

### An Ordeal for WHO

It seems, few agencies of the United Nations system go through elections of their chief executives or, for that matter, re-elections of their incumbent heads without falling victims to one kind of controversy or another. The latest to face such an unpleasant situation is the World Health Organisation (WHO) whose importance to the international community, especially to developing countries, can hardly be overemphasised.

The predicament facing WHO relates to its controversial Director General, Hiroshi Nakajima who has just won a new five-year mandate, by 93 votes to 58, with six abstentions. He has been re-elected despite strong opposition put up against him by the agency's donors, such as the United States, the European Community and Nordic countries. Their continued resentment against Nakajima has been mostly about his management style, alleged financial irregularities and reported favouritism in appointments. An opinion poll carried out among the staff revealed the Director General's unpopularity, while a report by a British watchdog team called for increased accountability on the part of the head of this all-important agency.

What makes it worse for all concerned, especially for WHO, is the role played by Japan in ensuring the re-election of its national. There is little doubt that Tokyo mounted a major diplomatic offensive in this exercise. It even reportedly took a highly offensive position of threatening Algeria to retract a pledge of US \$450 million in loan if the North African country did not withdraw its candidate, the only rival to Nakajima, who had won a large measure of support from principal donors.

Japan's devious success in getting its national re-elected to the WHO post may well produce a backlash. The United States may well decide to reduce the level of its regular contribution to the agency's budget and take minimum interest in supporting special projects through extra-budgetary grants. While one may rule out the danger of Washington pulling out of the agency, as it did from UNESCO in mid-eighties, there is no guarantee that other donor countries would not follow the US lead in reducing their involvement in the wide-ranging activities of WHO.

Diplomatic circles have even started hinting at the danger of "partial dismantling" of the agency.

Now that Nakajima is back in office, we can only hope that WHO will be spared the ordeal analysts have been talking about. Much depends on how the Director General treats his new mandate, with an improved management style, based on internal reorganisation, or in his usual manner which cost him much support from major contributors. For WHO, the challenge could not have come at a worse time. With its commitment to "Health for All" by the turn of the century and its growing involvement in the anti-AIDS programme, WHO has no time to relax or to indulge in the ego-building exercise for Nakajima. It must move on to carry out its obligations, especially to developing countries where millions are badly in need of better health care.

Perhaps this is also the time to take measures aimed at raising the level of accountability of heads of UN agencies. One suggestion that has been made again and again deserves careful consideration: Should a Chief Executive of any UN agency serve more than one term of, say, five years? If the international community answers the question in the affirmative, the ordeal that Nakajima has put his agency through may well be a blessing in disguise.

### Academic Calendar for DU

The Vice-Chancellor of Dhaka University (DU) announced last Monday, while speaking to a group at the Institute of Modern Languages, that he intends to prepare an academic calendar. This he said would have the salutary effect of removing session jams. It comes as a great surprise that a university of the status of the DU does not yet have an academic calendar. The way the news item has been published does not make clear the Vice-Chancellor's proposal as to whether his calendar would be tailor made only to solve the problem of 'session jam' or it will be of the general type that any university should have.

To the best of our knowledge, DU does not still have an academic calendar worth the name. Individual teachers, and in some cases individual departments, try to produce their own plans. But these are usually half-hearted measures. What we need is a university level effort to prepare academic calendars for all departments and institutions. Once prepared, the university should then put its seal of approval on the final version as they stick to it.

Three factors mitigate against this possibility. First is the tradition of strikes and hartals that puts the academic schedule behind. Second is the prevalence of violence on the campus. Rivalry between groups, or between individuals of those groups, leads to armed conflicts and to widespread violence. This, in its turn, results in the university being shut down for days, weeks and sometimes (rarely though) for months. Finally there is students' own demand for postponement of examination dates. As long as the three aforementioned factors are not removed from the campus life, implementing an academic calendar will be highly difficult.

We would like to commend the DU chief for having thought of the idea. We urge him to go ahead and put it into practice — even if the pre-conditions suggested earlier are absent—at the earliest. We are confident that an academic calendar will help both the students and teachers in many different ways. A calendar will tell a student exactly on which date a course will be finished, a test will be taken and results published. It will give everybody a clear idea as to what to do when, and to be able to make-up classes if and when a group or a department ends up behind the routine. The calendar should be flexible in the sense that some loss of study hours due to hartals and strikes should be taken into consideration. However, within that flexibility, the calendar should be definitive and quite unchangeable.

It is high time that the DU should introduce and implement the proposed academic calendar. Everybody should be made aware of the benefits of such a calendar and once the benefit is obvious, everybody will, we hope, will cooperate in implementing it.

A few drooping banners, a few tired voices, a few conscientious objectors and a few legal cases — the rest is over in Pakistan. There are no troops on the streets, no intra-party clashes, no censors overlooking the shoulders of editors. The fledgling democracy has survived another blow. But the people have developed an attitude of cynicism and resignation.

Like us, in India, they too have stopped looking for values in politics. Benazir Bhutto's volte face, joining President Ghulam Ishaq Khan, who dismissed her two years ago, has disappointed them the most. It is now known that the army, still the arbiter in Pakistan, would not have accepted the dismissal of Nawaz Sharif from the prime ministership if Benazir had not gone along with Ishaq Khan. Even then the army would have preferred the election of a new leader by the ruling coalition to the dissolution of the National Assembly.

Defending Benazir, her right-hand man and a minister in the caretaker government, Aitzaz Ahsan, says that they had wanted the cases against her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, to be withdrawn; they have not quite succeeded in that. [Zardari is now a minister]. "More than anything else, we have been demanding fair and fresh elections," says Aitzaz. "We have ensured that by joining the government." He adheres to the polling date of July 14, although the caretaker prime minister, Balikh Sher Mazari, says that the date can be changed "if the parties so desire."

Indeed, there are serious doubts whether the poll schedule will be honoured.

# A View from Pakistan: The Country is at Crossroads Again

Benazir for one has demanded the reconstitution of the election commission and the dissolution of provincial assemblies and local bodies, a task that can spread over several weeks. The ever-expanding caretaker government is issuing policy statements which indicate that a set-up, left with two months only, is doing which interim governments in democratic countries do not normally do. People recall how General Zia stayed for more than a decade after promising elections within 90 days, the period fixed by Ishaq Khan.

The postponement of elections this time is, however, fraught with dangers. Nawaz Sharif, receiving unexpected attention in the country, is reconciled to the date. But any change may bring on the streets of Punjab his supporters, who like him are convinced of their victory.

"Can you visualise the Punjab-dominated army shooting at the Punjabis?" was the question posed to me to emphasise that there will be no confrontation between them and the army. There is no misunderstanding between us," says Nawaz Sharif's chief aide. Nawaz Sharif has himself denied the impression that he was against the appointment of General Abdul Waheed as chief of the army staff, reportedly a bone of contention between the president and the dismissed prime minister.

The Punjab angle has a

string. Nawaz Sharif is the first Punjab prime minister since East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, broke away in 1972. Pakistan's 68 per cent of population is that of Punjabis, who also have a preponderant majority in the armed forces. Unlike her father, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, Benazir has never secured a majority at the polls in Punjab.

There is yet another reason why the elections may not be postponed. Ishaq Khan is seeking a second term in the

and the law courts to sort out the tangle. It reportedly favours even the confused, contradictory currents of democratic efforts to operate so that something coherent and firm system emerges ultimately. The country is literally divided into several groups with losing confidence in the state machinery and government leaders," a senior army officer says. He thinks that a "speedy action was needed to rescue Pakistan from this crisis situation."

Neither Benazir, nor Nawaz Sharif gives the impression of being aware of it. Both are busy sniping at each other, accentuating the murky atmosphere of political squabbles. Individually, the two say that the constitution's eighth amendment, which empowers the president to dismiss the prime minister and dissolve the National Assembly, should go. But both, even at the expense of playing into the hands of those who want to rule indirectly, are not willing to join to achieve that.

Aitzaz explains the difference between their stand and that of Nawaz Sharif. According to him, Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is for total abrogation of the eighth amendment, including

the pre-eminence of Shariah over the constitution, while Nawaz Sharif is only for restricting dismissals and dissolutions. It does look that Nawaz Sharif's fire is directed only against Ishaq Khan.

Supporters of Ishaq Khan argue that Nawaz Sharif is not fighting for a principle but bonapartism, "which will be inevitable in the absence of the eighth amendment." The president, an editor says, dismissed him because "he was trying to be a dictator."

Whatever the truth, there is no love lost between Ishaq Khan and Nawaz Sharif. And the light does look like between Ishaq Khan and Benazir on the one side and Nawaz Sharif on the other, although some cracks have appeared in the president-Benazir front. The president is refusing to dissolve provincial assemblies and the change of chief minister in Punjab is considered adequate. "We may leave the government if we are frustrated," says Aitzaz.

Against this background, the traditions which India has built by delineating powers of president and prime minister are viewed with envy. Although people are not happy over what they regard as "the Pakistan bashing" — and they enumerate the blame for the Bombay blasts as one of many examples — they have admiration for India's institutions. The apolitical character of Indian armed forces is appreciated by them the most.

But they are beginning to

doubt whether the concept of secularism has come to stay in India. The demolition at Ayodhya and its aftermath have jolted them and they once again justify the creation of Pakistan with vigour. However, engrossed as they are in their domestic problems, they have very little time to debate others'.

Their worry is where do they go from where they are. The system they have adopted has been found wanting again and again. Politicians have no qualms to bend or break the polity; the army is no solution either. What will happen if Benazir and Nawaz Sharif continue to be on the war path, leaving demonstrations, disturbances or even violence on their trail? They are afraid of open clashes; with the free availability of arms in Pakistan, they expect the worse.

"We are inching towards martial law," says a key supporter of Nawaz Sharif. If this is happening it is purely politicians' doing because the army loathes to come back. It has regained its professional reputation after a long time; it does not want to soil it by intervening. But what will it do if there is no political or legal solution to the situation that Pakistan faces?

To use a cliché, Pakistan stands on the crossroads. It has often taken a wrong road, many a time forced to do so. But if it falters again, the people's rule will become a question mark for many, many years to come. Maybe, that is the tragedy in such Third World countries as have seen the army at the helm of affairs. True, it goes back to the barracks but its presence is always felt.

## BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

presidential election this December. Members of National Assembly command a substantial number of votes in presidential electoral college. Once the process of postponement begins, there is no knowing when and where it will end.

So far the army is set on July 14 and it is determined to stay away. The army chief, soon after the dissolution of the National Assembly, said that it was for the courts to decide whether it was done constitutionally or not. This statement has assumed significance after the Pakistan Supreme Court's admission of Nawaz Sharif's petition, challenging the dissolution of the National Assembly.

The army wants politicians

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# The Decline of the Third World in the United Nations

by Choudhury M Shamim

THE momentous change in world politics that occurred in the last couple of years is also manifesting itself in the United Nations. The end of the Cold War and the termination of the East-West conflict in the United Nations have revived the influence of the great powers and the Big Five in the Security Council at the expense of the Third World in the General Assembly. During the height of the Cold War, the Security Council was often deadlocked by the veto powers of the Big Five. This enabled the General Assembly to emerge as the preeminent organ of the UN. The majority of the members of the General Assembly were Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Third World caucus in the form of the Group of 77 and the non-aligned movement had the votes to pass any resolution in the UN General Assembly. Thus in the 70s and early 80s, the Third World had moved from background to centre stage in the United Nations.

The break-up of the Soviet Union and the end of superpower conflict once again is threatening to push the Third World in the background and move the great powers, and especially the United States of America, back to centre stage again. The framers of the UN Charter had envisaged that the preeminent goal of the UN, which is the maintenance of international peace and security, would be the domain of the Big Five; namely, the US, Russia, Britain, France and China. Towards this end the Big Five were made the per-

manent members of the Security Council and were given veto powers. By Article 39 the Security Council was given the power to "determine the existence of any threat to the peace, ... or act of aggression" and to decide what measure including military means to be undertaken to maintain and restore international peace and security.

The Third World is not well represented in the Security Council. Of the current 10 non-permanent members in the Council only six are from Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are Cape Verde, Morocco and Zimbabwe from Africa, India from Asia, and Venezuela and Ecuador from Latin America. To pass a resolution in the Security Council one needs nine votes including the concurrence of the permanent members. Thus currently even if all six Third World members vote "No," the Council can pass a resolution with a "Yes" vote of the other nine members.

Furthermore, the General Assembly cannot discuss any issue that the Security Council is deliberating. Article 12 of the UN Charter states, "While the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it, ... the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute." This effectively nullifies any role by the Third World to influence the course of decision on an international event of global importance.

In the past the Security Council debate would be effec-

tively deadlocked by a Soviet or a Chinese veto and the issue would be taken up by the General Assembly where the Third World caucus and majorities would play an influential role. But with the end of the Cold War, the Russian Federation needs the economic and financial help of the West and sides with it politically. That leaves only the Chinese veto. But the double blow of the collapse of communism and the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident has isolated China internationally and made it geopolitically vulnerable.

The UN's handling of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait best illustrates the decline of the Third World and the rise of the influence of the Western powers, especially the United States. The Iraqi invasion was never discussed or debated in the UN General Assembly and, therefore, the Third World had little or no role in the UN decision making of that critical issue. This Iraqi-Kuwait dispute was handled entirely in the Security Council. The first Security Council Resolution 660 was drafted by American delegates. This is in sharp contrast in the 70s and 80s when General Assembly resolutions would be drafted by the Third World delegates. On the Iraqi-Kuwait dispute the Third World delegates hardly had any role in the drafting of the resolutions. All the 18 resolutions passed by the Security Council were the work of US delegates. Only on the crucial resolution of use of

force did China demur and refuse to go along. So instead of using the word force the language in the resolution was changed to "any means necessary." This innocuous language did not gut the basic thrust of

Resolution 678 but was able to deter the Chinese veto. China subsequently abstained, voting neither "yes" nor "no." Thus China is unable to play an obstructionist role because its geopolitics and geoeconomics do not allow China to stand up to the West or go against the

wishes of America, the lone superpower in the world today.

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## OPINION

### Barbarism in Bosnia

G M F Abdur Rob

What a brutality is being committed by kicking the human conscience itself in the strife-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina! The human rights of the west groaning under the hills of the Pharaoh's shed tears in silence of 'being helpless'. For a long time we are accustomed with the treacherous policy of the human rightists of the west but as a Muslim I am surprised at the shameful silence of the Muslim countries who are simply watching the massacre of their brethren. The Serbs want to extend their suzerainty over the Muslims of Bosnia. Everyday the television and newspaper present us with the story of murder, rape, horror and destruction of innocent Muslims struggling to survive. What a torture and suffering of mankind! Innumerable men, women are being killed and raped and thousands of children are being orphaned!

Scores of people are dying of hunger, cold and wounds every day. Thousands of women embraced martyrdom than to be dishonoured. Tears of orphaned children are rolling down to the graveyards of their parents. Those who are still alive, their tales of sufferings knew no bounds. What an unfortunate part on all of us that we are silently listening to the rape committed on Muslim women in front of their husbands and children. What a barbarous act, in the civilization? Why such killing of the Muslims? The barbarous Serbian thugs want to efface the last sign of Muslims from the map of Europe as their predecessors had done in Spain.

What a double standard of the protectors of democracy and human values? What a resolute effort of the protectors of democracy and humanity to implement Security Council resolution in the sovereign land of Iraq? What a sympathy and humanitarian awareness to protect life and properties of Kurds from the atrocities of Iraq? But where that sympathy and awareness gone in case of Bosnian Muslims? The atrocities of the Serbs towards the Muslims of Bosnia are buried under the double standard of the peace mission. What a shedding of crocodile tears for the Palestinians deported by the Israelis? What an effort by the members of the Security Council to put pressure on Israel to accept the deported Palestinians? But alas, the Israelis as before show their obduracy to the resolutions of the Security Council. The Security Council has become vanquished spectator. The untold sufferings and living in inhuman conditions in the 'no man's land' could never prick the conscience of humanism. The repeated flouting of UN resolutions by the Serbs and the Israelis could never be 'crime' in the eyes of the peace initiators. In the name of

peace initiative and peace negotiations, they are rather buying time to cleanse the Muslims from the Balkans. What a theatre the OIC and Arab League are watching on the stages of Washington, London and Belgrade in the name of so called peace effort in Bosnia? It does not seem to raise the moral conscience of the OIC and Arab League, in spite of the horror and rape perpetrated by the Serbs. The eye wash conference of foreign ministers of OIC on Bosnia and tall talks of the human rightists buried down under the shedding tears of thousands of orphans, men and women. They are rotting in cold and hunger. Every night is dreadful to them. The peace initiative of Lord Owen and Cyrus Vance is only to blur the atrocities of the Serbs and pacify the obedient Muslim states. Alas! The Bosnians till today are helplessly waiting to see the end of dreadful nights.

The cause and outcome of UN resolutions are meaningless. In spite of or in the name of peace process the killings and destruction are continuing unabated in the towns of Bosnia. Maybe the rape of further thirty thousand Muslim women and killing of their men will indeed be a peace process perhaps! The deputy prime minister of Bosnia had been dragged and killed in front of the soldiers of United Nations who watched the act without even raising a finger to the Serbian thugs. What a humanitarian force at work in Bosnia to bring succour to the oppressed and distressed humans? Does it look like that the world body is really sincere and intends to bring peace and relief to the millions of suffering Muslim men, women and children who are nearing their grave day? Does it not appear that the peace keeping mission is buying more time to allow elimination of Muslims from the Balkan states?

I am puzzled and bewildered at the silence of the OIC and the Arab League. "Kullu Mu'minin Ekhwanun" — "All Muslims are brothers" — the teaching of Quran. But what a brotherhood of Muslim states, may of the Muslims of the world! The greatest tragedy befallen on the Muslims of Bosnia but what it is to the essence of our rich Arab brethren and abiding Muslim states of the western allies? Doesn't it pricks? I wonder what they will reply to Almighty Allah on this silent watching of oppression, destruction, killing and rape on their fellow brethren.

Weeks ago the OIC shook a little to pass a resolution on Bosnia with an ultimatum to the west. But it was unfortunate for the Bosnians that the so called ultimatum was buried into oblivion for unknown reasons. Some Muslim countries

like Iran, Libya, Turkey and Malaysia tried to help directly or indirectly the Bosnians but due to the lack of united effort with other Muslim countries, particularly the rich allies of the western countries, could hardly make any significant contribution in relieving the distress of the Bosnian Muslims. What a Muslim brotherhood has been shown by the oil rich Arab states? They have shown their inability even to apply the weapon of oil for the cause of the oppressed Muslim 'umma'. Do the Islamic states have no responsibility to mitigate the sufferings of their brethren? If NATO can implement any of their own policy on any matter connected with them by strength, why OIC or Arab League should lack behind to implement their own resolution or at least to persuade the western nations to effectively implement the security council resolutions passed against the Serbs? Why the Muslim states cannot stand united and firmly warn Serbia of the consequences unless it stopped torturing the innocent people of Bosnia?

The Muslim states have failed to perform their obligations as Muslims. They hardly raised a strong protest when thousands of Muslim women were being raped by Serbs, when thousands of innocent Muslims of Bosnia were being killed, when thousands of children being orphaned. The process of persecution and elimination are still continuing. What our brotherly states have done to stop all this? They shall have to answer to Almighty Allah for their failure to save their fellow brethren from the persecution of the Serbs in spite of their ability (as is believed) to do so.

There is still time to do something for the helpless Muslims rotting under cold, with hunger and disease, and save the nation from extinction. Shall the OIC and Arab League rise from slumber and throw challenge to the Serbs for the cause and safety of the Muslim nation. My conscience pricks and like me millions of Muslims perhaps weep in agony watching the horrible conditions of the Bosnian Muslims. I am sure, millions of Muslims feel themselves 'very small' to find the shamelessness of the OIC which claims itself to be the largest organisation after the United Nations.

May Allah help to show the path to the OIC. May the declaration of United Nations ... "We the people of United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind ..." revive in right earnest in our lifetime to save not only Muslims of Bosnia but the oppressed mankind in general and bring peace to this world.

## To the Editor...

### Ginger for export

Sir, The northern part of our country is basically agrarian. In the alluvial soil of this region grow certain agricultural products which are qualitatively unique and have pretty good demand in the overseas market. One of such potential items may be ginger. The vast areas of Kurigram, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Rangpur and Dinajpur belonging to the northern zone are being extensively cultivated for this agricultural output.

Ginger of our country is said to have a huge demand in the markets of Japan, Canada, Germany, Singapore and the Middle East countries. During the pre-liberation period, Pakistani businessmen always took advantage of all these kinds of things that we got to produce here. They used to procure ginger at a lower rate from here and get it processed in the then West Pakistan for selling abroad at a lucrative price.

But, unfortunately, now our business people, owing perhaps to their inexperience and various limitations as an entrepreneurial class, have failed to make the best use of these gifts of nature that we abundantly have.

Nitin Roy  
Fakirpool, Dhaka

### Market economy and banks

Sir, The government is telling about free market economy. The banks deal in money. So bankers must have also free option to trade its bought money in a profitable

way. But what is happening in Bangladesh is the bankers are pressed upon to go for loaning indiscriminately. The targets have been given; it does not matter who's the borrower, but loan must go.

Believe it or not, Bangladesh is a defaulters' paradise! The defaulters lead posh life, drive cars, send their children abroad for higher studies! Here defaulters have got their association (of course one or two registered perhaps). They don't pay bank loans, rather instigate others not to pay. They even get or manage protection, one way or other, from the government. These defaulters also get sympathy at the court of law being "distressed class of people". The defaulters will speak about lot of problems — short supply of bank money, no electricity, high rate of tax and interest, trade union activities, high production cost, etc.

The World Bank prescribed many reforms. It has provided money to the banks to build up capital (which has been considered loss/bad by the banks). In the coming year the country's tax payers will also start paying tax for the lost amount of money of the banks for ensuring more comforts of the defaulters. Here in Bangladesh defaulters are not punished but rewarded. So one would invite others to take chance!

Khusroo  
Putinary, Rangpur

### Flying on schedule

Sir, I congratulate the Captain of the recent Biman flight from Chittagong to Dhaka who followed the

Aircraft Flight Regulation and took off the flight on schedule. He deserves respect from all the passengers in the aircraft whose interest and safety was supreme to him. There were passengers who were booked for onward journey to international destinations.

One should have known that once the aircraft has rolled on for take off it cannot stop to take a load. This is not a highway bus to be stopped by hand signal. One should know that once the door of an aircraft is closed it cannot be opened unless the flight is aborted for emergency. Further, an ATP plane's door is closed ten minutes before the take off run. This is not an intercity train, that you can take the journey if you arrive two minutes before the departure.

Though a VIP was booked on the flight no one was aware of his whereabouts. Besides, the Biman traffic was not alerted of his arrival. The flight cannot be delayed indefinitely. Civil Aviation Ministry should make it clear that no Biman flight should delay for any VIP (we have too many VIPs) except President and Prime Minister's flight, otherwise most of the flights will be delayed causing suffering to the travellers. This also brings shame to us as Biman carries lot of foreign tourists and such things are unheard of in their land, that is, a minister became very angry when the captain of an aircraft did not stop the take off run to pick up the load which was despatched late at the airport.

Betal Pasha  
Ahmedbag, Dhaka