Dhaka, Tuesday, May 18, 1993

Urgent Measures Needed

The daring day-light shoot-out and dacoity that occurred in the heart of the commercial district of the capital, has sent a wave of nervous shock throughout Dhaka, and to much of the country. The mafia-style hold-up, breaking through the car, blasting bombs to scare people away, shooting the victim and snatching away the loot, subsequently shooting a passerby who tried to come to the aid of the victim, and of course the successful getaway, all speak of the dangerous rise of organised crime in the city.

The rise of crime, violence and terrorism is something that our people have watched with tremendous concern. We in the media, especially the newspapers, have repeatedly drawn the government's attention to this phenomenon which cuts across all political parties and partisan views. But so far to no avail. What we need in this particular instance is determined and exemplary effort, if possible, on the basis of political and social consensus, to strike against

the criminals.

One of the saddest development of the past several years is the politicisation of crime, and the criminalisation of politics, which has direct bearing on the rise of organised crime. The use of armed gangs within major political parties to provide the fire and muscle power when needed provides political cover and legitimacy of sorts to those who are otherwise plain thugs. These criminal elements, sometimes with the knowledge of the political parties that protect them, but often without, induldge in extortion and protection rackets. The protest march of our shopkeepers and the setting up of private security teams by our retail traders in several shopping areas and 'bazars' of the city, amply testify to the rise of organised crime in the city. It is a violent demonstration of that phenomenon which we saw last Sunday.

Government, and especially the law enforcement agencies, must take up the issue of law and order with much more earnestness than have been evident so far. Their evident lack of determination and sufficient push behind this effort, has given a wrong signal to the

criminals. If we take account of how many violent crimes the police have been able to solve, and how many murderers and killers have actually been put behind bars, then it becomes amply clear as to why criminals are becoming ever more daring and why people are increasingly becoming skeptical about their safety. Several day-light murder of prominent people and numerous daring robbery have all remained unsolved. Criminals and gangs behind those murders and robbery still roam the city with no apparent care in the world.

There is no denying the fact that the failure of the police force and the CID has been abysmal. The question now is, will the government take up this problem seriously and do something about it? The rise in violent crimes is not only a threat to the civic life, but to society at large. Crimes affect all aspects of our life, especially those related to trade, commerce, production and business in general. If such be the state of our security, leave alone attracting foreign investment, our own entrepreneurs will refuse to invest and set up business.

The point must be understood at the highest level of the government that controlling crime lies at the very heart of our struggle for development.

Action, Not Studies

The first ever meeting of the inter-ministerial committee for restructuring mills and factories under various Corporations of the Ministry of Industry was held last Sunday. Needless to say we welcome this meeting. But must hasten to ask, why has it taken so long? The importance of a committee such as the one mentioned is obvious. The fact of our many government owned mills and factories being "black holes" of perpetual loss has been known for years. So why should the concerned ministries wait for so long to set up what seems like a very sensible mechanism of solving this very important problem.

The Planning Minister, Zahiruddin Khan, speaking on the occasion suggested that in-depth studies be undertaken of 22 of the 63 industrial units that need to be rescued from their so-called sick status. The question therefore is, having taken so much time to set up the inter- ministerial committee, if we now take the course of going for indepth studies, then when we will start taking the steps that will actually turn these loss making governmental units into profitable ones? Already two years have passed of the five year mandate for which the present government has been elected. Is there really enough time to proceed the way that is being suggested? Yes, there may not exist case by case studies of the sick industrial units. And yes, such studies would definitely add to the wealth of knowledge as to how not to run public enterprises. However, there is sufficient knowledge about the causes and reasons for the terrible mess of the public sector bodies. for us to go for direct action to salvage these wealth destroying units. The main issues of managerial inefficiency, low labour productivity, over employment, no accountability, lack of operating capital, and anomalous government policy are all well known to us.

Therefore, our suggestion would be that the inter-ministerial committee should, instead of indepth studies on the problem, put its intellectual resources together in determining action programmes and in chalking out a series of steps that need to be taken immediately. For example, the question of management efficiency should be the first issue to come under scrutiny. Burcaucratic approach to industrial management is perhaps the core problem. Then the issue of performance accountability must be brought to the fore. The practice of getting pay, overtime and bonus even when the unit concerned is failing miserably to perform should be done away with from this very instant. Often public enterprises were used by the ruling parties of the day to provide employment to party cadres - a way of making the state pay people whose main work is to propagate the party, especially among the workers. This must also be stopped.

The measures we suggest do not require indepth studies. What has been lacking so for is a will to act. We urge the government to go for concrete action, and not to waste further time. After all time is not an inexhaustible commodity.

Neither is people's patience.

World Helplessly Watches Serbs' F Serbs' atrocities on Bosnian Muslims have not aroused the conscience of the non-Serbs Genocide of Bosnian Muslims around the world, then the world is yet to be civilized. The atrocities can only be compared with the Holocaust which the world will always Serbs to accept much debat-

able Vance-Owen peace plan. condemn. The world fought But West Europe's arguments against Hitler but why delay in against air-strikes on the plea fighting present day Hitler of safety of UN ground forces Milsevic and his surrogates? and continuing relief work do President Clinton promised not appear valid. If Serbs milito act in Bosnia even during tary capabilities were made his Presidential campaign. He ineffective, there would have followed it up though with ocbeen less need for relief work. casional hesitations but pro-The UN ground forces could posed military actions against Bosnian Serbs in the form of be given enough fire-power to bombing Serbian military tarprotect themselves. Else they should be withdrawn and gets. He wanted allied participrompt actions be taken so pation and rightly so. US had that these relief troops are no full allied support in the Guli war. The cause was Iraq's oclonger needed. Joseph Biden, a member of the US Senate cupation of Kuwait; they all acted, and acted within 72 Foreign Relations Committee rightly "urged the Europeans hours of Iraqi occupation because oil supply was at stake. to pull their UN relief troops But no action in Bosnia even out of Bosnia, saying the solthough there is "Holocaust" by diers were being used as an Serbs on Bosnian Muslims. excuse to avoid using military West Europe's ambivalence. force on behalf of the despite US's pressure to act Muslims." In this case, unforgoes against its civilized behavtunately, the West Europe ior. Former Prime Minister stands exposed - it can no longer boost of its civilization Margaret Thacher was right in saying - it is unworthy of the and normal values and also its commitment to human rights.

It is also surprising why President Clinton being the President of the only Superpower has to depend so much on West Europe. He was obliged to consult but not would also have persuaded the obliged to go by their decision. act even though one of its tion. Indeed this is allowing

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It is not upto anyone to say what a Superpower President should do but people expect him to make his own decision and carry others along. President Clinton's predeces sors did the same. There were public and congressional hesi tations even in case of Kuwait. But President Bush went ahead. Same happened when US intervened in Panama and Granada; the Presidents rightly or wrongly went ahead. If the US does not find justification to act, if necessary alone, in Bosnia it will hardly have a ground to act in future anywhere in the world.

As the situation stands President Clinton should stick to his own decision and act immediately. Otherwise, Serbs will continue their murder. rapes and ethic cleansing. The people of the US are expected to praise him ultimately for his action - action not only in the interest of the US but also for its values, for stopping uncivilized behaviour where is takes place. Only then it can be wor

thy of being the Superpower. West Europe is unwilling to

by Muslehuddin Ahmad

neighbors has been engaged in genocide on another neighbor for over 13 months. Let Niros play flute while Bosnia is burning, one day all may be engulfed if such barbarism is allowed to continue unchecked. Remember World War-I started on an incident in Saraijevo. But those who care must act without further hesitation and delay. Again senator Biden while continuing his remarks on Bosnia said "let's not mince

words - European policy is based on cultural and religious indifference if not bigotry, and I think it is fair to say this would have been an entirely different situation if the Muslims were doing what the Serbs have done. The truth of this is not lost on the Islamic Moreover, Europeans' arguments, probably influenced

by Lord Owen in his final efforts to implement his peace plan, for more sanctions, more political pressure, appear meaningless as these generally do not work and are indeed futile in Bosnia-Serbia situafurther time and opportunities to Bosnian Serbs to continue their crime.

The idea of "Safe Areas" or "Safe Havens" in Bosnia protected by UN troops also appear less convincing for several reasons: number of troops and fire power not enough to protect "safe areas" and they cannot be there for all times to come, new areas are being attacked by Serbs and most importantly hardly anybody is left in those areas after Serbian atrocities. Either they have been killed or left the area. Larry Hollingworth, Chief of UNHCR in Bosnia said. "It clearly did not save Zepa and it probably won't save any place else. What good is a safe area in a ghost town?"

Milsevic who is supposed to be tried as a war criminal has duped the world by posing as the peace-maker. It is who invented the idea of greater Serbia and ethic cleansing and has been implementing it with the help of his surrogates in Bosnia by using the most barbaric methods. He cannot suddenly become a peace maker. His latest promise of embargo

and blockade on Bosnian Serbs

open - who inspects the embargo? Even if UN soldiers are finally allowed to be stationed at the border. Serbs will find innumerable ways to cheat and send arms and ammunitions

People with conscience are baffled by the inaction of the Muslim world and particularly of the OIC in this grave Bosnia crises - Serbs genocide on Bosnian Muslims. It is not enough to pass resolution in conferences and asking UN to act. UN Security Council is hardly in a position to act decisively in such a situation. Again why blame West Europe and asks only US to act? Where is the Muslim World? Where are the countries -Iran, Iraq, Libya, Syria and others which seem ready to fight the jews; can't they fight the Serb criminals? Anyway, it is not a call on Muslim countries to have a crusade against non-Muslim Serbs; it should be a fight by all the civilized people - Muslims and non-Muslims against the uncivilized. At this stage, UN arms embargo on Bosnian Muslims seems irrelevant. Send men and materials to Bosnia and tell President Clinton that the Muslim world will join US with its forces in saving Bosnian Muslims -- the helpless men, women and children. Maybe, West Europe will also change its present ambivalent attitude and join the combined interna-***** ********

Ethnic Cleansing in Bosnia-Greater Serbia

Arshad-uz Zaman writes from Istanbul

S 'ethnic cleansing' in Bosnia, which in effect and expulsion of Muslims from their hearth and home, continues with all its ferocity, the hand wringing of the international community, continues unabated. The Security Council of the UN has been reduced to a laughing stock by the sheer number of resolutions passed without a dissent and violated by Serbia, before the ink was dry. The inescapable question that the international community is faced with is simply if they will allow a whole community to be wiped out from the heart of Europe to satisfy the greed of the Serbs. The Vance-Owen plan

President Clinton's proposal

to knock out by air strikes

major military targets of

have largely stopped the atroc

ities on Bosnian civilians but

Bosnian Serbs would not only

have sowed terror in Bosnia among the Muslims and have murdered. Raped and expelled hundreds of thousands of Muslims in order to expand their territory. It may be recalled that the Vance-Owen plan envisages the creation of ten autonomous regions in place of present Bosnia-Herzegovina, to be divided equally between the Muslims, Croats and Serbs and turn Sarajevo, the capital, an open city for all. This plan amply rewards the aggressor, the Serbs, for they retain 43 per cent of their conquest, which at present stands at 70 per

around which all the diplo-

matic activity is centered to-

day, is nearly nine months old. cent of Bosnian territory. Alia During this period the Serbs Izzetebegovitch, leader of the Muslims balked at and had to be pressurised to accept the plan. The Croats were more than willing. The Serbs, who have set their sights on a greater Serbia, have been playing for time. Milosevitch in Belgrade and Karadjitch in Bosnia have been playing the eoy diplomatic game of softliner and hardliner. The Vance-Owen due took months to make Milosevitch accept. their plan. Then began a round of unending conferences to make Karadjitch accept their plan. At long last the latest

conference in Athens was

bused a great victory because the inflexible Karadittch signed the plan. But he put a sly clause - his parliament must approve the plan. The parliament, like on an earlier occasion, rejected the plan and proposed a referendum instead. This means more time for the Serbs, more terror for the hapless Muslims, who have fought with unparalleled gallantry, and of course more territory for the Serbs. More importantly, it would mean consolidation of their empire by establishing corridors through

cleansed Muslim territories. Beyond pious resolutions, whose number would create an

all time record in the Security Council on a single topic, and toothless economic and halfhearted military sanctions like the establishment of no fly zones, the international community has distinguished itself by supreme inactivity. It has been evident from the onset of the break up of Yugoslavia, that Serbs, the largest of the three communities have freely been receiving arms from her European neighbours, found her opportunity to achieve her long-held dream - a greater Serbia. It has become crystal clear that mere threats would not make them deter from their murderous conquest. The

world has been numbed by the

gruesome nature of the atroci-

The noise from Washington sounds daily a little bit more menacing and from Europe it is still continuation of the same futile scarch for a negotiated settlement.

Also clear is the fact that the world once again looks upto the young US President Bill Clinton for decisive action. Again, the US in order to maintain her world leadership can no longer take refuge behind Curopean non-action. Military strikes, even if limited to the Serbian military installations, will be the most potent message and will shorten the agony of the Serbian Muslims and hasten a solution, so eagerly awaited by peace-loving people around the world.

Mystery of New Air Base near S. African Border

Marx Garekwe writes from Gaborone

A big air base is being built in Botswana only about 100 kilometres from the South African border. Funding is shrouded in secrecy. The United States and France are said to be involved and the French are supplying aircraft to Botswana as part of the deal. The theory is that the US wants to secure its interests in the region in case a revolutionary government comes to power in South Africa.

Gross Domestic Product. At a time when most coun-

tries are cutting defence spending the building of this most expensive facility has aroused much criticism in Botswana and raised eyebrows in the regions.

ONSTRUCTION of the

in black Africa is almost

complete. It is in the republic

of Botswana and the cost is

estimated at \$1 billion — about

20 per cent of the country's

fargest military air base

The government is under fire for embarking on such a project while the world is busy disarming and preaching detente. Political observers say the work is carried out with the involvement of France and the United States. Both countries deny this and say the whole project is the sole initiative of the Botswana govern-

The development comes at a time when the country's economic growth is slowing. Minister of Finance and Development Planning Festus Mogae has forecast deficits in the national treasury during his last two budget presentations to parliament.

The source of funding for Project Eagle, as the base is nicknamed, is a closely guarded secret, but sources say Botswana will get a loan from France. Political observers say that under the package France will also supply aircraft to be used by the Botswana Defence Force (BDF).

In what some call a "sweetheart deal," the French

Billion dollar airport Zambia Angola Kanare Zimbabwe Botswana lapharangwan Molepolole • Tshane • GABORONE South Africa Kanye 200 miles/320 km

firms are providing an undetermined number of military planes. The tender was

awarded to the French company Spie Batignolles with South African companies as \$250 million.

Critics argue that with a population of 1.3 million people and its much respected record of non-aggression, Botswana does not need this kind of project.

They say the facility is for the use of the US services which have already started military exercises in Botswana. The BDF is tiny and Botswana, unlike most of its neighbours, has never had to wage war either internally or externally.

The base is in the south western part of Botswana about 35 kilometres, north of Molepolole village, at a place called Mapharangwane. It is about 100 kms. from the South African border.

The opposition parties argue that for a country with just a few planes and some reconditioned jets there is no justification for this facility. They accuse the government of building it to meet the logistical requirements of the American army.

When fully operational it would be used as the centre of US military exercises and ac-

subcontractors. The cost: about livities in southern Africa at a time when the future of South Africa is unpredictable. It would be a checkpoint for what might be seen as military and political hooliganism in

> The belief is that the US is getting involved militarily in the region so that it can safeguard its interests (strategic and otherwise) if a revolutionary government come to power at some stage in South Africa. Apart from Botswana, the South Africa ruled by the National Party under President FW de Klerk is the last custodian of US strategic interests in the region.

southern Africa.

One theory is that the conservative government of President Quett Masire will recoup the costs of the project by renting the base to the US. The government says it is in the interest of Bostwana's security.

Whatever the reasons ad vanced people are angry at the government for building the base at the expense of social amenities and infrastructure. The school system has deteriorated badly since the late

1980s. Both grade school and high school now produce mediocre products. A growing number of high school age children are not up to standard because of a shortage of secondary schools.

After the first nine years of schooling, drop-outs add to the growing numbers of unemployed. They cannot find places for further education or

As a result of this the numbers of street kids are on the increase. Wealthy families among them cabinet ministers and top civil servants - who can afford it, prefer to send their kids to neighbouring South Africa or Zimbabwe for schooling because they have lost faith in the system. Some even send their children to Britain or North America.

Those who cannot afford it are bitter that in diamond-rich Botswana their children are left to turn into boBashi and boNtshadi — the Tswana words for streets boys and girls.

Botswana has about \$3 billion in foreign reserves, primarily from diamond exports, tourism and beef production for the European Community countries. Yet despite all this wealth most people are without running water.

- GEMINI NEWS

MARX GAREKWE is a Botswana-born freelance jour-

Biman goes Utopian

Sir. It is amazing to note that Biman, already burdened with a heavy debt servicing liability of about 100 crore, is going to purchase two new Airbus A 310-300 worth about 100-120 million US dollar. It is reported in the press that recently Council Committee of Ministers in its meeting recommended for such purchase in view of the very "good condition" of our present economy. A very senior Minister has, it is reported, turned down the proposal of any lease arrangement proposed by Biman.

It may be pointed out here that in the airline operations, now-a-days people are not buying aircraft because of enormous cost of modern jets, and leasing has become very popular, particularly airlines with weak income. There are many inherent advantages: First, there is very little financial involvement compared to purchase; secondly, you have

ready-to-fly aircraft without the hassle of maintenance and repair; and thirdly, if the operation is not profitable, there is the option of terminating the lease after an agreed period of even 30 days. It is for this reason that even major airlines like the British Airways, British Caledonian, Qantas, Air Canada and many others are operating with leased aircraft.

But, what about Biman Bangladesh Airline? A third world country airline? It is besieged with so many factors resulting in the hindrance to take a pragmatic outlook for acquiring wide-bodies aircrast for raising its fleet of four DC 10-30 aircraft.

It is gathered that Biman, according to the instruction of the Council Committee has already abandoned the idea of and is now preparing for the purchase of two used A 310-300 Airbus. Till that time, the route expansion programme of Biman in general and its planned operation to New York in particular, will have to wait,

resulting a great uncertainty.

This is the state of affairs of Biman — our national airlines - in brief. Will some one in our Government machinery look into this mess and unscrupulous activities that plagued our national airline?

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Gross injustice

Sir, Those who have retired from Govt., semi Govt., autonomous or similar bodies between the period of previous 1985 Pay Commission and the current Pay Commission, effective from July 1,1991, used to get one or two or three dearness allowances (DA) depending on the time of retirement. Each DA amounts to 10 per cent of basic pay. The fact remains that during retirement those employees had not got any benefit of those DAs while calculating retirement bene-

Non pensionable jobs in sector corporations are worst examples as once their retirement benefits of gratuity and provident funds are paid, their names are struck off for good while pension holders continue to get subsequent benefits also from future Pay Commission. Thus a person retiring at Tk 5700.00 per month as basic pay on 30.6.91 with three DAs will get benefits of Tk 5700.00 while the same person retiring on 1.7.91 will get benefits of Tk 9500.00 per month. Under the above facts, is it not a gross injustice though we often preach natural justice, equity, fairplay and so on. Let us ponder over the

Sadig Alee Maghbazar, Dhaka

Bosnian peace plan

Sir. We wonder who rules Belgrade, the capital of former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, now comprised of

Montenegro and Serbial Is he Yugoslav President Dobrica Cosic, the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, Serbian Army Commander Ratko Mladic or the fierce Serb leader Rodovan Karadzic? Europe, the cradle of civilisation, has been threatened by the jungle rule in Belgrade.

We also wonder who Cyrus Vance of the USA and Lord Owen of the UK the mediators and peace makers of Bosnia? The so-called Vance-Owen peace plan to divide Bosnia into ten semi-autonomous 'states' has added fuel to the fire. The Serbs are annihilating the Muslims and swallowing up Bosnian land.

Why did Belgrade hold a referendum in Bosnia in February 1992? Subsequently, why did the UNO and many countries accord recognition to the independence of Bosnia? If the states like Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania can achieve their independence from the yoke of former

USSR, what wrong have the

Bosnian Muslims committed? We fail to understand how

and why and under what circumstances Vance and Owen have proposed division of Bosnia into ten semi-autonomous 'states'? Did not they know how the Punjab and Bengal were divided and demarcated under Sir Cyril Radcliff of UK in the year 1947? Whither Bosnie today?

We would request the UNO, UN peace keeping force stationed in Bosnia and the world conscience to stop bloodshed in Bosnia, help maintain a status quo 'as it is, where it is' among the Serbs and the Bosnian Muslims and form a boundary commission consisting of jurists from i Bangladesh, ii) India, iii) Pakistan, Iv) USA, v) UK, vi) Russia and vii) China to decide and to draw a contiguous boundary line between the two different peoples, and help restore peace, security and stability in Bosnia.

O H Kabir Dhaka-1203.