## The Baily Star

Dhaka, Saturday, June 19, 1993

### Children in War

The Amnesty International (AI) and other human rights groups have rightly taken a strong line against the killing of Palestinian teenagers in the occupied Arab territories in the Gaza Strip by Israeli army and other para-military forces. The latest count is over a dozen within a period of a week or so, according to one report, some of the victims being as young as eight. There is little doubt that these teenagers are very much in the fight against the occupation forces, staging demonstrations, throwing stones and, in some isolated cases, using some small arms. Who can question their right to join their elders in ensuring that they grow up in a land where they can keep their heads high in freedom?

In principle, the Israeli forces have a concern in maintaining peace and stability in the territory they govern, by a twist of history. However, there must be several methods in dealing with demonstrators. especially the teenagers, other than shooting at them. A crowd can be dispersed, teenagers pushed back and a kid disarmed by the use of water cannon or teargas, without Israeli forces resorting to "shoot to kill" methods.

The Tel Aviv authorities should take the admonitions from Al and other concerned bodies seriously. especially when all the parties, including Israel, have been trying to generate the right atmosphere for the success of the current Middle East talks.

Elsewhere too the number of children falling victims to armed conflicts, atrocities committed by the army or sheer victimisation, is rising rapidly. Here, the picture presented in Bosnia, as seen by millions of television viewers in the world every day, is particularly dismal, a heart-breaking one, one that puts our civilisation to shame.

Meanwhile, notwithstanding a feeble defence given by the United Nations authorities in Mogadishu and New York of the killing of some 20 Somalians on Sunday by Pakistani peace-keeping troops, the action has raised several awkward questions. There is little doubt that the action was taken in angry. somewhat thoughtless, retaliation for the killing of 23 Pakistani soldiers by a group of Somalians a week earlier, an action that had earned international condemnation. The forces of the Mogadishu warlord Mohammad Farrah Aideed which had killed Pakistanis had used children as a shield. It is now said that in the firing on Somalians Islamabad forces had also disregarded children in the crowd. If some of them escaped death, there were said to be several among some 50 who suffered severe injuries. We may understand the anger of the Pakistani forces, but we do not condone it. No peace-keeping force can act in revenge.

There are several other instances which focus on the fate of children in war, in many of on-going

armed conflicts.

The global conference on human rights, now moving towards its climax in Vienna, probably looks at this phenomenon as part of an overall scenario. We believe, that's not enough. We urge the participants of the meeting to treat the fate of children in occupied Arab territories in the Gaza Strip, in Bosnia, in Somalia and in all other places as a major issue in itself. Before ensuring their right to education, health care and equal opportunities regardless of race, colour or religion, we must guarantee that our children do not die in indiscriminate army firings, in police atrocities or any form of torture. Let all governments reach a total consensus on this issue — for the sake of children everywhere in the world

### Improving City Traffic

An inter-ministerial meeting has taken some welcome, although somewhat belated, decisions to improve the city's traffic system. Not that all those decisions are new, a few of them certainly are. But the important point is that the meeting presided over by Home Minister Abdul Matin Chowdhury has sought to remodel some of the existing traffic laws to enhance their effectiveness and also added supplementary measures with the same end in view. Even more important is the emphasis on a few concrete decisions arrived at the meeting to remove the traffic mess.

Of the set of measures, the most radical one concerns the ban on manufacture of new rickshaws and provision for training for the rickshawpullers. Parking of cars at places other than the parking lot or marked places will collect heavy find. Buses and mini-buses will be barred from picking up and dropping passengers at their sweet will in the middle of the road or anywhere other than the bus stoppages. The meeting is also categorical to evict hawkers and kucha bazaars from roads of busy areas. Provision for parking lot will be a necessary condition for obtaining permission to construct high-rise buildings. Besides, certain physical facilities will be built to improve the city traffic.

Evidently there are laws to deal with many of the traffic offences the newly recommended measures have sought to do away with or lessen. For example, this time vehicles found guilty of emitting black fumes will be fined Pk 5,000 instead of the existing amount of Tk 200. No one can deny the merit of tougher laws: sometimes such laws have the desirable deterrent effect. But at other times they can backfire as well and expose the inherent weakness in the system of execution. If the vehicles spewing black smoke were not made to pay the fines earlier, what is the guarantee for making them behave after only increasing the amount of fine several times more? Parking of cars pell mell or buses resorting to use the entire length of roads as their stoppages was illegal alright, but how many times were the erring vehicles legally dealt with?

The only response to many such unpleasant questions is likely to be an awkward silence. When the police vehicles themselves are found spewing black fumes, the hope for enforcement of anti-fume law simply disappears. When the buses and rickshaws obstruct almost the entire road leaving no passage for other vehicles to move and all this under the very nose of the traffic police, they make a mockery of the provisions of the laws. So the point really is the implementation of the measures and to that end evolving a system that works.

The all-important question is how to make the system work. The men assigned to maintain discipline and order on roads certainly have their limitations. They cannot be expected to make everyone behave when all others involved in the system are either ignorant or less caring because of their powerful lobbies and links. They cannot be expected to be the only angels in an abominably imperfect system. The poor traffic police is as much a product of the system as anybody else is.

Without a political will and respect for democratic values, it is a losing battle one is going to wage. To bring order into the traffic system, therefore, the men in uniform will have to be backed by socio-political considerations and supports.

## Central Asia: What it Means for Us

Republics - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - emerged as independent nation states, in 1991. Yet they are very old countries with historic links to the subcontinent. Farghana, the birthplace of Emperor Babar, is located in a beautiful valley in Uzbekistan. The Moghuls came from Central Aisa. Our connections with them are atleast 500 years old; same as discovery of America by Columbus who was in fact looking for an alternative sea route to the subcontinent, considered in those days to be one of the richest parts of the

HE six Central Asian

The course of historic developments gradually isolated Central Asia from our part of the world. First, it was division of the huge Asian land mass by two major colonial powers: the scafaring British established hegemony over coastal Asia while continental Russia pursued its imperial ambitions within the interior of the vast continent. The second important factor was geographical isolation imposed by high mountain ranges running from east to west of the continent. The opening of the sea route via Cape of Good Hope to Indian Ocean and then through the strait of Malacca to the Pacific Ocean obviated the need for the fabled silk route across land from Europe through Central Asia to ancient China.

By the beginning of 18th century, colonial armies of various European powers practically divided the entire planet

HE security situation in

ication of Germany. The East-

West confrontation is now over

and the former antagonists are

together turning their attention

to disarmament, arms control

and new forms of cooperative

security. At the same time,

dangerous ethno-nationalistic

conflicts have flared up in the

south, the true causes of which

are rooted in European Balkan

too, tensions have increased

since the ending of the East-

West polarization, though the

reasons there are spreading

overpopulation, poverty and

famine. Regional wars and

stronger flows of refugees which

create security problems of a

new kind are the result. The

Federal Republic of Germany

must define its future role in

the international security sys-

tem against the background of

to unification was for decades

determined by the East-West

conflict. As part of NATO's de-

terrence strategy it was geared

exclusively to protecting West

Germany and securing the line

running through the centre of

Europe which divided the two

military blocs. The Federal

Government's foremost aim was

to consolidate peace and at the

same time help overcome the

division of Europe. German

forces could not be deployed

outside the NATO area - a re-

striction inherent in the Basic

Law (constitution) and the

allied to the United States, can

no longer, in the opinion of

Chancellor Helmut Kohl, invoke

special rules when the country

is called upon to play an active

part within the framework of

the United Nations in warding

off acute danger and building a

new, global security order.

Basically, it is a question of

United Germany, still closely

country's division.

Bonn's defence policy prior

this changed environment.

In other parts of the world,

policies of a bygone era.

Europe has changed ra-

dically since the unif-

earth into metr respective spheres of influence. In so far as Central Asia was concerned, colonial isolation was followed by ideological separate and for long seventy years, iron curtain did not allow Central Asia to know anything about the rest of the world except the hounds of socialism within former USSR.

1991 was the year of momentous global change. Its unprecedented dimensions have not fully comprehended even after two years of the break-up of the Soviet Emptre. Several new nation-states recently joined the United Nations and they are by no means small countries. Of particular importance to us are six Central Asian Republies, each one of substantial land area, rich in natural as well as mineral resources with relatively small population although in absolute numbers, they are by no means

#### **Future Developments**

The population of the six Republics together would amount to half the population of Bangladesh. But in area, it would be about forty times Bangladesh with millions of hectares of farmland very sparsely cultivated or sucd as grazing land due to lack of working hands. Future development of agriculture would not only include cereal grains but varieties of horticulture crops well suited to agro-ecological conditions of Central Asia.

Apart from crude oil and natu ral gas, whose reserves are comparable to that of West Asia, there are other valuable minerals - iron ore, gold, urantum, to name of few, which could be the basis of yet unforeseen developments in Central Asia. In a nutshell, the opening of the six Republics can be compared to the discovery and subsequent of minerals, energy and other natural re-

Azerbaijan with a population of little over seven million and nullion) is poor in oil and gas, far from foreign markets and beset by ethnic rivalries, this mountainous nation faces and uphill task. Yet it has suff and mmerals, arable, land and industrial infrastructure to build modern attion.

With a population of over 5 million lank stan is the poorest of the six Republies - and with the highest rate of population growth - this nation is mainly agricultural, with cotton its largest export. Extensive hydro power ls an aluminum

## WINDOW ON ASIA Shahed Latif

endowed with fertile land and ample oil may have the greatest potential for prosperity among the six nations. However, construction of a pipeline to make its oil accessible to world shipping lines may be needed.

Kazakhstan, population 17 million, possess one million square miles of steppe, desert and mountains. This huge nation is also rich in natural resources - including abundant tracts of fertile farmlands in the northern plateau. Its mineral wealth - vast oil deposits are but one component - is draw ing lot of investors, particularly multinational companies to fis

capital Alma Ata. Kyrgyzstan (population 4.5

industry a supplies most of the nation's electricity.

Turkmenistan has a population of near around 4 million. Cotton and natural gas are the economic mainstays of this Spain-size nation, 90 per cent of which is covered by the Kara Kum desert. Over-reliant upon food imports, it may replace cotton with food imports to become more self-sufficient.

Uzbekistan, given a population exceeding 21 million, is the most populous of Central Asia Republics. Cotton is he king here and south of its great deserts, fertile valleys including Farghana, are watered by runoff from Tian Shan mountains. Iluge reserves of natural gas

Specialisation The Central Asian economies under central planning of

tormer Soviet Union developed ilong a very narrow range of sportalisation. As a result, cotton became the leading agricultural commodity and exploitation of mineral resources were aimed at satisfying demands from extensive capital goods industries including manufacture of armaments. Comprehensive agricultural development did not constitute a part of planned development process; and con-

sufficiency.

largely neglected. While the economic of the former USSR characterised by a high degree of self-sufficiency, there was considerable regional specialisation within the economy. The effect was that he Central Asian Republics used to trade mostly other republics of the former Union rather than outside world. Only around 10 to 15 per cent of the total trade took place with outside the former Soviet Union. Along with the collapse of former USSR, trading patterns among republics have fallen apart Therefore during the present tran ition stage the major task before the Republics is to move towards an open economy linked to the global market rather than former Soviet mar

sumer goods industries were

should help assure energy self-

Narrow Range of

One can easily visualize the economic plight of all con-

stituent republics of CIS, if 85 to 90 per cent of their trade have collapsed; while, each individual economy of the republics continue to remain geared to specialised cultivation of few selected crops and commodities as well as a limited group of industrial and mineral products. The inevitable results have been accumulation of unsold stocks of wool and cotton. while bread from imported wheat and garments, may be products from the same cotton. are in short supply. This has happened because rouble as the currency for effecting trade transactions have gone haywire. Nobody is aware of the real worth of that currency, nor the Central Asia Republics have any control over circulation or issue of rouble notes - it is all done at Moscow.

Within the collapse of the past system lies the seeds of change for the better, provided we are able to fruttfully utilize the new found opportunities for our mutual benefit. The six Republics used to import a wide range of goods and services, foods in particular, from other parts of former Soviet Union. If countertrade companies could manage to supply these imported items but receive payments not any hard currency since they are short of it; but in surplus cotton or minerals and fuels that they have in abundance, then the Republics would definitely progress along the path of transition to an open market economy. This is where Bangladesh can help and in the process, help ourselves too.

(To be continued as part II

Germany and the New World Order

# The Bundeswehr (Armed Forces) in a Changed Security Environment

Germany's involvement in establishing the regulatory Framework for a new world domestic policy which, for the first time, has a real chance of materializing.

Nor can Germany deny her key role in forging a pan-European peace system. She is obliged by the constitution to serve world peace as part of a united Europe. Since, in an era of growing interdependence, every threat to peace affects more or less all nations, this consti-, tutional requirement can today, according to UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali on his visit to Bonn in January, only be fulfilled within the frame work of the international com- vention. munity. Furthermore, joint efforts to maintain peace have always been the focal point of all multilateral security agreements to which Germany is a

 Under the peace-keeping mandate of the United Nations the Federal Republic of Germany has, within the limits imposed by her constitution, participated in various UN peace-keeping missions by providing civilian personnel and police, technical and logistical support as well as considerable financial assistance, and more recently by assigning unarmed

military experts. - In the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Bonn itself has urged that this community of now 54 member states declare itself a "regional arrangement" within the meaning of the United Nations Charter and asWolf J. Bell writes from Bonn

sume a peace-keeping role of its

- Germany feels that the institutional framework of NATO and the North Atlantic Cooperation Council as the forum for increasing cooperation with the nations of the former Warsaw Pact should be used to develop the CSCE's security

- Within the European Community, which is also aiming to form a security union and to make Western European Union its desence instrument, Germany advocates a common military policy of conflict pre-

### **New Mission**

In this newly developing international framework the political mission of the German Bundeswehr must be redefined in the light of existing disarmament commitments and with a view to its specific role in the Alliance. It must be a role acceptable to the German public.

The classical mission of defending the country now applies to the whole of Germany since national security can be threatened on all of its borders and that is where the danger has to be met. In addition, the German armed forces are to be made available to the UN Security Council and the CSCE as partners of NATO and WEU in safeguarding international peace

and order. It is argued that German troops should be involved in UN peace-keeping missions as well

as in military operations to restore peace on the basts of a Security Council mandate, and that they should be available for verification duties under arms control agreements and for humanitarian and disaster relief operations.

#### A Change in the Constitution?

Such assignments would re-

quire changes in the constitution which can only be carried by a two-thirds majority in parliament. This is still a controversial political issue in Germany. The urgent need for a decision is obvious, one reason being that the members of the Bundeswehr will have to be motivated for their new role.

The armed forces themselves are already adjusting. Since total manpower will be restricted to 370,000 as from 1995, they have begun the task of restructuring. There will be two very different components: the "main defence forces", who will protect German territory, and the "crisis response forces", who will be ready to perform international missions under the aegis of the UN and the CSCE and who will be trained and

equipped for the task. New structural arrangements are also evolving at the multilateral level. NATO is to have a rapid deployment force consisting of 100,000 troops from 12 member states. A Franco-German army corps, to which Spain, Belgium and

Luxembourg wish to add their contingents, is to form the basis of a European corps under the wing of WEU. Two German-American corps, each consisting of two divisions, are to be operational before the end of 1993. A German-Danish corps was established a number of years ago and a German-Dutch corps is in the pipeline.

All of these formations can be used in various combina tions and also together with other international forces. This is the first security model of its kind. It is rapidly taking shape in response to the conflict in former Yugoslavia, which in strategie terms caught Europe and its allies completely unprepared. Today it is beyond doubt that only resolute inter-

national and regional cooperation can safeguard world peace. New forms of deterrence are called for which must also include the international prosecution of those accused of violating human rights. UN Secretary-General

Boutros Chali has submitted his reform plans under the name of a "peace agenda", which also provides for the deployment of UN personnel for conflict prevention purposes. The Secretary-General proposes that forces be placed under the direct authority of the Security Council for enforcement operations, and that special units be established in order to stabilize peace in troubled areas. Germany supports this plan because it strengthens the world organization's monopoly on the use of force and makes it less dependent on individual or groups of countries who seek to act on their own authority or even to use the United Nations for their own purposes. Those who wish to share peace, says Germany's Defence Minister Volker Ruhe, must also be prepared to make sacrifices for - Inter Nationes

## OPINION

## Like it or Not

from the European currency India. mechanism, the Danish dilemma for the EC, Prime expand our trade with India, and the US from his vision of cess to their markets of our ex-

by smaller Asian nations.

Bangladesh-India relations, Brahmaputra. which are non-existent between China and Taiwan or between cept, but in order to expand our the US and Canada (even if one trade and investment links with takes into account the absence India, it is essential to move of diplomatic ties between forward on a structured, equal China and Taiwan). To say, in and firm footing. This will not the meaning that Mr Latif does, happen as long as there is no that whether we like it or not, visible progress towards a reso-India is the most important lution of long outstanding bilat country for us, and therefore by eral issues on both the political implication that we must trade and economic fronts. These too with India, is to overlook the are realities which Mr Latif, to facts of recent and past history. use his words, has to accept,

is the most important country Bangladesh can reap sufficient for us - in the sense that it and handsome dividends by acsurrounds us on three sides celerating its growing business and never lets us forget it. Note links with the rest of Asia and Farraka, Talpatty, the the industrialized north. Chittagong Hill Tracts, illegal immigrants, barbed wire fences,

I read with interest Mr Latif's pressing issues: The eriminal piece, 'Close neighbour or dis- destruction of the Babri Masjid tant relative', in your issue of by Hindu fanatics or the gross June 5. ( May I just point out violation of human rights by schere, perhaps irrelevantly, that curity forces in Jammu and China and Taiwan met in Kashmir, to mention just a few Singapore, not Beijing). It is well of the serious communal inciknown that regional trading dents in that country, has not blocs have assumed a growing helped matters either (in consignificance over the last two trast, Bangladesh is a much decades or so, the best known tolerant society). In addition, as and most talked about being far as trade is concerned, the the EC, NAFTA, ASEAN and re- Indians have a distinct and lated Pacific Rim proposals. definite advantage, and they Although I accept the argument have done very little to help that regional economic co-oper- balance the situation. Their anation is important, these ven- nual exports to Bangladesh, intures have faced and do face cluding smuggling, stands at serious problems - witness the over \$1 billion, compared to a withdrawal of pound sterling paltry few million of ours to

Yes, we do have to greatly

Minister Mahathir's attempts to beginning with the Indian govexclude Australia, New Zealand ernment giving far greater ac-Asia, and the suspicion with ports of tea, jute, frozen fish, which both China and Japan, garments, textiles and other for different reasons, are viewed goods and services. I do not see any need to hurriedly start Nevertheless, to compare selling our natural gas to India, China and Taiwan, and the US when this only finite valuable and Canada, with Bangladesh commodity of ours can be put and India, is to try and say that to far more valuable use by degreen and red are similar veloping it to industrialize colours. The levels of economic Bangladesh. As far as exports of development, not to mention fertilizer or LNG are concerned, the calibre of political leader- it is very likely that we will obship, in the countries of east tain far better prices and deals Asia, north America and west in the newly emerging markets Europe, are a far cry from of east Asia. In the area of enground realities in south Asia. ergy and power, India can make Further, in the particular cases a positive contribution by setof China/Taiwan, the tling the Farraka issue, rather US/Canada, and Europe, their than continuing to unflaterally peoples share a common value siphon off our waters, and by and culture with one another, allowing Nepal to enter the wawhich Bangladesh and India ter-sharing solution, rather share to a far lesser extent. than distracting from the main Added to this are a host of fac- issue by suggesting link canals tors that complicate between the Ganges and the I am all for the SAARC con-

Of course, in a sense, India like it or not. In the meantime,

Mahmood Haq

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.

#### Sunday as weekly holiday

Sir, I strongly support the idea that we go back to Sunday as the weekly holiday. Let us float the weekly holiday in the open market, as we are going to do for our currency.

It is good for export and will do away with the hypocrisy we are practising flirting with

When this slobbery nation is going to become practical?

A Mawaz Dhaka

## PWD and Dhanmondi

Sir, Recently Public Works Department served notices to the owners of houses in Dhanmondi RA to stop any kind of non-residential use of their premises even partly, be it a school or college, a clinic or a hospital, a medicine shop or a flower shop, an office or a chamber, whatever it is other than purely residences. PWD takes plea contending that in the year 1958 (long 35 years ago) when plots were allotted, it was mentioned in lease clause for use of residence only. After a long period of thirty five years, this lease clause has lost its realistic

sense, approach and merit in the context of time, changed circumstances, situation, facts and realities.

Now Dhanmondi RA, because of its convenient location and site, has turned to be the heart of the city. It has gradually grown in a spontaneous manner to be a residentialcum-non residential area because of its own merit which is a reality and that can not be denied and destroyed by any stretch of imagination. A good number of prestigious schools, colleges, clinics, hospitals, UN agency offices like UNDP, FAO, WFP, CARE, UNICEF etc. including a number of government and semi-government offices are located in Dhanmondi RA for quite a few decades without affecting civic peace and environment.

caused in this area because of its wide roads representing partial non-residential character. If at all it is to solve traffic jams of Dhaka city, due attention should be given to areas like Gawsia, Chandni Chawk, New Market, Topkhana, Motijheel, Gulistan, Mouchak where innumerable markets are growing without proper planning. This ought to have been checked and commercial markets should have been allowed to grow in different parts of the city for distribu-

Hardly any traffic jam is

tion of crowd and traffic load. In this respect, diversification of commercial area should be encouraged and concentration of it should be seriously discouraged.

PWD, after long thrityfive years, is unnecessarily turning a non-issue into an issue and a non-problem into a problem. Supposing if all non-residential establishments are removed from DRA, I do not understand what positive gain will be achieved; on the contrary, it may create huge financial problems including huge unemployment and cessation of economic activities and earning for many families. Because, once so many establishments are winded up, in the process many of them will die out and many will not find suitable reestablishment even in the remote future.

In the developed countries also, there is no such purely residential area in the heart of a city (without any medicine shop, flower shop, pastry shop, kindergarten school etc.) conforming to PWD's utopian concept of 'residential area'. It is apprehended that certain quarters are trying to make our present democratic government unpopular raising these kinds of unproductive and unpleasant issues which can only bring harm rather than any benefit to the society. On the other hand, there

are many grave problems needing immediate attention such as unemployment, corruption and bribery, law and order, removal of countless licenceless rickshaws for reducing traffic jams, enforcement of fare metres in baby taxis and taxis

improvement of roads and railways etc.

Our democratic governmen is expected to invest time and energy for problems on merit and priority basis rather than allowing PWD to exercise such meaningless and unproductive efforts.

Zohurul Huq Dhanmondi RA, Dhaka.

## From Ghulam to

Sir. There has been a wel come change in the politica scene in Pakistan when judiciary has taken firm stand in protecting the constitution from the extra-constitutional interference in the democratic process by the president Mi Ghulam Ishaque Khan. The first such interference was made by Ghulam Mohammad then Governor General of Pakistan when he dismissed the elected Govt of Khwaja Nazimuddin Unfortunately the then Supreme Court of Pakistan refused to uphold the constitution on the extra judicial plea of prevailing circumstance. It is inter esting to speculate on the con sequences - if the Supreme Court of Pakistan and ruled strictly on the basis of constitution, the history of Pakistan might have taken a different do hope that Supreme

Court ruling has put paid to the ambitions of future Chulams of Pakistan and elsewhere and democracy will henceforth have a chance to take root and flour

M W Ali

R K Mission Road, Dhaka

Ghulam

corridors and various other

Uttara, Dhaka