Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

Dhaka, Thursday, August 17, 1995

## Wading through Water

Most dailies have carried pictorial reports of the latest spate in water-logging in the city. All of them made it a point to highlight the seriousness of the problem. But one Bangla Daily mentioned something which is quite worth noting: one-fifth of the city's 60 square mile area went under water - in parts under kneedeep deluge — in the latest spell of showers. The situation has been likened to the city's flooding in 1988. The comparison may look exaggerated on the whole but there is no denying that in parts of the city people went through the 1988 experience without the actual visitation of a calamitous deluge on that scale.

All because of the absence of any effective drainage and sewerage system in the city. Earlier the concerned authority had come up with an explanation for a similar kind of waterlogging. The point advanced was that works under the Dhaka Coordinated Flood Protection Project would be completed by 1997 with the result that the problem of water-logging will have been solved by then. In the meantime, the problem will continue, albeit in a reduced form. That was really a heartening assurance which we duly welcomed through this column. At least, the authority took pains to inform the public how long it would take to mitigate their suffering.

Now we come to know from reports that progress achieved on the project hardly indicates the possibility of its completion on schedule. There is even an apprehension that the project might take as late as the year 2000 to be completed. We do not know how reliable these reports are but do know one thing which is that two-thirds of the construction of the 35-km-long storm sewerage and the three-kmlong canal-digging have been completed. Evidently only one-third remains to be done. Now the question is, if on the completion of two-thirds of the work the problem still looks largely unsolved, what is the guarantee that with the completion of the remainder, it will vanish altogether? The impression is that the problem of water-logging has aggravated regardless of progress in the project work.

We would like to know from the relevant authority about the exact situation prevailing now. Can we rest assured that it is a temporary problem and we are not condemned to suffer a plight worse than the present one?

#### **Punish Them**

Board examinations at the SSC and the HSC levels have become very undependable as yardslicks for measuring the pupil's academic capability, thanks to copying on a massive scale, leakage of questions, the question bank and objective questions and the 'suggestions' by coaching centers and expert teachers. First to recognise the unreliability of the SSC and HSC results were the colleges and the universities of the nation. All the universities and most of the better colleges devised admission tests in a way that only the truly deserving could get through and be admitted.

Now the disease has attacked the university admission tests themselves. This is the beginning of the end if the problem is not challenged in all seriousness and now. The Jahangirnagar University on Tuesday cancelled part of its admission tests in the Ka or science faculty group. They were convinced that some questions in the test held on June 17 had leaked out. They have decided on re-examination. In the interest of stopping the rot the university should carry forward its good work to identifying the persons responsible for the leakage and their modus operandi. The holes must be plugged and the culprits branded for

This is, however, easier said than done. The universities have here developed a close-circuit world as an unyielding way to fend off prickings from the world outside. University violences, often ending in multiple murders, are immune to law. It may quite likely be that the hand of law doesn't reach other areas of the university maze either. The Dhaka University had to cancel the test in Ga group in the last admission examinations because of a leakage scandal. A probe was made duly and a report furnished to the Vice-Chancellor. No one knows its fate though.

We urge upon the DU authorities to make a clear case of this by punishing the culprits, in pure self-interest if not anything else. With DU taking a firm stand, things will be far easier for JU to proceed on the right course fearlessly.

### **Burden of Unrecognition**

At first no one would believe the news. It came all the way from the US through the courtesy of agencies like the Reuters and AP and was published by all national dailies. In the 9th Summer Olympics of the world's mentally retarded persons, held in Newhaven, Connecticut the Bangladesh contingent of 15 won 5 gold, 6 silver and 6 bronze medals. Hardest to believe was, of course, the report that our 17-year old Lulu Marzan came out as the world's fastest woman by clinching the 100 metres sprint.

The handicapped people's Olympics, held for the ninth year running and called the special Olympics, was participated by more than 7000 athletes from 140 nations of the world.

It was the girls that did us proud. Of our 5 golds three were won by the girls. A goodly part of our silvers and bronzes was also won by them. One among them, Fahmida, has repeated her Minneapolis Games performance four years back by winning a gold this time too.

The indifference now being meted out to these super-achievers is, however, quite in line with what they have been receiving from closer quarters and for long. No one helped them by even a farthing and the expenses of joining the Special Games were naturally beyond the means of their families. In this also the four golden girls, Lulu, Rumana, Afroza and Fahmida have scored high in beating insuperable odds.

This mean act of unfair neglect has happened and is still happening in a nation where hundreds of millions are spent on sport every year and tens of millions on sending athletes and players abroad. We seriously question our princes of the sporting sector on their continuing unrecognition of these achievers and appeal to government to set right the grievous wrong.

Pakistan's Foreign Policy

# Suggestions for Going Somewhere?

Nobody should be in any doubt about the importance of Pakistan maintaining a good relationship with the only (for the moment) remaining Superpower in the world, the USA. It is true we have certain differences that seem too irreconcilable but the US is a pragmatic nation that can adjust principles to circumstances as the Afghan decade has shown.

cal relationship remains with the former Eastern wing of Pakistan, Bangladesh. The last quarter century has seen a gradual decrease of the bitpeaked in 1971. Today our relationship is as strong. The Pakistan-Bangladesh trade has increased considerably but the Bangladesh-Pakistan has decreased and needs to be enhanced upwards from its present level. Lifting of all mutual tariffs would make for a much closer mutually beneficial relationship. With our great neighbour India, our relations can never improve while the Kashmir dispute remains unsettled.

AKISTAN'S geograp-

hical position places

it at a crossroads of

South Asia, Central Asia, the

non-Arab and the Arab

Middle East. As such we face

a severe identity crisis right

at the outset in establishing

our actual place in the comity

of nations. Historically Pakistan is taken to be part of

the South Asian sub-conti-

nent which includes India.

Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal,

Bhutan and the Maldives. At

the end of 1971, we found

ourselves almost frozen out of

South Asia but more a part of

the Central Treaty

Organisation (CENTO) and

Regional Cooperation for

Development (RCD), in affin-

ity with Iran and Turkey as a

part of the non-Arab Middle

East. In the meantime we

had a considerable number of

expatriates working in the

oil-rich Arab Middle Eastern

kingdoms, Saudi Arabia,

Kuwait, Qatar, UAE, Oman.

considerably after the oil

boom of 1973 by the aug-

menting of the existing

Pakistani work force. Central

Asia opened out to us after

the collapse of the Soviet

Union. After the advent of

Alexander the Great in 325

BC into what is now NWFP

and Punjab (his host there-

after followed the Indus River

down to Sindh and the

Mekran Coast), successive

waves of invaders came from

Central Asia, the only excep-

tion being Mohammad Bin

Qasim who came to Sindh

Pakistan, adjacent to Muslim

Iran and Afghanistan while

being in the proximity of

Muslim Arab lands, became

almost solidly Islamic though

the invaders in many cases

went right upto Delhi where

they established themselves

before fanning out to success-

fully conquer the rest of the

inates from these countries

but does spread through the

sub-continent, particularly in

Muslim majority areas of

Bangladesh, Kashmir, Kerala,

Assam, etc. Till 1971, given

the two wings of Pakistan, it

made a whole lot of sense to

be part of South Asia, in our

present configuration this

In South Asia, our histori-

LTHOUGH the Senior

identity is up for debate.

Our Muslim heritage orig-

South-Asian sub-continent.

The area now comprising

rom the Arab Middle East

This number increased

Bahrain, etc.

It is not a matter of territory but of economic survival given that the five major rivers that emanate from Kashmir eventually make up the great Indus, these waters flowing like lifeblood through the great agrarian delta.

For both India and Pakistan it may be an emotional matter but for Pakistan it is a matter of life and death. Given the great Hindu revival under the Bharativa Janata Party (BJP) which should culminate in a rout for Congress in the next general elections one does not see any change in the anti-Muslim stance for the foreseeable future.

Without a strong govt in the Centre, the rulers can only play to an anti-Muslim gallery for votes and survival. On the ground inside Kashmir the situation is becoming rapidly untenable for Indian Forces, that by itself becomes a possible flashpoint further exacerbating

Pakistan-India relations. This background makes our membership of SAARC look hypocritical, though with Sri Lanka and Nepal we have excellent relations. Instead of making an anti-Indian group within SAARC we could cooperate with Bangladesh on a Level One

priority and with Sri Lanka and Nepal on Level Two bilaterally, with trade as the main platform between the foursome. There is no doubt about the benefits of tradebetween all the countries of South Asia including India. but we cannot compromise on our legitimate interests and security because of business interests.

We need to immediately re-assess our deteriorating relationship with our two immediate neighbours to the west, Iran and Afghanistan. Iran has remained our friend through the change of government from Shah to Ayatollah Khomeni. Whereas we are a Sunni majority state in contrast to Iran's Shia mainroads.

Similarly our Afghan policy is an unmitigated disaster. Instead of maintaining strict neutrality between the Afghan Mujahideen factions post-the Afghan war and allowing them to sort out their own problems, we got involved in supporting one faction or the other in a grave musical chorus. The bankruptcy of our policies can be assessed from the fact that after a decade of supporting the legitimate right of genuine Afghan freedom fighters we are now supporting, among others, a Sovietcreated mercenary, selfstyled General Rasheed Dostum.

Through the years.

## ASISEEIT

#### Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

jority, despite the best efforts of the lunatic fringe on both sides, there is basic amity between the two sects which can only be deepened with more inter-action and dia-

Iran's ports, roads and railways provide for an excellent alternate communications route through Quetta if Karachi Port is blockaded, as such peacetime use of this land route as a conduit to the Arab-Middle East as well as to Turkey and beyond Europe must increase. The Indian lobby in Iran is led by the Hindu business tycoons, the Hindujas (of great help to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war). The Hindujas were the prime influence behind Iran's proposal for a Iran, China and India trading bloc. This was a major blow to our complacency that Iran would always remain a staunch ally where India could make no

Aighanistan's govt was confined to Kabul and the major cities with the guerrillas running wild in the country side. However, since the Soviet puppet government controlled Kabul they were the ones legally acceptable to the world. Instead of supporting President Rabbani, we tried to unseat him and thus threw him into the lap of the Indians. Net result is that after ten years of struggle and sacrifice, we are still outsiders in Kabul but India, that vociferously supported the Soviet puppet government in Kabul during the entire war materially and morally, is now firmly ensconced on the side of the

Similarly we gave reason to believe to everyone that we were supporting the Talibaan when in fact this was an indigenous uprising peculiar to Afghanistan, this further

alienated us from the Mujahideen factions.

One hopes we can correct this hotch-potch policy (another blunder being to try and resuscitate old King Zahir Shah) and be on the side of the victors for once. For Pakistan it is of vital importance that peace is restored in Afghanistan as soon as possible and the govt in Kabul will build on the sacrifice and commitment of the 80s decade when the Afghans

depended on Pakistan. In a meeting of foreign heads of government and business leaders in Istanbul in 1993, both President Suleyman Damirel and PM Ms Tansu Ciller stressed that while Turkey was keen to enter the European Union their only regret at turning away from Asia was that they would leave Pakistan behind.

In contrast it is amazing how insensitive we have been to Turkey's legitimate interests in Cypress and their road contracts in Pakistan. Our relationship with Turkey should only be based on supporting Turkey wherever and whenever, right or wrong. With the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia we continue to have a strong relationship but not of the level that used to exist during the days of late King Faisal, becoming less important of Saudi security interests than we were a decade or so ago. A weakness that emanates from our domestic problems. In a way Saudi Arabia represents all the oilrich states, they will only respect Pakistan as an equal if Pakistan is strong. Our rulers should not fall over themselves to please the Arabs. Nobody respects grovelling. Unfortunately we have institutionalized this in dealing with the Arab states.

Nobody should be in any doubt about the importance of Pakistan maintaining a good relationship with the only (for the moment) re-

maining Superpower in the world, the USA. It is true we have certain differences that seem too irreconcilable but the US is a pragmatic nation that can adjust principles to circumstances as the Afghan decade has shown.

Our negotiators have to impress upon the US that they have only to gain by maintaining Pakistan's geopolitical status as a cornerstone of US policy in the Middle East

If we were forced into a bloc with Iran and Iraq out of a mutual sense of survival. this would be a disaster for US long-term policy. A strong Pakistan is a sure guarantee for the smaller oil-rich nations of the Gulf, a stable Pakistan is good for the entire Central Asian region.

If US dealings with Pakistan remain mutually beneficial based on sovereign equality, it could encourage countries like Iran to soften its anti-US stance. The present targeting of Pakistan by the US on various "sins" despite our 80s close relationship makes Iran suspicious of US long-term relations with anybody to be that of convenience of business, a policy of hire and fire.

The cold war may have finished, the forecast is that as Russia consolidates its economy and its former empire (the near abroad as they call it), it may well start domination of its neighbours all over again. To repeat Chou En Lai's admonition to Henry Kissinger in July 1971 during his initial secret visit to Beijing to establish US-China relationship: "Do not forget the bridge (i.e. Pakistan) that you have crossed, you may have to cross it again!"

Instead of becoming hostage to the F-16s issue. let us take the relationship beyond to a more mature plane, that of mutual necessity. Can the US take the chance that forced into a corner out of the necessity of survival. Pakistan may well go the way of Iran, from a staunch US ally to an indomitable US foe? Such a happen-stance would neither be good for Pakistan, nor for the US. The sooner we narrow the gap of perceptions. the better for both countries. Not a matter of life and death for the US, but certainly for Pakistan.

## Restoring the Senior Service Pool

The SSP should be open to all in order to attract the very best, since it is sheer nonsense to suggest that government in a complex world as ours can be run by mediocrities.

Service Pool (SSP) was a fine concept, it was never operationalised according to the original plan. As such, it did not last for long either. It was later on derisively called a cesspool or a stagnant pool. It also led to a lot of bitterness and frustration. It never worked out as a cohesive group of the best and the brightest. It seems that there are now fresh moves to restore it, but again without much thought applied, so the pertinent question lurking in the minds of those interested in a quality civil service in the country is whether the same mistake is being repeated all over again.

A number of important questions need to be addressed while considering the option to restore the Senior Service Pool. Firstly. at what minimum level should the SSP be reconstituted? I do not at all agree that it should be at the level of Deputy Secretary for two reasons. For one thing, the number of members would be too many and hence unmanageable. If the idea is to create an administrative elite, then it must consist of a chosen few and not the multitude. Also, Deputy Secretary is not the policy making level in our administrative set up. The policy making level in our system starts with Joint Secretary, so it is at that high level that the Senior Service Pool should be reconstituted.

The second pertinent question to raise is, to which categories of people should this pool be open? To put it more explicitly, should it be restricted to Secretariat officers only or made open to officers of other government departments and organizations outside the Secretariat. How about opening it even wider to reach out to the public corporations, the private sector, academia, the media, etc.? In my opinion,

Whither consumer's

rights?

nancial solvency are long

gone. These are days of arbi-

trary decisions least consid-

The other day a group of

academicians bought a pair of

recently fashioned apparel

(Panjabi+coatti) from a fash-

ion setter-NGO controlled

showroom as gift for their

colleague, which to the utter

dismay of the receiver was

one size short. He, on good

faith, approached the battery

of sales ladies for changing to

a larger size. They informed

him of their authorities' deci-

sion of 'no one to entertain

such foolish buyers' to change

had no alternative but to

The receiver of the gift

any stuff once purchased.

ering trouble for others.

Sir. Days of moral and fi-

the SSP should be open to all in order to attract the very best, since it is sheer nonsense to suggest that government in a complex world as ours can be run by mediocrities. Moreover, this open door approach is necessitated by the rather poor quality of officers about to emerge at the higher levels of our bureaucracy. Indeed unless something of this sort can be done, the political leadership in this country will not be able to carry out even the routine work of dayto-day administration, let alone deal with any higher agenda of nation building. There should, of course, be certain percentages reserved for Secretariat officials, other government servants of various cadres, etc. whose claims to the SSP are obviously far more legitimate. Also, the minimum qualification and experience requirements for different categories of people desirous of entering the SSP will also have to be spelled out by the relevant authorities. As recruitment and training at the lower level improve, the practice of bringing in outsiders at the Joint Secretary level should be gradually phased out, and accordingly the details of it should be spelled out now and widely publicised in order to allay the fears of the younger generation in the

civil service. Thirdly, what should be the selection criteria for entrants to the SSP? Obviously, it should be based on merit, over and above the specified minimum requirements mentioned above. For government and public corporation officers, a combination of the ACR, the viva voce and

leave the most coveted fash-

ion apparel with the person

sitting in the counter and

change either colour or size

is being blatantly overruled by

the sellers, a unique situation

only practiced here perhaps.

by unilateral and arbitrary

decision. Only God can save

the consumers from those

who are bestowed with the

17/37 Dhanmandi Residen-

tial Area, Road 11A (New),

The Balkan balance

sive by the Croatian Army and

back lost ground in the 5-

year war-torn Balkan region

successful operation in taking

Sir, With the new offen-

right to give decisions.

S Siddique Hossain

Dhaka

The choice of a buyer to

leave the showroom.

# Making Government Work

the written examination should be applied in order to sort out the chaff from the grain. For other categories perhaps only the viva voce and the written examination should be resorted to. Job-related practical knowledge as expressed through both written and oral Bengali and English is what should be tested through the written examinations and the viva voce. On the other hand, experience and integrity could be ascertained, hopefully through the ACR. However, given the present day quality of the ACR, it is best not to depend too much on it.

Fourthly, who should be made responsible for re cruitment to the SSP? In order to avoid politicisation the Council Committee on Promotion should be involved only in a guidance and policy capacity, but the actual work of recruitment to the SSP should be handled only by the Superior Selection Board (SSB). Since the work is of a very complex nature, the services of the Chairman of Public Service Commission (PSC) and a few top independent human resources consultants should also be utilised in this exer

Finally, there should be a few post-recruitment measures for consolidating the Senior Service Pool (SSP) namely orientation, training and a series of briefings by the political and administrative leadership of the country. There must also be con-

we see a new scenario. In the

back-drop of present situa-

tion — the conscience of

people can force their gov-

ernment to take positive and

decisive action to stop the

senseless blood shedding and

insane ethnic cleansing being

carried on there. With the

Washington presenting pho-

tographic evidences of recent

genocide committed by Serbs

in Bosnia and Herzegovina

one cannot understand how

the Russians are being al-

lowed to continue their tacit

support to the Serb forces. It

is time for the people of the

world to wake up to the real-

of their fellow human beings;

if need be a Russian boycott

too late to be sorry.

Akku Chowdhury

Banani, Dhaka

scious efforts to inculcate esprit de corps within this elite pool of officers from

so that a lot of problems can be effortlessly sorted out,

are accepted, particularly by those who dread merit. However, if these can be once implemented through a determined exercise of political will, things should fall into place, and Bangladesh administration at the higher levels should be moving in the right direction. The other alternative is to go for a half-hearted Senior Service Pool, like the last time, and then face continuous grumbling, resentment and low morale.

expressed as soon as these

### Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia A K M Jalaluddin

### What the CSPs were Taught-XII Apparel Proclaims the Man

CSP and PFS probationers) was high, indeed very high. The institute was able to marshal a galaxy of brilliant scholars/practitioners (both part-time and full-time) break the trainees into the rigours of various disciplines: - Islamiat: Allama Allau-

ddin Siddiqui Code (CrPC): Daud Ilyas, Bar-

- Development Economics: Prof. A Rashid - Evidence Act: Sheikh

Allama Siddiqui was a passionate champion of Islam.

probationer and told us in his usual style "Gentlemen, come here to teach Islamiat, not for the miserable fifty bucks, that I get as remuneration for my efforts — but because of the student clientele am able to address. Please don't take me amiss. I am not a mercenary — working just for money."

horses?)

Chanan Khan used rockets to hit the probationer's male ego direct. "If you cannot control the horses, how would you control your wives?", he would taunt us and teach riding.

perhaps over a telephone The proposals outlined above are not going to be very popular, to say the least. All kinds of resentment will be

many different backgrounds,

his modulated voice and U-English, "our administrative system is not only wretched: it is stinkingly wretched. It is about time we recognized the fact and gave it a decent

"Granted", said Siddiqui, "in order to improve things, you need to change laws. Now write an outline of three new laws you would like to be introduced in the country. Also please mention three laws which you would like to be replaced/or amended and give reasons for your choice.'

Shaukat Fareed found, like all the rest, that he did not know enough about laws to pilot three bills to be enacted as law for the welfare of peo-

We also could not identify three Acts of Parliament which were to be struck down/or amended from the statutes book of Pakistan. "Do not be nervous about it". "Now to improve things you should acquire knowledge before unleashing your attack on the decadent system which ought to be buried at the earliest. After all, all of us had to begin from the begin-

ning," Siddiqui assured us. Siddiqui had also his own way of evaluating exam papers. "I reward you for your quality of efforts — not merely what you write," he said in the beginning of the second term. "I know, by now, your intrinsic intellectual capacities." He was simply superb in his teaching role but judged a failure in the area of field administration (i.e. positions like Deputy Commissioner, Subdivisional Officers etc).

Amer Raza Khan was a Harvard graduate in law. He tried to make his lectures as interesting as possible despite the built-in handicap he had to encounter: Civil Procedure Code (CPC) was truly very dry and difficult.

turer for CRPC, had a bachelor in Civic Law (BCL) from Oxford and was called to he Bar from Grey's Inn. He spoke with flourish and lectured with his own brand of humour. Handsome Ilyas was truly very polished in his dress and encouraged us to the same sartorial lines.

"Apparel proclaims the man," he said that it was true everywhere in life: "But more so in lawcourts

# Imtiaz Ali

Once he was annoyed with a

tent teacher (he later became Education Adviser/Minister of the Punjab Government).

Chanan Khan, our riding instructor was quite an articulate teacher in the nonetoo-popular subject of riding (who would like to get up at 0500 in the morning to behold the lovely visages of Chanan Khan and the

Allama Siddiqui had a resonant voice and impressive presence. He was later appointed the Vice Chancellor of the Punjab University, the oldest in Pakistan. Sheikh Imtiaz Ali was a very compe-

ity and start acting on behalf

prised to know that almost all fifty of the CSP/PFS probationers showed the scars and imprints of having grown

One should not be sur-

should begin now, before it is

S already stated, the up as what feminists would quality of instructions call today "MCP" (male chau-A at the CSA (both for vinistic pigs). No apology for that because, in 1966-67, empowerment of women, woman's lib etc were not topics of terrible relevance in the Orient. Those who had their education abroad

showed a slightly — but only

slightly, different attitude

towards the subject. DDT (Deputy Director Criminal Procedure Training) Tariq Siddiqi was the best of all. He was a member of the CSP (1955 intake) and a divorcee (his Italian wife and Siddiqi could not make a marriage of their nuptial pledges). He devoted all his energies, with missionary zeal, to the task he perceived to be his duty: Widening the intellectual horizon of the probationers"

Tariq Siddiqi was surely

innovative in his teach-

ing/examination techniques. He was supposed to teach us "Public Administration." He did not devote a single lecture to the formal/textual aspect of public administration. On the last day of our training session, he said, "Gentlemen, you have to take an exam in public administration conducted by the Central Public Service Commission carrying 150 marks. You are likely to be asked questions whose answers are given in Simon's book." He held the book aloft and said, "It is a very simple book — there is nothing to teach from this book. You just go through it and you will understand." He was absolutely right. Siddiqui was correct in

his assessment of the prescribed book (by Simon). How, then, Siddiqi, spent his lecture time? He started off as impressively as he concluded his lectures "Gentlemen, you have come from different areas of the country. How do you rate our administrative system?" he asked. "Wretched," we said, Shaukat Fareed (PFS). Cambridge graduate, said in

Daud Ilyas, part-time lec-