

## City's Problems Growing Out of Hand

There is increasing sign that Dhaka city's problems are growing out of hand. There is garbage all around, law and order situation has deteriorated beyond acceptable limit, water, sewerage, electricity, drainage and all other related services are becoming undependable. In fact people are beginning to wonder what is happening to all the urban, municipal and other taxes they are paying. On the one hand taxes are going up, and on the other, quality of service is on a slide down. The latest, and perhaps the most visible urban problem that is adding to our troubles is traffic. City traffic has become impossible, to put it in one word. There is of course the unbridled growth of rickshaws which we talk about, but do nothing to address it. There is however another problem which is adding to our traffic congestion, and that is the unplanned, and often unauthorised bus stands and bus terminals which have been set up in various busy parts of important sheets of the city.

The recent case of nine deaths, while waiting in the bus terminal of the Saudia bus service has brought the problem to a head. The question is who authorises the setting up of bus terminals, who supervises them as to whether or not they are living up to the required standard, and finally who to go to in case of any infringement of the rules? The City Corporation is obviously the main body concerned. Speaking to a Bangla paper the city Mayor Mohammed Hanif said that a major bus terminal in the Fakirapool area was unauthorised. But having expressed this view he was not able to say what steps he will take against the offenders. There are several such instances of bus terminals being set up without any consideration either of traffic or of convenience of the passengers. This "do as you please" attitude pervades into many other areas of our city life like building shopping centres or big markets without permission, setting up faceries and workshops in places earmarked only for residential or office purposes.

We appeal to our first ever elected Mayor, please do something about the city before it really falls into pieces. Perhaps you can start by organising wide ranging "talk to the people" seminars and hear what your electorate has to say. Such a series of informal talks will generate a lot of fresh ideas which the high paid consultants may not be able to suggest. We need some serious thinking to do about our city, and we need to do it immediately.

## Stranded Pakistanis Face Uncertain Future

The stranded Pakistanis — popularly known as Biharis — are fighting an almost losing battle. Agreements reached between Bangladesh and Pakistan on their repatriation have time and again been stalled. But once the prospect of the stranded Pakistanis making it to their homeland looked quite bright. Even the return of 325 of these people from Bangladesh to Pakistan marked the beginning of the process of their repatriation. But a series of developments in Pakistan brought an abrupt end to that happy tiding for the rest of the two and half lakhs of such people.

Subsequent negotiations at ministerial levels on two occasions rekindled the hope but the agreed time limit for resuming the process is about to pass out. By this December the repatriation should have restarted. Frustrated and abandoned, the Biharis now have every reason to be desperate. On Monday they brought out a rally in the city and disclosed their plan to go for a self-immolation programme in January next if the repatriation is not resumed by this month. They want the implementation of the Bangladesh-Pakistan joint declaration of last August.

Reportedly, however, the government of Benazir Bhutto is not keen to accept the stranded Pakistanis. It was her predecessor Nawaz Sharif who was pledge-bound to take them back. But his defeat in the election and the death of Golam Haider Wyne have upset all calculation. Actually it was this former governor who took active interest in the matter. He made lands for settlement of the repatriated Pakistanis available in Mian Chhunnun. What politics worked behind is none of our concern. We are rather interested in the smooth return of the refugees to Pakistan.

For long 23 years these stranded Pakistanis have been living in a country they do not belong to. They themselves consider that their future lies with Pakistan — the land of their origin. They cannot be denied the right to get back home.

## Tampering with Reproduction

Authorities may come and go in a long historical procession, but the mosquitoes are there to permanently stay. This is how the relations between the city fathers and mosquitoes and between the tiny stinging insects and their victims — here the city dwellers — can be aptly summarised. Swarms of mosquitoes are now invading the citizens as soon as the sun goes down. But how come it that the mosquitoes prove so invincible. With a brief life span, they should have been the most vulnerable of human enemies. But actually they continue to pose a growing threat to city people's peaceful existence.

For the insects themselves this is no miracle. The answer to their sustaining biting power lies in the enormous capacity for proliferation. One female mosquito lays millions of eggs to supplant the extremely short life span of the species. To curb their menace therefore there is a need to attack this highly breeding potential. The traditional means to deal with this is to make sure that they are not left with any easy breeding grounds. In fact, our city fathers have long been trying this method with relative success. But still such efforts cannot be expected to be fail-safe. A city as large as this and as unplanned as it is cannot get rid of every breeding place.

Perhaps a scientific method now being applied to pest control could properly deal with the threat from these nasty insects. It is nothing but a tampering with the reproductive process of the insects. If the male of the mosquitoes can be made impotent or the female fertility can be reduced to a negligible level, controlling mosquitoes can be easy and simple. To do that, however, there is a need for research and experiments. Bangladesh alone cannot pool enough resources for such extensive and costly studies. Maybe, international agencies can think of taking up such a responsibility.

In a recent editorial this paper commented that "we are optimistic about a negotiated solution to the present crisis, because we are afraid to be pessimistic". To put bluntly, we are afraid of what we see as consequences of an all out fight between the opposition and the ruling party. We can see perhaps more than our politicians as to the dangers that stares us in the face. With the resignation of the opposition MPs fixed for 27th of this month, and the utterly irresponsible threats of three days continuous hartal, and other types of agitation programmes to start from the following day to render our civic and political life unbearable, a solution to the present crisis has become a matter of immediate concern for us.

After a careful reading of what the leaders of the two sides have been recently saying, and on an indepth study of what has so far been agreed upon by the two sides, we feel convinced that an amicable solution can be reached of the current political crisis. However, for that to happen, our politicians from the two camps will have to stop focusing on their differences and take a stock of what has so far been achieved through negotiations. If they do so, they will immediately see that they have come a long way since the start. What remains is in fact, only one issue - that of the role of the incumbent Prime Minister during the 45 days prior to and during the elections. This issue also can be solved keeping the core demands of both sides intact.

Let us take stock of where we are. As a result of the negotiations between the BNP and the combined opposition, we have the following agreements:

a) That, some sort of special arrangement needs to be made about the composition and running of the government, during a period of 45 days before and during the election, to ensure that no party has any advantage to use the government machinery to influence the elections.

b) That, a Parliamentary Committee, headed by a speaker and five MPs each from the treasury and the opposition benches, will be formed to suggest electoral reforms, including identity cards for the voters, and formulate a code of conduct for political parties, including strict norms for public disclosures of election funding both for the individual and the party.

c) That, a thorough reform of the Election Commission will take place to make it as powerful and independent of the government as is necessary to ensure free and fair polls.

Of the above three critical areas, near identity of views exist about (b) and (c). It is only (a) that we are stuck with. Here also a great hurdle has been crossed. Both sides have

# If it is after Her Term, then the Prime Minister should Agree

*Imagine that the Prime Minister goes on the national TV and says that because "I want the welfare of the people, I want peace. I am worried about the possibility of loss of life and property, of lawlessness and the consequent civic strife — for all these reasons, after I finish my term, I will not head the government that will supervise the next election. In exchange I expect the opposition to return to the parliament and participate in a collective effort to build the country till the next general elections." Such a speech by the Prime Minister will show that she truly cares about the welfare of the people, and that she can take any challenge from the opposition.*

agreed as to the need for a special arrangement. What remains to be agreed upon is the form of that special arrangement. The government, by suggesting a ten Member multi-party interim government, with a figurehead Prime Minister, has already agreed to the opposition demand that the normal structure of the government will be changed to hold the elections.

I repeat, the difference that remains is a small, but critical. The opposition wants the interim government to be under non-partisan and neutral people. The government wants it under the incumbent Prime Minister and consisting of party people from both sides. There is sufficient indication from the opposition camp that they will accept the multi party government formula if Begum Zia does not head it. This leaves only one unresolved issue, that of the role of Begum Khaleda Zia in the government which will conduct the elections.

As for Begum Zia, she has very rightly pointed out that she will not allow herself to be pushed aside by street agitation because she has been elected to serve a five year term. She also rightly said that during her TERM, she cannot agree that non-elected people should replace a government made of the elected representatives of the people.

The word TERM is of crucial importance here.

Let us now move to what the opposition is saying. In an interview with this paper earlier, and recently repeated in another interview in Bhorer Kajog, Md. Nasim, the Chief Whip of the Opposition said that the "Caretaker government, as they propose, will supervise the elections, after the completion of the full term of the present government... If we take this as the official position of the Opposition, then much of the objection of the BNP is taken care off. If the opposition is talking about the period after five years, which is after the period for which this government has been elected, then Begum Zia's point that nobody can force her to quit before her TERM is over, is fully met. One minute after that period she is no longer the elected prime minister of the country.

The Constitutional provision states that on completion of five years the parliament is automatically dissolved, and the government ceases to hold office. At that stage the President will call upon the PM to continue on an interim basis till the next election is held, and a new government is brought to office.

So now the question is, will Begum Zia, review her position and agree, not to head the interim government after the expiry of her TERM. Since the opposition's point hinges on that one issue, and as the Prime Minister no longer retains her elected status, then would it not be wise for Begum Zia not to insist on heading the interim government which holds office, not in an elected capacity but more on the basis of norm and practice. We agree that it would be better if we could fulfill not only the

tute of the PM. We would like to suggest a different approach - to look at the present crisis as a political opportunity, and react as such. It is our view that at this moment BNP has much more to gain from a final concession, than by standing their ground and pushing the country towards strife and violence.

Let us look at what the BNP has already agreed to: 1) The ruling party has conceded to a multi-party government, consisting of five cabinet members from the opposition and five from the BNP, including the PM. 2) It has agreed that during the 45 days of this government the PM will be only a figurehead, without any executive power. 3) It has also agreed that in that multi-party cabinet, the decisions will be by majority vote, meaning that the PM cannot take any decision without at least one from

in power, there will never be a free and fair election and thereby lessen the impact of her victory. If she loses then she runs the risk of critics saying that she was so unpopular that even with the PM's chair to back her, she could not win. In addition if she remains the PM during the election, we in the media and the public in general (who are traditionally opposition minded anyway) are more likely to be critical of her, and watch her every move - is she misusing official power, transport, telephone, government resources, etc. Did she call any district level officials for party work? There will always be speculation about her using governmental power for election purposes. So why should she take all that risk? What for?

But instead of it all, can she not take a totally different line. Imagine that the Prime Minister goes on the national TV and says that because "I want the welfare of the people, I want peace. I am worried about the possibility of loss of life and property, of lawlessness and the consequent civic strife — for all these reasons, after I finish my term, I will not head the government that will supervise the next election. In exchange I expect the opposition to return to the parliament and participate in a collective effort to build the country till the next general elections." Such a speech by the Prime Minister will show that she truly cares about the welfare of the people, and that she can take any challenge from the opposition.

The most important thing is that such a move will give Begum Zia's government one full year of undisturbed administration during which time she can improve her government's performance and win the heart of the voters. The opposition, on its part, will also do everything to win the voters to its side, and we will have a competition of constructive politics for one year. This will change the very nature of our politics. Not to mention that the world will see that we can solve our problems, lead our people, strengthen our democracy and move forward. This will greatly increase our attractiveness to foreign investors. Most impor-

## The Third View by Mahfuz Anam

letter, but also the spirit of the Constitutional provision. However, since a controversy exists, and since our immediate future drift, either towards chaos or towards a peaceful settlement, hinges on this one point, then can we not expect Begum Zia not to occupy a non-elected office for 45 days for the sake of peace and for the good of the country?

The fact is that ultimately it will have to be one of the two leaders-Khaleda or Hasina-who will have to make the last move. There is no question that as the elected Prime Minister, at this point in time, Begum Zia is by far the greater and more important leader in the country. Therefore, at this moment of political crisis, the nation looks far more to her, rather than to Sheikh Hasina, for any resolution of the crisis. Therefore, it will have to be the BNP party chief, who will have to make the next move.

Let us approach the subject from a positive angle. So far the BNP, we think has looked at the opposition's demand only in terms of threat, challenge and an attack on the party and the personal pres-

the opposition siding with her. This will further curtail whatever residue of power will remain with her. According to press reports of the latest initiative of Speaker Razzaq, there is talk of giving more portfolios, and the important ones, to the opposition so that the multi-party government overseeing the election, is balanced. This has not been agreed upon yet. It is another move towards the solution, and helps to assuage the fear of the opposition. So much is being done for the simple purpose of making the PM's presence in the interim government acceptable to the opposition. The question that we would like to pose is, is it worth it? With so much conceded, is it worth for the Prime Minister to occupy that powerless chair for 45 days? We think not. Isn't it much better for her, and also the party, for her to fully concentrate on the election campaign rather than be encumbered by the formalities and protocols of that 'empty chair'. And look at the risks she runs. If as the figurehead PM she wins, the opposition can always make a case that we have said it all along, that with her

# What is at Stake in Bosnia is Credibility of United Nations

by Abdul Hannan

**Non-action by Security Council lends substance to the suspicion expressed by a UN official who said 'If the French battalion and not the Bangladeshis was still in Bihac area the political pressure for decisive action would be overwhelming by now. (New York Times December 6, 1994)**

WHAT has been happening to United Nations' peacekeeping troops and observers in Bosnia may not be an auspicious prelude to the celebration of 50th anniversary of United Nations' performance next year.

The succession of UN brokered peace plan for Bosnia constantly being reviewed to appease Bosnian Serbs has been stymied by their intransigence.

The UN peacekeepers in Bosnia are being humbled, persecuted and badly bruised by Bosnian Serbs. The litany of humiliations suffered by the peacekeepers is dismal. They held 450 UN personnel as hostages and used some of them as human shields in runways of two airfields against potential NATO air strikes. The Bosnian Serbs have even threatened obstruction of withdrawal of UN peace keepers from Bosnia linking it with NATO although the unarmed UN personnel are not on an adversarial role but on a peace mission. The Bosnian Serbs are continuing with their ethnic pogrom by ruthless artillery tank and missile offensive against Bihac designated as a UN safe haven. Bangladeshi battalion which replaced a french battalion is now trapped in besieged Bihac cut off from

supplies of food, fuel and medical equipment. The death of a Bangladeshi soldier of cold, stress and lack of medical aid and the latest guided missile attack on Bangladeshi peacekeepers killing one and seriously wounding four others underscored the escalating danger to which the UN peacekeepers are exposed in Bosnia.

Yet, the peacekeepers are in Bosnia in pursuance of a resolution of the security council. The attack on UN peace keepers is an attack on the UN. The humiliation of the UN peacekeepers is an affront to the Security Council. Yet, so far the Security Council has not issued any ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs denouncing their abuse of UN peacekeepers in Bosnia. The statement by the Security Council President contained in Council document S/press/1994/79 on December 13 condemning the anti-tank missile attack on Bangladeshi peacekeepers, short of giving stern warning to the perpetrators of the crime is a poor substitute of a strong

Security Council resolution which is adopted after a full fledged Security Council debate and of little comfort to the peacekeepers trapped in a grim struggle of life and death. Why is this reticence of the Security Council? Is it because the Security Council, led by western powers, is selective in its dispensations? Or is it because some lives are more expendable than others? This non-action by Security Council lends substance to the suspicion expressed by a UN official who said 'If the French battalion and not the Bangladeshis was still in Bihac area the political pressure for decisive action would be overwhelming by now. (New York Times December 6, 1994)

For too long the befuddled NATO dithered, prevaricated, acted ineffectually and now have balked and talk of withdrawal of peace keepers from Bosnia. It is unbelievable that the NATO powers should capitulate and cower under threats and intimidation of a tiny 10th grade geographical absurdity which has come to be

known as Serbia held Bosnia. Yet while UN peace keepers are being grossly abused and smouldering Bosnia crying out for help, the world looks askance and its leaders working at cross purposes fiddle with empty rhetoric and quibbling about European security. The United States and its partners in NATO alliance may not be absolutely right to wash their hands off Bosnia saying that they have no security stake there. According to a western official quoted by the New York Times, Dec 6, the Serbian leader Radovan Karadzic sees the Serbian campaign as the last anti imperialist war in Europe and talks about having a mission to eradicate the last traces of ottoman Turkish empire in Europe". This statement combined with the Serbian leaders' recent threat that the United States will have to send 10,000 American troops to rescue 2000 Marines sent earlier to help evacuate the peace keepers, savours of militant nationalism of the demom of a chauvinist bent upon a wild rampage of racial

extermination and territorial expansion and foreshadows dark and sinister portents of future developments posing a potential risk of a wider conflict beyond the confines of Bosnia, threatening peace and stability in Europe.

Students of history are only too aware that it was Serbian Nationalism which precipitated the World War I when a Serbian nationalist assassinated the Austrian Arch Duke Francis Ferdinand. Mr Standley Hoffman, chairman of the Center of European Studies at Harvard has succinctly sounded the alarm bell when he wrote "a victorious Serbia could spread violence to Kosovo and Macedonia or Albania. There is still the danger of major international crisis in the Balkans provoking a showdown between Russia and NATO, a split between the western powers and increasing tension between West Europe and USA" (New York Times Op-ed page, Dec 4).

Nevertheless, above all, what is at stake in Bosnia is justice,

tantly will be rid of strikes and hartals for one year. We will all be winners. There will no losers if the Prime Minister makes such a speech.

The suggestion made by several bodies that the President could be asked to head the interim arrangement through a slight amendment to the Constitution, appears to us to be an arrangement which will be acceptable to all. The opposition can, perhaps, be persuaded to concede that they should accept the President instead of a neutral person.

There will be those who will consider this move as a sell out, or as going on bent knees to appease the opposition. Still others will say this will show the government to be ineffective and the Prime Minister to be weak and afraid.

All sorts of flattering and ego-appealing, bombastic words and slogans will be used against such an idea. It is our hope that Begum Zia will be able to see far beyond than these people. These are the moments that reveal the difference between an ordinary and an imaginative leader, between one who can see beyond the immediate future, one who can turn an adverse situation to one of advantage, one who looks like the peacemaker as against the one who is forcing the society towards strife. If leadership is for the welfare of the people, then at times it will mean risking losing power. But then if that leads to saving of lives and property, if it means avoiding conflict and lawlessness, then why can't we expect it from Begum Zia.

It may be asked that why are we asking her to make this move, and not Hasina. Simply because Begum Zia is the Prime Minister. Only she can decide whether or not to give up a meaningless Prime Ministership (which is what a non-executive PMship actually is) and create a new hope in the people and win over their hearts and mind through a leadership of sacrifice, reconciliation, accommodation and wanting nothing but the good of the country. In fact Sheikh Hasina has a distinct disadvantage in the fact that she can do nothing of the above. The move that we suggest will give a proactive image of the PM as against a re-active one.

We would like to conclude by saying that besides the opposition and the ruling party there is a third group. That is, we the voters. Regardless of what the other two groups are saying, we have a vested interest in ensuring the holding of a FREE and FAIR election. This feeling is universal, and goes beyond all party and group feelings. Whatever steps can be taken to ensure it, will get our automatic support, and whoever appears to do more for such an end will naturally get our backing.

international morality and the credibility of the United Nations. United Nations as a provider of political and economic security is the last hope and refuge of the developing countries and when needed, it has come handy to some western powers not infrequently in the past. It is their moral responsibility to help uphold and safeguard undiminished the prestige and honour of the United Nations and not allow its credibility to be eroded by the repulsive arrogance of stubbornly recalcitrant Bosnian Serbs. The question is not of dismantling of Bosnia or survival or extermination of Bosnian Muslims alone. The point at issue is the conflict between good and evil, right and wrong, justice and tyranny. The latter must not be allowed to succeed.

The United States as the only remaining superpower must play its global leadership role in concert with its NATO partners under the aegis of the UN to demonstratively assert once again that aggression will not stand, or else its will and resolve will be severely tested and credibility in shreds.

The author, now living in New York, is former Press Counsellor, Bangladesh Mission to the UN, New York.

## 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.

### An appeal to the Hon'ble PM

Sir, Six months ago Director General, Higher Education, transferred my husband Jayanta Bhushan Deb, lecturer in Botany, Eden Girls' College, Dhaka to Najipur Govt College which is at a most remote place in Noagaon district.

As a result of his transfer from Dhaka my family life has been totally disrupted. I am in a service in Dhaka city. My scholarship holder only son

reads in Dhaka city. My mother-in-law has been suffering from cerebral atrophy. She is under the treatment of Professor B Chowdhury and stays with me.

As such, a number of applications with strong recommendations of the Education Minister and Education Secretary were placed to the Director General, Higher Education for immediate retransfer of my husband to Dhaka, but all became fruitless, when, during

that time, there were 5-6 posts of lecturers fallen vacant in Dhaka city. I do not know nor I can guess any reason why the authority did not take any action for retransfer of my husband to Dhaka.

It is only painful to recall instances that some teachers and two principals of that college come back to Dhaka and other desired places with only a few months after they had been transferred to Najipur Govt College, Noagaon.

As we are small and helpless and have little or no influential connections so perhaps we could not draw the kind and sympathetic attention of big authorities. But our fortune and future fully depends on the growth of sympathy in the conscience of the authority.

Here, I feel inclined to recall that it was a standing

order of Shaheed President Zia that wife and husband would stay in same place though their services might be different and violate of this order were asked to report to the President's secretariat. The order perhaps still exists, and on the basis of this order too retransfer of my husband to Dhaka is quite legal and necessary.

In the helpless situation, often I tend to feel whether my husband is a victim of conspiracy!

My husband is being mentally disturbed too because he has to approach off and on to the authorities but fails to persuade them about his transfer. On the other hand due to exhaustion some times he becomes sick. Long 12-14 hours bus journey is unbearable to his health.

Therefore, I like to pray, through your esteemed columns, most humbly to the honourable Prime Minister to kindly transfer my husband immediately to Dhaka and save a helpless suffering family both legal and humanitarian ground.

Mrs Tripti Deb  
72, Shashahab Lane  
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### Recalling the great leader

Sir, 16th December, 1994 commemorated the 23rd year of liberation of Bangladesh. This day, 23 years ago, we freed the golden land from foreign rule and domination. On account of this historical day, this fertile, natural beautiful and petite land of ours, enjoys the much awaited respect of being an independent sovereign country.

Being liberated we share joys and sorrows. No matter how difficult the present circumstances be in general, there will soon come a generation to supersede. And when political instability and poverty be a talk of the past, like freedom, power, status, wealth and all that fancy houses and flashy cars were all most impossible dreams in the past.

And this is the moth when the nation needs to recall the great sacrifices and contributions of our great leader Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. May Allah rest his soul in peace. Without this great courage us leader, the land could still perhaps be in chains of foreign domination.

Moinuddin,  
Dhaka