# The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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## 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. And the good news speaks of a substantial rise in foreign exchange remittances from the people earning abroad despite the decline in the outflow of workers.

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 compred to the same period last year. Inward remittances of earnings abroad through official channels during the same months, however, went up by 21 per cent in comparison with 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. All the time, there had been talks of new employment opportunities opening up, particularly in East Asia and Africa. Prospects of availability of additional jobs for our workers in the Middle East also were generally being painted as bright. Meanwhile, some of our banks have introduced new schemes for financing the cost of workers' travels abroad.

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. Permission to work in the EU would now be given only on a temporary basis and under strict conditions. Seasonal workers will be admitted for a maximum period of six months and must remain outside the EU at least for the same duration before being readmitted. It is true that the EU is not exactly a major source for providing new employment to our workers. Nonetheless, the move does convey shrinkage of employment opportunities abroad.

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. Corrective measures need to be taken on a priority basis before the new trend asserts itself. Fresh initiatives are required to open up new job opportunities abroad for our workers.

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. We do not know what exactly these measures are. Nonetheless, this is a welcome development. We would urge upon the authorities to continue with the good work, expanding and streamlining the official channels for inward remittance of workers' funds as well as plugging the loopholes. Else the sudden upsurge in remittances could turn out to be just a temporary spurt.

#### 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. But why should it be so? There is no denying road deaths in the US as also in Europe although it is much much less so there. But why should Bangladesh vie for a place for notoriety with its 50 thousandish pieces of vehicle with a nation which uses more than 100 million?

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. If harsh punishment against people responsible for road deaths cannot be used as an effective deterrent because of transport-worker resistance and an accepted element of unforeseen mechanical failure, that is all the more reason why road laws and, more importantly, norms and etiquettes should be enforced and practised with unfailing seriousness. The head-on collision between two buses near Mirersarai on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway on Saturday in which 25 have been killed and more than 80 seriously injured, brings inexorably to mind the fact of the hellish situation of total anarchy reigning on our highways. When, if ever, shall we be serious about our road administration and road behaviour?

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. But then it also very much deserves to be looked into whether the driver and his men on the pleasure vehicle are perforce, on their way back, overfed and tired after a long day's toil? This seems so naturally to attend such party junkets. Will the elders in such social outings, particularly in the case of picnics, be mindful about keeping the drivers out of the way of conviviality by making that up with the gift of a hefty food parcel and a pad of money in tips? But the problems of a busload of merrymakers may lay more with the passengers than the drivers. How to reform the wayward passengers who sometime contribute to such death-spewing

'accidents? 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. This could positively have averted the Mirersarai tragedy.

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.

Our sincere sympathies to the members of the affected families.

# Trade Reforms Pushing Ahead but Speeds Vary

CONOMIC 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. And you can only go forwards, you can't backpedal. The analogy suggests that reforms are irreversible. Beyond that, the only choice is of the speed at which you roll forward - how furiously you pedal

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. The expanse and depth of cuts in customs duties bear testimony to that.

In our context, it is import liberalisation which really mat ters in trade reforms. By and large, exports are free anyway Trade reforms thus concentrate on Easing restrictions on imports. Quantitative limits on imports are phased out, ex change controls relaxed and customs duties are scaled

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. Among traders. importers are the most imme diate beneficiaries of liberali sation. On the other hand wholesale dealers of domestic products would face problems in marketing their stocks due to the availability of competing

HE orgy of killing in

Nations with its pants down."

in the words of an African

series of ineffective responses

by both the Security Council

and Secretary-General Boutros

Boutros-Ghali in the bloody

aftermath of the 6 April assas-

sination of the Presidents of

Rwanda and neighbouring Bu-

rundi in an aircraft crash by

elements wanting to sabotage

Rwanda's transition to democ-

number of UN military per-

sonnel — in the country since

October to oversee implemen-

tation of a peace agreement

between the government and

the rebel Rwandan Patriotic

Front (RPF) — the Council re-

duced it when 10 Belgian

"The Councils reflexive re-

So the world watched n

action was to pull up its pants

and flee in confusion, said the

horror as the mountain of

corpses grew, a technicolour

killing field strewn with heaps

of torn flesh, women in green

ad yellow and blue dresses all

now red, the red of their

peacekeepers of the UN Assis-

tance Mission in Rwanda

(UNAMIR) were recalled to

the safety of their home coun-

tries. A token force of 270 was

to remain as "a symbolic pres-

ence" 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

with workers from interna-

tional relief agencies, have

tried to deal with the catastro-

phe 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 rein-

mander Romeo A Darrielo 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 Herze-

govina: resolutions, resolu-

civilian members of the Tutsi

tribe and politically moderate

Hutus slaughtered by govern-

ment troops and the affiliated

youth militia, reached 200,000

sacres, Boutros-Ghali went of

television to the astonishment

A month into the mas-

The body count, mostly

As UNAMIR Force Com-

forcements refused.

tions, resolutions.

and more.

The peacekeepers, together

UN compound.

The vast majority of the

peacekeepers were slain.

diplomat.

blood

Instead of increasing the

racy and multi-ethnic rule.

He was referring to the

diplomat.

Rwanda in early April

"caught the United

goods from abroad. Retailers would gain more than lose They would be able to offer a wider range of goods to attract Industry would draw advan-

tage generally from freer availability of raw materials and other inputs imported from abroad. Lower duties on imports of these goods would bring an additional benefit to them. Duty relief would stimulate investment in capital goods. However, the domestic import substitution industry tends to view trade liberalisation with deep suspicion. They are apprehensive of losing their market to competing imported goods which, as it usually happens, are cheaper in price and often better in quality. Domestic manufacturers of goods which compete with imported products, thus fear loss of output and income. They resist import liberalisa

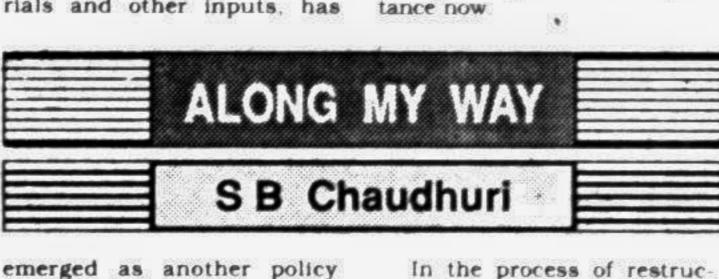
Reduction of domestic manufacturing activity would affect the economy. Jobs will be lost when the output falls. Wholesale dealers of domestic products will either shift to other products or face business closures. Trade reforms strategies, therefore, take the genuine concerns of domestic producers into account to allay their fears of being overwhelmed by competition from abroad.

The tariff policy package outlined in the budget brings certain aspects of the current trade reforms strategy to sharp focus. First, protectionism is out. The package introduces changes in duties on several

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

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 any way. Trade liberalisation by way of lower tariffs looks irre versible on this count as well How best can lower tariffs on imported inputs add to the strength of the domestic in dustry is of paramount impor-



plank of trade reforms. To be sure, reduction in duties on raw materials and intermediate goods has not been specifi cally 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. However, import substitution industries are likely to benefit most. These industries depend more heavily on imported raw materials. Import duty reductions would help lower their cost of production substantially. Their capability to compete with imported finished goods would improve to

In the post-Uruguay-Round

that extent.

turing of tariffs, higher slabs of customs duty are being eliminated. The highest rate of duty has now being brought down to 60 per cent. This means that duties on finished goods too are coming down. In the usual scheme of things, finished goods come in the higher duty slabs. Lowering of higher rates automatically reduces duties on finished goods. The extent of reduction in the duty of raw materials would determine if the lowering of duties on finished goods has impaired the competitiveness of the corresponding domestic products. Alarm bells seems to have gone off already that reduction in duties on certain finished products has placed the competing domestic goods in dis-

advantageous situation. The trade reforms strategy precludes the possibility of raising duties on finished products to take care of the problem. In such a situation, the obvious answer is to lower duties on raw materials for the competing domestic product, further. After all, it is the consumer who benefits in the end if domestic products are enabled to compete with imported goods. Soon enough, such incon-

sistencies 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. Trade reforms might then be interpreted as a programme directed against domestic producers. It might be argued that a series of further reductions in duties to safeguard the legitimate interests of domestic producers would hurt revenue. However, the current strategy of restructuring tariffs has already relegated revenue considerations to a background. It is more important to upgrade the credibility of the trade reforms programme.

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. They simply dread the prospect. The programme in this area envisages lifting restraints on import of all items except a handful, where restrictions could be retained on specific grounds such as religious, social and health reasons. Import liberalisation is yet to reach that stage but has come a long way nonetheless.

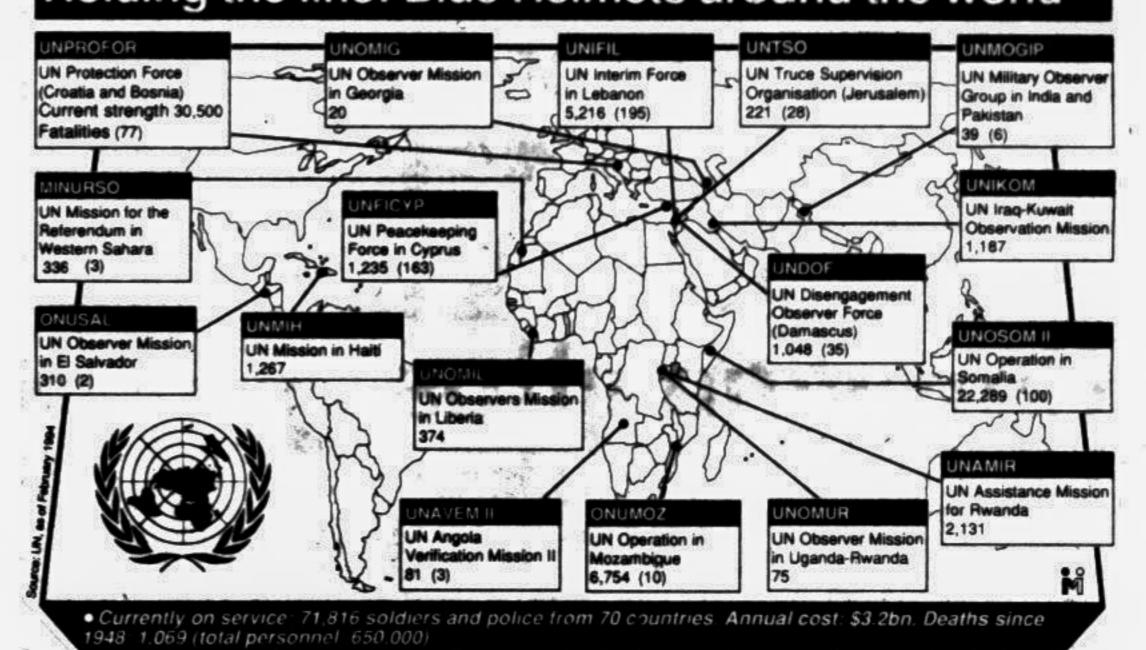
Trade reforms continue to push ahead. Albeit the speed is not uniform. Import liberalisation through restructuring of tariffs seems to be running on top gear. Exchange controls no longer hinder imports and yet, traders do not buy foreign currency at rates determined by the market exactly. A bit of ambivalence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

# 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 illu-

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 Phillippe 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.

It was another example of how the Secretary-General's interpretation of Security Council mandates often prevails, while others get the

Boutros-Ghali also pointed the finger at the Security Council and its "donor fatigue". Support for the Secretary-

General's view on the mighthave-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. f he 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, geno-

cide."
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 So-

malia lessons." The report by an indepenstreets of Mogadishu. It was not until a month

Somalia into warfare in the

after the beginning of massacres in Rwanda that Boutros-Ghali wrote to the leaders of African countries asking them to contribute to an all-African peacekeeping operation there.

It was not well-received. Many countries deeply resented it. Said a representative of one of the 21 countries which had provided troops to UN missions: "We've spilled our blood without complaint all over the world in the UN's service. When a few Americans got killed in Somalia and a few Belgians in Rwanda, Westerners turned tail and took off in a hurry in a cloud of dust."

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 inmagnitude 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. This has been the practice in other situation of dire need elsewhere in the world. It must not be set aside in the case of Africa." But for the dead in Rwanda.

stead of transferring responsi-

bility elsewhere. Besides, the

plans for troops of whatever colour from whichever continent were too late. RPF representative Dusaidi told Gemini: "All who had to die, died. Hundreds of thousands dispersed as refugees. The international community watched the genocide. We don't need any peacekeepers now."

Speaking when the RPF had ained control of two-thirds of he country and was thus no longer interested in a UN-bro kered ceasefire, Dusaidi added "But of course we welcome the UN's humanitarian efforts."

Indeed, whatever troops it may be able to gather, the benefit of the UN to Rwandans in their enormous suffering and pain is expected to consist mainly of food, medical and other relief. The amounts will depend on the extent of the rich countries' guilt in sitting at home and dining in comfort while watching televised geno-

ELVI RUOTTINEN is Gemini News Service correspondent at the UN in New York.

one of the longest journeys of

'her life - a 40,000 mile, five-

month long tour through Asia.

Wherever she traveled, she

brought new courage to mil-

lions of blind and deaf children

and adults by speaking to them

about her life and helping

them raise money for schools

public appearance in 1961.

Despite her aloofness from

public, Helen was not forgot-

ten. 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

Helen Keller said shortly be-

fore 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 be-

fore 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 has been a happy life.

Helen Keller made her last

and teaching materials.

### ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH

## Helen Keller — Beacon of Hope for All

ELEN Keller was born in the town of Tuscumbia, in northern Alab-ELEN Keller was born ama 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. It is due to the Keller family's courage and determination that they lived through this tragedy and finally overcame the pain. With the help of Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. they found Annie Mansfield Sullivan to try to help the stricken child. Helen would always refer to the day Annie Sullivan arrived as, "The most important day I remember in all my life."

Annie Sullivan was 20 years old and a graduate of the Perkins School for the Blind. She had been blind for most of her life until undergoing a series of eye operations.

The first lesson Annie 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-

by Farhana Rahman children could be developed.

wrote her autobiography. "The story of My Life." This book, now available in over 50 lanceed in life. As she said, "

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.

#### 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. The following points are submitted for considerations by all concerned.

(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 hartals. This will improve the social and political image of our nation and enhance discipline and economic growth.

(b) Political parties who will not be able to secure 10% of cast votes or 2% of parliament seat should not be allowed to run the next election under the same banner. This will impede the proliferation of political parties and promote healthy democracy.

The above points may be incorporated in the caretaker government bill.

S Hasan Dhaka.

#### Don't destroy the green spots Str. I was, to say the least,

completely shocked by the suggestion of our 'City Father' that the Ramna Park, the Suhrawardy Uddyan and Osmany Uddyan be used for holding public meetings to

avoid traffic jams (The Daily Star, 19th June) even if that would mean destruction of these three (out of four only) most beautiful green spots of our dear city! Simply horrific.

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? ! may not live that long any way.

Taufig Khan Bara Moghbazar, Dhaka ..

## UN humanitarian mission in

dent commission comes down

hard on both the Security

Council and the Secretary-

General, blaming them with

militia leader Mohamed Farah

Aideed for the descent of the

# 75 years old, she embarked on

strate how doubly handicapped 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 deafblind person in history to graduate from a college.

While at Radcliffe Helen

guages, destroyed many myths and prejudices about the blind and raised the public's consciousness about the ability of handicapped persons to sucbelieve that if we can make up our minds to do something great, we can accomplish it." During her life she wrote 13 books and numerous articles. She championed the rights of women, workers and minorities, and waged a worldwide crusade on behalf of the underprivileged and oppressed. especially the blind. Due to her interest in the welfare of blind persons, in 1916 she became involved in the Permanent Blind Relief War Fund, now called Helen Keller Inter-

national In 1955, when Helen was