

New Ideas Needed to Resolve Kashmir Issue

Prakash Chandra writes from New Delhi

Families lined up against the wall and searched as part of security measures adopted to counter the insurgents reminded people of British troops searching Indian homes and maltreating civilians.

Stand-off and Prices

We may have run out of luck with the sustained stability in rice prices. What a loosening of a grip this is over the market of daily provisions!

A Daily Star market survey report underlined this hard fact the other day. Both coarse and fine quality rice are selling dearer by Tk two to four per kg compared with their more or less static prices some weeks ago.

At the wholesalers' points the stock positions were good but the retailers took advantage of the transportation dislocation caused by hartals that came in a row.

So, this is a very wrong time for political agitation by the opposition and physical resistance against it by the ruling party.

The prices have hardly ever been a respecter of budgetary discipline. While the budget for the current year held out some concrete hopes for a fall in the prices of many daily necessities by reason of the reductions made in the duties structure, the desired outcome has evidently eluded us.

The opposition, too, has a role here to pinpoint why the prices are rising particularly in the constituencies they represent, organising consumer resistance and consulting with the trade and industry leaders as a normal function to ensure their cooperation in stabilising the prices at a tolerable level.

Haiti Awaits Invasion

Haiti's military strongman Raul Cedras is no Saddam Hussein. But he has been acting like the Iraqi president before the US-led multinational troops' invasion.

US President Clinton who has taken the initiative to invade Haiti does not want to give any more time to the military leaders in the tiny Caribbean country with only 300,000-strong population.

We also share President Clinton's concern for the establishment of democracy in Haiti as also elsewhere. But what we find unacceptable is the inconsistent policing role of both the US and the United Nations.

As the UN-sponsored invasion looks like taking place any movement this week, we cannot help asking the question if the same standard is being applied in case of similar rejection of popular mandate or even more atrocious and deplorable crimes.

Countries around the world are sending troops because they considered it a principled stand. The multinational force is going to take part in the operations under the UN Security Council Resolution Number 940.

ANY countries are advising India and Pakistan to develop a new policy on Kashmir in line with international opinion that supports a peaceful settlement of the protracted conflict.

They propose that the two countries explore other solutions to the problem, such as resolving it through peaceful negotiations.

Three wars have shown that violent action is futile, they point out.

The western powers, including the United States and Great Britain, are anxious to see the end of the Kashmir dispute that has claimed more than 7,500 lives.

At one stage, the Clinton administration was clearly sympathetic to India. It seemed to share the Indian view on the role of Pakistan in fomenting terrorism in Kashmir.

But now, the Americans are insisting that India must hold tripartite talks with Pakistan.

including the Kashmiri insurgents.

In the past, the Americans also supported Pakistan. Although this has already stopped, the Pakistani military top brass still maintain very good working relations with the Pentagon.

However, now Washington is demanding new initiatives from New Delhi and Islamabad to break the Kashmir impasse, the chief source of destabilization in the subcontinent.

One senior western official suggests a Bhutan-type sovereignty for Kashmir. This means that India could handle the defence and external affairs of a new state of Kashmir, comprising both the Indian side and the Pakistan occupied state.

Some analysts say another solution would be to recognize the international boundary between Pakistan-occupied and Indian Kashmir.

But this proposed partition of the disputed state is being

rejected by the fundamentalist Hindu party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which considers such formula a sell-out to the West and to Pakistan.

Many Pakistani officials privately concede that the only solution is to have an independent state comprising the two Kashmiris, whose frontiers could be guaranteed by India and Pakistan.

The Kashmiri people have been angered and estranged from the Indian government ever since the Muslim insurgency began in 1989.

Events connected with the insurgency brought back bitter memories of what happened in 1942. Families lined up against the wall and searched as part

of security measures adopted to counter the insurgents reminded people of British troops searching Indian homes and maltreating civilians. It is impossible for the Kashmiris to forgive and forget their humiliation in the hands of the Indian Border Security Force.

Border security has become India's most rapidly-growing industry. According to one conservative estimate, New Delhi is spending a minimum of 30,000 million rupees (US \$957 million) annually on these forces.

Policy analysts recognize the fact that Pakistan has scored not only propaganda advantages in Kashmir. It seems to have put a fairly logical case, although and foreign governments have backed India in its argument that Islamabad has been backing the terrorists with arms.

Many independent observers believe that the Hazratbal incident, where in the Indian Army and other security forces laid siege on the famous Muslim shrine supposedly because of fears that the

militants boled up inside might take some drastic action, had been carefully staged by Kashmiris anxious to secure international recognition of their homeland's problem.

Some policy analysts, thus, feel that the withdrawal of the militants from the Hazratbal shrine need not be considered a great victory for the Indian Army and the Border Security Force.

It was Indian Prime Minister Rao who initiated talks with Pakistan on Kashmir that reopened at the start of the year. He proposed the talks in his congratulatory message to Ms Bhutto after the polls.

He explains: "I would like to suggest that wide-ranging and sustained bilateral discussions commence between India and Pakistan as early as possible, the objective being to progressively normalize relations between our two

countries." Madam Bhutto, for her part, gave the assurance that her government is prepared to engage in serious and purposeful discussions in order to resolve this issue as well as other problems between our two countries through peaceful negotiations.

But recently, Ms Bhutto has gone all out to lambast India for the alleged repression in Kashmir and New Delhi's failure to respond to international opinion on what Pakistan perceives to be another Bosnia.

The Pakistani Prime Minister has spared no efforts to link the Kashmir problem with the hot nuclear issue. Pakistani generals and some policy-makers would like India to believe that the next round of war between the two countries could be nuclear.

VOTERS lists are the only national documents which contain the names and addresses of largest number of citizens of our country. These important documents prepared and compiled by the Election Commission Secretariat at a huge cost are now used for only one purpose.

Voters list now contains (1) name of the voter, (2) father's or husband's name, (3) age, (4) profession, (5) address.

Age and Profession

The above particulars are not adequate or specific to make voters list a multi-purpose document. Age is uncertain, but the date of birth is certain. Asking a villager or a neighbour, an enumerator may give the age of a voter, but it is more difficult to know the date of birth.

Profession of the voter is written in the voters lists as service/agriculture/business/teaching, etc. It is easy to provide false information about a profession by stating 'service'.

For A Multipurpose Voters List

by A Z M Shamsul Alam

But if exact designation, name and address and telephone number of the organisation is wanted to be recorded in the information collection sheet, it would be difficult to record without visiting the household.

Addresses also are inadequate. With amendment in the forms used for collection of information for voters, the voters lists could be improved and made a national manpower register of the adults of 18 years old and above.

Education

In order to make voters list a multi-purpose document, the quality of the voters list should be improved with additions in the voter information collection forms. For instance, if we include in the voters list, academic qualification with year, the educational level of the adult population in a locality can be understood from the voters list.

Particulars of academic qualification may be collected from neighbours, but the year of obtaining the last academic degree is more difficult to collect without asking the persons concerned.

Number of educated people in the electoral area with the

level of education will enable the persons involved in mass literacy programme to motivate educated persons and thrust responsibility on them for removing the illiteracy of the uneducated people.

Contact with educated persons will be helpful for identifying the volunteers for social work in the locality.

Help for the NGOs

The non-government organisations (NGOs) organise various development programmes in different regions and localities. It becomes easier for them to contact appropriate persons, if, in the voters list academic qualifications, age, professional designations, complete address etc. of the citizens are recorded.

If telephone numbers of the voters are recorded, contact and verification become easier. While preparing the voters list in future, provision may be kept for recording the

telephone numbers, if any, of the voters.

Cooperation

If any voters list is prepared with care and cautions, it can be used by the cooperative department staff as well. If the officers of cooperative department want to organise a cooperative society in any field of activity, they can easily contact the concerned persons after the perusal of the voters list which would contain the names of the voters with academic qualifications, specific descriptions of professions and designations etc.

Social Welfare

If the addresses of the voters are correct and clear, they can be easily located, and contact with the voters gets easier. Officers and personnel of Social Welfare Department can establish contact with citizens at ease or without any hindrance. Professional address and positions, academic qualification etc may be helpful

to assess their attitude and ability to render community services.

Agriculture/Horticulture/Tree plantation/Pisciculture/Livestock

If some officers of developmental departments are willing to motivate citizens for improved method of cultivation, tree plantation, horticulture and kitchen-gardening, pisciculture, dairy farming etc, they can contact them after the perusal of voters list. Well-prepared voters lists make things easier for the functionaries of various developmental departments.

Relief Distribution

If any organisation wants to distribute relief to the sufferers of natural disasters such as cyclone, flood, epidemic or human-created disasters such as fire, rioting etc, the voters list can serve as a guide. Highly qualified educated people in the locality can be contacted and their views may be sought about the affected and deserving citizens. Retired persons can also be given some responsibilities.

Poverty Alleviation

If from the professional de-

scription, the number of unemployed persons in a locality or mohalla appears to be large, appropriate poverty alleviation programme for the uneducated unemployed can be thought of.

Law and Order

Educated and the unemployed adults could be sources of social unrest and problem in the urban areas. Law enforcing authorities may be cautious about such people.

Marital description can also be recorded in the voters list or can be kept at least in the information collection forms. If a service holder or a peace loving person wants to rent a house, he would obviously try to avoid a locality having many unmarried, educated but unemployed youth in the adjacent houses.

Preparation of the next country-wide voters list may cost our government around Tk 50 crore. A document compiled and prepared at such a huge cost should be comprehensive and must contain much more information than we have at present. Now, the credibility of the voters list is very poor because of the existence of fictitious names. If additional and more specific particulars are added in the information collection sheet, the extent of false information would be reduced.

Upgrading Laws and Forces to Protect Markets

by Nizam Ahmad

ALTHOUGH every country thinks it is unique, no country is unique. There are laws of Economics just as there are laws of Physics, and they apply whether you are talking about Kazakhstan or whether you are talking of Sichuan. These are the remarks of Milton Friedman, the 1976 Nobel laureate in Economic Science, the Professor of the Chicago School of Economic Thought, the man who inspired Reagan and Thatcher, in a question and answer session in Hong Kong in 1993.

The promise of simple dal and bhat or, rice and fish, may be the end of an economy

controlled by the State but, a decontrolled and liberalised market condition creates a burst of commercial, industrial, financial and technological activity as presently witnessed in Southern China. But liberalised economies risk extreme lawlessness and disorder. South China, capitalist Russia or disorderly tracts in the USA, Italy, UK, Japan etc, are good examples.

In New York or Naples, their constitution or public opinion restricts liberal use of

their country's modern armies to decriminalise their markets. Their civil law enforcing agencies were long deprived of state funds grimly mobilised to militarily crush Marxism. Kidnapping for ransom is a successful underworld business in Bombay where the ganglords are too aware and informed of real estate property boom and profits.

Mainland China indiscriminately practices executions of criminals in their one party dictatorial system. In the modern sensitive world, executions are merciless and often the real criminals escape punishment as they are clever enough to disappear from the scene of crime leaving the innocents to be executed.

trade and associated criminalisation. With protectionism and high tariff walls broken, today's smugglers will be tomorrow's sea pirates, urban mafias, highway robbers, possessing extra-ordinary armed organisations which only the constitutional-institutional State military can counter and crush. It would demand substantial resources and years to train and equip our police forces only to return to markets emptied of honest producers and investors.

This new economic role of the Third World military as an extended responsibility will provide security, discipline and confidence a free market democracy requires in devel-

oped or developing countries. Past political dangers, from the left and the right, had provoked Third World military takeovers while ambitions of power and greed had prolonged military rules wasting opportunities for the democratisation of political and economic thinking and practice.

We must put in efforts now, to redesign our institutions (laws and forces) to deter such threats or, be once again dominated by the underworld criminalisation of our markets. This new economic role of the Third World military as an extended responsibility will provide security, discipline and confidence a free market democracy requires in devel-

opment. The black side of the picture will be the proportionate increase in economic piracy and terrorism. We must put in efforts now, to redesign our institutions (laws and forces) to deter such threats or, be once again dominated by the underworld criminalisation of our markets. This new economic role of the Third World military as an extended responsibility will provide security, discipline and confidence a free market democracy requires in devel-

The writer is Executive Chairman, MOER.

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.

Hasina and British MPs

Sir, I was amused to read in your newspaper (13.9.94) a "clarification" issued by Mr S A M S Kibria on some derogatory comments by his party chief, Sheikh Hasina, on the British parliamentary members who visited Bangladesh last week.

Hasina was clearly angry over their comments that a caretaker government was an absurd opposition demand in a democratic polity. She therefore labelled them as being brought in by the ruling party at the cost of public money to secure a certificate.

Hasina might have realised by hindsight that she had talked too much. She, therefore, asked Kibria to issue a clarification, which was in fact a rejoinder. But what kind of

black and the white.

The truth of the matter is that Hasina's comments betrays the quality of leader that she is, no matter how much bureaucratise he (Kibria) and some of his retired civil service colleagues endeavour to apply to make the black white.

Mohammad Fasihuddin Ahmad 26/2 Pallabi, Dhaka

The political impasse, which way out?

Sir, Congratulations for your Editorial "This Brinkmanship may Easily go Out of Hand," Sept 12. Nothing is more relevant, pertinent and burning as the on-going political movement which is choking our nascent economy. It seems that the political parties are after their arrogance rather than thinking about the people.

Kibria has tried his best to fudge this issue with slipshod explanations. I am sure he realises that this exercise is useless because the people in this country are quite capable of distinguishing between the

their voting rights if they go unfed and find no earning source. At the same time, may I pose a question to the ruling party? Now it seems they are shedding all their tears for the toiling masses; what have they done for them soon after getting elected? In this regard, I like to bring to their notice a news that old Mahathir is not afraid to give early elections.

As Mahathir's party has done a lot for the Malaysian economy and for the Malaysians so they are not afraid to face any early elections.

Your newspaper also carried an article on "Infrastructure for Economic Development" on the same day. The subject should also be a pointer for the political parties that where we stand regarding providing infrastructural facilities for our people and also the rating (therein) provides a pen picture of economic development.

Do our politicians want our 120 million people wait to see our position slide from 146th to 200th in the HDI just because of their political squabble? Let the good senses of our politicians prevail before our starved people wait to see this

country turned into Somalia or Rwanda. The WDR report contains some vital statistics which whip the conscience of the concerned citizens. It is high time to make our politicians think for the economic thrust.

It is hard to believe that there are any group or private citizens who have no political bias or are not politically inclined to one party or another. If the present movement is for a neutral caretaker government to supervise an election, I believe there also we may face the difficulty of getting one without any political inclination.

So the next question is, which way out? I would suggest that why not invite the UN to supervise a real neutral election. As the UN only has proven record of supervising neutral, fair election as they have done it in South Africa and Cambodia.

In this respect I like to request the editors of our news papers to form a group and meet the Honourable Prime Minister and also the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and try to get their

personal views on the present crisis and organize another big debate as it seems one debate did not bring them to their senses.

As it seems more than obvious that they would not participate in any forum, both the leaders may be requested to nominate representative to debate on the political future of our country and kindly make sure that our honourable Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition are in the front row of spectators listeners.

If our politicians and political parties fail to come to terms regarding future of the people and this country, I think we should give a second thought and say no to any politicians during the next election.

Let our politicians rise to the occasion so that we can start appreciating their prudence, put our trust in them, feel proud about them and accept them as our leaders. Let them now draw line between personal gains and the future of 120 million people.

Nasim Ibn Samad 17/12 Pallabi R/A, Dhaka-1221