

## Pakistan's Trial

With every passing day Pakistan is entering into further crisis. Manifestly a power struggle between Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, the political middle concerns far bigger issue than it looks to be at first sight. These two men may be fully preoccupied by the power they are or will be wielding when the dust has been settled, but for the people of Pakistan the outcome will prove to be a real turning point in their political history. Ever since the creation of Pakistan, the country has always been ill at ease with the democratic aspiration of its people, thanks to the over-size ambition of men in uniform and their bureaucratic cronies. The presidential form of government is a creation more suited to the purpose than to ensure a people's representation.

The latest tussle was bound to take place once the parliament had decided to assert its position. This time the defection of a number of ministers from Nawaz Sharif's cabinet has indeed complicated the situation and in the process the most contentious point is at risk of disappearing from the view. Everybody knows, this parliamentary system was a concession from strong man Zia-ul-Haq who hardly treated the then prime minister Junjo's cabinet more than as a rubber stamp. Even when Zia-ul-Haq's words were the laws, his prime minister got involved in political rows with him whenever the highly qualified premier refused to be a 'yes' man. After the death of President Zia, the personal aura had also gone and the parliament showed sign of reviving its lost glory.

However, that was never to be. Benazir Bhutto's unceremonious exit from power showed that the democratic system in Pakistan was only too fragile to hold on to the good work done by its electorate. President Ghulam Ishaq Khan flexed his muscle, thanks to the collusion of power-hungry men, this time, not in military but in civilian garb. On this score perhaps this decimation of parliamentary power looks to be quite a poetic justice. But the most aggrieved party of that time has been so far playing an admirable role. Benazir has long expressed her willingness to co-operate with Nawaz Sharif to curb the president's power. That the incumbent prime minister has weathered the heavy odds till now owes to a great extent to Benazir's resolve to keep off from the political bout between the prime minister and the president. It was the high-handedness of Ishaq Khan that saw the demise of Benazir as prime minister. She is not supposed to forget.

Nawaz Sharif, on the other hand, is no natural ally to her. But her political savvy has quite overcome her other failings and even passion in this crucial time. She has admirably conducted herself through her earlier setback. Bhutto knows better than anyone else that she must not play in any quarter's hand and the only guarantee for her to go, once again, to power is to correct the system where the individual ego will not have the upper hand over the constitutional provisions. The line of reasoning in Pakistan, as elsewhere, should indeed be similar. Sharif has vowed not to bow to any individual whims. He too is right in that he has been representing the people of Pakistan. The question of modalities of changing the people's representative should be settled through another election. Until then all parties must agree to enhance the power of parliament and not do anything to let power concentrate in one person's hands.

The current situation is expected to be advantageous for Benazir. She stands the chance of rising in stature through this turbulent time of Pakistan politics. One note of caution is that given the political history of Pakistan there is always the danger of the country drifting into further chaos and forces are not few to take advantage of this chaotic situation. This is one prospect, lurking behind, everyone must try to avert.

(The editorial was written before the latest developments in Pakistan.)

## Killing a Whole Art-form

There must be some lunatic fringe acting within the government. Otherwise why something championed by the Prime Minister as a prized national treasure should be proscribed by government before a hundred days had passed. The Shilpakala Academy's hosting of the National Jatra Festival inaugurated in early January by the Prime Minister with the best of laudatory words spoke amply of the government's attitude towards this oft-maligned form of folk theatre called Jatra. We have earlier in this column wondered about the wisdom of the incredible shift in the government's unexplained position on Jatra. Saturday's report on the press conference of the Jatra Owner's Welfare Association shows that our comments haven't much helped setting right that governmental act of tomfoolery.

The new material that came out from the press conference comprises such items: 20,000 talented and hardworking men and women together with three lakh people depending on them have been pushed to a condition of penury and hunger by the government's action; only 61 out of 210 registered Jatra companies could stage any performance last season, causing a total loss of Taka seven crore to the Jatra owners, all due to government restrictions; there hasn't been any complaint against the Jatra companies for violating rules of production and as such the permission required from the district authorities for a performance has never been refused.

It is rather plain that the government doesn't have any satisfactory answer to any of these. And, in fact, what right the government has to 'ban' a form of art? It doesn't have any, legally. Freedom of expression covers pursuit and practice of art-constitutionally. This is a fundamental right of the citizens of duly constituted states of the modern world. Much more than through verbal communication short of literature, man expresses himself most and best through art. And no form of art can be proceeded against by government simply because that doesn't come within the pale of governance. If any specific performance or work of art runs foul of any established law or even the prevailing mores of the society, that particular show or exhibit can be dealt with with the help of laws that are already here.

The administration has all the mechanism to see that no individual Jatra show contravenes the law against pornography and public nuisance. Why then go after this ancient and powerful form of theatre through which the Bengalee people's mind has expressed itself so tellingly and artfully?

We again appeal to government not to take a move at the immeasurable cost of killing a living and mainstream art form.

# Office Dress in Bangladesh: An Unresolved Question

SPRING days are over. And summer is upon us. At this time of the year, I have often wondered what could be an appropriate dress for the urban gentry to wear to office during the ensuring hot and humid, sultry days running well into November.

An attire that is fully functional but leaves you feeling comfortable, looking cool. An apparel that does not carry a hefty price tag and yet is smart. Clothing that allows the hot, clammy air to escape but keeps you cosy on a wet day.

While lounge suit has always scored as the right dress to wear to office, the State has, at times, lent a helping hand to its functionaries in getting over what-to-wear-to-office indecisions. For instance, in the late fifties, the then Pakistan government approved full-sleeved Hawaiian shirts (not multi-coloured of course) worn over trousers as an authorised summer dress. Then again, a couple of years short of mid-eighties, government of the day cautioned its employees against coming to office in casual dress but said they could wear bush shirts over trousers or shirts tucked into trousers, no stipulation was made about the

length of sleeves this time. However, it was safari suit which got the real green signal as the preferred official summer dress for gentlemen.

Well, safari suit is a smart dress but does not come cheap. In order that its trousers may not flap at the ankles or cling to the thighs, a safari suit is usually tailored from relatively heavy and stiff dress material. This perhaps would add to the discomforts of a hot day. In winter, shirt collar helps beat the chill but as an appendage of a safari suit it renders the neck and also the throat even more sticky with sweat on a hot and humid summer day.

As for being getting rigged up in a lounge suit or a summer suit, if you would prefer it that way, perhaps only the fortunate few who live in air-conditioned houses can manage it with some aplomb on a sultry day. But then, he would probably step out of his air-conditioned home only to hop into an air-conditioned car and keeping his cool all the way, sail into an air-conditioned office. In any case, white collar workers cannot rid themselves of the lounge suit even if they wish since they have to wear it on ceremonial occasions. On such

occasions they are given the limited choice of putting on either a lounge suit or national dress. Come to think of it, what is our national dress anyway!

Let's now turn to a dress of everyday wear which we have perhaps come to consider as our own. I. e. pyjamas and 'punjabi'. Pyjamas or pajamas, Oxford dictionary defines, are loose silk or cotton trousers tied round waist, worn by both

sexes among Mohammedans and adopted esp. for night wear by Europeans. 'Punjabi' the appellation suggests, is of exogenous origin. May be we did adopt it from 'kurta' but having gone through decades of modifications, it has emerged as an endogenous garment. On count of comfort, pyjamas would undoubtedly score high. For wearing to office, on the other hand, they suffer from a major drawback, namely, there are no pockets on them. Worn with a 'punjabi', this deficiency

becomes even more apparent. Pockets of a 'punjabi' provide an easy pick for members of the light-fingered fraternity. In point of fact, gentlemen garbed in pyjamas and 'punjabi' are often seen outdoors carrying a shoulder cloth bag or a 'jholi', as it is called. The bag serves the purpose of pocket or pouch, rather a male version of a lady's reticule. Besides, a 'jholi' vaguely reminds one of a

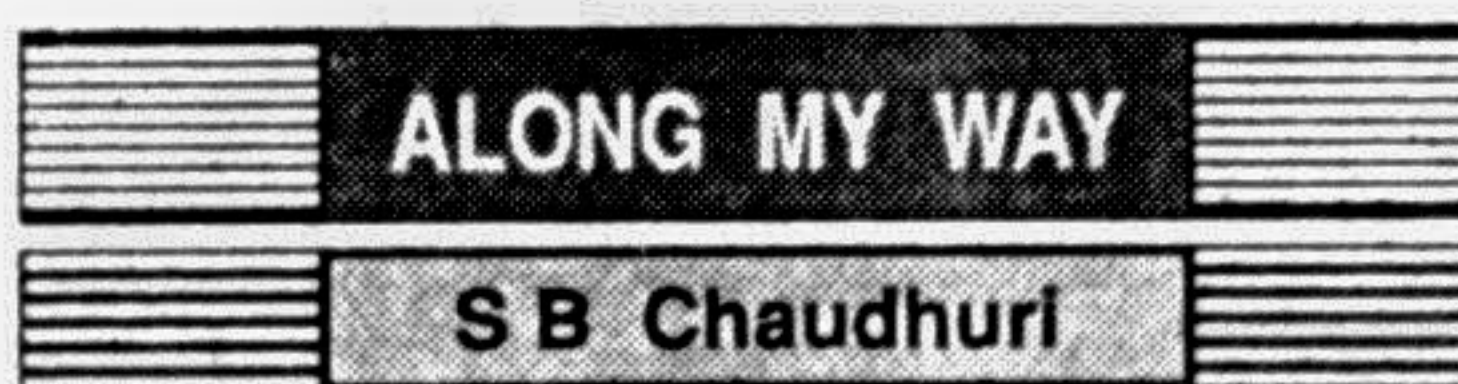
suits are usually made from imported material. Wider use of such a dress would benefit our textile and handloom industries. It's true that emblazoned with floral and other motifs, 'punjabi' is getting increasingly colourful these days and some might consider the garment more of a holiday attire than an office wear. However, one has to depend on the discretion of the wearer in such matters. Besides, if it is alright to put on a colourful tie with floral designs why should it be denied to 'punjabi'. Bit of a colour might bring some cheer in a drab working place.

Although our 'lungi' has not made it, its kin, sarong, has secured entry in English dictionary. According to the Oxford, sarong is Malay national garment, a long strip of (often striped) cotton or silk worn by both sexes tucked round waist. 'Lungi' is in vogue as an outdoor wear in neighbouring Myanmar also. However, the ubiquitous light-fingered fraternity won't let it to be used for office wear. It has no pocket nor can you affix one to it. A 'punjabi-lungi' attire would multiply the woes of an office-goer. To avoid being

cleaned of everything in his 'punjabi' pockets, he would probably have to wear a moneybelt, adding to the accoutrements as well as cost of his outfit. For comfort, however, 'lungi' would perhaps top the list.

TALKS of dresses reminds me of the two visitors from Greece who called on us last week. The two sisters were tourists and it was the second visit in two years for the elder one. She was dressed in 'sahar' and 'kameez' bought here, looking quite cool and chic. They had toured Malaysia and Indonesia and were on their way back home.

The elder of the two girls seemed to have grown quite fond of Bangladesh. At the same time, she did not sound happy about tourist accommodation in Dhaka. Accommodation facilities for ordinary tourists in Malaysia and Indonesia were quite good, she said. Not luxurious, she explained but adequate and functional. Her last remarks, added rather wistfully, were "I wish there were similar facilities here also."



ALONG MY WAY  
S B Chaudhuri

IT was business as usual. Various activities were being carried out, most of which aimed at the provision of the basic needs of life: flattening a piece of ground with old shovels to make it suitable for large-scale cooking; setting up a large marquee for communal activities such as prayers, lectures, plays, etc, escorting journalists around the 50 tents sheltering the 400 deportees, and so on.

The spring sun has changed the climate into a fine breezy day, giving hope that the thundery snow storms would not return. It was the extreme weather conditions that had led to various illnesses, especially among the elderly.

At the beginning of their ordeal, the Palestinian deportees had little of their basic needs to be able to face up to the harsh realities of a hostile environment. Apart from the psychological trauma caused by a sudden change of daily regime and the forced separation from the beloved ones, the lack of shelter, food or medicine was an unforgettable experience for most of the deportees.

The Israeli, who expelled them from their homes in the occupied territories, are accused of abandoning their human ideals and resorting to the means and methods reminiscent of Nazi days.

## Palestinian Deportees: All or None

The message of the deportees, whether coming from their spokesman, the energetic and sharp-sighted Dr Abdul Aziz Al Rantisi, or from the inexperienced young man, is one of total rejection of the Israeli-American plans aiming at partitioning the United Nations Security Council resolution 799 which was passed unanimously last December. It calls for the immediate return of all the deportees without preconditions. That universal stand did not leave any room for manoeuvre to the Israelis.

However, the Americans attempted to sabotage the resolutions by convincing the government of Yitzhak Rabin to show some flexibility by allowing 100 of the deportees to return home immediately. That step forestalled a planned UN Security Council resolution to isolate Israel because of her failure to implement the resolution.

The new US administration fears it will be accused of adopting a policy of double standards if it fails to act against Israel in a way similar to her reaction to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, 30 months ago. The 'compromise' solution was exploited by the US to block the move to impose sanctions against Israel.

The 400 Palestinians expelled by Israel to southern Lebanon insist on a comprehensive settlement, writes Dr Saeed Shehaby who recently visited the deportees at their camp.

Furthermore, the new US President, Bill Clinton, despatched his Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, to the Middle East to sense feelings in the region in order to assess the possibility of recovering the stalled peace process. Since the deportations, Arab countries and the Palestinians taking part in the peace negotiations had linked the resumption of the talks to the return of the deportees.

The deportees are using the lack of any progress in peace negotiations, in the last 16 months, to Israeli policy of deportations to prevent the resumption of the talks. Warren Christopher attempted to convince the Egyptians, Syrians, Lebanese, Jordanians and Palestinians to return to the negotiating table in April and resume the talks as scheduled.

So far, there is a reluctance on the part of the Arab parties to do so although there has, recently, been calls for separation of the two issues: the peace process and the deportees.

There is no end to stories of sufferings endured by the deportees starting the moment of their arrest and continuing throughout the two months of total isolation from the outside world. Looking around at the surroundings, their physical world looks small and narrow. But their vision and aspirations are of immense magnitude.

Abdul Aziz Abdul Gader Kajak (60) was dragged from his hospital bed into a truck and off to Lebanon. He was suffering from cancer of the blood (leukaemia) and ulcer of the stomach and the duodenum. Kajak lost his son who was 18 in the intifada. He does not belong to a party and his only crime was being a preacher. The Red Cross decided to transfer him to a hospital inside the occupied territory, but he is still in the camp.

Sheikh Ahmad Hajji Ali (55 years) was a teacher at Nablus, and a member of the Teachers Committee in the West Bank. He had been in jail since 1 November 1992 and was dragged from his cell, six weeks later, hand-cuffed and blindfolded. The trip took 36 hours and was the worst experience for him. He was deeply

hurt by the continuous swearing directed at the deportees by their Israeli captors. He suffers from benign prostatic hypertrophy.

The 19-year-old Ayman Khaled was arrested at his hometown of Shaj'aayah in Ghazza. He believes his only crime is his adherence to Islam and rejects any attempt to partition resolution 799. Khaled Abu Asr, with a degree in Geography, would not go back to his hometown in Ghazza unless everyone else is allowed back. He has benefited greatly from his experience and believes that it has made him a stronger person.

One of the 100 whose names appeared on the list of those who were to be returned, according to the American-Israeli deal, is Ezzeddina Subhi Salama, who was a publisher in Ghazza. He rejects the deal and would not go back unless all the others are also allowed back. We will go back one day and achieve victory. Time is worth much in the context of the struggle. We will work together once we go back even if that takes one year or more.

— Third World Network Features/Africa Events

Dr Saeed Shehaby wrote the above article for the London-based magazine Africa Events, with whose permission it is reprinted.

SOUTH Korea's most urgent security concerns relate to North Korea's nuclear programme.

According to information from various sources, North Korea is rapidly gaining the capability to produce nuclear warheads.

To prompt Pyongyang to end its nuclear weapons programme, South Korea issued in November 1991 the Initiative for Denuclearisation and Peace and, one month later, announced there were no nuclear weapons in South Korea.

The two Koreas consequently adopted the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula. They agreed to ban the possession or development of nuclear weapons and to allow inspections of suspected nuclear facilities. They also agreed to form a joint nuclear control commission to oversee such inspections.

Pyongyang in 1992 signed and ratified its long-delayed safeguards agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

North Korea should open its nuclear operations to outsiders and accept not only IAEA in-

## A Real Danger of Renewed War

spections but also South Korea's 'challenge' inspections as a complement. Pyongyang should realise that elimination of its nuclear weapons programme will promote peace on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia as a whole.

It is the duty of the international community not to allow Pyongyang to acquire nuclear weapons and become a potential source of nuclear weapon technology for other countries.

Two development have been hailed as major progress in inter-Korean relations: one is the adoption of the Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Exchange and Cooperation — appropriately known as the 'Basic Agreement' and the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The Basic Agreement is the first official document governing basic inter-Korean relations. Among other things, the Basic Agreement provides that the two sides shall 'discuss and carry out steps to arms

reduction, including the mutual notification and control of major movements of military units and major military exercises, the peaceful use of the Demilitarised Zone, exchanges of military personnel and information, phased reductions in armaments including the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and attack capabilities, and verifications thereof."

The Agreement specifies that a telephone "hotline" shall be installed between the military authorities of both sides to prevent the outbreak and escalation of accidental armed clashes. A joint military committee shall be established in order to discuss concrete

measures for the elimination of military confrontation.

The Joint Declaration of Denuclearisation stipulates, among other things, that neither side would possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities and that a joint nuclear control commission should be established, mandated to carry out inspection to verify that the Korean Peninsula is nuclear-free.

Since the legacy of the Korean War still remains and since significant military asymmetries continue to exist along the demilitarised zone, there is a real danger of renewed armed conflict. In these

circumstances, nothing is more important than preventing renewed conflict from occurring, and transforming the existing precarious armistice into a solid peace structure.

Ultimately, Korea's security can not be ensured without peaceful unification. For peaceful unification, arms control is imperative.

The final objectives of arms reduction should be the strengthening of stability and security on the Korean peninsula through the establishment of a stable and secure balance of defensive forces at appropriately lower levels. The need for self-defence as an independent unified nation should be satisfied, taking into consideration the geostrategic location of the Korean peninsula and the history of foreign intervention.

As a matter of high priority, the capability for launching a surprise attack and for initiating large-scale offensive action should be eliminated together with the reduction of weapons

of mass destruction. Overall levels of offensive equipment such as tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers, which are verifiable and which are central to the seizing and holding of territory, must be radically reduced in the first stage of reductions. Foreign military forces may be gradually reduced and withdrawn in accordance with the progress made in structural arms control.

It is very important for the Koreans to take advantage of this opportunity in the post-Cold War era. In this sense, the first challenge for Seoul is to persuade Pyongyang to fulfill the promise of the two inter-Korean agreements. Pyongyang should also realise that written pledges alone will never bring peace or unification.

At this moment, the most urgent task for Seoul is to solve the problem of North Korea's nuclear weapons programme. As long as the threat of nuclear war persists, it will be impossible to move even one inch towards reconciliation.

— Dephneus Asia

(Source: Department for Disarmament Affairs, United Nations)

## 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.

### Railway tickets

Sir, I came from a district nay division which has no railway line. So, please forgive my ignorance about things locomotive, and bear with me.

I travelled — first class — to Shumsher Nagger by Upobon Express on the 22nd March and returned by Jayantika (from Srimongol) on the 27th. With difficulties, I could manage two tickets for self and wife, but there was none available for my seven-year old daughter. But I was assured that some arrangement will be made on board.

It was, outbound, the attendant collected Tk 210/- from me, but never returned with my daughter's ticket. At Shumsher Nagger nobody challenged us. Inbound, a ticket checker at Srimongol acknowledged my difficulty and advised me to pay for the

ticket at Dhaka. Duly, a checker at Dhaka collected Tk 145/- but was taking a long time in handing over the ticket, while we waited inside the gate. At long last, he appeared and motioned us to leave. When I asked for the ticket, he claimed to have handed that out to the gate-keeper who mercifully did not challenge us.

My question: Did the railway authority receive the money for my daughter's ticket? Wg Cdr (Retd) Welayet D Ahmed, 37, Pioneer Road, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000

### Accommodations for Hajj pilgrims

Sir, There has been enough bungling with persons intending to perform the Hajj next month. When an Agreement was signed on the 13th

January 1993 between the Saudi Government, and our Government to the effect that (a) not more than 12,000 persons would be allowed to proceed to Saudi Arabia this year for Hajj from Bangladesh, (b) no non-ballottees would be permitted and (c) no one living in accommodations at Makka Mukarrama other than those rented by the Government of Bangladesh would be granted visas by the Saudi embassy at Dhaka, protocol demanded that our Government would honour the terms of the Agreement. If so, why did our Government invite applications from intending pilgrims and distribute to them through various banks till mid-February application forms, permitting them the choice to rent accommodation on their own?

Being unaware of the Agreement, and naturally of the contents thereof, and having been accorded the liberty of renting accommodations of my own, and being an elderly person who would be accompanied by his wife, we opted not to avail of governmental accommodation, precisely because we intended to reside, during our days of stay at Makka Mukarrama, as close to

the Ka'aba Sharif as possible. We also arranged to put up at Madina Munawwara with a relation of ours who is employed there.

As only eight thousand odd persons applied to our Government for being balloted, the Government declared in the last week of February all applicants as eligible for proceeding for the pilgrimage subject, of course, to clearance from medical authorities, and issued a notification in early March inviting applications from non-ballottees. This, too, was in apparent violation of the Agreement entered into with the Government of Saudi Arabia.

It is at this stage that the Saudi embassy at Dhaka issued a press release on the 17th March informing the interested public about the terms of the Agreement signed on the 13th January this year. As a consequence, I had to rush to the Hajj Office and make a fresh application for being accorded a governmental accommodation which would be of two categories, the rents for those being more or less 1,600 and 1,150 riyals respectively per person. My application was naturally for category 'A' accommodation, expecting fond-

ly that the accommodation at Makka Mukarrama would be close to the Ka'aba Sharif and that at Madina Munawwara close to Masjid-i-Nabawi.

The Saudi embassy press release referred to above categorically stated that all pilgrims from Bangladesh would have to stay at Makka Mukarrama and Madina Munawwara in accommodations rented by our Government. On enquiry at the Hajj Office at Dhaka I was informed, to my utter surprise, that the sums stated above as rent would be for accommodation at Makka Mukarrama only.

In view of the above, I have two queries: First, will our Government arrange for our lodging at Madina Munawwara, or will be given the liberty to do so on our own? Second, will the sums of 1,600 and 1,150 riyals stated above be for accommodations at both Makka Mukarrama and Madina Munawwara, or for Makka Mukarrama only? If so, what would be the average rent at Madina Munawwara per person?

The Hajj Office is yet to inform the flight schedules, including the return flights, to the intending pilgrims, but as the Hajj is drawing near, we are eagerly awaiting to hear

about our programme, so that we are able to make arrangements for our journey and also inform our near and dear ones, both at home and those living abroad, about our flight particulars and also, if possible, about our precise residential arrangements in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, we would eagerly await immediate governmental clarification to the two queries mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

An intending Pilgrim

### Diplomat's Association

Sir, An association called — "The Diplomats' Association of Dhaka" has been launched by the diplomats of foreign missions in Dhaka with the objective to promote friendship and interaction among the diplomats of different countries agencies in Bangladesh. This association will also act as a forum for formal and informal communication between the diplomats on international issues.

Good. We must wish success and prosperity of the association.

M Zahidul Haque, Asstt. Prof. BAI, Dhaka