

"Every Muslim Youth is Now a Suppressed Volcano"

A Chilling Scenario

Use, better say abuse, of polythene has reached such a dreadful level that it now poses a serious threat to the physical environment of the capital city.

This time the report published in this paper yesterday is pronouncedly specific about the consequence and has advanced some chilling figures in support of the claim.

The ESDO paper has concentrated on just Dhaka City and there is no reason why the situation will be any different in other cities and towns.

Then the report has been silent on the non-perishable quality of polythene and the havoc it will wreak over hundreds of years.

Surprisingly though people who are aware of the deleterious impacts of the substance show hardly any qualms about using it and thus they also become a party to this malpractice.

So the question that begs for a straight and simple answer is: what stands in the way of bringing an end to polythene bag's manufacture?

Trade lobby — no matter how strong it may be — should not be allowed to jeopardise the nation's future. Particularly when we have a most versatile material like jute to replace it in a most environment-friendly way.

Good News for Hanoi

With Washington relaxing its tight restrictions on co-operation with Vietnam, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has offered a substantial financial assistance to Hanoi, amounting to over \$150 million.

Meanwhile, Hanoi has licensed several big US firms, including banks, to open their offices in Vietnam.

These US-based companies may have to wait for months before they start operating their business, whether it is in the banking sector or the manufacturing field.

Hanoi is calling the shots. This is because this socialist country whose rigid centralised planning had once kept the nation in economic stalemate.

We welcome the decision of Bangladesh to set up a resident diplomatic mission in Vietnam.

IMAM Bukhari, the Shahi Imam of the Jama Masjid of Delhi, has emerged as a very important player in Indian politics, especially since 1977.

His son, Naib Imam, has recently been subjected to severe press criticism both for his considerable wealth and for his alleged role in fomenting riots in some parts of Delhi.

Speaking to this writer, in the reception room located on one side of the magnificent Jama Masjid, the Shahi Imam was clear, quick, and articulate in his answers.

He was obviously satisfied with this display of his power to a foreign journalist.

The Shahi Imam exhibited a very impressive sense of punctuality which I did not quite expect.

The Daily Star (DS): What do you think is happening to the Indian Muslims?

Imam Bukhari (B): My country is in a very bad shape. I sometimes feel that my country will be broken into pieces.

Today the situation is that we have a Prime Minister and a government that says that communalism must be eradicated.

DS — Are you totally convinced of this fact, I mean the involvement of the Prime Minister?

B — There is not an iota of doubt in our minds on that score.

DS — Asking a 10-year boy, is not the best way of finding out a fact.

B — This indicates the popular feeling. Whatever the Congress government did after

by Mahfuz Anam

(The translation from Urdu is the author's)

the demolition of the mosque, the dissolution of the UP government, and the governments of four other states, they were all eye wash.

DS — You believe that the Rao government could have saved the mosque if it wanted to?

B — Absolutely. It the Rao government really wanted to, it could have protected the Babri mosque, and prevented its demolition.

DS — But the government also banned the VHP, the RSS and other parties. All this was "eye wash"?

B — The government's banning VHP and the RSS were a sham.

DS — What is the present situation?

B — The situation now is that the open sword of communal forces are hanging over our heads.

Immigrant Workers

Complex Scenario Poses a Dilemma for Japan

by S Y Bakht

employed in Japan, according to the Immigration Bureau official.

However, a recent amendment made provisions to allow unskilled workers with Japanese ancestry, primarily those from Brazil, Peru and other Latin American countries, to legally enter the labour market.

Japan also wishes to cooperate with the international community and actively receives trainees from developing countries, and since April this year we somewhat extended this system to include a technical internship programme.

Some social conflicts arise out of cultural differences, Suguchi said while pointing out, as an example, that some foreigners do not know how to use a public bath.

Hiroyoshi Iatanaka, deputy director of the Foreign Workers' Affairs Division at the Ministry of Labour, noted that, although no investigations have been carried out on the social effects of hosting foreign workers, it is generally held that it would make it difficult for older people to find jobs and would also have an adverse effect on the country's housing, education and health-care system.

Involvement of some foreign workers in criminal activities, which are given wide coverage in the media, are also making the Japanese people more apprehensive about foreigners.

There is a fear that the increase in the number of illegal workers may come as a pressure on us," noted the Immigration Bureau official.

Foreign workers, he added, also find it difficult to rent suitable housing as most landowners are reluctant to lease apartments to foreigners.

The writer, a senior reporter of this paper, recently spent a month in Japan as a Foreign Press Centre Fellow.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES

As for the perceived need for foreign workers in the Japanese labour market, demographic statistics reveal that as the population growth rate decreases the percentage of older people would sharply rise in contrast to the young-age group.

According to official figures, the ratio of job seekers and the job offer situation turned to 1:02 in June '88, indicating for the first time in nearly 14 years that there were more job offers than job seekers.

Even the Japan Immigration Association, an affiliate of the Immigration Bureau, pointed out in a report published last year that improved business conditions in Japanese industries have generated a shortage in labour force due to differences in working conditions and environment.

The shortage in the labour force continues to exist because

To the Editor...

BTV's Parliament Round-up

Sir, The Parliament Round-up was one of the important features of BTV which has been abruptly stopped by it apparently on the ground of some disputes arisen between the government and the opposition parties.

For the TV viewers, it was a pretty good programme.

It was more entertaining than informative in a sense that it not only provided us the chance to see our representatives, who are hardly available in their constituencies, on mini screen but also enabled us to see them in interesting stances — sometimes sitting improperly, laughing unnecessarily, shouting meaninglessly, making issues of non-issues and even sometimes fighting and

presenting scene of a stunt film.

The BTV is requested to re-introduce this programme at the earliest. For many of us, it is a late night entertainment which also induces sleep.

K R Zakhami Khulna

Stranded Pakistanis

Sir, I highly appreciate the efforts initiated and undertaken by the government of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia with Myanmar and Indian governments for repatriation of Rohingyas and Chakmas as per agreements reached between them.

But, at the same time, it really pinches my heart to see

that no initiative as yet has been taken so sincerely to start repatriation of 2.38 lakh Pakistanis stranded in Bangladesh and languishing in 66 dingy and shabby camps for the last 21 years despite signing of historic Joint Declaration by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at the end of her very first official visit to Pakistan on 12th August 1992.

Our issue is purely and absolutely humanitarian and settled one but vested quarters have politicised it for the sake of their selfish ends.

M Nasim Khan Chief Patron SPGR, Bangladesh

down. There is no doubt that for Indian Muslims, the present moment is comparable to the darkness of the night.

The Muslims in India are now 15 crore (150 million). We are a big community and we are waiting for our morning to come.

DS — What should the Muslims now do?

B — First we have to follow the path of Allah. We have to strengthen our Iman (Faith). We have to mould our characters in the proper line, under proper guidance.

Do you know what Juwaila Mukhi is?

DS — Not really. (My compassion translates it, as volcano)

B — Volcano. There is fire inside a volcano. Today Muslims are restrained.

We are silent, and we are keeping our mouths shut. We are worried and anxious. We are not saying anything at this stage. We are watching the events very carefully.

DS — Why is it so?

B — Our women have been raped, our houses burnt and invaded.

DS — Are you referring to

Kashmir, or the whole of India.

B — Throughout India, wherever there are Hindu-Muslim riots.

These crimes are not only committed by the Hindu fanatics. Police, security forces have also been known to do the same thing.

About Kashmir, the less said the better. The oppression that is going on in Kashmir, has very few parallels in the world.

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution has been destroyed by these people. It exists today only in the statute books, not in real life.

Today, we do not trust this government and this Prime Minister anymore.

DS — Would you like to tell us, how you see the immediate future, how events are likely to unfold?

B — These are very uncertain times. We are suffering very much. A mistake now, can cause tremendous damage.

DS — Thank you for your time.

B — Thank you.

(Tomorrow: Interview with M. J. Akbar, author and journalist)

Industrial accidents involving foreign workers are a major problem and the employers normally do not apply for the compensation scheme out of the fear of employing illegal workers," Noritaka said.

He pointed out that the labour law in Japan is applicable to all workers regardless of nationality or even the legality of his or her stay and a Workmen Compensation Scheme administered by the Labour Office is also in place.

The negative aspects of allowing foreign workers into Japan which are currently being put forward include the risk of dividing the labour market, unemployment problems during economic recessions, risk of preventing improvement in working conditions including wage levels for Japanese workers, adverse effect on modernization and rationalization, burden of social costs, social friction and possible increase in crime rates.

For all these reasons, the report goes on to recommend a detailed study of the problem.

"This is an issue of the whole nation and is not limited to one company or other...and it is necessary to reach a national consensus on this question."

Foreign workers, he added, also find it difficult to rent suitable housing as most landowners are reluctant to lease

apartments to foreigners. With over 800 members representing 12 countries, the Society handled 311 cases of foreign workers involving labour issues and another 25 needing medical treatment.

After receiving a complaint the APFS contacts the employer and urges him to redress the grievance of the employee and if that fails, Rizaul Islam said, the society employs lawyers and lodges complaints with the Labour Office.

According to the Immigration Association report, the argument in favour of allowing unskilled foreign workers to enter the Japanese labour market includes countering the labour shortage, increased international contribution and cooperation by easing the unemployment problem of developing countries and the argument that positive acceptance of foreign nationals would help Japan attain "domestic" internationalisation in line with its growing global influence.

However, many persons as a prefix to their name are using the word "Maulana". This tradition is only common in countries of the sub-continent, introduced during the British rule for reasons only known to them, but still acceptable to us all in the society.

I could gather from one Islamic scholar who has translated the Holy Koran both in verses and prose in Bangla that nowhere in the Holy Koran Allah addresses Prophet Mohammed (SM) with this word "Maulana".

Now, it's hardly understood to what justification persons are using this word with their names. Somebody may please enlighten further.

Mohammed Mohtuddin Bangladesh Avenue, Dhaka

Playing the Whore Sir, Thank you very much for your editorial. Attack on

Mohit Ul Alam Chittagong