Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Thursday, June 30, 1994

Govt's Warning Must Have Some Teeth

The government has at long last done what it should have done at the very least months ago. It has in a Press Note cautioned the people against 'issuing threats' against the lives of 'some persons and announcing rewards for the killers Then it has gone on to repeat the ultimate in obviousness that these acts were punishable in the eve of law and 'expressed the hope' that 'all concerned would refrain from such illegal announcement.

Although the government's belated announcement leaves much to be desired by way of both language and approach, we welcome it wholeheartedly hoping that it will be redeemed through follow-up actions. Indeed much more so, for we demand of the government that it mean what it has said in the Press Note despite the evident tenor of the note being one of appeasement rather than of a stern warning.

Ever since the case of Chhatachhaura's Noor Jahan the government's credibility as an effective enforcer of law and ensurer of justice was being eroded unremittingly and dangerously. Dangerous not only for this government which is of necessity a mere passing phase in the long life of this state but also for the far longer life of this society.

The Press Note must presage a series of uniform actions combining amply to show that the government means to put its foot down, if only because it must.

We welcome the government's pointer even if it falls short of addressing the root problem. Groups of people all over Bangladesh have taken into their hands the power of passing sentences of punishment on whosoever they choose and in most cases executing those into reality.

If these anti-social goons, — the same set that fell thousands of newly planted trees and resist population control campaign and burn down schools — displace the government good measure and in the process rob the state of its justification to be there.

Certain very debatable, if not outrightly dubious, actions of late by the government have undoubtedly exacerbated the already dwindling situation of democratic stability. That is all the more reason why the government should be very watchful of its steps in the ensuing weeks. But this delicate and yet explosive, mean and wily, crucial and challenging patch of time also offers the government a God-send opportunity to retrieve the trust people had reposed in it and to resuscitate its covenant with the people, elaborated and confirmed by so much repeated pronouncement.

One thing the government shall not do on pain of harming all in the land and their institutions built over thousands of years — contribute to the destabilising process set in motion by certain self-righteous holy of holies. The long leash already allowed to these has doubtlessly harmed Bangladesh's image internationally. When it is vitally important for Bangladesh to have the goodwill of all the peoples and states of the world, the government can ill afford to be impervious to what all this would mean.

RAJUK's Unpleasant Duty

The parliamentary standing committee on the Ministry of Housing and Public Works arrived at an important decision on Tuesday. The decision on illegal construction in the city seeks to address a problem that has grown over the years to a menacing proportion. We have been witness to demolition of some roadside constructions in recent times but the operation was conducted only sparingly, leaving the big fish almost untouched. This time the parliamentary committee's decision will bolster the Rajdhani Unnayan Katripakkhya (RAJUK) to take the fight to such big shots and help get rid of the unauthorised constructions in the city.

This is however only a hope. Even though the directive has been duly communicated to RAJUK, one cannot be sure it will — or it has the ability to embark on such an ambitious programme soon. RAJUK has its own limitations — in both men and materials - apart from the mess created by itself. For much too long, a section of corrupt RAJUK people have been a party to housing malpractices, sometimes they have been too lax to carry out onthe-spot inspection for the approval of a house plan. All this has contributed to unplanned and unauthorised construction of houses, roads and alleys.

This fresh directive from the parliamentary standing committee adequately equips RAJUK to perform the job, but only legally and on paper. The laws are there alright. But the important thing is to implement the legal provisions in practice. Some of the buildings found at fault on broad and busy roads have to be dismantled any way for the simple reason that they concern the safety of public lives. They are a precariously looming threat and the sooner they are brought down the better. That those multi-storied buildings could be built at the city centre or thereabouts under the nose of RAJUK speaks all about the authority's performance and also perhaps of the political and other clouts that weighed behind such constructions.

We would only hope that this time no such clout will prove too much for RAJUK to overcome. Let the agency cleanse itself of its past mistakes or misdeeds and thus prove equal to the task. Faulty construction of a number buildings detected recently has created panic among the public. RAJUK has a responsibility to allay that fear by taking some stringent actions against violators of the housing codes and specifications. To do this however there is need for bringing its own house in order. Supervision and monitoring have to be unsuspectingly efficient. If this can be ensured, chances are that no more demolition operation of buildings will be required in future. A planned city is what Dhaka ought to be and to make it so the agency must have to be very strict in following the rules.

TATIONAL security in a country revolves around two basic questions: What do we all want to secure and where we do we perceive the threat to our security to be

coming from? in Bangladesh these questions have seldom been addressed in some concrete terms, either officially or academically. Thus the national security objectives and threat perceptions remain largely undefined in our country. Even today after almost a quarter of a century of our independence we feel shy of spelling it out.

The apathy is not without reasons. First, still there exists a problem even about the understanding of national security and it has often been treated as synenymous with national defence which relates essentially to military defence from external threats. National security is however much broader a concept. Second, we lived in a polity which neither encouraged nor set a tradition of public debate on national issues. In the absence of such traditions there are doubts and hesitations about expressing views on a matter which most people think is rather sensi tive and lying within military's domain. Last but not least, like in any other third world country, in Bangladesh also national security leads to be identified with the problems of regime security. Whatever might have been the reasons for the neglect, our security perspective remains shrouded in ambivalence if not ignorance. And a great deal of misperception persists.

Security in a developing country

Security is a matter more of perception. It means different things to different people depending on the material circumstances in which they live and the geopolitical environ in which they operate. In the context of a poor developing country like Bangladesh security is essentially the product of development. It is the endresult of the total process of development, when we talk of developments in the context of security it is the whole set of efforts that goes into building up a nation state in the contemporary global setting. It, in fact, encompasses developments in all socio-economic. politico-eultural, moral, intellectual and technological fields bringing about a civilizational transformation in the society where both individual and corporate forms of existence, are sustained with secure feeling

In modern times, roughly forty countries of the world which were the direct or indirect beneficiaries of European renaissance and industrial revolution could, through their long and turbulent process of nation building, reach that level of development. They have achieved a cohesive society, economic infrastructure and a stable internal order for

These nations are, thus, insulated from internal upheaval and fissiparous tendencies from within. They are strong enough - economically and

OUTH Africa, which

once ran a prolific un-

politico-militarily - to take on challenges from any direction. At the worst, they are to provide military security against external threat if there is any Empirically however there are few such threats, As against this, in a developing country like Bangladesh national security covers a much-wider spectrum of challenges, threats and responses than mere military security which is only a component of a comprehensive framework for national secu-

What is to be secured? What do we really want to secure? It is said that each state aims at protecting its internal values from external threats.' There has however been a problem about the precise understanding of internal values with attempts at explaining it in different ways. Most people go by Walter Lippmaan's concept of security asserting the protection of core values of a nation although problems are no less complex even here in pinpointing such values. In our case the security is therefore the preservation and perpetuations of the core values fundamental to the nationstate of Bangladesh. Our survival as a nation is at stake once these values are compromised. The roots of our core values can be traced in our history, heritage and experience as a people

Much of it were manifested through our aspirations, passions and struggle for our independence. They are partly enshrined in our constitution and also reflected through the hopes and expectations of our people. These values are often articulated by our national leaders and intellectuals.

"Those values might not have been formally spelt out anywhere, but we can always put them together from various manifestations of their existence. Here follows an attempt to cluster them up.

Our core values First, the political independence and territorial integrity are our minimum core value and we would like to secure them at all costs.' An indomitable urge for an independent existence drove us through immense sacrifices to create our homeland -Bangladesh. Our people resisted foreign intruders and their dominance through the ages. We paid dearly in our War of Independence which is the symbol of the greatest glory of our people. Therefore the sovereignty of Bangladesh both in geographical and political terms is our core value

number one. Second, we must be able to provide and sustain conditions conducive to un-interrupted socio-economic and allround developments for continued wellbeing of our people. While political independence is an abstract value and of course. the most precious one, we must be able to provide something tangible to our people who struggled for a certain quality of life. Although it is a long and arduous process to reach the goal, we must be able to keep that process going

by Brig. (Retd) M Abdul Hafiz

Evolving a Security Perspective for Bangladesh

at any cost. Thus the maintenance of congenial environs for a consistent national growth is a matter related to the security interest of a country.

Third, we have a distinct

identity of our own with a po-

litical culture and socio-eco-

nomic structure, which is different from those in the rest of the South Asian region. This is based on our history, heritage, tradition and peripheral location in the sub-continental landmass. The geographical nature and deltaic feature of our land have a great deal to do with our total attitude and nafional psyche. We came under Muslim rule from thirteenth century onward for the next five hundred years and this left a deep imprint on our religiocultural life. Our forefathers fought against the British from the bamboo fort. They also fought for their dues against the oppressive zamindars and communally biased nationalism. We spearheaded the movements for a separate Muslim homeland in British India and subsequently fought against internal colonialism of the Pakistanis and their exploitations in the name of reli gion. Ours is a heroic people with the tradition of fighting any odd including devastating cyclone or tidal surge and standing up to the challenges of a new life. Our adherence to a more liberal, tolerant and human face of religion with age-old communal harmony provide us a separate set of values and identity. This is also our core value and we would

like to protect it at any cost. Fourth, in a resource-poor country like Bangladesh viable egalitarian society can be built up only on the basis of social justice which is also a cardinal tenet of our religion. Unless we would be able to share both the resources and miseries among ourselves there is really no-escape from perpetual inequity in our social structure. In fact, our people. through all the movements and uprisings, fought for equal opportunities and fairplay among other things. Social justice should therefore be treated as one of our core values without which it would be impossible to build up a stable

society Fifth, the democratic norm. is the essence of our society During the British rule, Bengal was one of the pioneers of building up democratic polity through the self-government granted in phase, by the British. With a vibrant and enlightened middle class democracy struck a firm root in our region much before its spirits were understood and accepted in many other parts of India. We fought uncompromisingly for democracy throughout our entire political history. If development is security it is democracy which brings about development. All advanced developed countries of the world boast democratic polities. Democracy, is therefore yet another core value.

Threats to our security: **Internal dimension** If we have to secure these

values, let us now see what can be the sources of insecurity for them. As I have argued earlier the sources of threats in a developing country can be multidimensional. The threats can emanate from within the territorial limits of a country. They can also come from external sources. The internal dimension of our insecurity relates to our state of development in Bangladesh. The more chronic the state of underdevelopment

the more acute is the nature of

insecurity and vice versa. The internal threat to our security is precisely our chronic underdevelopment with the accompanying syndrome of poverty, hunger, diseases, social unrest, illiteracy, integrational problem, social cleavages, political dimensions and instability as well as moral and intellectual decay. The threats emanating from domestic factors are perhaps the most serious and significant of all other threats to our security as these are in most other developing countries. It needs some elaboration now.

Let us first have a look at our social scene. Here the most alarming spectre is that of unemployment. According to World Bank report 35% of our workforce is unemployed although unofficially the figure is claimed to be more than 40%. This does not include the people who are underem ployed. They are potential source of insecurity because they with their enormous problems strike at the root of the social order and disrupt the fabric of a disciplined social life. Consequently, social unrest grips the country with problems of unpredictable proportions pushing the country's law and order situation downhill. Corruption pervades the whole society making it vulnerable to external pressure

and manipulation. With a literacy rate less than 25% it affects the growth of future leadership and the quality of the citizens. The youth force may fall victim to widespread narcotic culture which could make them into complete liability for the na

Look at the economic sec tor which is equally bleak awaiting steps to be taken on an emergency basis to reverse the trend. The country is categorised as one of the least developed countries of the world with per capita income of a little over \$200. With a growth rate averaging 3% or so. Ours is a stagnant economy by international and particularly Asia Pacific standards. There exists not much of an economic infrastructure in the country. Neither is there an industrial base to sustain defence efforts. Only 14% of the GDP belongs to industrial sector. More than 50% of our GNP is foreign debt. Our external loan burden is to the tune of over \$ 10 bn. 25% of our export earning is consumed by debt servicing. The capital flights by the businessmen, industrialists and MNCs are rampant. Smugglings and many

similar practices deprive us of

our vital revenue earnings. In a contemporary world where economic strength of a country is increasingly the instrument of power relations where do we really stand in security terms? The pervasive underdevelopment is compounded by our resource poor economy. Over 70% of our peasantry is landless and per capita calorie intake of our people is roughly 1900. To be fair, such a large population struck by stark poverty can not be expected to share concerns for national security. People virtually without any belongings or peasants without land can not have commitments to lofty national issues like security or development. Hence there is a great stake for security in the state of development of a nation.

Now let's have a look at our political scene. The nation is divided on fundamental national issues. The political process was not allowed in the country and so has been the fate of political institutions. Political expediency has been the order of the day. We have talked profusely about democracy but seldom abided by its norms. There are often the crises of legitimacy and polarisation in national politics. Political instability seems to have been 'stabilised' in the country. Then there are some problems of integration not only with ethnic groups but also among social forces. In sum, we are yet to build up a stable state structure and political order capable of

dealing with both internal and external insecurities. Internally there are still more sources of insecurity like ecological degradation and natural disasters putting at times even our physical existence at stake. We also take serious challenges to our security in the very process of our nation state building with critical constraints on our resources in a highly intrusive, unfriendly environment and an international system rather hostile in the context of a third world country.

The state of domestic situation provided here is by no means exhaustive. How ever the internal weakness of a country due to its underdevelopment not only erodes its strength of resistance and survival it also encourages outside intervention in various guises. Viewed in this perspective Bangladesh suffers from a great deal of vulnerability.

External dimension of our

insecurities Now let us turn to another front of threats. This aspect of threat is more clearly understood by the people. The country's external threat usually emanates from its neighbours. Bangladesh is bounded on three sides by India with a common border of 2566 miles. To the southeast there is a little boundary with Myanmar stretching over only 176 miles In the south her coastline of 257 miles is wasted by the Bay of Bengal where her Exclusive Economic Zone lies alongside India's.

the region has 72% of the re-

gion's area, 77% of its population and 78% of its GNP and also has concomitant natural superiority that constitutes power. It is several times the size and power potential of South Asian countries combined, a fact which neither India nor the other states can do much about. It is only natural that India exercises an enormous influence on South Asian politics. Moreover India's perceived role in the international system is to be a strong and stable nation and to acquire a world mission commensurate with her size, population, resources and power capabilities.

Most spectacular however is particularly to the west her practice and preservation of a resilient democracy in a highly pluralistic society. Problems do however arise

when this preeminence is turned into predominance. Independent India wanted to put on the British mantle as far as the security of the region was concerned and called for a strategic unity in the region envisaging an orbit of her control in the immediate neighbourhood. India still insists on its validity though in a modified form and proclaims a kind of South Asian Monroe Doctrine' asserting her exclusive influence in the region. Not withstanding India's security outlook and regional policy the quest of smaller South Asian nations including Bangladesh to steer their course clear of India's sphere of influence has remained strong. Bangladesh always tried to assert her independent positions or issues of mutual concern as well as those of regional and global concern that gave rise to an inevitable conflict between Bangladesh and india straining their bilateral relationship. Although the conflict has not broken out in open hostilities, it has certainly influenced the bilateral issues existing between them. From time to time the incompatibility of our security perceptions took different manifestations in the interstate relationship. An eminent South Asian scholar succinctly puts up the dilemma. "One of the biggest dilemmas of South Asian politics is that India conceives of her neighbouring countries as lying within the defence perimeter and being integral to the security of India while India's neighbours themselves regard India itself as the source of their insecurity against whom it is necessary to organise their own security. sometimes on an extra-regional basis." This is the crux of the problem facing the smaller nations of South Asia

In international politics there is no permanent friend. no permanent foe. A complex web of factors goes in identifying either of them. Moreover, it is never prudent to stamp a nation clearly as an adversary. However, as and when required our external threat will have to be identified in the light of all these geopolitical realities and many more as well as politico-strategic developments in our region and

India, the core country in

last year.

elsewhere.

vis-a-vis India

Malaysia's Defense Minister Najib Tun Razak said his country was looking into the possibility of buying attack helicopters from South Africa.

Aside from Malaysia, South Africa has also been negotiating the sale of howitzers and artillery to Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. South Africa's arms export markets have included Taiwan, Chile, Israel, Paraguay.

Lanka. Exports are a matter of survival," South Africa's deputy minister of defense Wynand Breytenach said last year. "Otherwise we will lose our expertise"

Morocco, Argentina and Sri

The Washington-based Defense News reported in last November that year that the ANC will not stand in the way of South Africa's defence industry. It quoted John Alberts, chief executive officer of the Denel Group as saying, "I don't think they will tamper with an industry that is giving them benefits in employment and technology.

Disarmament

Pretoria Readies Arms — to Sell

derground sanctionsbusting arms trade, is getting ready for a crack at the trillion dollar global arms market.

The latest issue of the London-based military magazine Jane's Defence Weekly carries a fullpage ad pitching South Africa's CSH-2 Rooivalk combat helicopter, described as "a new hunter in the air".

The ad, which carries a phone and fax number in South Africa, says its domestically-manufactured helicopter is "ready to strike with deadly speed".

Indeed, the chopper that was once one of the military showpieces of South Africa's past white minority regime is geared to carry air-to-surface and air-to-air missiles.

Freed from a 17-year-old UN arms embargo in late May, South Africa could be a major player in the arms market, says Paul Beaver, editor of Jane's Sentinel.

The sanctions, imposed in protest against the apartheid

policies of the white minority government, effectively barred all UN member states from either buying weapons from or selling weapons to South Africa.

Addressing the UN Security Council in May, Thabo Mbeki, deputy president of the new African National Congress (ANC) government, said Pretoria will "banish from our life all those things that make for war and violent conflict".

But Beaver said South Africa is expected to be both a buyer and a seller in the dog-eat-dog international weapons market.

Pretoria is close to ordering up to six 2,000 tonne, helicopter-carrying British warships to reinforce its blue-water capability in the Indian Ocean, he pointed out. At the same time, he said, South Africa is also hawking its CSH-2 Rooivalk combat support he-

dollar global arms trade. Thalif Deen of Inter Press Service reports from the United Nations. licopter to the British army. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had told journalists in May that the lifting of

first step of the return of South Africa to the United Nations". South Africa was subjected to two UN embargoes, the first a voluntary embargo imposed in 1963, and the second a

the arms embargo was "the

mandatory embargo in 1977. But this failed to deter the country from having one of the world's fastest developing military industries, says Dr Mike

the coastal areas from Teknaf

to Kuakata? I welcome anyone

to come and see if my claim of

valuable minerals 'black-gold'

is not commercially viable.

Khatana of Forecast Interna tional, a US defence research

Its new leaders have vowed to banish all

things made for conflict, but South Africa is

expected to be a major player in the trillion-

South Africa's state-run Armaments Development and Production Corporation (ARMSCOR) — recently privatised under the name of Denel Corporation — was at one time the world's 10th largest arms manufacturer, he said.

"I don't think that South Africa will find it either feasible or prudent to dismantle its military industry either for political or ideological reasons. Khatana said. He noted that

even before the embargo was lifted. South Africa was already focusing on two of the world's most lucrative markets for arms: the Middle East and Asia-Pacific.

The South Africans have participated in two military exhibitions - one in Malaysia and the other in the United Arab Emirates — where they negotiated the sale of helicopters and artillery.

The domestically-manufactured weapons for which Pretoria is seeking markets include combat helicopters, remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs), air-to-air and surfaceto-air missiles, armored personnel carriers, mine-resistant vehicles and rocket launchers.

About 35 South African defence companies participated in the exhibition held in the northwestern Malaysian resort town of Langkawi in December

Barapukuria Coal Mine Project

Sir, We congratulate Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia for the inauguration of Barapukuria Coal Mine Project of Taka 887.52 on June 27, 1994. We also thank the government of the People's Republic of China for providing necessary help and assistance in the amount of US dollar 124.84 million for starting the much awaited work on Barapukuria coal mine.

It may be mentioned here that 'black-gold' mine of Cox's Bazar containing huge deposits of valuable minerals like zircon, rutile, garnet, magnetite and monazite etc. is no less important than that of Barapukuria coal mine project. But we wonder why our government has not taken in hand any commercial project on 'black-gold' of Cox's Bazar as

yet? Why the government is keeping totally silent over the matter for years together is not understandable.

In fact, we hardly do not need any foreign aid and assistance for the exploration and commercial utilisation of the valuable minerals known as 'black-gold'. We may start the work of 'black-gold' mining at Cox's Bazar at any time with our own resources, indigenous method and technology without any heavy investment either in the public or in the private sector. Would the government kindly look into the matter? Would our Bangladeshi mineral experts and foreign experts kindly visit Cox's Bazar and examine the indigenous method?

salt, make shrimp cultivation

in the coastal areas why can't

we utilise commercially our

valuable minerals available in

Dhaka-1203, Christian graveyard at Wari Sir, On a recent visit to the

O H Kabir

Christian Graveyard at Wari, I found it very much a dismal situation. A number of young people in smaller groups were sitting at different places. A man was sitting under a tree with a woman and talking secretively which seemed fishy. Upon a little asking, I came

to know that at different times in the day-time many 'Romeos' I wonder if we can produce and Juliets' also gather there for exchanging and expressing their emotional yearnings.

A cemetery is a sacred place because we bury the last remains of our ancestors there. We have respect for those because it would never be possible for us to be what we are today without their supports The civilisation is a compilation of generations

It is further heard that the young people sitting and gossiping there often pull, puff at and pop in different sedatives and while young ladies go to pay tribute to the memorials of their forefathers are teased and taunted.

It is further reported that the caretakers of the cemetery under the given circumstances are not able to handle the situation due to lack of security of their own families.

Criminals don't have any culture or religion. If the above mentioned profanity is allowed to proliferate, this will one day engulf all and sundry. Though it may sound harsh, it is true if

these people are allowed to

desecrate the graves of late relatives of somebody else today, tomorrow the very criminals will not hesitate to violate the sanctity of the other

we ask all concerned including the law enforcing agencies to take appropriate actions to put the things straight at the cemetery by restricting the entry of unwanted persons and extending co-operation to the care-takers stationed there.

John Arun Sarkar Dhaka.

Megacity Dhaka

Sir, Congratulations to Mayor Hanif and all the best wishes for his desire to improve the living conditions in the metropolis - a megacity indeed - whose runaway growth may lead to unliveable state in days to come and the

signs of the state of devastating strangulation are already there. Let him, therefore, ensure the following so that the city starts functioning and not remain stagnated losing its battle ' In view of the above, may against crime, economic chaos and filth.

· Select exclusive public meeting places and shopping areas (pedestrian malls) during evening hours.

· Introduce bicycle lanes connecting the parks and other open places. Introduce incentives like

tary separation of reusable trash and non-recycleable Provide modern public transport system to eliminate

free bus tickets etc for volun-

city road problems. Improve sanitation/cleanliness of market places/disposal areas.

Col (Rtd) Mirza Shafi 100, Aga Sadigue Road, Dhaka.