

Remittances from Abroad

The news from the manpower export sector are some bad and, some good too. The bad news is that the number of people going out of the country seeking jobs abroad has fallen off rather sharply during the first five months of the calendar year.

As the report appearing in this newspaper has it, official records show that the number of workers who went out on employment abroad was 38 per cent less this January to May as compared to the same period last year.

The number of people migrating abroad to secure employment has been rising steadily over the past few years. The sudden reversal of the trend is a cause for concern.

The debacle comes at a time when job opportunities for migrant workers are shrinking in Europe. Just the other day, the European Union (EU) decided to adopt measures to tighten immigration rules to put checks on the flow of workers from outside.

The current strategies for manpower export should be reviewed anyway. The reasons for the sudden fall in the level of workers' migration should be analysed and the immediate cause for the reversal of the trend of the past years identified.

Certain positive steps and diplomatic moves taken by the government are said to have contributed towards the creation of an environment which, the workers abroad find favourable for remitting more of their earnings home through official channels.

Why should Buses Collide?

Traffic accidents, meaning deaths and injuries by moving vehicles, are inevitable and writing to demand at least its containment is futile. This is a very apt observation if applied to Bangladesh.

We always have felt that all traffic deaths and maiming in our country are results of negligence and utter callousness on the part of both the vehicle operators and the highway law enforcers.

Big-tally highway traffic mishap deaths have a strange way of involving wedding or picnic parties, big groups out having the best time of their life. A causal connection may not exist there and whenever this does happen, it may happen as fortuitously as anything.

The R & H people are every now and then seen to be building concrete road dividers on some niggardly stretches of highways. The Dhaka-Chittagong highway is the foremost among the nationally important road-links which needs to have these high and strong dividers very urgently.

Why should buses collide in a land enjoying good visibility even in winter? The divider is the answer to that. But then a divider cannot help buses banging against it. The roadworthiness of the vehicle, its drivers and also its passengers are necessary preconditions for making the highways safe for vehicular travel.

Trade Reforms Pushing Ahead but Speeds Vary

ECONOMIC reforms bring the bicycle theory into play. You start pedalling the moment you get on the bicycle and you keep at it. You just fall over if you stop pedalling.

So it is with us. This year's budget carries a clear message that reforms are irreversible. And the signal comes out particularly strong in the area of trade reforms.

Import liberalisation is also an area where concerns of the different interest groups in the society tend to clash. Consumers stand to benefit from import liberalisation. They gain access to a wider variety of goods usually available at competitive prices.

Import liberalisation is also an area where concerns of the different interest groups in the society tend to clash. Consumers stand to benefit from import liberalisation. They gain access to a wider variety of goods usually available at competitive prices.

THE orgy of killing in Rwanda in early April "caught the United Nations with its pants down," in the words of an African diplomat.

He was referring to the series of ineffective responses by both the Security Council and Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in the bloody aftermath of the 6 April assassination of the Presidents of Rwanda and neighbouring Burundi in an aircraft crash by elements wanting to sabotage Rwanda's transition to democracy and multi-ethnic rule.

Instead of increasing the number of UN military personnel — in the country since October to oversee implementation of a peace agreement between the government and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) — the Council reduced it when 10 Belgian peacekeepers were slain.

The Councils reflexive reaction was to pull up its pants and flee in confusion, said the diplomat. So the world watched in horror as the mountain of corpses grew, a technicolour killing field strewn with heaps of torn flesh, women in green and yellow and blue dresses all now red, the red of their blood.

The vast majority of the peacekeepers of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) were recalled to the safety of their home countries. A token force of 270 was to remain as "a symbolic presence" in an effort to promote peace and to provide equally symbolic — but psychologically important — protection for the tens of thousands of civilians who had sought refuge in the UN compound.

The peacekeepers, together with workers from international relief agencies, have tried to deal with the catastrophe as best they could. Many shared their meal rations with the refugees camped out in the nearby sports stadium while the fighting raged on, their desperate request for reinforcements refused.

As UNAMIR Force Commander Romeo A. Darriello of Canada asked for additional troops, his men saw the last of their comrades leave while the mountains of corpses grew all around them. His reply from the Security Council was what his fellow Blue Helmets have received in Bosnia and Herzegovina: resolutions, resolutions.

The body count, mostly civilian members of the Tutsi tribe and politically moderate Hutus slaughtered by government troops and the affiliated youth militia, reached 200,000 and more.

A month into the massacres, Boutros-Ghali went on television to the astonishment

To the Editor

Caretaker government Sir, A debate is on over the issue of caretaker government. It is hoped that government and opposition will come to an understanding for greater national interest.

(a) A government elected under such an arrangement should also be allowed to continue for its full tenure of office. No political party would either support or call any halt. This will improve the social and political image of our nation and enhance discipline and economic growth.

thousand imported items. However, protective duties to safeguard the interests of domestic producers are being specifically imposed on five items only. The message is quite clear. Domestic products will henceforth gain protection through imposition of higher duties on competing imported goods only rarely, if ever.

Strengthening the competitive situation of domestic industries through lowering of tariffs on imported raw materials and other inputs, has

ALONG MY WAY S B Chaudhuri

emerged as another policy plank of trade reforms. To be sure, reduction in duties on raw materials and intermediate goods has not been specifically designed for the import substitution industries. Depending on the import content of the output, industries in general would derive the benefit of lower costs resulting from reduced rates of customs duty.

In the post-Uruguay-Round

world, it is no longer practicable perhaps to use high tariffs to safeguard the interests of domestic industry. Reciprocity is a key element of the market access package of the global trade agreement. Tariffs would have had to come down anyway. Trade liberalisation by way of lower tariffs looks irreversible on this count as well.

Soon enough, such inconsistencies would come to be identified as anomalies in the tariff structure. For import liberalisation to gain wider acceptance, it is important that cases of tariff anomalies are attended to expeditiously. Delay in taking corrective action where tariff anomaly does occur, could do serious harm to the domestic industry.

As regards exchange control relaxation, a major contributory factor for import liberalisation, progress made so far is considerable. Availability of foreign exchange for financing imports is virtually free. Limitations on totally free access to foreign currency arise

not so much from exchange controls but because of the remaining quantitative restrictions under import regulations. However, currency conversion rates continue to be managed under the guiding hands of the central bank. In that sense at least, reforms in this area do not look quite complete yet.

Lifting quantitative restrictions on imports is a crucial ingredient of the trade reforms. This also is a programme the import substitution industry has particular reasons to be wary of. Removal of restrictions on the import of an item means that domestic manufacturers would, for the first time, face competition from abroad in selling their own product.

Trade reforms continue to push ahead. Albeit the speed is not uniform, import liberalisation through restructuring of tariffs seems to be running on top gear. Exchange controls no longer hinder imports and yet, traders do not buy foreign currency at rates determined by the market exactly. A bit of ambivalence marks the attitude on lifting all import controls. All the same, reforms in the area of trade do look irreversible.

stead of transferring responsibility elsewhere. Besides, the magnitude of the tragedy in that country requires the kind of coordination and resources which can effectively be sustained only through a global network such as could be successfully managed only by an organisation like the United Nations.

Speaking from the RPF had gained control of two-thirds of the country and was thus no longer interested in a UN-brokered ceasefire, Dusaidi added: "But of course we welcome the UN's humanitarian efforts."

Responding on behalf of the 52 member countries of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim in diplomatic language told the UN Secretary-General to go and fly a kite.

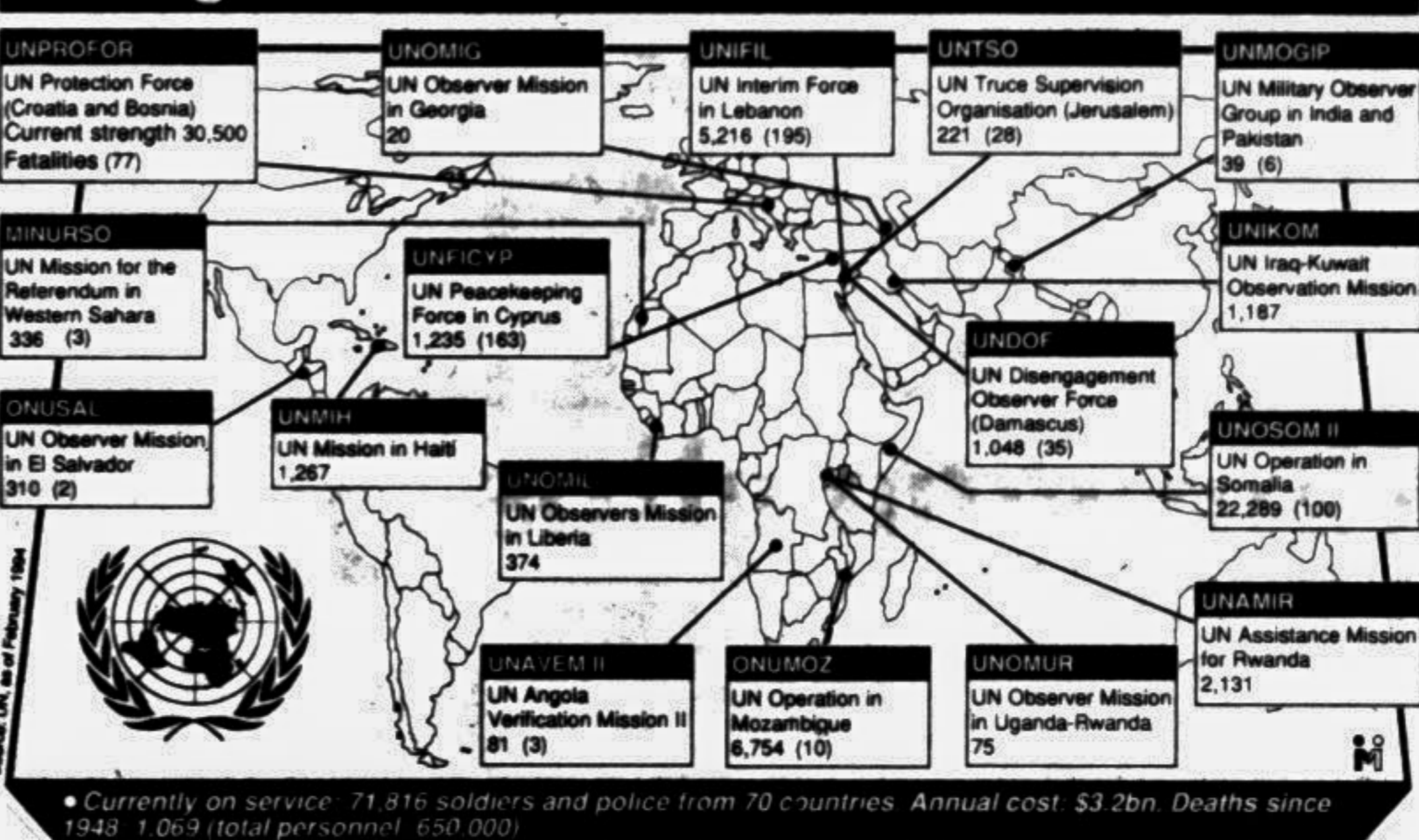
He wrote to Boutros-Ghali in early May: "You will agree with me that since the United Nations is already engaged in Rwanda, the accent should be put on strengthening and expanding that engagement in-

Rwanda Catches the UN with its Pants Down

Elvi Ruottinen writes from New York

Three million Rwandans may have been killed, displaced or need emergency aid, according to Peter Hansen, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs. Yet the world body's response to the crisis has been one of continuing confusion. Gemini News Service looks at the record so far.

Holding the line: Blue Helmets around the world



of the diplomatic world to say that if 5,000 men had been provided, the events could have been prevented. The statement met with a great deal of scepticism around the Headquarters.

British Ambassador Sir David Hanney told Gemini News Service: "That's an illusion." A spokesman for the Secretary-General clarified Boutros-Ghali's statement to mean that if he had been given 5,000 troops with an enforcement mandate, they might have been able to persuade the Presidential Guard not to go on a killing spree which then quickly spread throughout Kigali, the capital, and triggered off country-wide massacres.

Hanney repeated "That's an illusion." Referring to the 2,500 peacekeepers in Rwanda before the massacres, he added, "The troops there didn't do anything."

The troops, of course, did only what their Security Council mandate permitted them to do. And not much improvisation is permitted in "Boutros-Ghali's army," as the French Lt General Philippe Morillon found out last year when he bravely stood by the civilians of Srebrenica to discourage relentless Serbian shelling of the besieged Bosnian town.

Boutros-Ghali reportedly was enraged at what he considered Morillon's overstepping of his mainly food delivery protection duties.

While Third World members of the Security Council favoured an enlarged UN presence with a mandate to restore law and order, the Council's Western members were reluctant to get involved.

One representative sad, in reference to an unreleased February report on the failures of the UN's Somalia experience: "we remember our Somalia lessons."

The report by an independent commission comes down hard on both the Security Council and the Secretary-General, blaming them with militia leader Mohamed Farah Aided for the descent of the UN humanitarian mission in

It was another example of how the Secretary-General's interpretation of Security Council mandates often prevails, while others get the blame. Boutros-Ghali also pointed the finger at the Security Council and its "donor fatigue."

Support for the Secretary-General's view on the might-have-been presence of armed UN military as well as blame for his handling of the crisis comes from a Rwandan source. A thin, intense Tutsi, Claude Dusaidi, who showed up in New York one day as RPF director of external relations and its representative of the UN, told Gemini: "The Secretary-General's recommendations to the Security Council when the presidents were assassinated were unclear. I had firmly requested 5,000 armed men, the Council would have probably give them to him. And such an action would have shown international resolve. This would have been a deterrent. Instead, now, genocide."

My humble prayer to the Mayor is not to destroy anything as good and beautiful as these parks are. We need more of Ramna, Suhrawardy and Osmany uddyans with their lush green embrace for all of us, the old and the young, to breathe freshness of life. Can the Mayor promise us to give even one more Ramna Park? I may not live that long any way.

ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH

Helen Keller — Beacon of Hope for All

by Farhana Rahman

HELEN Keller was born in the town of Tuscumbia, in northern Alabama on June 27, 1880. She was a normal healthy baby, but at the age of 18 months, she became ill with a fever that left her deaf and blind. From the age of 19 months she never saw the sunlight or heard a human voice. The world became dark and silent for her ever since. Helen could not communicate with other children and she did not have any friends. She became somewhat spoiled and unruly as she grew from infancy to childhood.

While at Radcliffe Helen wrote her autobiography, "The story of My Life." This book, now available in over 50 languages, destroyed many myths and prejudices about the blind and raised the public's consciousness about the ability of handicapped persons to succeed in life. As she said, "I believe that if we can make up our minds to do something great, we can accomplish it."

The first lesson Annie Sullivan taught her student was the "Teacher" the boss. Within two weeks, the often savage Helen had been disciplined and one month later, Helen spelled the word "W-A-T-E-R" and understood that everything had a name. Annie succeeded in teaching Helen how to communicate by spelling words into Helen's hand and teaching Helen how to spell them back. She taught Helen how to understand people's speech by touching their lips. Until the death of Annie Sullivan in 1936, she and Helen were inseparable.

"It was my right as well as my duty," Helen Keller believed, "to complete my college career so as to demon-

strate how doubly handicapped children could be developed." She entered Radcliffe College in the fall of 1900 and received her Bachelor of Arts degree cum laud in 1904. Helen Keller is the first deaf-blind person in history to graduate from a college.

Helen Keller was her last public appearance in 1961. Despite her aloofness from public, Helen was not forgotten. In 1964, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Johnson for her worldwide contributions. In 1965, she was one of the 20 elected to the Women's Hall of Fame.

"It has been a happy life," Helen Keller said shortly before her death in 1968. "My limitations never make me sad. Perhaps there is just a touch of yearning at times. But it is vague, like a breeze among flowers. Then, the wind passes, and the flowers are content." Helen Keller died on June 1, 1968, a few weeks before her 88th birthday. She will be remembered as a woman who showed the world courage in how, "to be part of the world and not outside of it."

Helen Keller was committed to improving the lives of all handicapped persons. Her life remains a beacon of hope for all the disabled and for those who continue to work, as she did, "so that light can prevail in all places." Helen Keller's philosophy and outlook on life have inspired millions of people around the world. Helen Keller said, "The best and the most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart."

Helen Keller International, the organization which she helped to establish, still continues Helen Keller's crusade around the world. In 1955, when Helen was



Helen Keller was her last public appearance in 1961. Despite her aloofness from public, Helen was not forgotten. In 1964, she received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Johnson for her worldwide contributions. In 1965, she was one of the 20 elected to the Women's Hall of Fame.