

## Matter of Public Order

It is said, knowledge is responsibility. Fore-warnings are even more so. And, if actual incidents should occur boding a breakdown of law and order, the failure to act even as late as that would be an unpardonable breach of responsibility. The untoward happenings in Chittagong on Monday and Tuesday centering on a Jamaat rally where party chief Golam Azam was to appear and speak, in the face of stiff opposition by a combined student front, basically reflected a miscarriage of ill-conceived law enforcement.

It goes to show that with a fuzzy mind the home ministry mixed up the political rights to holding meetings and making speeches with what was brewing up to be an explosive law and order situation. The ground level law enforcement officers accounted for only an extended vagueness of the policy tenor permeating from the top. They appeared to be either marginalised as if observing a bull fight from a distance and, where they had to intervene, they were alleged to be partisan. On Monday the alarm bell was set off as the revulsion against the next day's Jamaat rally raged over possession of venue — the Laldighi maidan. In the ensuing rapid-fire clashes between the police and the students marked by gunfire, lobbing of teargas shells, and cocktail blasts, quite a stretch of area was engulfed with panic bringing life to a halt. Fifty people were injured. This was enough of an early warning for heading off Tuesday's running battles between Jamaat activists and APSU supporters for hours. At the end of the day, dead bodies had to be counted this time around — four. Two hundred others including policemen were injured in armed clashes. Death count may mount.

There has to be a line of demarcation between taking cognisance of threats to public order and defending political rights, of either a party or an individual. It needs to be drawn by the custodians of law at the policy-making and the operational levels. The political parties may see the wisdom of cooperating in this. The Jamaat-e-Islami as a political party having seats in Parliament and a following interacts with other political parties, does hold public meetings, takes out processions and their leaders speak out their minds at the rallies. But why have they to force Golam Azam on the scene when this creates a lot of avoidable commotion in public life? By a court verdict he may have had his citizenship restored and, he being the Amir of Jamaat his party would insist on his speaking in public but, how can one be blind to the fact that there is not just controversy about him in public perception but also a burgeoning public resentment against him. This is no pejorative but stating a fact. Chittagong is not the only place where his party's insistence that he make an appearance has been vehemently opposed, in some other places, too, his footsteps were dogged by resentment against his role during the Liberation War. For a single person whole areas cannot be allowed to be turned into battle grounds. The political party concerned may agree that discretion is the better part of valour. And it should be the policy of the government to keep the need for civic peace uppermost in its mind.

The state of political confrontation in the country is getting acuter by the day as is evident from choosing the same venue for political rallies or scheduling hartals for the same day, knowing fully well that the general public for whom these are meant disapprove of such things. Such tendentious behaviour does not help politics, far less democracy. There must be an end to body-line politics.

## Politics or Trade

Hopefully SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement) will have taken one more step forward through the holding of the just concluded seminar in Dhaka. It was fourth in the series of national seminars, being organised by SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industries in order to raise public awareness of what SAPTA is all about.

Every time we talk about SAPTA the question that naturally comes to the fore is how little progress has been made in putting this idea into place. Pious claims and ambitious utterances follow every such gathering. Then life goes on as usual with very little to show as follow up, till the next such meeting comes our way.

There are two radically different views as to how SAPTA can move forward. One view is that political problems will have to be solved first before economic relations can take root. The other view is that let political solutions take their own course, while trade and economic relations develop on their own momentum.

Some speakers drew attention to the immensely complicated political relations between Pakistan and India due to Kashmir, and the gradually deteriorating relations between Bangladesh and India caused by the water sharing problem. They felt that trade cannot move forward without the political problems being solved first.

It is obvious that such soured relations are actually responsible for the slow progress of SAPTA. However the FBCCI chief, Mahbubur Rahman laid stress on the economic and trade relations going their way, while politics remains unresolved for the time being. "Economic cooperation must continue despite political differences prevailing in the region. By such cooperation we can expand and develop our production and add new product to our trade basket." While we are fully aware of the centre stage that political problems occupy in our relations with our neighbours, we are also fully conscious of the fact of what is going on between other countries and in other parts of the world.

The most recent example of India and China increasing their trade and commercial relations while their border problem, for which they had gone to war, remains unresolved. If we look at the evolution of ASEAN, one of the most successful regional cooperation bodies, we see the correctness of the position of FBCCI chief. There were serious problems between Thailand and Malaysia, and between Malaysia and Singapore. The ASEAN members did not allow their political problems to hamper their commercial links.

While neither undermining the importance of political problems, nor understating the need for their early solution, we would like to lend our full support to the view of the FBCCI chief and urge the SAARC members to take a leaf out of the experiences of other regional bodies, and do what they did and are doing. Free trade and commercial relations from the fetters of political problems, and allow them to follow their own logic. Let the logic of free market operate in the SAARC region. Only then will SAPTA take off.

FOR the United Nations the road to Rwanda has been paved with good intentions — and hell it is indeed.

Intentions being safer than action, action at the UN is often left by default to those with an agenda or ambition or both: in the case of Rwanda, to the French and the man they sponsored for Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Whether the French prove to play their self-proclaimed role of angels of mercy, or are doing the devil's handiwork, as feared by Rwanda's victimised Tutsi minority, the international community and even the Security Council will be glad to see the Foreign Legion pick up its guns and go.

There is much public criticism of the Council's accusations of "complicity and collusion in re-establishing French colonialism," even of "complicity in genocide," for supporting the French who support the Hutu government which is seen as guilty of genocide.

So many problems: the French in Rwanda, the French in the Council, the Rwandans in Rwanda, Rwandans, mostly Tutsi, in camps in Tanzania, nearly a million Rwandans in Zaire — mainly Hutus stampeding across the borders, incited to create this humanitarian catastrophe party by the Hutu regime's radio broadcasts sheltered in the French safety zone.

The Council President felt it "inappropriate" to ask the French to jam the broadcasts despite recommendations from non-government organisations and some Council

# UN Fiddles while Rwanda Burns

Elvi Ruottinen writes from New York

Frustrated by the difficulties of reporting the ditherings of the UN Security Council over the crisis in Rwanda, Gemini News Service's United Nations correspondent lets fly with a personal view from the world organisation.

members and numerous letters to the Council from the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), in which they pledged a national unity government and no harm to anyone apart from war criminals and murderers.

The Council finds decisions difficult, with 15 heads around the table — or, more accurately, 15 tails wagged by dogs in 15 capitals.

Letting a sleeping dog lie may be a sound policy but some were dozing off when the Secretary-General, none-too-affectionately known as Boutros, helped to sell 10 of the 15 on the wisdom of the French returning to their old



Boutros Boutros-Ghali: Backing French intervention

colonial patch of francophone Africa. It was expected homage would continue to be paid to the Eiffel Tower, a powerful emotional symbol of one of the top dogs of yesterday.

A senior diplomat admitted: "Bou-Bou made a booboo. The French miscalculated. The year is 1994, three decades too late for colonial solutions to African problems."

But there were few fights over the French venture — some call it adventure — into Rwanda. After all, it was only Africa. The loudest noise came not from the conference hall, but from reporters yapping at the heels of the elusive French Ambassador.

The Security Council's secretive seclusion in UN language is called CONSULTATIONS, in capital letters because it is the Council's main business. That is what it does best.

There have been many CONSULTATIONS. After witnessing a massacre of people hacked to pieces and doing little about it but recall most of the UN troops who were in Rwanda at the time of the April outbreak of violence, the Council decided to "review the situation" frequently. And, as it keeps assuring the media in Council jargon, "to remain seized of the matter."

For reporters afflicted with

a pesky professional need to know, covering Rwanda in the carpeted hall outside the Council chamber has been safer than reporting from Rwanda, but some might have preferred being on the ground in Kigali to being here with the Council President's vague and rapid murmurings of "we will continue to look at it."

The main war wound suffered by the media on the Council beat, besides the usual frustration of rarely getting a straight and meaningful answer free of diplomatic double-talk, is boredom.

CONSULTATIONS often run into evenings and weekends. Varicose veins are also a hazard for the more optimistic who lean against the Council security barricade for long hours on the off-chance that when delegates come out to make a private telephone call or answer nature's call, they might also let dribble a few drops of information on the thinking, if any, taking place inside the Council. This rarely profits anyone but the most dogged.

Besides CONSULTATIONS, there are "informal" and "formal" meetings, though few on Rwanda compared with Bosnia's 50-plus.

In the "formals," voting on resolutions takes place. In

about a couple of dozen short paragraphs, the resolutions mostly ask each side in a conflict to cease hostilities.

This seldom happens. In the most frequently used description, the resolutions "have no teeth." Only if some major power has national interest — still the guiding principle of the Council's Big Five permanent members — will Council resolutions grow teeth.

Most notably, the Gulf War's oil, attractive to all Western corners, had the Council sprout mighty fangs. Some 500,000 military personnel and \$50 billion were amassed in short order to protect the immensely wealthy oil company called Kuwait.

It may well take the UN as long to raise the 5,500 peacekeepers authorised by the Council for Rwanda as it took to plan and commission the Gulf War.

Except for France, suspected of propping up its former Hutu clients, no hard-ware could be found among the Council's major arms merchant countries to protect Rwanda's maimed, lame and starving survivors from becoming new victims of the slaughter.

The UN received only what it calls "soft" offers — men without equipment or weapons — in its effort to respond to the Council's call for troops to

join the token UN presence of less than 500, who were all that remained of the UN Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) in Kigali when the Council panicked the pulled out.

The United States, mastermind of the Gulf venture, made no soft offers. After the US deaths in Somalia, its soldiers — even with their stupendous superiority in arms over Rwandan machetes — are not to be put in any risky situation.

The Pentagon finally offered to lease some 50 armed personnel carriers to the UN peace-keeping office, for \$10 million, payable in advance. The US, which owes \$1.28 billion to the UN, finally agreed to send the bill after the service was rendered.

The US Army had the personnel carriers lying around in the sands of Somalia after conceding to Somali faction leader Mohammed Aided, who, unlike in the Gulf, was the one who drew a line in the sand.

As it happened, the employment of the vehicles meant for the Ghanaian peacekeepers was further delayed in Uganda. The Pentagon had failed to paint the carriers and mount guns on them.

In Uganda, the UN also had to find commercial connections to take the carriers to Kigali, because the Pentagon — in keeping with President Bill Clinton's coitus-interruptus approach to foreign policy — would not go all the way and deliver the equipment to Rwanda.

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## Is there Political Support for the Family Planning Programme in Bangladesh?

by Dr Syed Saad Andaleeb

THE family planning programme in Bangladesh faces formidable challenges. To curb the serious consequences of population explosion, various programmes have been envisaged and implemented by the Bangladesh Ministry of Health and Population Control. In the Second Five Year Plan, the government planned to achieve, by 1990, replacement levels of fertility by increasing the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) to 60 per cent. Apparently, that target has not been reached with a CPR of about 30 per cent in the country. The Directorate of Family Planning claims a current prevalence rate of over 40 per cent which is even higher. Although these figures suggest that significant progress has been made, clearly more needs to be done to increase CPR and reduce fertility.

Studies that have been undertaken to explain fertility behaviours have identified a broad range of factors such as demographics, client behaviours, socio-economic conditions of clients, and programme parameters. For example, demographic factors such as age at marriage and female education, and behavioural factors such as the desire to have sons have been associated with fertility. Increased availability of contraceptive supplies has also been shown to result in fertility decline.

Good relationship of field workers (FWs) with clients is another factor that has been postulated to have a net incremental effect on contraceptive use.

One factor that can powerfully influence contraceptive adoption behaviour, and that has not been adequately studied, is the involvement and support of the political leadership. Their involvement is important because of their perceived status. Evidence suggests that a status-oriented approach can be effective in persuading clients to adopt the means of family planning. For example, when FWs from well-respected and educated families replaced the traditional village-based workers (daits) in Bangladesh, this strategy may have been highly successful in achieving fertility decline. In India, a context similar to Bangladesh, it was found that the poor and lower class patronised their ideals and aspirations on those of the more powerful castes. This behaviour is attributable to emulation and aspiration effects. Although the caste system is not prevalent in Bangladesh, the poorer segments of the society are

likely to aspire to be like the influential individuals in the society. And the status of political leaders is likely to be high in the eyes of the clients. Consequently, by being directly involved with the programme, political leaders could inspire target clients to emulate them. Their involvement could, in essence, be a powerful motivator that can alleviate the "hesitance factor" of interested clients because political leaders can legitimise family planning. The involvement of political leaders can also signal to programme personnel, especially FWs, the seriousness attached to the programme. In turn, it could spur FWs to pursue their goals with greater commitment, dedication, and zeal.

This article is based on a study that examined how FWs view the involvement and support of the political leadership, and whether they feel that political leaders can strongly influence contraceptive adoption decisions in the country. If the political leadership stands strongly in support of family planning and demonstrates its involvement with the pro-

gramme by reaching out to clients more directly, it can have positive effects. If, however, as pointed out by some researchers, politicians view the family planning programme as a target for resource extraction and for distributing political patronage, the programme is bound to suffer. The government sponsored family planning programme in Korea, believed to be one of the most successful family planning programmes in the world because of the commitment and involvement of the political leaders, is a case in point. The views of FWs on this issue are examined for Bangladesh.

The views of the FWs were solicited especially because being involved with programme implementation, they are likely to provide reliable insights about the role and involvement of the political leadership. They are also likely to have accumulated invaluable experience and may be privy to insights that are not always apparent from client or administrative perspectives.

A survey was conducted among 155 FWs. The results

indicate that 51 per cent of the FWs disagreed that political leaders were serious about the family planning programme. Another 15 per cent remained neutral or undecided. Only 34 per cent of the responding FWs felt that political leaders were serious about the programme. Eighty eight per cent of the FWs, however, agreed that with more direct involvement of the political leaders, the family planning programme is likely to be more successful in attaining its goals. The lack of strong political support was corroborated by another question in which a large proportion of the FWs (88 per cent) responded that political support for the programme should be stronger.

Analyses were also conducted to test whether there were differences in opinions between genders, organization (GO vs NGO), and location of field work (urban vs non-urban). Male and female FWs differed significantly in their attitudes on the involvement of the political leaders. Female FWs felt more strongly that the involvement of political leaders with the family planning programme would add to the success of the family planning programme. FWs employed in

non-government organizations also felt more strongly than their GO counterparts that more direct involvement of political leaders would result in greater success of the programme. Attitudinal differences were also found between urban and rural-based FWs. Urban-based FWs felt the need for political support more strongly.

Apparently political leaders need to provide stronger and more effective support by being more directly involved with the various activities of the programme. This is not to say that political leaders are disinterested in the programme; what the FWs are saying is that with greater initiative and more visible involvement of the political leaders, programme performance can be improved in the country.

The findings urge political leaders to re-examine their commitment of support the family planning programme and their willingness to become more directly involved in motivating clients. If they lack the motivation and commitment to increase the efficacy of the programme, it does not bode well for the country's development efforts.

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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.

### BBC

Sir, What does BBC stand for? Yes, British Broadcasting Corporation. But that is the official name. It is run of a Royal Charter which is extended for a further period of 10 years from 1996. So for the next 12 years, there is little chance of its partial or total privatisation, as demanded by some British Conservative MPs. It is a British institution and it is for them to decide how to run it.

However, my problem is that I am compelled to listen to its Bengali Service on our FM Band even though I do not want it. I totally stopped listening to the Bengali programme when I heard from it that the death anniversary of Mr "Shurabordi" was held in Dhaka. London people said they received the said news from their Dhaka representative.

Yes, you have guessed it correctly. The BBC people sitting in London always select the news and relevant words thinking about their listeners in India (The Hindus of West Bengal used to write and pronounce the name of Mr H S Suhrawardy that way). They will never use an Arabic or Persian word even it widely used by the people of Bangladesh in their everyday conversation, although the English service, Urdu service and even Hindi service do not hesitate to use the correct words pronouncing correctly. For example, when after the Soviet pullout the Afghan freedom fighters were entering Kabul shouting "Allahu Akbar" the BBC English service pronounced it correctly, but its Bengali service described the event for its Indian listeners using the word "Isawr". Even the Bengali accent used in the

BBC programme is not that of the people of Bangladesh are used to. Let the BBC authorities listen to the news tape used by Mr Nurul Islam, a few days back, when the Israeli Enquiry Committee announced their findings regarding the Hebron massacre. That is the way Bengali is spoken here in Bangladesh. The difference may be compared with the Spanish spoken in Spain and that in Latin American countries.

For all this and other matters, I came to the conclusion that the BBC Bengali service is meant mainly for India but if the people of Bangladesh want to listen to it the BBC people will not object to it.

A few days back, in reply to a question of a Bangladeshi regarding the Kashmir dispute, the BBC gave Indian Government version only, that Kashmir within the Indian Union would prove the secular character of India, totally ignoring the UN Resolutions of the past and also the commitments of the then Indian Prime Minister Mr Nehru to that world body. Further, in another broadcast, the Bengali service merely read out the threats of the party newspaper of the West Bengal Government, if any thing happened to their Bangladeshi darling. On the same date they informed us about an editorial comment in the London Times criticizing the Bangladesh Government for taking steps regarding the book "Lajja". BBC Bengali Service did not give us any further information regarding the said editorial.

In reality the BBC now stands for say, Bharat Betar Centre, as one may think appropriate, and I think their F M Band broadcast should be stopped in Bangladesh immediately.

The F M Band can be used as Radio School for higher education.

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### II

Sir, For really a very long time I am listening to BBC and watching BBC programme on TV for primarily a neutral and instant reporting on all important events anywhere in the world. I sincerely admired its neutral and objective reporting.

But, of late, I have developed a different opinion about BBC's reporting, particularly on the sub-continent events. There appears to be a very pronounced tilt towards Indian interest vis-a-vis other countries of the sub-continent. Now I would like to mention about a news item on Bangladesh where some section of India's politicians, intelligentsia and journalists have shown over-reaction and partisan views. While broadcasting the news on Taslima Nasreen BBC appeared to have been influenced quite a bit. It followed the same view that was Indian. Such reporting from BBC certainly was not expected.

Firstly, could not BBC find an item of news on Bangladesh which affects the nation both economically and politically? In the choice of news item on Bangladesh BBC's partisan view is quite pronounced. It was expected of BBC to select an item of vital national interest to Bangladeshis. Say, the water problem of Bangladesh where all symptoms of desertification prevail and this is inflicting considerable human sufferings besides economic ruin. Water problem of Bangladesh is also an international issue as all countries through which a river flows have the same right to its use irrespective of its source of origin. Again, the water issue is so vital not only to Bangladesh but also to Nepal and India itself. But, unfortunately, BBC does not probably consider it important enough than Taslima Nasreen. What a

pit? Again, we all look towards the United Kingdom for example in the practice of parliamentary democracy. Bangladesh, while following the British system is rather in amess because of local problems. This problem is affecting the national life. Could not this impasse on democratic practice have been a better news item than Taslima Nasreen? It was expected that BBC should have shown its true (neutral) character while selecting a topic on Bangladesh.

AHMAM  
DOHS, Dhaka.

### The odd one in!

Sir, Apart from EU Commission President's omni presence, Russian President's attendance at the G-7 summit can be regarded as very deserving in the context of the present global scenario.

The positive indications of this neo-bourgeoisie state's commercial outlook rapidly modifying into capitalist posture should have qualified this space-dwelling nation by now for induction in the mightiest group on earth.

The only strong factor that stands out on the possibility of inclusion of capitalist Russia in the group of the world's most industrially advanced countries is the aids-recipient status of the superpower.

The latest grand conference in Italy may not be delivering anything revolutionary for all the words, but the usual expectations of something more something new from the super-rich ones should be fertilizing the productive bases among the fast developing nations.

Furthermore, the frequent monitoring of whether the whole world, specifically Third World, is optimally benefitting from their rendezvous, which is popularly believed to be, can be an additional value-added topic for the regulators of the terrestrial destiny.

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## OPINION

### Freedom of Press

In a democratic country freedom of press is a sine qua non and prerequisite for the system to work. However, it does not imply or give licence to the press — the Fourth Estate — to write and publish anything which is libelous, seditious, blasphemous and scandalous.

Apart from the mini screen and radio, the print media is fortunately in the hands of private entrepreneurs. There are apparently three categories of newspapers, weeklies, journals in Bangladesh. One group is tied to the apron-strings of four mainstream political parties seemingly having little urge for the overall progress and prosperity of the nation. They only have a tilt to their own party interest. Another group toes the line of the ruling party perhaps do get as many government advertisements as possible. Then, there is, however, another group which is neutral, and independent, but they possibly can't write on or point out all the malpractices in the government apparatus lest the government screams blue and show them the red card!

In fact, the press in our country is not so free as it should have been in a democratic country. There are a very marginal number of newspapers and journalists in our country, who like to write and publish on any such subjects as the handsome pay and allowances and benefits including red passport, duty free car, grandiose house allowance etc enjoyed by our elected representatives in the Jatiya Sangsad and about top-heavy staff of the PM. They don't write on such matters lest they incur the wrath of the government. The expenditure of the PM's establishment may be minimised in a poor country like ours and the opposition MPs should have foregone their salaries etc since March

because of their continued absence from Jatiya Sangsad.

Attacks on newspaper premises, arrest of editors on one hand and talk about freedoms of press and the right to freedom of expression as in a democracy are very contradictory exercises.

Just sometime back such incidents have occurred. They add to the impression that the press, despite the claims made that it is free, is yet far from being so and that the ghost of the past seems to haunt it to make those running the national media feel anything but secure. This is not to say that the editors or staff of a newspaper are above the law and could get away with violating the national and international norms and laws that sustain a free democratic press.

The increasing proneness to use brute force, to intimidate the press has not only enhanced the feeling of insecurity among journalists but threatens to be a major obstacle to the projection of the truth which is the soul of a free press. The free press as it is operating, say, in India, to say nothing of the standard of freedom of American or British press, strengthens, rather than weakens the foundation of democracy and is the secret of its socio political stability, despite the diversity of races and languages, etc.

Only two journalists of Washington Post in the seventies unearthed the noted Watergate scandal which ultimately brought down the late Richard Nixon from presidency. Yet neither the Washington Post was banned, nor its premises was attacked. No personal attacks were carried out on those two journalists either. We intend to have such kind of freedom of press in our country.

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