

Crime against Children

In a departure from their usual lethargic way and at times inaction, the police in Sutrapur demonstrated a rare sense of responsibility and promptness to rescue six children from their kidnappers. They were brought to the Hotel Famous on BCC road from as far as Biani Bazar, Sylhet for smuggling them out of the country.

Kidnapping children has become a profession — albeit by some organised gangs. In some cases ransom is demanded. If the money is paid, chances are that the child or children would be returned unharmed. If not, they are not released and could as well be killed. In some other cases, they are maimed and used for begging and there are still other cases where the young ones are sent abroad where God knows what fate awaited them.

Evidently either of these prospects is frightening. And there is no reason that those who are involved in this trafficking business can disclaim knowledge about the fate of their victims abroad. Unless devilishly debased, no one can think of taking up such an illegal trade. Human civilization itself is shamed by such acts of incredible greed and wanton bestiality.

We Live if Environment Lives

Today is World Environment Day. There are so many days now strewn all over the year. But this is a special one. If environment lives, man will live. At the present geological moment, environment is ailing, in certain respects precariously.

Individual man, or the family, or the clan and tribe or for that matter the nation — has been making nature poorer by the hour, not stopping for a while. A very myopic view of man's true interest and his true situation in the universe and an overpowering urge to satisfy a mistaken idea of self-interest was at the root of it all.

Awareness spreads but the old myopia persists, as much as in individuals as in nations. Brazil is mowing down its rain forest on the plea of development exactly as individuals are encroaching on forest lands in Bangladesh clinching the primacy of man over plant perhaps. In Bangladesh brick factory kilns are burning trees by the tens of thousands tons and in developed north increasing consumption of fossil fuel is fouling up atmosphere and heating up the biosphere.

In Dhaka we have not been able to stop one motor vehicle from belching black smoke out of 50 thousand that do so. Sale of refrigerators and aerosols booms while the ozone hole spreads over south pole. There is a terrifying fissure in the polar ice pack as if to signal man to pause and ponder.

No, man has only started making protestations of love for nature. It will take time for true love to take hold of the situation. Meanwhile irreparable losses will have been taking place everywhere. For Bangladesh the environmental question is, however, of inescapable immediacy. Desertification has to be prevented by all means. This will need vision and application and national will. The present temper of politics is hardly conducive to those. It is hardly environment-friendly.

Oldest Art

So the pride of primacy of Altamira and Las Caux goes. The frescoes in the Chauvet Grotto, South France, have proved to be older than those found in Altamira and other caves. The rise of the homo sapiens has now been pushed back 30,000 years before present by virtue of this fabulous art strike at Chauvet.

Who were the painters of these bisons and herds of deer? Black or fair? Local or coming up from south? Recent spectacular finds in paleoanthropology have reached back as far as to apparently fill the void of the missing link. That is a four million year old spot. Thirty thousand years is indeed recent compared to that. Man could not have been very different from now when he drew those pictures. But the vision we see of them can, for all that, be quite misleading. The western perception will have the painting cave people all as white men and male. It could very well be black people and the painters counting more women than men.

Didn't the painters do their magical daubings in the accompaniment music and dancing. That is quite probable. It is sad that we shall perhaps never know of those artistic creations in music and dance. The cave painters must have had quite a developed language too. All this brings them up nearer to us.

It is strange and yet quite true that we have still with us pockets of humanity which are as good, or as bad, as the cave painters of Chauvet. And the difference between then and now can be seen as a question of here and there — all in the present time.

THE mandarins of the foreign office have given a jump start to economic diplomacy in the country as viewed by the apparent success of the just concluded visit of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to South Korea. It was obvious that the programme of the visit, well-conceived and planned, comprising a 39-member Bangladesh delegation of businessmen and a Bangladesh investment seminar held in Korea addressed by Bangladesh Prime Minister and attended by a large number of potential Korean investors and businessmen, was an economic overture at the highest level designed to draw maximum gain or Bangladesh. By all indications, the visit a success. South Korea will immediately recruit 3,500 Bangladesh workers for industrial units in Korea. South Korea is also expected to provide 50 million US dollars for projects in locomotives and other sectors.

The shift of emphasis in content and form of our diplomacy was manifestly clear when a few days earlier, Foreign Secretary, Faruq Sobhan accompanied by his two top aids, leaving their splendid isolation, visited the office of Bangladesh Federation of Chamber and Commerce and Industries to talk about a new trade and investment promotion wing in the foreign office to achieve the goal of economic diplomacy through coordinated efforts with the Federation, Export Promotion Bureau and Board of Investment.

The reexamination and review of the role of present day foreign services was overdue and most appropriate and is consistent with changed global circumstances. In the present age of fast information super-highway of instant satellite communication, video photos, TV, Internet and cyberspace with increasingly global transparency of political and economic profile of each country, the traditional role of sending political reports must seem outmoded and obsolete. Nations no longer view each other through the eye of the leaders. The foreigners image of a country, its inclination to trade or make friends is conditioned by what is seen on TV.

MOST financial discipline takes place in Defence Procurement, Military Engineering Services, Army Supply Corps, Army Medical Corps, Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Establishments and Ordnance Corps Depots. It needs immediate and critical attention. Waste and corruption are twin partners in crime against the Defence Budget and the perennial losers are the fighting men.

It is also time to conduct a survey wherein pure services like medical facilities, conservancy, maintenance, etc. in fixed peacetime locations must be contracted out and the support services should be reduced as much as possible. After all we do not have to fight in Africa or Europe, so why have the same World War II British concepts? There are too many generals in the medical corps as well as in the EME. With honourable exceptions the Army Supply Corps (ASC) is a disgrace, quite in keeping with their brother supply establishments in different military forces of the world. One has to maintain the same standards of honesty and integrity throughout the service. With the advent of computers, a judicious use of it will permit a greater amount of control over leakages. A suggestion could be decentralised budgetary operatives down to the corps level.

Supporting Services The EME has bloated beyond recognition mainly because of the lack of standardisation in various equipments particularly transportation. All fixed units and HQs should immediately dispense with first-line transportation, mainly jeeps, dodges, 2-1/2

To the Editor

Boarding bridge at ZIA Sir, Kindly allow me to ventilate my views on the above subject through the columns of your esteemed daily.

Two boarding bridges have been constructed at Zia International Airport recently for convenience of the passengers at a cost of around Tk one hundred crore. This is no doubt helpful for the passengers. But when our resources are limited, every available taka should be carefully spent so that we can have maximum return from scarce resources.

We do not have snowfall or biting cold so that passengers may face serious problem in getting out or into the aircraft

Manderins of the Foreign Office Jump-start Economic Diplomacy

by Abdul Hannan

The reexamination and review of the role of present day foreign services was overdue and most appropriate and is consistent with changed global circumstances

heard on radio, read in books and newspapers. The new diplomats are award-winners, sports and business tycoons, journalists and individuals tourists. In a post Cold War era of interdependence and competitiveness because of disintegration of protective barriers and emerging borderless global economy, we have no option other than to mobilise our own resources through trade and investment. With Western countries under heavy burden of budget constraints and suffering from donor fatigue, official foreign aid is increasing and private business has taken a more important role. The Republican controlled US Congress has proposed deep cuts in foreign aid bill by 3 billion dollars. Merely inviting foreign investors is not enough. We must find a way for investment to be dealt with on a special track so that the period of time, from the date of submitting the proposal to the day production commences, is brought down drastically. We must also escort foreign investors as quickly as possible through the morass of redtape constraints. We must take advantage of the abundance of our cheap labour by developing their skill in industrial technology through a massive programme of human resource development.

Economic agenda is the main thrust of foreign policy initiatives of even the most advanced Western countries today.

With stiff competition from the four-tiger and three-cub economic of East Asia, European Union and the United States are eying for export and investment in the emerging markets of South Asia, particularly India with its wide (wage) labour base and two hundred million strong middle class. Confronted by criticism recently from treasury secretary Sir Kenneth Clarke that of 1.3 billion pounds spent on British embassies, less than one hundred million pounds went to direct promotion of export and trade, the British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd at a conference 'Britain in the World' held on March 30 last reiterated the determination of the foreign office to strengthen its role to promote British exports and investment. Earlier,

In January this year, Douglas Hurd leading a high power business delegation, visited India to attend the confederation of Indian industry centenary celebration attend by Indian industrialists and foreign businessmen and leaders from 43 countries. Even now as I write this report, the Chancellor of Exchequer, Sir Kenneth Clarke is visiting India in an effort to strengthen British Economy. Earlier this month, the British Secretary for trade and industry led a 150 member British Trade Mission of senior business executives to China, the largest ever. Similarly when President Bush visited Japan two years ago he was accompanied by a big business team including chiefs of three US automobile companies including Chrysler, General Motors and Ford. The current trade row between USA and Japan over the sale of American cars and car parts to Japanese market is a different matter. What is important is the objective of US foreign policy to promote US trade and investment.

Investment promotion is high on the agenda of Clinton

administration to get access to foreign markets for products of US manufacturers. The US Commerce Secretary, Ron Brown leading the largest ever business team to India signed a 2.66 billion US dollar deal with India in January this year in telecommunication and power sectors in addition to 1.4 billion US dollars transaction made earlier. During US Energy Secretary O Leary's visit to India in February last, India and US firms signed 23 power contracts worth 1.5 billion US dollars bringing US investment in the Indian power sector to more than 10 billion US dollars. The US Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin during his recent visit in India said a US-India investment treaty would be signed soon protecting bilateral investment. Between 1991, when India began its economic reforms of market economy, and 1994 Indian government approved 7.2 billion US dollars of foreign direct investment. The US proposals account for 35 per cent of the total with Britain in the second place at 9 per cent. European governments in the EU are poised to sign a framework

of economic cooperation with Vietnam.

It is a tall order for our foreign service to perform their newly demanded role of economic diplomacy to accelerate trade and foreign capital for the country. Yet, we have to finest crop of foreign service officers who have a proven track record of excellent performance. Despite being a small UN mission in New York, compared to the size of others even from the Third World countries, it has acquitted itself wonderfully well, and been most effective, based on principles, strategy experience and ability to take intelligent decisions. Thanks to the skill and professionalism of our foreign service officials our delegation has never taken a back seat in debates and discussion of the UN and have invariably made their presence felt in every negotiating and consulting forum by active participation in all UN committee and regional group meetings. The roll call of achievements has been significant. During a comparatively brief period of its UN membership, Bangladesh has held key and important posi-

tions of president of the UN General Assembly, member of the Security Council, chairman of the Group of 77, chairman of the committee of programme and co-ordination (CPC), the nerve centre of the UN system, coordinator of the least developed countries, chairman of the Executive Board of UNICEF and chairman of UN Population Award Committee, to mention only a few. Given leadership, direction, sense of purpose and the needed resources, our foreign service officers can do equally well in economic diplomacy. But they must be provided with the necessary wherewithal to be effective. To do business you need money. The foreign service officers must get adequate financial support to be able to perform their new role effectively. Cynics who criticise our foreign service for lavish life style, bloated expense accounts for various perks and privileges, for investing too much for the pursuit of too little, do no service to the profession. We lose sight of the fact that one also needs glamour and attraction to court, cultivate and woo to win friends and influence people.

The writer is former Press Counsellor, Bangladesh Mission to the UN, New York.

Stop this Honkference

Pinch of Salt by Chintito

THERE is a local saying that given free a Bangalee would consume kerosene. There is no known attempt of anyone having put that adage to test. However, there could be some truth in the allegation that most Bangalee drivers keep on honking, usually unnecessarily, simply because it does not cost a penny. Off course, the Bangalee Babu experiences a surge of aristocracy, gentility, nobility and all things associated with one's blood being blue, every time he presses to make it honk, and honk and honk.

Some drivers on the streets of Dhaka honk each time he breathes. You breathe in, honk out; breathe in, honk out; that's the way to live, man!

But, do these honks come of any use? You give a honk the car behind you honks back, followed by the one next to it and soon you are having a honkference where no one is making any sense. Vehicle horns are to be used only to warn a pedestrian or another vehicle of any impending danger. But, then perhaps our

drivers are pointing out to the fact that we live in a dangerous world.

Besides giving us such benevolent warnings, the car horn in Bangladesh is used for many purposes. The husband many honk from the car to inform the Bua that the daily bazaar has been done. The wife may honk to let the neighbours

impossible things. In a narrow street we honk to ask the sweating rickshawpuller to fly in the air so that we may pass; we honk at the cigarette vendor so that he may guess and bring five sticks of a particular brand; we honk at the driver ahead of us so that he can tell his boss that we, yes we, are in the car behind. Often I wished

know that she has finally learnt to drive. The young man may honk to let his paramour know that he is passing her house. Isn't that sheer chivalry? We honk to tell the darwan to open the gate, we honk to let the world know that the bridal party is here, we honk to let our children at school know that papa is here. We honk! We honk to make people do

they could honk back.

But, is all these honking good for us? Not according to medical science. Noise produces many physical and psychological reactions. One of them is the 'startle reaction' caused by a sudden, unexpected noise such as the blast from one of those inter-district buses. In a reaction that lasts less than a second, the

tions of president of the UN General Assembly, member of the Security Council, chairman of the Group of 77, chairman of the committee of programme and co-ordination (CPC), the nerve centre of the UN system, coordinator of the least developed countries, chairman of the Executive Board of UNICEF and chairman of UN Population Award Committee, to mention only a few. Given leadership, direction, sense of purpose and the needed resources, our foreign service officers can do equally well in economic diplomacy. But they must be provided with the necessary wherewithal to be effective. To do business you need money. The foreign service officers must get adequate financial support to be able to perform their new role effectively. Cynics who criticise our foreign service for lavish life style, bloated expense accounts for various perks and privileges, for investing too much for the pursuit of too little, do no service to the profession. We lose sight of the fact that one also needs glamour and attraction to court, cultivate and woo to win friends and influence people.

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head jerks forward, the face tightens into a grimace, the heartbeat quickens, breath comes in short intervals, the blood sugar increases and the muscles tense from head to knees. Continuous exposure to any steady, moderately loud noise (such as in our streets) tends to constrict the blood vessels of the skin and may weaken vision. There are also indications that steady noise upsets the body's metabolism by increasing the adrenal gland activity. Noise can severely affect the central nervous system and the cardiovascular system, give rise to giddiness and nausea, increase blood pressure, cause gastric pains, etc. The above is true for persons who are in good health, physically and psychologically.

The next time you feel like honking, think of the children in their beds, think of the old and the sick, think of your own health. Next time when you breathe in, just breathe out. Next time ask your driver not to honk. Next time, don't honk, please.

Pakistan's Defence Budget — II Financial Discipline and Other Criteria

AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

ton M34 type trucks etc. and them over to the fighting arms. An officer commanding a combined military hospital or some such static unit has no need for spanking new Toyota jeeps. In lieu they may use 800-1000cc cars, Datsun type pickups and Bedford-type trucks. All administrative units like Logistics HQ should maintain central vehicle pools for administrative support of units in their areas. This is the only way to avoid blatant misuse of transport. It does nobody any good to see a UNIMOG vehicle plying in Karachi lugging water trailers. Water Bowsers mounted on Bedford trucks are adequate instead of destroying our desert war mobility in administrative non-essential use.

Our spare parts requirement every year is horrendous and the maintenance budget colossal. We must work out a five-to seven-year plan to replace all the vehicles or the defence services in a planned and phased manner based on standardized equipment indigenously manufactured. A number of well-known and reputable foreign companies offer transfer of technology and their offers should be considered on a priority basis, particularly if they include effect mechanism and buy-back programme. These companies are providing different types of equipment which are satisfactorily being used by various defence services in diverse terrain and climatic conditions all over the world. Our one sided love with im-

ported Mercedes Benz trucks continues and though one cannot detract from their quality but it is necessary to condemn all the others in any given 'test and trial'?

Something smells when you apply such a blatant scalpel to ward off potential competition. It things are allowed to continue in the same vein one will have to change the aim of the Army from defending the country's ideological and sovereign frontiers to that of

ment permitting the military psyche to innovate in order to make up for the lack of superiority in numbers.

However, innovation has to start from the top. Gen Zia's 'cycle' campaign bombed out in the wake of the burning of the US embassy in Islamabad but the fact remains that it was a symbolic gesture dictating the attitude towards cost-cutting and saving. Almost a decade later we can count in

guarding the EME establishments.

Innovations

One of the finest lessons one learns in the Armed Forces is to 'improvise'. The word may now kindly be changed in this high tech age to 'innovate'.

A lot of effort has gone into maintaining exceedingly high standards in the various training institutions of the Armed Forces at different levels. The soldier is kept under constant training in order to cope with the rigorous and aspects of modern warfare in an electronic age. It has to be made more objective and greater emphasis on actual combat conditions have to be introduced. Great emphasis has to be placed on mind develop-

billions of rupees the cost of POL for non-productive use.

Countertrade

The modern world is looking to countertrade as a means of balancing financial deficits in foreign exchange. In the Defence Services there is certainly awareness of 'Buy Back' schemes for encouraging indigenous production but a comprehensive understanding of the implications of international trade and the ensuring of meaningful transfer of technology escapes them. There is a great deal of lethargy in moving forward with decision making for local production with the effects translated into constant purchases by hard earned foreign exchange. Turkey paid for part of its purchases of F-16s from the US by

Choice of Weapons and Equipment

We must make correct and early decisions about the choice of weapons and equipment. The important thing to remember is to make decisions which would affect the armed forces over a 5-10 year period, without the equipment becoming obsolete. We have an integrated Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCS) and that should be the correct forum to take such decisions universally for the three services. The JCS must be made more effective as a means for enforcing standardisation. The purchase of Jaguar aircraft by India is a case in point where delay in decision making made the aircraft obsolete before delivery. Without talking about the procedures followed, let it just be

said that these are mostly outdated, antiquated and thoroughly made counter-productive by inordinate delays.

Defence services cannot afford to be parade ground outfits which they are apt to be given, unscrupulous arms merchants in various disguises of manufacturers, agents, consultants etc. Some of the so-called 'patriots' have reimbursed accounts in foreign countries. Will it make any difference if the heavy commissions they receive are exposed? The main items for future selection are the small arms, the artillery pieces, armoured vehicles, miscellaneous transportation and communication equipment.

The general staff is competent to recommend possible selections in such cases in less than a week if it does not get entangled in muddled technical specifications coloured to suit a particularly motivated viewpoint. This decision can be based on world-wide assessment by various analysts from diverse countries with the specifications well researched and the performances under various field conditions well documented. The same analogy can be reasoned as to why the Air Force did not ask for a 'test and trial' of an F-16 before it bought the same? Because the technical capabilities were available universally and there was no need to get involved in our own elongated in-house technical analysis, in which circumstances, one daresays that the F-16 would perhaps never have been purchased. Innovative swift decision making through the broad spectrum is the need of the hour.

outside the terminal building. So who are the real beneficiaries of this project. Had this amount been spent for acquiring new aircrafts, that would have contributed a lot to the exchequer. It is not understood how priority had been given to boarding bridge at this stage of development of the country when our per capita income is only around US two hundred and twenty dollars. This shows that our planners have miserably failed in setting the priorities of development.

It is learnt that some more boarding bridges have been planned to be constructed for Zia International Airport. Before proceeding further may I request the Parliamentary

Committee on Ministry of Civil Aviation to go into the matter dispassionately as to whether there is any need for constructing more boarding bridges at this stage?

Saleh Ahmed Choudhury Dhaka Cantonment

Investment allowances of income tax

Sir, For decades various governments in our country had allowed saving certificates as investment for rebate of income tax. But our Finance Minister has stopped investment in saving certificates from

1.7.1995 in order to encourage share market.

With the closing of investment allowance on saving certificate tax payers (esp. middle income group) have no other options but to go for DPS or investment in shares as our honourable minister wanted.

As for DPS we all know that no bank will open DPS accounts (it has been closed since long). And as for investment in shares — there is no guarantee of getting shares as first allottee of such shares. I know lot of bonafide income tax payers who applied for shares of various public limited companies this financial year but all they got is the refund money after their money was

blocked for quite sometime. And these tax payers who, only got the refund warrant will not be eligible for rebate of investment allowance of income tax for no fault of theirs. And this is due to black money flooding the country and the unscrupulous people who pay no income tax whatsoever applies in various names to purchase new shares at face value, and rebuild their enormous black money from their already built up black money by purchasing shares in hundreds of names.

In these circumstances I would request our honourable finance minister, National Board of Revenue (NBR) and other concerned government

departments to pass laws which will give income tax payers first preference in allotting shares of all company issuing new shares if they mention their Tax Payer's Identification (TIN) Number (which must be cross checked with NBR), while applying for new shares.

In this way we will help tax payers get the benefit of paying tax every year as well as they will be able to get the rebate for investment for which they are eligible. But the present law cannot secure allotment of shares nor get any rebate of tax for investment.

Yusuf Reza DRA Dhaka