

Child-lifting must Go

Clandestine child trafficking by organised gangs has become a serious problem in the country. Reports published in newspapers from time to time give a violent jolt to our confidence in the ability of our law enforcers to provide enough protection for our younger generation. In other words, the child traffickers appear to be either smarter or stronger than the men in uniform. In certain cases the law enforcing agency may outsmart some of the smaller tries working for a widespread network engaged in the illegal business of child lifting, but the big bosses continue to stay beyond their reach. So far the law enforcers have been able to dabble only at the fringe of a most organised and criminal business carried across and beyond borders.

Mirpur, according to a report carried in a Bangla daily, is one such den of the child traffickers. The lifting of a madrasa student of the nursery class and his subsequent safe return home at 10 pm are shrouded in mystery. There are more questions than have been answered regarding the release from custody of the prime suspect's nephew (sister's son). The incident will take not long to be forgotten by the people of the area unless a similar one takes place and becomes public soon. But it has been a pointer all the same that not everything is going well on the law and order front. Now that the prime suspect and his nephew are in hiding, the prospect of uncovering the underground operation of the gang is remote.

So the exasperation as expressed by quite a number of guardians of the area is a natural outcome. But it is — to stretch the idea — a fair reflection of our national helplessness and frustration in the face of a threat posed by a handful but powerful anti-social goons. What we find unacceptable is the mentality of surrender to the threat. This mentality is as much manifest in the people as in the administration.

The Mirpur incident may be just a case study for several other concentration spots elsewhere in the country. It has grown over the years like the empire of the drug cartel. Scratching on the surface — as is the practice of our police force — will not do. A determined and strong offensive will have to be launched against the network of the child traffickers. Without public outcry and journalists' persistent efforts to bring such incidents to light, things would perhaps have moved even slower. But why will the law enforcers and the administration require such a push to deal with the gangs in the illegal trade?

The revelation that children illegally exported were used as jockeys in some Arab countries made quite a furore here and prompt correspondence between the supplying and receiving countries could settle the matter to our satisfaction. Similar outrage ought to have come over the illegal export of our young ones to several countries with the bizarre purpose of extracting their organs in hospital for operation. That has not happened yet.

So, remedial measures should be considered on both fronts — the supplying and the receiving points. Apart from activating the diplomatic process for the purpose, vigilance has to be geared up at both ends. The efforts have to be devoted not only to curb the crime but also to nab the ring leaders of the ill-meaning business. A nation that cannot take care of its children and even protect them from being smuggled across the border is indeed poor enough. Again the countries which, with enough resources at their disposal, allow the dismemberment of foreign children at their hospitals are really accursed. An appeal to the conscience of social-work groups and government leaders there together with some practical measures at home may prove highly useful.

Co-existence in ME

The Washington Declaration by Hussein and Rabin on Monday, to end the almost half a century old warlike hostility between Jordan and Israel, has been a historic event. If one harks back to the origin of the ancient enmity between them and marvels at how this is being lived down now, the episode will assume momentous significance. For the inimical relationship to be consigned to oblivion though, one has to wait till a permanent peace treaty is signed between the two countries to replace what is now a declaration. Even so, one gets the impression that a secularist trend is limbering up in the Middle East by the sheer dictates of economic development in an atmosphere of peace, reconciliation and co-existence between one-time enemies.

What is significant here is that the country most likely to have been the first to mend fences with Israel — namely Jordan — given the background of her contacts with Israel and the USA, has come second after the PLO in building the rapprochement with Israel. The first thing was needed to be done first — a definitive agreement on Palestinian self-rule had to be forged. But Palestinian in their first reactions have not taken kindly to Washington Declaration which, they think, has given a guardianship role to Jordan on the holy city of Jerusalem diluting the PLO or the Arab demand on it. Syrian President Hafez Al-Assad, on the other hand, has made it clear he would not compromise his position on the Golan Heights, held in possession by the Israelis since 1967. So, the bone of contention in the Middle East insofar as the Israeli-occupied territories goes, remains with the embers being intact.

Moreover, just as PLO chief Yasser Arafat has been accused of a sale-out to the west and Tel Aviv by the fundamentalist groups within the Palestinian ranks, so too has King Hussein been decried by the opposition in Amman for his latest round of friendliness towards Tel Aviv. Militants in Israel are said to be hell-bent upon wrecking peace with the Arabs on the other side. One is yet to know how extremism is really being pressed on to the bargaining counter to extract advantages from the other party. Suffice it to say though that the Arabs and the Israelis have to work out a package deal for themselves. One has to wait and see what bearing the present country-by-country approach will have on the prospect for coordination among the frontline Arab states to arrive at lasting peace with Israel based on comprehensive settlement of all issues.

When at the heart of hearts security concerns are paramount between the Arabs and the Israelis, confidence-building measures, such as have been envisaged between Amman and Tel Aviv, are of crucial importance. If countries once condemned to mutual distrust go for opening telephone links and new border crossings, sharing of the electric grid and having their security forces work jointly to fight off drug trafficking then co-existence is what they are aiming at — in some material terms.

WHEN India's Atomic Energy Commission — the first in Asia — was set up as early as in 1948 with a mandate to launch a comprehensive nuclear programme (nuclear weapon capability automatically included), it went almost unnoticed. With an elaborate industrial base as well as nearly four million science and technology graduates of India, which is the world's third largest pool of scientific personnel, the enterprise was looked upon as one of those normal sequelae of India's national building efforts. Even when she exploded her first bomb in June 1974 in the desert of Rajasthan there were routine "shocks" and "surprises" while the Indian's themselves innocently called it a peaceful explosion. Many considered India to be entitled in her own right to this key to winning great power status.

India's nuclear detonation mainly prompted by China's test in 1964 soon after the former's humiliating defeat in the Himalayan war was however enough to unsettle Pakistan. India's archival in the region where the military balance already tipped in favour of India after she routed Pakistan in 1971 war.

Anticipating that India would one day build the bomb in her bid to catch up China — and in fact by 1964 India's reprocessing plant with the capability of producing weapon grade plutonium was ready in Trombay — Z A Bhutto, then foreign minister of Pakistan, talked about the bomb for the first time in 1966. Unlike in India there was a measure of theatrics surrounding the initiation of Pakistan's nuclear programme. The drama was heightened when Bhutto expected his countrymen to eat grass, if required, to follow India's suit. In 1969 Bhutto

South Asia's Nuclear Stand-off

by Brig M Abdul Hafiz (Retd)

These days there are talks aplenty to halt a nuclear adventure in South Asia which, it is argued, together with nuclear China is imperiling the future of two billion people living in the area and many more. But looking at the region's strategic landscape as well as political and bureaucratic control over its nuclear arsenal it appears extremely difficult, if not impossible, that India and Pakistan would ever agree to roll back their nuclear programmes.

wrote explaining the rationale about a nuclear deterrent for Pakistan. But it was not before 1972 that, as prime minister of Pakistan, Bhutto launched the country's nuclear programme in a secret meeting of fifty top scientists of Pakistan. By then Pakistan had few alternatives but to adopt a nuclear option. If a burning desire to seek international prestige was dynamic behind India's bomb programme a deep sense of insecurity, after she lost her military parity with India, drove Pakistan to take up the shield of a nuclear deterrence.

The programme went ahead at a brisk pace thanks to the financial support of Libya which could be lured into making an Islamic bomb. Exploiting the loopholes of national and multilateral export control regimes in western countries Pakistanis were able to import most of the nuclear components and materials quite in conformity with practices even elsewhere. The German trained metallurgist Dr A Q Khan, all by himself steered the course of Pakistan's road to bombmaking at Kahuta, the country's nuclear Shangri La. Though there exist no clear or authentic information about the exact state of bombmaking it is believed that Pakistan was able to carry out a test as back as in 1983, with the help and cooperation of China in her Xinjiang region. While both India and Pakistan

have certainly crossed the nuclear threshold, even a conservative estimate suggest that Pakistan today has the ability to field at least eight bombs (five are enough to destroy India) and India's capability is to produce six times as many. India with her growing stockpile of weapon grade plutonium and Pakistan with her capability to produce enough highly enriched uranium as well as appropriate delivery system available to both it is believed that both the countries have been able to establish independent nuclear regimes.

Contrary to all predictions as well as expectations that a more secured world would emerge from the ashes of the cold war, the world has however been rendered more unsafe with endless ethno-religious wars and more fingers on nuclear buttons. Today there are as many as twenty two open and clandestine nuclear weapon programmes across the world. Out of them South Asia has been identified as most critical zone of nuclear proliferation with piled up anger and mistrust of animosities between two nuclearised neighbours i.e India and Pakistan. Both have built up formidable military to confront each other. According to James Woolsey, the CIA director, 'the arms race between India and Pakistan poses perhaps the most probable

prospect for future use of the weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons'. The countries' narrowly averted nuclear war at least thrice earlier i.e during Indian Army's 'Brasstacks exercise' in 1986 when both the armies faced each other eyeball to eyeball, then during the spring of 1990 in the wake of Kashmir uprising and in the winter of 1992 as a consequence of deterioration in communal situation in India. The spectre of nuclear war looms large even today as the Pakistani foreign minister asserts, in Tashkent during a recent visit: 'Unless the Kashmir disputes is solved peacefully on the terms of international law and UN resolutions, there cannot be lasting peace in South Asia and there is always a danger of fourth war'. South Asia itself stands under the shadow of another nuclear power with a fast expanding atomic arsenal which India considers is threat to her security. Thus a recognized nuclear power with whom India has troubled borders explains much of India's anxiety for at least a nuclear deterrence to China. It is however important to mention that Sino-Indian border tensions have eased in recent years while Indo-Pak relation have come under renewed strain mainly over Kashmir.

These days there are talks

aplenty to halt a nuclear adventure in South Asia which, it is argued, together with nuclear China is imperiling the future of two billion people living in the area and many more. But looking at the region's strategic landscape as well as political and bureaucratic control over its nuclear arsenal it appears extremely difficult, if not impossible, that India and Pakistan would ever agree to roll back their nuclear programmes. Moreover, they are too advanced to be disbanded at this stage. In Pakistan it is highly emotive issue. What used to be Kashmir once to the Pakistanis is now bomb to them. It is perhaps the only issue that seems to enjoy bipartisan national support. The recent effort in trading off between the resumption of US military aid and rolling back of Pakistan nuclear programme, many think, is a misplaced optimism on the part of Washington. Because the pro-bomb lobby in Pakistan strongly argue that Pakistan's nuclear programme has already started to work as a deterrent and averted all out war for the longest period in the chequered history of Indo-Pakistan relationship. Such a security guarantee can at no cost be done away with. For them it would be prudent to go nuclear openly to make the deterrent more effective. Both India and Pakistan have by now developed high emotional

stake in the bomb as can be gauged from what General Aslam Beg told his American hosts some years ago: 'The (nuclear weapon) situation in Pakistan is such that even if I order to roll back the programme my subordinates will not obey me'.

Even in India the pro-bomb forces have been gaining strength everyday. They are demonstrating growing impatience with what they have called India's continuing 'Nuclear Brahmacharya'. India has successfully testified in 1989 an IRBM, the 'Agni', capable of delivering nuclear warhead to places as distant as Shanghai, Riyadh, Tehran and Kuala Lumpur. With so much of developments underlining the potential transformation of Indian military to one with offensive capability, she cannot now observe a passive posture on nuclear issue. If strategic deterrence is to be achieved in the view of ongoing missile proliferations then the acquisition of nuclear weapon, they argue, is the only viable option.

A nuclearised South Asia, according to them, would stabilize the regional security situation to the degree it did for US-USSR relations.

At international level pressures are being built up for dismantling nuclear weapons programme in South Asia. This may push a nation to the brink of despair and the consequence may be opposite of what the big powers seek to achieve. Instead far more needs to be done to address the underlying motivations that drive a nation to adopt nuclear option.

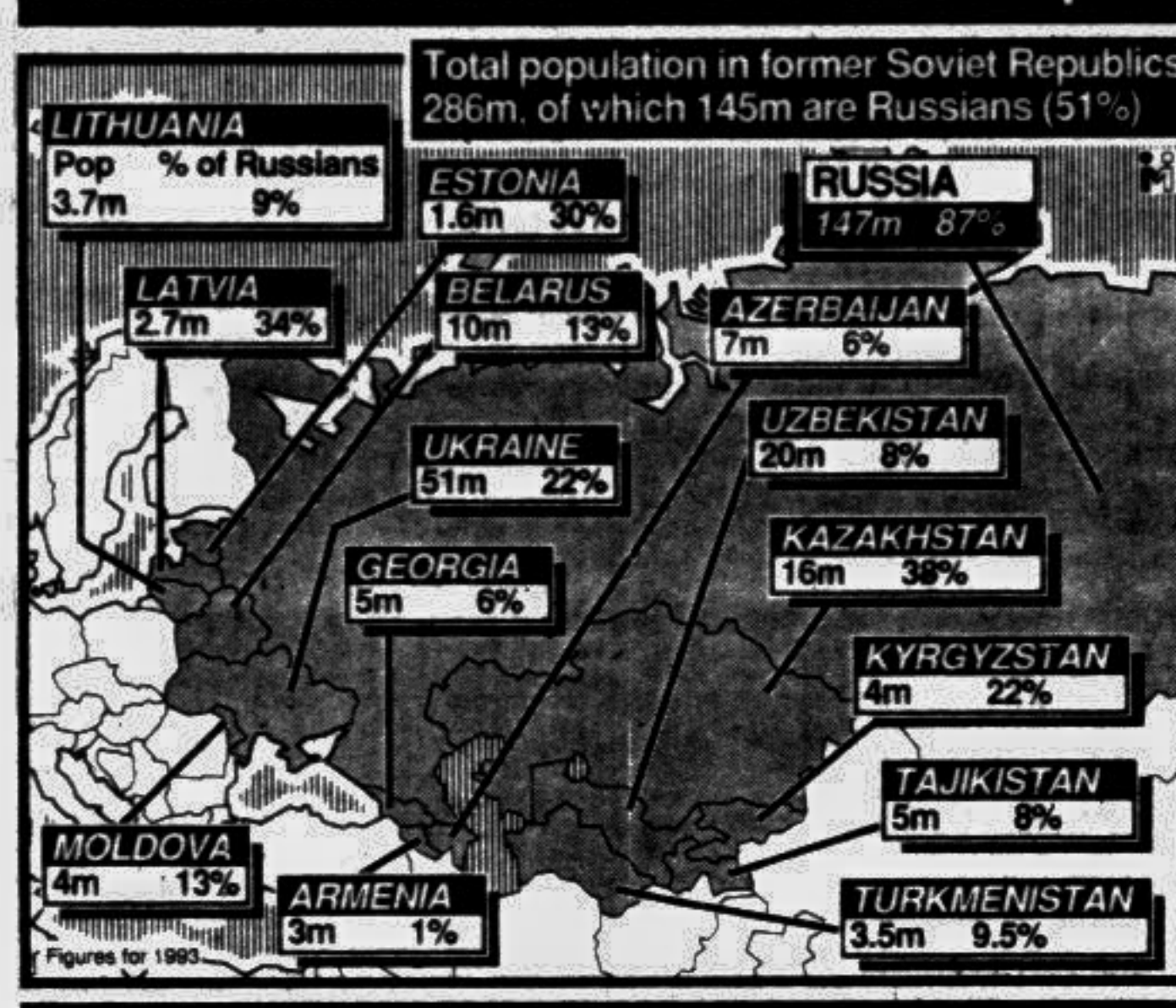
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Russia Plans for the World's Biggest Movement of People

Andrew Wilson writes from Moscow

A massive exodus of people from what the Russians call the "near abroad" is posing enormous logistical problems for the planners in Moscow. At the same time, Russia is trying to deal with 500,000 illegal immigrants, many from Asia.

Abandoned children of a lost empire



cial and other incentives.

The huge population movement has been watched with near indifference by Western leaders, whose hopes are concentrated on preserving fragile and arbitrary state frontiers. But the only hope of staying off a potentially disastrous economic and social upheaval lies in encouraging moves by the states concerned toward regional autonomy, federative statehood and at least temporary dual citizenship.

The Russians who suddenly

found themselves in a foreign country on December 1991 when the Soviet Union formally ceased to exist were frequently not there by choice. Some, for example, were from families who had been the victims of Stalin's deportations.

To call such people "colonists" can be misleading — though the new republics of what Russia calls the "near abroad" need Russian technical and administrative skills as much as the newly independent countries of Africa and Asia required those of their

former colonial rulers in the 1960s.

Every month brings new indications of the gathering pace of the exodus.

In April, the Kyrgyz parliament opened a new session in the now customary way — with the resignation of Russian deputies quitting the republic because of discrimination against Russians in business and the professions. They included the chief physician of the largest hospital and the president of the Kyrgyzstan Industrialists' Association.

Another recent leaver was the President's deputy press chief, a life-long Kyrgyz famous as a "walking encyclopaedia" of Kyrgyz life.

A more sombre development is rising dissatisfaction among Russians in the republic's army. In December, 100 Russian officers of the Osh garrison — part of 8,000 who constitute 90 per cent of the Kyrgyz officer corps — protested to the president about discrimination in military appointments.

In Kazakhstan, the most industrialised of the Central Asian states, one million Russians have left in the last five years, claiming discrimination. More than 10,000 Russians have been dismissed from senior administrative positions. There are only 103 Russian parliamentarians compared with 566 Kazakhs, although Russians form 38 per

cent of the population.

In the same period, 50,000 Russians have left Georgia. In Armenia, even military training is hindered by the departure of Russian instructors. Of 30 in the military department of the Yerevan Polytechnic Institute at independence, only six remain.

For millions of Russians caught up in the exodus, resettlement in Russia is a question not of "going home" but of total disruption. The vast majority come from far-flung cities where they served the Union. They are offered resettlement in the primitive Russian countryside, which they find unacceptable. Instead they seek a foothold in overcrowded Moscow and other crime-ridden cities.

Tens of thousands are tempted to continue their trek into eastern and eventually western Europe and the United States, if necessary resorting to the illegal networks.

Russia also faces a problem of illegal immigrants, mostly Vietnamese, North Koreans and Chinese unwilling to return to their own countries at the end of labour contracts. Aleksandr Arkhipov, director of the external migration division of the Russian migration service, puts the total at 500,000.

An estimated 150,000 Chinese live in the Moscow region, nearly four times as many as in 1992. Some have set up

organisations to "pass" "illegals" westward, "using visas and passports supplied by gangs in China, Hong Kong and Malaysia."

The newest racket is to sell "admissions" to 10-month education courses at Russian institutes and universities. Hawkers tour China selling the stamped papers for \$10 a time. Thus armed, Chinese traders cross the Russian-Kazakhstan border pretending to be exchange students.

Another profitable opening for illegal migration/merchants is the Kurdish connection. Kurds in the former Soviet Union numbered 153,000, mostly in Transcaucasia and Central Asia. Turkish officials, frightened at the prospect of Kurdish political activity in Russia, believe that the number has swollen to 500,000.

Ex-Soviet Kurds have tended to settle in southern Russia, but the illegals are in transit, mainly towards the Baltic republics, whose governments are under pressure from Finland and Norway to impose tighter controls.

The smuggling of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis is mainly in the hands of foreign students unwilling to return home for various reasons. But more professional organisations are also involved; a group of Ukrainian helicopter pilots and a Russian cooperative was broken up after several cross-border flights for which Indians, Pakistanis and Afghans were charged \$400 each.

— GEMINI NEWS
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To the Editor...

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.

World Cup 1994

Sir, Congratulations to Brazil for having won the World Cup 1994 and having created a record for being the first country to have won it on four occasions. Congratulations to Italy as well for having put up gallantly under rather excruciating circumstances for the runners-up slot.

But it is a shame that after putting in strenuous training over years and after hectic and exhausting month-long encounters with the national teams of various other countries, the championship of international football be decided upon by penalty shoot-outs, as performance had to take place at Los Angeles, USA, on the 17th July.

In tie-breakers, the goalkeeper is under continuing tension, and the player taking a shot is also under tension, leaving the twenty other players in the foray to relax. Thus FIFA should alter its format for future World Cups by subjecting drawn matches to go into "sudden death" extra time when, however exacting it may be for them, all twenty-two

players in the field will have to exert themselves totally till a goal is scored.

Quazi Arifur Rahman
Wari, Dhaka

Power failure and load-shedding

Sir, There is a sharp line of distinction between power failure and load-shedding. In the former case, electricity falls abruptly for 5-10 minutes and is subsequently restored, within 15-20 minutes, and the process sometimes continue for hours. But in case of load-shedding, the power is cut in a certain area for 5-6 hours and when the supply is eventually restored it is clamped down in other areas.

Load-shedding may occur, if it must, with a prior notice served to the particular area, so that the residents may make necessary arrangements to face the situation. But it is a nightmarish experience in case of sudden power failure and one remains virtually in a state of suspended animation as to when the electricity will be restored and this process continues unabated. Sudden

power failure is due to some technical fault originated from the power station while load-shedding is carried out in phases for minimising the power supply gap among different areas of the city.

Continued power failure has lately made life miserable throughout the country. Besides, the malaise of load-shedding or reduction in power generation has been plaguing the country for over a year now. Load-shedding across the country two weeks back stood at 500 MW with the capital city experiencing a 200 MW shortage of power supply. Additionally, disrupting day to day chores, recurrent power cut has in recent months badly affected the industrial belts, and hampered normal production. Those in the worst hit sectors are now extremely concerned for their future, and have expressed their doubt about the prospect of the much touted private investment in the country.

The recent spurt of load-shedding has been ascribed to the closure of 16 units of country's 28 power stations due to repair work, overhaul etc. This shows the extent of problems in the power sector leading to their intermittent malfunction. Chronic systems loss now running over 40 per cent, has left the state-monopolised power sector sick. We understand that there are many limitations that have to be taken into account before lifting control from the sector.

But the government is taking too much time to sort them out, which apart from adding to the people's sufferings, has started enervating the national economy.

Whatever may be the position, until and unless the power sector is fully developed to cater to the need of the entire country, it is suggested that in the case of load-shedding in a particular area/zone, prior notice should be given through BTV, Radio and the print media so as to enable the residents of the concerned areas to make necessary arrangement beforehand.

N H Sufi
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Poverty alleviation

Sir, Recently in Dhaka the SAARC finance ministers' meeting was held with efforts to reduce poverty. At this critical time in the present world poverty erodes the social and administrative frame of the third world countries. It seems now it is much more difficult than earlier to come out from the grip of poverty.

Once Bangladesh was believed to be a rich country, say, during the Mughal period. We inherited a quality and sophisticated life but unfortunately we failed to keep it up. And now in the modern world we are just an LDC. In this situation, SAARC finance ministers' meeting is seen as a hope of

light for the hundred crore plus people who have been severely undergoing the pains of poverty for decades.

In Bangladesh, since its independence, each successive government has seemingly tried to alleviate poverty but has not been successful. It seems something is lacking in our character — determination. Actually we can find out some solutions at least, but unless our national characteristic is changed, we may not be successful even with the largest integrated steps.

Fayezur Rahman
Masdair, N'gonj

US invasion of Haiti

Sir, Rumours about US invasion of Haiti are mounting day by day. Is the invasion of Haiti imminent? We don't think so. We believe that after the Bay of Pigs fiasco in 1961 the USA is not going to repeat the past mistake once again in 1994 under a new world order.

Former US President George Bush who opposes Haiti invasion rightly says 'We would have no problem in getting into Haiti, the problem would be getting out.'

We feel that the use of military force to restore constitutional rule in Haiti would be a total foolishness. Why should Washington poke its nose in the internal affairs of a coun-

try? Rather, the USA should use its good offices to help solve problems of countries like Haiti, Burma, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, and issues like that of Kashmir and also the rightful sharing of the Ganges water between Bangladesh and India even if 'multilaterally' instead of 'bilaterally' in the interest of service to mankind and establishment of world peace.

O H Kabir
Dhaka

Character certificates

Sir, A character certificate by a 1st class gazetted officer is invariably needed to admit oneself into an institution, to apply for a job and for many other purposes. If we go to a 1st class gazetted officer, he/she says, "I do not know you. How can I give you a character certificate?" It is right when he/she says that. It is quite impossible to justify an unknown person. Under these circumstances he/she falls into great difficulties.

Considering these problems it would be better to introduce the system of acquiring character certificates from an educated and distinguished person of one's locality instead of a gazetted government officer. In this way everyone will be spared a lot of trouble.

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