters. The Government has got an inextricably binding obligation to show by rightful endeavours the sincerity that they have deep regards for the martyred freedom fighters and the cause that led to the eventual victory of the brave people of Bangladesh.

Hubert Francis Sarkar  
Singhola, Dhaka

## Why American English?

Sir, Why American English is being taught in the Open University lessons on the BTB? This might create confusion amongst the students and the listeners; not only in usage, but also in spelling.

American English may be studied later, after a good grounding of English English.

A listener,  
Dhaka

## Modern medical facilities

Sir, In our country the facilities for modern medical treatment is very limited. For instance, only a few hospitals are offering dialysis facilities for the kidney patients. Of course some private clinics in the country under their own initiative have developed dialysis facility but the charge is too high. Again there is inadequate clinical facilities for treating cataract, an eye disease. A huge number of people are suffering from cataract in our country. I understand that Australia and some other developed countries have invented a laser system of treating cataract which is far better and effective than the conventional surgery method. I think, we should also try the newly developed laser technology for the treatment of cataract in our country.

The government should adopt pragmatic programme to develop modern treatment infrastructure in the government hospitals and at the same time the private investors be encouraged to instal modern medical facilities as well.

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