

Dialogue with Private Sector

We are for as many consultation meetings between the government and the private sector as possibly be held before the national budget is announced in June.

It is in this light that the FBCI-NBR consultative meeting of last Sunday has to be seen. Not only are we for more such consultations between the private sector leaders and the government during the coming crucial weeks of budget-drafting we would also like to see some of the business community's suggestions incorporated in the draft document.

The tax base looks rather inelastic having been pulled to be farthest. Anyway, higher indirect taxes would be unwelcome to the general consumers who have grown wary of the burden passed on to them.

The government's fiscal management must be able to cope with an inflationary pressure that election-related expenses are bound to exert on the market.

With all our limitations, we can give the private sector a break, if freight, power, gas and telecommunications services are efficient enough.

Malaria Menace

Malaria, once thought to be eliminated, has once again staged a comeback. Finding itself in one of the high malaria-prone regions, Bangladesh faces the problem anew largely through the lack of awareness of the people about the menacing disease.

The lesson that gets lost in the hullabaloo is that eradication of malaria, which we recall with pride now, was made possible by a consistent and systematic campaign against it.

Drive for Software

In the age of computer or microchips, we find ourselves way behind the race. Sure enough, we are enjoying some of the benefits of this modern machine but this is very largely as a consumer of the sophisticated gadget.

Turkey and Kurds

Sir, This refers the article written by Mr. Muslehuddin Ahmad under his column "Spotlight on Middle East" published on 12th April in The Daily Star.

I would like to give some of the facts. It is simply because some of the western countries, however, trying to put pressure on Turkey to withdraw the forces from Northern Iraq, had proclaimed the PKK as

Thanks are due to those who are thinking of going for software manufacturing. Better late than never. The venture is not something beyond our capacity. It is good to know that the government has expressed its readiness to support the initiative.

I am a great admirer of Kuldip Nayar. He has to be counted among the great journalists, past and present, in this part of the world.

Hence, I was particularly happy to see his trenchant attack on the silly and petty game the authorities of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh have been playing in respect of issuance of visas to each other's citizens.

So rightly he says, "It is comical that anyone from anywhere can roam all over the country but when it comes to Pakistanis (lately the Bangladeshis also) the visa is given for three cities."

Bangladesh also seem to have joined recently in this comical, yet to the victims debasing and often painful, charade of tit-for-tat.

PRONOUNCED the two cities ring nearly similar. But in all other respects Oklahoma and Yokohama — one at the heart of the United States and another a port city of Japan — are vastly different.

What is however of grave import of the two incidents is the victimisation of innocent people and the concerned governments' inability to ensure adequate security for them.

Oklahoma was, however, not that lucky. It turned out to be the worst instance of terrorism America has ever suffered. At least 250 people perished in the inferno and many were missing in the debris.

UNDER THE OVERPASS

Why Blacks in US View OJ Trial as the Big Payback

RACE is front and centre in the O J Simpson trial — as it has been from the beginning. For months legal talking heads have insisted that "this case is not about race."

Most black folk are still living under the overpass: within sight of the fast track and the information super-highway and the Bill of Rights, but unable to gain full access.

Most white folks don't want to deal with this reality for fear it will spark a dialogue about the sorry history of black experiences in the legal system.

To the Editor...

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ERRATA

In the issue of April 30, the fourth line of the first editorial was inadvertently printed as "... the death of one party MP ..." instead of "... the death of the son of one party MP ..."

In the "Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia" column, published on the same day, the fourteenth line of second para was inadvertently printed as "... was cruelly killed ..." instead of "... allegedly killed ..."

The printer's errors, and the inconvenience caused to our esteemed readers, are regretted.

Only the Wearer Knows

I wonder how Kuldip Nayar could be so sure that the current deplorable situation arose largely or solely due to the machinations of the bureaucrats. How could he rule out the possibility that the bureaucrats are simply executing a political decision?

attend summits, conferences, workshops and seminars all aimed at promoting greater cooperation and friendship among South Asian countries.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose — it reminded me. The more that changes the more it is the same thing.

The year was 1963. Government of India was hosting the Asian Population Conference. I was serving as Director, Bureau of Statistics in the then East Pakistan and was included in the Pakistani delegation to attend the conference to be held in New Delhi.

I duly submitted application for visa to the then Indian Deputy High Commission with all official papers. First, there was a long wait presumably for clearance from Delhi. Then I

was told that since the conference is in Delhi, that is the only place for which I would get visa. On my way, I spent more than twelve hours, from nine in the morning to ten at night, waiting for the connecting flight sitting on a bench in the dirty and dusty Calcutta airport lounge. I was not even

allowed to step outside for ten minutes for a breath of fresh air.

And I am sure that there are many Indian citizens with similar tales to tell.

Reverting to the present, I find that Kuldip Nayar has solely and squarely blamed the bureaucrats, whether in the (Indian) home ministry or in the foreign ministry for causing this damage to India's im-

age. I wonder how he could be so sure that the current deplorable situation arose largely or solely due to the machinations of the bureaucrats.

Kuldip Nayar's own bitter experience as a bureaucrat of a sort has been vividly described in his 'India House' memories of eight months as the Indian High Commissioner in the UK.

One could have expected that this experience would have made him somewhat more understanding of the lots of bureaucrats who are often made the targets of uninformed criticisms without any right or means to defend themselves.

He was charged with being negligent in attending to the then Chief Justice of India who died of a heart-attack in London. There were angry criticisms in the newspapers and denunciations by the politicians.

Kuldip Nayar writes. However one lesson comes through clearly to me. It is all too easy to criticize the bureaucracy from outside whereas the reality inside can be very different.

He then goes on to quote from his letter to then Indian Foreign Minister. 'All too often a public servant has his name dragged through mud in parliament and in the press without being given a chance to explain his position. There should be some remedy for this....'

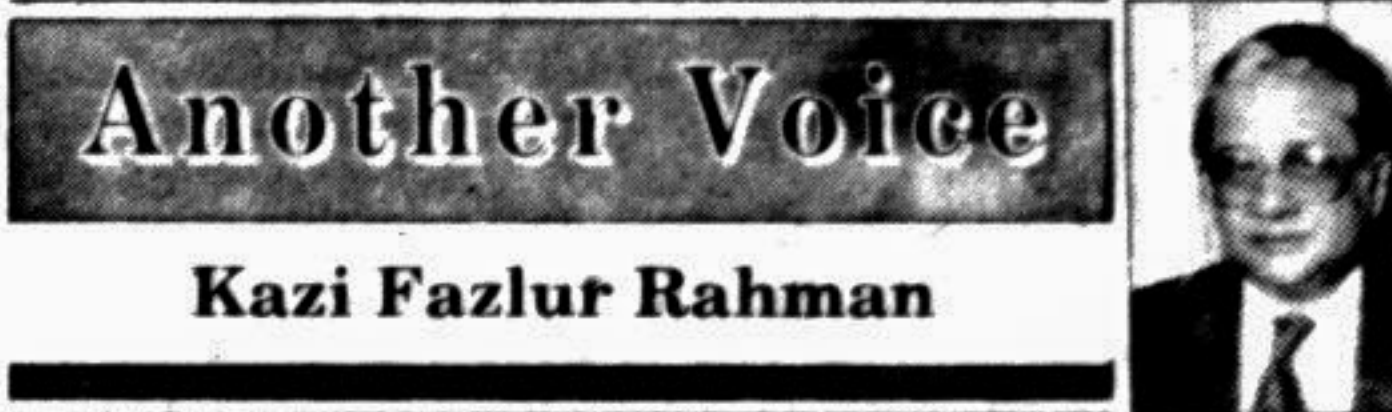
Perhaps Kuldip Nayar has unearthed irrefutable evidence that the relevant Ministers are totally ignorant of this disgraceful activities by the bureaucrats poisoning the relationships among the peoples of the neighbouring South Asian countries. In that case there

should be some positive action to restore sanity now that Kuldip Nayar has exposed the bureaucrats' game. It political masters really want it, they can surely overrule the bureaucrats. By all accounts, India's relationship with neighbours were much more positive and cordial in days of Janata rule in New Delhi with the same bureaucrats in the foreign and home ministries.

Frankly, I am not optimistic of any action arising from Kuldip Nayar's exposure of the perfidy of the bureaucrats.

God knows the bureaucrats of the South Asian countries, all supposedly carrying on the British colonial tradition, have been responsible for many misdeeds — some from motives of self-interest, some out of sheer malice, and yet some due to ignorance or stupidity.

As a former bureaucrat, I can only join Kuldip Nayar in his plaintive observation that "..... the reality inside can be very different" and add that only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches.



Another Voice Kazi Fazlur Rahman

STRING OF TERRORISM From Oklahoma to Yokohama

by Nilratan Halder

A sustained campaign of vendetta on the line of religion and ethnicity, as in Bosnia Herzegovina, and also on tribalism is now sweeping the globe. The aberrations are not all their own making. Part of the problem — might be a major one — has been created by default of government policies.

across the Atlantic came under senseless attacks on the same day. Or, there may indeed have been some remote link between the two. Whatever may be the case, at least a pattern of terrorist tactics is discernible in the two incidents.

However, even the most diabolic of deviationists and bizarre of cults know that such occasional attacks cannot bring governments to their knees or

help take over power from the long established system. Yet such attacks are carried out almost throughout the world. There is hardly any likelihood that the attackers do so only to derive sadistic pleasures.

At this point we need to remember two things: state-sponsored terrorism and the deep frustration of a large number of people on which some highly clever, crooked and even charismatic leaders cash in. Whether such acts are

perpetrated by political extremists, religious fundamentalists or obscurant cult sects, it exposes a broad avenue of unaddressed economic, social and human needs. This is where the crafty, wily and devilishly devoted can make deep inroad. It was there in the past, its transformation into a murderous obsession in recent years is what worries the sane people the world over.

The problem is confined not only to the developed countries — where there is risk of affluence causing disillusionment and the standard of

life is generally high — but also in other less fortunate nations like us. An unmistakable subtle link connects the excesses of religious fundamentalists in the Middle East — from Albania to Egypt to Iran — with the Bharatiya Janata Party's political rise in India and also Jamaat-e-Islami's new-found stronghold in Bangladesh.

This is how the fanatic forces' campaign here in our own land has to be seen. A more caring society — not totally welfare-oriented though — could perhaps get rid of the various political and religious aberrations, misinterpretations, deviations etc. A less consumer society deriving its strength from democratic-secular-cohesives enlightenment duly complemented by the humanities may take the steam out of the fanatic disruptionists forces. This can help restore sanity — and therefore parity too — to the world constantly in turmoil.

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Michael Datcher writes from Los Angeles

For many African Americans the O J Simpson trial is not about a man, it's about race and power. Black attitudes about the trial reflect a resurgence of black anger against white Americans which runs across the socio-economic spectrum.

comes The Big Payback. Across socio-economic lines, there seems to be a resurgence of black antagonism toward white Americans. I hear the anger in line while shopping at the grocery store.

turned to me enraged. "I can't stand white people, you can't trust them."

Harassment at Calcutta airport

Sir, On the 12th of April, 1994, my husband and I were at Dum Dum Airport, Calcutta, waiting for our names to be called as passengers by 'chance' on the Biman flight BG 094 bound for Dhaka, due to depart at 7:30 in the evening.

By 7:25, all the confirmed passengers had completed their formalities and the 'chance' passengers stood around the check-in counter. The Bangladeshi member of the ground staff announced that there were just 5/6 seats left vacant and began calling out the name of the people on the 'chance' list.

When my husband returned, the Bangladeshi staff member stated, rather than asked us, that if there was just one seat left neither of us would board the plane. He then proceeded to take the single boarding pass he said was left, and walked off towards another

room behind the counter on some mysterious errand. We immediately sought out the other staff member and asked him how many seats were left. When he said "quite a few" we told him what had occurred. He rushed off towards the Bangladeshi and we saw the two in a heated discussion.

The Indian gentleman came back, took our tickets and handed us two boarding passes. We were the last passengers on the plane — being numbers 5 and 6 on the waiting list. When all the passengers had settled down in the plane, we counted seven more empty seats.

A M Zahiruddin Khan

Sir, I fully endorse the views expressed by Karishma Rahman published in the letter column of your esteemed daily of 28th April.

One must admit that Mr A M Zahiruddin Khan has made positive contributions in promoting industrial development in the country, particularly in making paper pulp and rayon fibres from green jute using locally manufactured machineries.

There is, therefore, a need to take account of the guerilla war, that has been continuing for a decade costing the lives of 15000 innocent people, including mostly children,

women, elderly people, teachers and inmates.

Lastly, I should express, that I am very pleased to live in a brotherly country, Bangladesh. No one will ever be able to impair the everlasting friendship between the two countries, Turkey and Bangladesh.

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