

Armed Intervention now the Only Option

Whatever the Vance-Owen peace plan was worth, it is worth less now. With the rejection of it by the so-called Bosnian Serb Assembly...

In earlier editorials, this journal called for the armed intervention of the US and the European powers, to safeguard the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina...

To the credit of the United States, President Clinton has expressed a far greater willingness to act militarily in that area than was expected...

The response of the Muslim world to the Bosnia-Herzegovina genocide has been shameful, to say the least. It has been the OIC's impotence...

The course of action at this stage, it seems to us, is clear. First, there should be an immediate lifting of embargo on arms supplies...

Tagore, the Evernew

The poet had himself said chiro nutanerey dilo daak, ponchishey Baishakh. His birthday signifies, as he loved to believe, a call towards the evernew...

There is a very real risk of Ponchishey Baishakh becoming routine and stale and failing to be an act of rejuvenation. It cannot be helped that the exercise of remembering him would feature, as of always, offerings of songs composed by the poet himself...

We feel that this is a very appropriate day to launch a 'let us learn from Tagore' movement starting from such unusual ends as say the history or anthropology of the Bengalees...

All of Tagore's contributions are there for us to exploit. We have hardly got hold of the tip of the iceberg. He has so much to give us. Tagore's ideas must have a part in the growth of Bangladesh into a dynamic society...

Italy is the only European country where at public places like railway stations, one can find the warning: 'Beware of pick-pockets'. Burglars and thieves abound the most ancient European city of Rome. Mafia, world's most notorious crime syndicate, is of Italian vintage...

Yet Italy during the last two decades developed a remarkable dynamism of industrial growth. Typically Italian, and today the country is one of the seven most industrialised nations of the world. Its growth in productivity and per capita income, before the onset of the present world recession...

Manufacturing growth in the midst of indiscipline, inefficiency and inadequacy ought to be of particular interest to Bangladesh. It establishes the premise that in spite of prevailing constraints, it should be possible to develop the appropriate strategy of growth which could overcome the limitations imposed on the economy...

yond the reach of organised labour unrest or lack of direct foreign investment. Such dynamic expansion was sustained in Italy in spite of the paralysing influence of transport strikes in Rome. The question still remains — how?

'Italian Miracle'

In Val Vibrata, eastern Italy, there are 1,660 small firms, each averaging 15 workers but collectively turning out over one billion dollars a year in clothing, footwear and furniture. And, Val Vibrata is only one small region — part of what is now known as the third Italy. Today number one is agricultural south; number two is industrial north; and, Italy number three is composed of rural and semi-rural regions...

A similar pattern is seen in small cities. Modena, for example, boasts 16,000 jobs in knitwear industry and majority of firms are family run, employing five or fewer hired workers in direct manufacturing works. In a typical small firm of this nature, the owner will not only be the manager, he is the virtual 'jack of all trades', assisted by his wife looking after sales, the son guarding finance, the daughter would be the designer and in-charge of quality control while the nephew running the production side with five hired workers. It is a family affair and, if required, everybody joins the production line. The

few hired workers would be very known to the owner, most probably from the same locality or could be relatives as well.

In such enterprises, owner-manager and workers are closely attached to the industry and often to a particular region where the industry is located. The company itself is like an extended family, where employees are known and feel important. These conditions lead to a very long-term orientation in Italian companies and

costs are too high. Problems may arise in case of marketing large volumes of outputs on a continuing basis. Political interference is also to be expected — particularly strong pressures to recruit the 'eternal nephew'. As a result, too many workers not only increase cost of production, they further intensify labour unrest. Above all, we must recognise that the right attitudes and discipline for working in large-scale, impersonal organisations

are the hallmarks of small firm development in Italy. As a result, many advantages (economies) of large-scale production were captured by them through joint research, product development and market promotion. The respective industry association played a vital role in furthering their common interest. The best part is that the constraints to growth so visible at the national level could be avoided: trade unions or organised labour cannot reach the family concerns whose household and business finance, working arrangements and other concerns are all mixed up together (avoiding the long arm of tax department as well). They require no investment loans since small firms limited capital needs are met from family savings or informal borrowing from friends and relatives.

Small Firms

Such small firms can bring about a big difference in productivity. Work here is family work, hence the motivation is entirely different. There is neither any eight hour work shift nor any overtime for extra work. It is all for good profit so that the family will prosper which consist of those who work in the small firm. There is no difference between the firm and the family.

The cottage industries of Bangladesh are basically organised as family-run, informal micro-enterprises. The handloom sector is particularly important supplying a substantial portion of the cloth consumed within the country. Jewellery, furniture, smallscale metal

works etc., also fall in this category. However, these are very traditional, often primitive enterprises, primarily geared to local markets and suffer from poor quality and low productivity: their turnovers amount to subsistence only.

The Italian family run small firms embody advanced technology, high quality and the latest in design; be it shoe, kitchen-ware or shirt. Thus in spite of severe competition from developing countries in the manufacture of labour-intensive products, Italian small manufacturers, because of quality and design, managed to monopolise upscale markets of fashion conscious, high-income consumers.

In the Bangladesh context of organised labour, hartals and strikes, risks associated with large-scale investment and high cost of credit (rate of interest in Bangladesh is more than double the rate in the world market), the Italian model seems very attractive. There are lessons to be learned and adapted to our conditions.

However, no model should be blindly followed since every country is also unique in many respect. Progressive modifications are called for, state support would be necessary and by no means large-scale investors should be discouraged. What is attractive in the Italian model is the inherent dynamism built into the small firms which should be feasible in Bangladesh. Above all, it is very necessary to bring about changes in view of the deplorable state of work ethics that prevail today in our country.



a commitment to sustained investment. When problems arise, Italian owners will pour all they have into new machineries or make whatever changes necessary to preserve the business. To exit voluntarily is unthinkable. One cannot close down the family. Low margins or even no margins for a time are far preferable. In these words, Michael E. Porter in his famous book the Competitive Advantage of Nations very succinctly explained the source of inherent dynamism displayed by small firms who brought about 'Italian Miracle'.

Lack of Discipline

In Bangladesh, like in Italy, a large enterprise must face union pressure and labour unrest. Without political influence, it is difficult to secure investment loans and even if such funds are secured, the

are lacking in our country.

Like in Italy, large-scale, disciplined organisations are difficult to establish. It may also be noted that direct foreign investment had a marginal role in the Italian growth miracle; while firms being small, specialising in narrow production areas, the need for investment funds were also minimised. Usually such small firms, sometimes over one thousand of them would concentrate in one small geographical area or in a small town; like ceramic industry in Sassuolo or jewellery making in the town of Arezzo. It is not only such concentration, there has been clustering of industry groups as well, like manufacture of machineries and equipment used by ceramic and jewellery industries in Sassuolo and Arezzo respectively.

Clustering and concentra-

Shelaidah Kuthibari Needs Proper Attention

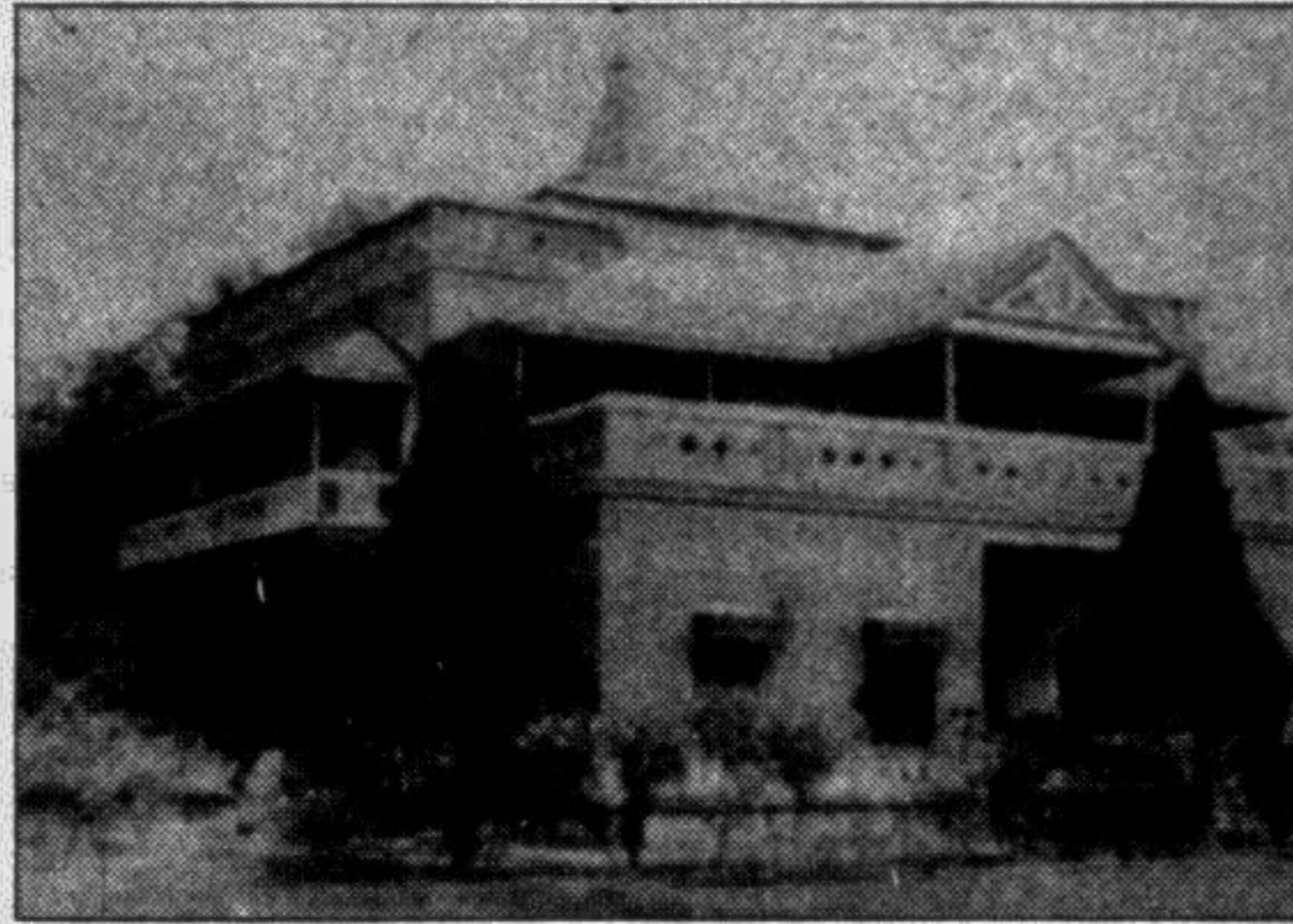
by Mohammad Amjad Hossain

LIKE every year, the anniversary of birth of Rabindranath Tagore is being celebrated today at Shelaidah in Kumarkhali under the auspices of the Celebration Committee in a manner befitting the occasion.

25th of Baishakh — the first month of Bengali calendar — brings to the literary-minded and also simple rural people of Kumarkhali an annual occasion to share joy and splendour with the rest of the people of Bangladesh, in connection with the celebration of the Rabindra Jayanti. This day Shelaidah wears a festive look with the arrival of renowned litterateurs, artists both from home and abroad as well as social and political leaders, including Head of the State at times. Thanks to the Celebration Committee to mark Tagore's birth day observance at Shelaidah which also resulted in metalling of the road from Charaikal to Shelaidah. The road remained neglected in the recent past. The metalling of the road has facilitated the people to converge in large numbers at Shelaidah on the 25th of Baishakh to pay homage to the great poet.

Amidst great fanfare every year the birth day of the poet is celebrated and speakers make eloquent references and pledges, but hardly proper attention is paid to the maintenance and preservation of the remnants of the great poet's resort — Kuthibari on a plot of 13 bighas of land, Kutcharybari, Maharshi Charitable Dispensary and post office belong to the Tagore estate in Shelaidah.

Ironically enough, the remnants of the Tagore estate are looked after by different organisations like the



Shelaidah Kuthibari—not well maintained

Department of Archaeology, Revenue Department of Kushtia, the Ministry of Health and Post and Telegraph Department. Naturally, Kuthibari which has been declared as protected monument in 1961, is taken care of by the Department of Archaeology while nobody knows about the fate of the rest of the remnants of Tagore family estate.

At this Kuthibari Rabindranath Tagore wrote profusely and enriched the Bengali literature. It is really interesting to note that his English Gitanjali which he wrote at Kuthibari of Shelaidah brought him laurel at home and abroad. It was published by Macmillan Company on behalf of London Indian Society in 1912 while Tagore was on a tour in America. It is not a translation of Bengali Gitanjali. English Gitanjali draws upon ten different books including 51 poems from Bengali Gitanjali. I would like to quote

what Rathindranath Tagore, the eldest son of the poet, wrote about the English version of Gitanjali: 'It was the utter simplicity of the language. The English translation, subtle in its artlessness, which, I believe, moved Yeats so strongly, I have a feeling that the English translation reflects in some strange way the spirit of those days that he spent in Shelaidah. It is as though the poems were reborn in another garb; they were not mere translations'. While writing the English version of Gitanjali, Rabindranath Tagore alone had spent many days in Kuthibari of Shelaidah. 'Peaceful pastoral surroundings' of the river Padma and visits by a Vaishnavi, a female devotee of Vaishnav sect, must have created an impact on Tagore in selecting poems for English Gitanjali. It may be noted that the Vaishnavi woman had been reflected in Sadhana and other writings of Tagore. Following



Kutcharybari at Shelaidah—reportedly sold off in auction

publication of English Gitanjali unprecedented response was noticed in the literary circle of English speaking areas and Tagore subsequently won Nobel Prize in literature in 1913. By his own merit Rabindranath became the greatest writer of all times.

During Tagore's life time, Kuthibari of Shelaidah was visited by renowned personalities like Dwijendralal Roy, known as D L Roy, scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose, historian Akshoy Kumar Maitra, Maharaja Jagadindranath of Natore, C F Andrews, Sister Nivedita, Mohitlal Majumdar, pandit in French literature Jatindranath, first Indian Civil Servant Satyandranath, artist Nandalal Bose etc etc while famous essayist Pramothe Chaudhuri, who is known by his pseudonym Birbal, had spent considerable time of his life in Kutcharybari (office building of a Zamindar) as manager of Tagore estate. It is

reported that Tagore's Kutcharybari was sold off in an auction recently. It would have been better had the Kutcharybari been included in the protected monuments also. It would be interesting to note that Tagore family had introduced Kalyan Britti at the rate of one pie (3 pies per rupee) of rent and cess for the uplift of the villages under this Zamindary. This was paid by the tenants voluntarily for their own benefits. Only the tenants under the jurisdiction of the collection circle of Janpur were exempted from payment of the same due to their voluntary contribution to

the fund for the construction of the Janpur Kutchary building.

Therefore, it is clearly evident that revenue collection Kutchary building also played as important role in promoting welfare oriented villages under Tagore Zamindary.

As we see from the writing of Syed Murtaza Ali there was a plan to set up a library in Kuthibari and a plan was being undertaken to establish a museum during pre-liberation days. Since Tagore's writings were source of inspiration during Bangladesh War of Independence, Bangladesh Government declared to set up a Rabindra University at Shelaidah and, time and again, it was reiterated to carry on a research project on the works of Tagore. These remain practically as pledges. Nothing has so far been carried out in this direction.

By now Shelaidah has come to pass a long way to become a 'Stratford-upon-Avon', Warwickshire or Salzburg. This place has become a symbol of nation's pride. Since the present government is paying attention to the promotion of our art and culture, it is high time the authorities considered making Kuthibari of Shelaidah and its surrounding areas a museum for those who love and nurture culture. This could perhaps be a museum in line with Art Museum in Vienna which would generate income by itself.

OPINION

Laws and Women

I would like to refer to the letter captioned 'Islamic law' by Asstt Prof. Zahidul Haque published in your daily on the 16th of April, 1993.

With due respect to Prof. Haque, one of the most prolific letter writers of our time, I would like to state that it is not only 'certain ladies' but also many men (hopefully gentlemen) like me are profoundly disturbed by the unequal distribution of inherited property between men and women in our society. Other than saying that time will eventually reveal why certain things have been prohibited for women, Prof. Haque has not provided any line of reasoning as to why this should be so.

While we wait for this revelation, I would like to put forward a fine thought of my own on this issue: Legions of learned scholars such as perhaps Prof. Haque will waste no effort to impress upon us that since a woman leaves her family immediately after her marriage it is not wise to give her an overly generous portion of family property as this is tantamount to giving it away altogether to another family.

Such tired feudalistic sentiments do not, however, explain the reality of 'women and inheritance' in our society. The reality being that in many cases not only do a woman not get the same amount as her more fortunate brothers, husband and father but frequently she gets nothing at all or at best a pittance. The unequal distribution of inherited property results in an open licence to deprive women financially and psychologically. The belief that the laws of inheritance

backed up by religious sanction is principally on their side results in a powerful incentive, among male members of the family to try and avoid any kind of settlement with the female members.

In our poor society where property may mean the difference between living and existing, family affections usually fall by the way side in such matters with the victims inevitably having women. There is of course recourse to the law but anybody who has tried this form of redress, especially women, know what a frustrating, time consuming and futile exercise this can be given the malady of our judicial system.

If we accept in principle that men and women in our society are equal then inequitable inheritance laws need to be questioned. There is no reason why our religious sentiments and traditions cannot accommodate a more mathematical distribution of property. Islamic laws still sanction polygamy yet as a society we are now, is definitely a monogamous society. This is not because we have abandoned our religion, but the passage of time and changing circumstances have slowly but surely mauled us into our present form. I am confident that Professor Zahidul Haque is opinion cannot be the only one on this matter so I would urge all concerned men and women to write and express their views on what I see as a glaring inequity affecting the rights of women.

Kamel Haque, Gulshan, Dhaka

No to 72-hour strike

Sir, In a democratic society, every person has the right to demand his 'right'. And to seek their grievances people may resort to certain form of demonstration without disrupting or obstructing the right of other individuals. The respect for rights and opinions of other is the essence of democracy. Somehow, we all seem to deviate from that ideal and, no matter how, want to impose our views and ideology on others. This is not true only in politics but happens in most of everyday situation also. Unless we wholeheartedly, as a nation, try to refrain from this practice, democracy has no hope in our society. Tolerance and free exchange of ideas are two of the most important pillars of democracy.

The workers of this country has a few demands but the nation must have the ability to fulfill those demands before the workers can go about tearing the nation down. It is not only unfair but it will be downright undemocratic if the country is brought to a standstill by the trade unions and the people made to go through undue suffering.

I fervently hope good sense prevails with the workers, and they find other form of demonstration to rally their grievances.

Akku Choudhury, Nakhlaipara, Dhaka

Stigma on telephone bills

Sir, It is indeed shocking to see that the T&T revenue authorities have been affixing an insulting rubber-stamp insertion on monthly telephone bills of all private subscribers since December 1992. The insertion says, 'The arrear dues of the previous month have not been included in this bill'. The simple and only meaning of this is that the subscriber is a defaulter in respect of his payment of dues of the previous month, although the correct position may be that, he had paid the bills of the previous month well within the target date. As for me, I have always been paying my telephone bills, for many years, by the target date set by the T&T revenue officer in each month's bill. And yet, the above stigma-stamp, meant for a defaulter, is also inserted on my bills since December '92.

When this stamp is inserted in every month's bill of a regular payer, in the eye of the T&T revenue officer, the subscriber is a defaulter in perpetuity! What an insult! Indiscriminate stamping of private subscribers telephone bills, as being resorted to, should be discontinued forthwith, if the T&T revenue officials have minimum respect for those who never default in paying their bills well within the target date.

Incidentally, if the T&T revenue officials do not receive the payment statement from the concerned banks before preparation of the following month's bills, on what legal or moral ground, they can put the blame on the subscribers? Why can't the Telephone Revenue Office and the banks concerned arrange daily or weekly transmission of the payment statements when both the establishments are located in the same city/town areas, to avoid the insulting practice of calling all regular payers defaulters for every previous month?

Will the authorities of T&T please take actions as above, in the interest of both the government and the private telephone subscribers? Agrieved

Headgear of wisdom

Sir, To fend off cold and heat, we have headgears multiple. Distinctive religious denominations, too, have their distinctive headwear. To the best of our memory, the oldest form of headgear in our community was fez, a tussled red coloured cap of Turkish origin. Associated with the cizet and glory of the Ottoman, we had deep affection for it. The young Turks discarded it as being anachronistic. So did we ultimately. If fez is called the sultan cap, astrakhan can be called a vintage cap. Its variant Jinnah cap, although a misnomer, became a popular

headgear immediately before and after partition of the sub-continent. Its counterpart, a dinghy shaped shallow cap, made of coarse cloth, became the symbol of the Congressites. The difference between the two is not so much of shape as of material with which they are made. While Congressite cap is made of thick cloth, the Jinnah cap is made of skin of young lambs with wool in tight little curls. They represented two distinct philosophies — one austere and the other pragmatic. For effect and influence, such sartorial affectations became necessary. Certainly, they donned such caps neither for a sacramental task for a spiritual benefit nor for fending off cold and heat, but for a utilitarian purpose. Those were not games of wig-gery or deception in mundane sense.

Diadem or coronet is the emblem of royalty. It distinguishes the crown from the crowd. But Shakespeare has invested the cox-comb with the Affliction of foolishness in him is absolutely genuine. He wields sovereignty in the world of wisdom. Though not to his liking, he plays the fool to make the sovereign wise and prudent. The cox-comb on his head wears the crown of wisdom. Let us evolve a headgear, exuding wisdom though not of as much efficacious as that of the cox-comb.

Gulam Nabi, Nasirabad, Chittagong