Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Sunday, June 4, 1995

Serbian Outrage

While the Serbian outrage in Bosnia continues, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) members are busy interpreting the role of United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) vis-a-vis their own troops. In the absence of a coordinated and common stand on their part, the Serbian aggressors have dared commit crimes, one after another. That Serb forces have taken UN peacekeepers hostage and brought down a US F-16 in the latest development show that they are out to test the patience of the Western powers. They are quite adept in playing the war game. On the one hand, they have released more than a hundred UN troops, on the other taken some troops hostage besides downing the US jet.

Even though one of the powers capable of effectively dealing with the defying Serbs has shown the willingness to talk tough with the violators of all international rules and the Geneva Convention, others have tried to evade the issue. After the hostage taking, there was a glimmer of hope that the NATO alliance will thrash out the differences between its members and the UN Security Council will go for redefining the role of the peacekeepers. Instead, the UN secretary general for his part reminded the countries which opted for deployment of more of their troops of the limitations under the UN mandate.

That the sending of more British and French troops was a hasty decision cannot be in doubt. The additional forces do not know what they are there for. Their uncertainty can be their worst enemy. The French president has gone a step further by ordering his officers to use force, no matter if it means bypassing UN commanders. The United States initially reluctant to commit its troops in Bosnia indicated that it might consider deployment of ground forces to help reposition . UN troops in Bosnia. How it reacts to the downing of its plane over Bosnia is to be seen now.

When the major players are so inconsistent and unsure about themselves, there is little hope of bringing the Serbs to their knees. The UN secretary general has indicated how aggression could be met with aggression. It was possible if the NATO alliance went on the offensive under the umbrella of a multi-national force. They did it in the Gulf war against Saddam Hossein. Do they have the same will to bring the Serbs to size? If not, the war will continue with the potential of bringing the entire world into a conflagration as it did once.

Economic Mirror-image

There has been a whiff of a positive change in the export-import imbalance as portrayed in the Bangladesh Bank Annual Report, 1993-94. The trade gap experienced in the 1992-93 fiscal year narrowed down modestly - but meaningfully - in 1993-94, by 31 million US dollars. Noticeably, the reduction in the gap has occurred not in a condition of decrease in export and import but in a positive state of a simultaneous increase in the two-way trade. Import payments registered an increase by 2.9 per cent to reach 120m US dollar in fiscal '93-94 while export earnings increased by 6.3 per cent accounting for US 151 million dollar, as compared with the figures for the previous year.

The aggregative uptick in the volume of earnings from the export trade is worth greeting unreservedly but a close look at item-wise performance unravels where we need redoubling our efforts to sustain the over-all buoyant export trend. The child labour linkage to the garments export has to be got over with to keep to the higher income notch recorded in this sector in 1993-94. Tea, raw jute and jute products continue to be weak points crying out for fresh market exploration. Green jute pulp can make a difference there — almost singly. The advantages in leather products, frozen food, handicrafts and cut flowers have to be fully exploited. In the coming budget, fiscal incentives need to be offered for vigorous export activities.

It is understood that import of capital goods and raw materials has shown an upward trend lately as an indicator of future stimulation in industrial productivity. But this fact is a bit diluted in view of lower tariffs accorded by us to imports at some expense to the growth of local industries. Then there is smuggling, mostly of consumer items, which puts our industries producing similar items at a disadvantage. We learnt on good authority sometime ago that since the exchange rate between our taka and the Indian rupee has been stable there could not have been a serious damage to our economy owing cross-border smuggling. We want the government to make suitable fiscal and infrastructural re-adjustments aimed at lessening the costs of industrial and agricultural production.

Leftist Setback in WB

The CPI (M)-led Left Front in West Bengal has, by suffering a setback in the recently-held municipal polls, helped explode the myth of its electoral invincibility in the sprawling Indian state bordering Bangladesh. Ruling the state continuously since 1977, the communists led by Jyoti Basu hitherto remained vindicated through all the vicissitudes that the Indian left and world communism underwent, specially in the nineties. Without overstating this point, we may say that the left front's losing of municipalities in West Bengal to the Congress Party lends itself to certain obvious interpretations.

In the first place, this has signified their declining popularity in the urban areas of West Bengal. Secondly, West Bengal Congress which had looked so very much divided raising the possibility of its being totally routed in the city council polls emerged unexpectedly victorious in some leftist strongholds. It is not yet clear whether the old communist stalwart Nripen Chakravarty's stridency against Basu had any bearing on the electoral fate of the left front or not.

The communists may have endeared themselves to the peasantry in West Bengal by a variety of agricultural reforms including land re-distribution and fixation of farming wages, etc. Anyway, the next state and national parliamentary elections are only a year away so that one does not have to wait for too long to get to know the left front's latest standing with the electorate in West Bengal.

OR a very short period in the past, there was

an attempt to involve officers in the development of their respective villages. The implicit idea behind this scheme was that although officers, in general, did not like to go out of their sheltered life in the cities and towns, they would not be able of resist the temptation of visiting their own villages with government TA/DA, and that since there was a strong emotional attachment to one's own village, such visits would lead to some genuine rural development. It was a sound idea, and still remains so. Most importantly, it would give officials a good exposure to Bangladeshi reality and hence help them in their official work, whatever that may be. Given the vastly improved transport and communications, such visits would

not be as arduous as they would have been in the past. Unfortunately, this scheme was abandoned as quickly as it was taken up. There were, of course, complaints that some officers got involved in factional village politics and were settling old scores. However, as far as I recall, this kind of conclusion was not based on . any proper evaluation of the situation. It was, I believe, a case of panic reaction to stray incidents. Also, at that time, the programme was started without adequate precautions and careful planning, so that backing out at the first instance was the only recourse open to the initiators to save them-

HE political air is thick

Combinations and permuta-

tions are being thought of. The

fear of instability has led

politicians and constitutional

experts draw on various

methods of saving the Centre

from becoming a plaything of

forces which will not let it

work unitedly. At stake is the

state of the Union. Are

constitutionally troubled times

far shown little disregard to-

wards entering into alliances

with other groups is the Bhar-

tiya Jana Sangh: It cannot be

said whether this is a show of

bravado before the electorate

to say that it can form a gov-

ernment on its own or it is

based on firm calculations. Ob-

servers cannot ignore the fact

that the very same party en-

tered into an alliance with the

Shiv Sena to win Maharashtra.

The president of the BJP, L K

Advani, has said that this al-

liance will continue. One can

also say that when the time

liance with any regional group

which meets its requirements

engulfed in inner fighting that

at least at present it is oblivi-

ous of its fortunes in the par-

liamentary elections. It seems

to have decided that the fight

between Narasimha Rao, Arjun

Singh and B D Tiwari is far

more important than winning

the 1996 general election. No

one seems to give the

Congress the possibility of

forming the Central Govern-

The Congress has got so

in winning a majority.

comes it will enter into an al-

The only party that has so

ahead?

with possibilities. Gue-

ssing games are on.

The officers would be required to teach in one of the village educational institutions most acutely lacking in teachers if they have no other skill. Those with specialised skills should help out the villagers in their respective areas — a doctor should open a free clinic and an engineer should help repair the village tubewell and culvert, etc. discouraged during the briefselves from criticism.

I would strongly support

the revival of this scheme, but

this time in a well planned

manner. In this regard, I

would like to propose an out-

line which could be further

strengthened and improved by

others. Firstly, this scheme

should be tried out first one a

pilot scale under the leader-

ship of the Cabinet Secretary

and a small cell composed of

some experienced officers. In

the pilot scheme, surplus offi-

cers. OSDs and some hand-

picked volunteers should be

utilised so that least disruption

is caused to official work. Only

after evaluation of the pilot

scale operation, may replica-

tion on a wider scale be at-

tempted. Secondly, whether in

the pilot or replication stage.

officers should be sent only

after thorough briefing. The

briefing should be based on a

well devised guide to action,

spelling out not only what to

do and how, but also the code

of conduct to be followed in in-

terpersonal relationships dur-

ing the stay in the village.

Thus, for example, involve-

ment in factional village poli-

tics in the name of resolving

disputes should be strongly

pilot scale operations should provide valuable materials for the briefing to be conducted during the replication stage.

Thirdly, during the replication stage, proper care should be taken in allocating the villages to the officers. For example, there should be no

ing. In fact, the evaluation of

duplication, that is, a village should not be allocated to more than one officer, even if it happens to be the common village of several officers. In that case, lottery should decide who is to be allocated that particular village. The other officers would be required to

the villages they know best Fourthly, since there are

different perceptions of what constitutes a village in different parts of the country, there should be some clear understanding about it before sending officers to the village. One pragmatic approach would be to go by the villagers' definition of the area constituting their village. R case of confusion or dispute, the local UP

Making Government Work

Developing One's Own Village

by Analyst

choose some other villages according to their familiarity and kinship ties. There are many city-bred officers who do not have a village of their own. Eventually, they should also be brought into the scheme, and they may be allowed to choose

Chairman could be made the final arbiter.

Fifthly, the involvement of the officer with his own or his adopted village should be in two phases. During the first phase, lasting about a fortnight, he should be mainly required to carry out a rapid but highly participatory survey of the village according to a prescribed format and methodology. The format and methodology should be drawn up by experts who have practical experience in this area. The main objective of this survey would be to determine the top-priority development pro-

jects from the perspectives of poverty alleviation, besides generating a set of reliable data on key indicators. The data should be processed and analysed by the Statistics Division for use by relevant organisations and persons. In addition. the officers would be required to teach in one of the village educational institutions most acutely lacking in teachers if they have no other skill. Those with specialised skills should help out the villagers in their respective areas. Thus, for example, a doctor should open a free clinic and an engineer should help repair the village tubewell and culvert, etc. Finally, they would be required to explain, through small group meetings of the villagers, current government policies and programmes on public health, family planning, education, women's development, canal digging, tree planting, fisheries, poultry and dairy, diversified crop cultivation, rural electrification, rural industries and rural poor based credit. In fact, they should be asked to carry a sufficient number of relevant posters. leaflets, manuals, booklets, etc. for distribution among the vil-

would be asked to pursue the priority projects they identified during the first phase, in addition to continuing the motivation and skill transfer work of the first phase. This would include persuading local authorities (local administration plus local government bodies) and NGOs to take up the identified projects and inducing the villagers to take up one or two of these projects by themselves through voluntary labour and subscriptions or in conjunction with the NGOs and local authorities. During this phase, officers should not be required to stay in the village for more than 2-3 days in a month and their stay should include the weekly holiday, so that office work suffers least. They should also be required to carry some of the unfinished office work with them and complete these while travelling. However, before getting on with the more difficult work of the second phase, the officers would be required to submit their survey findings to. and hold consultations with, the Cabinet Division Cell mentioned earlier. Other safeguards that this scheme should have are close monitoring. with prompt action against violators of the set norms, minimum commitment of additional staff and funds, aroidance of conflicts with loca authorities, and finally, a midterm review. Singh Yadav and benefit itself with the parliamentary seats,

The second phase should

be of at least one year duration.

In this phase, the officers

Who will Fight Whom in 1996?

A N Dar writes from New Delhi

The Congress has got so engulfed in inner fighting that at least at present it is oblivious of its fortunes in the parliamentary elections. It seems to have decided that the fight between Narasimha Rao, Arjun Singh and B D Tiwari is far more important than winning the 1996 general election.

great pity for the once grand old party of the country but a contrary verdict seems impossible to think of.

That leaves the National Front. The earlier question whether it is shaping up after the poor fortunes it had suffered earlier has been answered. The National Front .-Left Front is all there to make a bid for power. Whatever its various spokesmen have said has meant that it will try to light the Congress as well as the BJP. Is it strong enough to do so? And what kind of results will it achieve if it has to fight both the major parties? The BJP too has made it clear that it will fight both the Congress and the National Front-Left Front. Both aims are difficult to achieve.

Both the BJP and a large section of the National Front leadership want the AIADMK to became a part of their respective combinations. Perhaps this will not happen until the parliamentary elections come to be very near.

According to reports, the Chief Ministers of Karnataka, A B Deve Gowda, and Andhra Pradesh, N T Rama Rao, favour Jayalalitha to join the National Front. They are also said to be supported by Biju Patnaik. The ball was set rolling by N T Rama Rao at the time of his swearing in when he invited Jayalalitha to be present, ignoring the claim of the old National Front leader. Karunanidhi of the DMK. Jayalalitha, shrewd in seeing the future of such a combination, lost no time in coming over to Hyderabad. Karunanidhi was

cooling his heels in Madras. But not everything is in her favour. From the DMK Mursoli Maran has served notice that his party will walk out of the National Front if the AIADMK is in it. The Leftists are said to be against letting the AIADMK join the National Front. So also V P Singh. The feeling in some of the National Front parties is that they should not let down Karunanidhi when he is out of power. But the fears are that if the National Front does not have the AIADMK in it, Jayalalitha may be enticed by the BJP. The calculations take in the popularity of Tamil Nadu's ruling party, though it has suffered several recent stabs at the hands of Subramaniam Swamy. Yet the AIADMK is said to be so strong that a large section of the Congress too would want to fight the Tamil Nadu Parliamentary elections in collaboration with the AlADMK. A suggestion has been made in the National Front ranks to have both Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi in it. But will this be acceptable to the two parties?

This is not the only problem of the National Front. Before its good showing in the recent state assembly elections, the Janata Dal suffered a severe setback. It lost 14 MPs to the breakaway Samata Party. Eleven of them belonged to Bihar. When the elections came the Samata party launched a full-scale crusade against Laloo Prasad Yadav. spearheaded by his one-time friend, George Fernandes After the elections when the question of the formation of the National Front came to the fore, Laloo Prasad Yadav expressed himself against it. In his own inimitable style he said: "There are 54 parliamentary seats in my state and there should be no doubt after the Janata Dal victory in Bihar that all these seats belong to me. If you let the George Fernandes gang in, then the new National Front should not count on these seats. The Bihar Janata Dal will be a separate entity.

The other possibility thrown up was that the National Front should let Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samaiwadi

Party get into it. But Laloo Prasad Yadav is opposed to this also. Who will Mulayam Singh Yadav and Kanshi Ram support in the parliamentary elections? There could be the possibility of their joining the National Front, which will make it a big force. But depending on what kind of a crisis develops in the Congress and who comes on top, it need not be impossible for the part of the party which stands by Narasimha Rao and his lieutenants in up to make common cause with them. This will also become a major force to fight the Bharatiya Janata Party. But this means that N D Tiwari will either be

similar to what the other parties have been doing with AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. More interesting is the move of some of the Samata Party leaders to have a "third front". Chandrajit Yadav is said

to have met N T Rama Rao. Biju Patnaik and Mulayam Singh Yadav on forming another front. If it comes into being, will the Leftists be part of such a combination? The idea seems to be to keep the Janata Dal out of a combination in UP. which will give supremacy to Mulayam Singh Yadav. What will be Kanshi Ram's reaction to it? The idea is too uncertain yet to pin any speculation on it.

If the Congress splits or the anti-Narasimha Rao dissidents leave the party, there could be opportunities for them to join other groups. Indrajit Gupta of the CPI has said that if Arjun Singh leaves the Congress and accepts a common programme, he would be welcome to receive the support of the leftists. But it is perhaps yet too early to start calculations on that. — Mandira

The author is a former resident editor of the Indian Ex-

Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia) A K M Jalaluddin

What the CSPs were Taught — IX

Fiancees, Girlfriends, Female Friends et al

behave at the Academy? L Director Majeed appeared to be a puritan but within

out of the Congress or van-

quished. Mulayam Singh Yadav

with the support from poor

castes and the Muslims to-

gether with the Congress can

make a strong combination.

That kind of a Congress could

leave the UP state to Mulayam

Officially probationers were expected to return to the dormitories by 10 p m. But there was no method to ensure compliance with this absurd regulation.

The main gates of the Academy would close at 10 pm but the super-high boundary. walls (about three feet high) were easy even for the Bengalis, not to speak of the Punjabis and Pathans, to scale. The Directing Staff made it clear that the 10 pm rule was obsolete, and made no sense at all. It was difficult to change rules in Pakistan, after going through the mandatory ritual of consulting the Law and Finance Ministries and possibly some Advisory Council

So the 10 pm rule had no practical validity. The gate would be closed at 10 pm the Janitor will note down names of those returning late and the DDT would know about it. Since the rule had gone into disuse — nobody tried to hide the fact of late-coming.

I hated the Academy food. would somehow eat the lunch there but for dinner I would go elsewhere - most often to the Gymkhana Club. Imtiaz Javed, my friend (from the Punjab) had a car and he insisted that I should always use his car. Both of us were fond of bridge (Javed is now one of the top bridge players of Pakistan — he nearly became the National Champion some years ago). We would go to Gymkhana, eat chicken pakora (for dinner) and return after the last lights were out.

Javed had a fiancee' (his cousin). He is happily married to her now. As young men of 22-26 age-range it was natural that many (if not most) of us would have girl-friends or fiancees. (Girl-friend was not a respectable word, those days to be uttered in front of elders and seniors. So we used to call them fiancees - although no support.

engagement had taken place). I had my 'fiancee' too, living

in Dhaka. Naturally, I missed her. I told DDT about it - he was all sympathy for me. Could I be posted to Karachi for the district attachment (July-September)? Certainly, said DDT. Her father was serving in Karachi as a government functionary. But somehow the Karachi coalition could not be managed - she was not able to join her father in July-September because of her academic schedule. So I told DDT that I would not go to Karachi; my girl-friend could not be there. So I went to Quetta — a lovely

city with majestic beauty. Naeemuddin Hassan (PFS) had his fiancee. He wrote a beautiful letter to the director asking for leave of absence.

My flancee is in the city. May I have a day's casual leave tomorrow so that I can take her out?

The letter was:

follow!)

Academy.

Hassan's candour was appreciated. Not only did he get a day's leave; his letter was posted on our information billboard for others to see (and

Belai Khan got married in January 1967. He was so lovesick that he brought his newly married wife to his suite in the Academy. Belal Khan was the treasurer of the Mess Committee of which I was the President. We allowed his wife to eat in the Mess (or in her room — the choice was hers). The Directing Staff maintained that it was against rules to bring your spouse to the

Belal's argument was simple. We had a number of married colleagues whose home was in Lahore. "They can meet their spouses as often as they wish - and have conjugal relationships" Move the Academy to Karachi - I would follow your rules!

We were all sympathy for him - we had attended his marriage ceremony in Karachi Intercontinental and met his gracious wife. So Belal Khan continued to flout the rules with impunity and our sincere

ment on its own. This is a

Make cheese with undistributed milk

Sir. A large number of new cottage dairy farms have come up during the past two years. spurred by the local loan incentives. While most of the farms can sell the surplus milk, there are many pockets and areas where the transport and distribution systems are not working properly (poor infrastructure and absence of link services). To make economic use of the surplus unsold milk, the same may be converted into various types of cottage cheese, which can be preserved for a longer duration than fresh milk.

'At present, even our famous Dhaka Cheese cannot be preserved for long as no standard canning process has been evolved yet (the taste changes after a few days in the 'fridge'. Therefore, the milk producers in the rural area have to be trained in cheese-making methods under technical assistance or NGO schemes. There are two groups of cheese: those which need refrigeration; and the canned ones which may be preserved for one or two years at ambient temperature.

We save the surplus unused milk, and get more cheese in the market (the current high price will come down). The school children can get calcium from cheese the yearministration cheese-conscious?

A Husnain . Dhaka

War of 'Cadres' and Govt

Sir. Over the past couple of years or so the newspapers have been episodically reporting issues and demands put forward by Prokrichi and 26 other Cadres on the one hand and BCS (Admn) on the other. There have been allegations and counter allegations, not infrequently accompanied by veiled threats and ultimatums.

These have been punctuated by an occasional statement by the government blaming the non-Adım, Cadres, more often than not, for all the ills.

Of late, the national dailies have been splashing in varied details reports on grievances, and demands laced with threats in unambiguous terms by the BCS (Admn) Association. They have reportedly gone to the extent (with impunity of course) of sending Fax to the hon'ble PM during her visit abroad. They have demanded unconditional apology from a people's representative (without the usual inquiry of which they from a people's representative (without the usual inquiry of which they themselves are so fond of and frequently used as an instrument to freeze issues), not forgetting to challenge a common practice Govt. appointment. Recently in a show of bureaucratic muscle display, the Secretaries 'ganged up' to announce their 'solidarity' with the aforementioned actions. If newspaper reports are any guide the government reacted in a guarded, hesitant and above all in an apologetic fashion, making it difficult for the layman to discern who controls whom.

At least on the face of it the government, on the issue, has chosen to pamper the bureaucrats, indirectly admitting to have erred; and above all as reported in a section of the press on 31 May, the hon'ble Prime Minister had reportedly reprimanded the hon'ble Dy Minister for Health for his alleged indecorous behaviour with a member of an. 'elite' service. Leaflets containing demands have been distributed in Sectt, Principal Secretary to the PM and Cabinet Secretary had joined gathering, and made speeches in tune with the threats and ultimatum. Finally dates have been set for 'maha sammelans' for announcement of greater

As a layman of the street with claim to some knowledge of literacy and thus access to the media, may I be allowed to inclulge in the audacity of

making certain observations? 1) Are the current activities of this particular association compatible with the status of the members or are they consistent with Govt Services regulations and discipline?

2) Do these activities and statements tantamount to insubordination and instigating others to create dissatisfac-

tion against State authority? 3) Does the term trade unionism assume different meaning in the current con-

4) Is this sort of an exclusive prerogative of this Cadre which others claim to be privileged?

The answers to these queries will determine the neutrality of the government in its dealings with the various Cadres. Interestingly, an opposition political party which hitherto remained tightlipped on these matters has suddenly found it expedient to join issue with present administrative 'unrest'.

Discrimination leads to unfairness which breeds contempt and simmering discontent. Such a scenario is hardly conducive for an efficient, disciplined, development oriented, pro-people functioning of state machinery.

A literate pedestrian

Political parties

Sir, There are many countries in the world, including UK and USA which have only two political parties. In the last general election of USA there were three candidates. but the political parties being limited to two, the third candidate had to fight the election as an independent candidate. Had that been in a country like ours, he could have found a good number of parties and could fight the election as a nominee of one of such parties.

One would like to know what is the number of political parties in our country. There is

no doubt that the number wil be quite a noticeable one. We also have such coalitions of parties as 15-party, 7-party, 5party, and so on and so forth During the Jatiya Party rule, the opposition party led by Mr A S M Abdur Rab - popularly known as onugato birodhi dal - had more than 70 parties in its fold! There has also been an impression held by many that in our country, there are seasonal parties, which show their activities only at the time or general election.

It would be appreciated if government do take some steps so that the parties who do not fulfil a minimum standard as may be prescribed by the government should go out of operation.

Our leaders in government and Opposition may work out some modalities so that our poor and small country may have at least three parties for a healthy exercise of politics in the interest of our land and

M Rahman 27, DOHS, Dhaka

T & T's new policy

Sir. Thanks are due for your valuable editorial on the 23rd instant on T&T's new policy. It is mischievous, something that it could 'milch' and it is a negative aspect. Moreover, it would be criminal to put any sort of restriction in the new stage of information age.

Recently, we are facing great mis-management in the telephone systems. Even the minister is not satisfied with the activities of the T&T. Subscribers are unable to maintain residential telephone due to ghost bills and other problems even in the case of digital telephone. So, like other sectors, telephone deptt, should be decentralised to private sector Because, it is a profitable sec tor like power and gas etc. So T&T Board should think the matter seriously.

M Alt Rajshahi