Dhaka, Monday, November 13, 1995

Pakistani **High-handedness**

Having failed to deal with the MQM, the Pakistani government did, what governments all over the world are prone to do, victimise the innocent and the weak. Within weeks of the declaration by the interior minister of Pakistan that there are a large number of illegal Bangladeshis there, 145 of them have been picked up, and sent to Bangladesh without so much as talking to our government. Under normal circumstances when a country, with whom we are supposed to have friendly relations, decides to proceed on a sensitive issue like that of illegal immigrants, it starts by informing our embassy about the nature and extent of the problem. Then specific cases are brought out and discussed, and then a course of action is taken. Even if the two sides disagree, there is at least some formality, and diplomatic moves precede a precipitate action, like the one we saw on Saturday. We are not aware that any such attempt was made by Pakistan.

By all norms of diplomatic behaviour Pakistan's move was a high-handed one, to put it extremely mildly. We all know that the question of Bengali-speaking people living in Pakistan is not a simple one. During our 24 years of existence as a part of Pakistan, lakhs went over and settled there. Immediately after liberation, and some time later, many people took up residence in Pakistan to join families and to link up with near and dear ones. There was a sizable number who opted for Pakistan out of a conviction. All these people have been settled there long time ago, and have by now become Pakistani.

The underlying question is, what has triggered the current Pakistan outrage against the innocent people who ended up at ZIA on Saturday? Simply put, it is the government's failure to quell the Muhajir uprising, which has been going on for many years now. Spearheaded by MQM, the political organisation of the immigrant population, they have been demanding equal political and economic opportunities as enjoyed by the rest of the Pakistanis.

By this move Pakistan is giving an ethnic colour to, what is fundamentally, a political and economic problem. Having failed to negotiate with them, the government, in an attempt to divert the attention of the people of Pakistan, is picking on the mild-mannered and hard working Pakistanis of Bengali origin, as if packing them off is the answer to the ethnic strife that is plaguing Pakistan. This is an inhuman racist and dangerous policy, which may end up making MQM extremely attractive to this group of people, who have so far remained outside the present strife.

Nigerian Martyrs

World opinion, specially all-out efforts by Mandela and Mugabe, failed to save the charismatic Nigerian leader of the Ogoni minority people and eight of his rights activist fellow fighters. They were executed in a hurry for the Nigerian junta felt they were too hot a quarry to be allowed to live after the sentence was pronounced.

The 52-member Commonwealth on Saturday suspended Nigeria's membership in the toughest action it has taken since its inception. The suspension would lead to expulsion if the regime did not release 43 'plotters' including deposed head of state Obasanjo and Chief Abiola who had clinched the 1993 elections annulled by the usurpers. The United States has recalled its ambassador to Lagos and was considering sanctions against Nigeria. All the nations of the European Union have also withdrawn their envoys from Lagos.

The question is not of making that rogue of an Abacha government reform but of making it quit. And the Nigerian people are lucky that all of the world nations are now actively poised against the Abacha regime.

This universal revulsion over the executions would fail to affect the gang unless effective sanctions are made against buying Nigerian oil, the mainstay of the economy of that nation.

As we mourn the death of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his fellow fighters and condemn the Abacha gang's barbarous action, we firmly expect Bangladesh to commit itself to international action aimed at Nigeria's return to democracy.

Wonderfully Forgetful

In November, 1970 it was the Eid season and all Dhaka was out shopping for a change of taste from the politically volatile atmosphere of the day. News came to the media offices on November 13 that something was seriously wrong with the Noakhali chars, some incredulous informants had counted bodies by the hundred — all dead by the swoop of a cyclonetidal bore double-hit the previous day, Thursday, November 12.

With every passing day the toll mounted. And went well past a million dead. The whole tragedy was compacted into one small coinage proloy raat — the doomsday night.

Unfortunately the remembrance of the day receded further this year owing to the hartal week beginning the day before. Droves of people rushed for trains and river vessels and airliners to get away from the capital and make the best of the time. The Dhaliwood crowd tried to make of the week a busman's holiday. converging on Cox's Bazar for shooting as well as having a good time. They were unaware of November 12 and its connection with the Bay. But the elements were fleetingly on a repetition march all right.

We Bengalees have a wonderful capacity for forgetting what others wouldn't in a hundred generations.

Assassination Never Changes History

The bullet that killed Yitzhak Rabin, following a peace rally on Saturday night November 4,

1995, trumatised the entire world. The forces that gunned down President Sadat in 1981 for

the self-same reason — forging peace, in another form — took the life of Yitzhak Rabin.

N of the many lessons of history is that the progressive movement of human civilisation is full of ironies. Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the US, an archetypal figure of the American democracy, was shot dead just after Lee's surrender. President John Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. both gave their lives to the assassin's bullets both victims of hatred and intolerance: but the example Rabin's closest to assassination is the death of Mahatma Gandhi. Yitzhak Rabin, the folk-hero of the Jewish State of Israel who witnessed the holocaust, led his country to a lightening victory in the 6-day war in 1967 against the Arabs and brought the country to what the Jewish scriptures suggested, to the fulfillment of the dream of building their Home in the promised land of Judea and Sumaria by oc-

The occupation of Jerusalem made it possible for the Government of Israel to think that they could shift their capital to the city which unified in itself the history of all three monotheistic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam — all children of Moses and Abraham: the city with the unique distinction of having the Wailing Wall, Holy Sepulchre and Al Quds al Sharif. Rabin fulfilled the dreams of Jews all over the world, the completion of the dream of return to the land with promised Jerusalem at the heart of it. For a while the Israelis almost forgot in their jubilation and merriment their diaspora, the bad memories of King Herod's violence and tyranny, the beheading of John the Baptist and even the humiliation inflicted on them in the defeat and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Roman Emperor Titus Flavius in 70

cupying Gaza and West Bank

and the eastern half of

Jerusalem.

Legend has it that after the decisive victory of Israel against the Arabs in 1967. the Jews stopped scouring the bottom of the Tiber in Rome, in search of the Jewish treasures including the

T all started with the in-

at the same time when our

Yasmin of Dinajpur was raped

and murdered by Bangladesh

police. The victim, here in

Japan, was a twelve-year-old

Japanese girl and the perpe-

military authorities.

article of the Japan-US Status

of Forces Agreement signed

between the two countries in

1960. The US side obviously

suspects possible violation of

the fights of the alleged

criminals in Japanese legal

procedure. This was enough

for the islanders to raise

their long-neglected demand

for a revision of the Status of

Forces Agreement signed be-

tween Japan and the United

States, and call for a reduc-

tion of American presence on

the island. Okinawa's elected

governor, Masahide Ota, de-

cisively took the leadership

of islanders' initiatives to

create pressure on the cen-

tral government for the ful-

have come in any other worst

moment for the central gov-

ernment as the lease agree-

ment for the use of privately-

owned land facilities in Oki-

nawa for the US military base

expires in March next year.

Governor Ota was supposed

Such demands could not

filment of their demands.

cident of a rape in early

September more or less

famous candelabra for Jewish Hunnuka festival which, reportedly, were looted from the Jerusalem Temple and flung into the river Tiber by Emperor Titus, in whose view, that was the worst humiliation of the Jewish population of the Roman Empire!

It must have taken a lot of pondering and meditation on the part of Prime Minister Rabin to have engaged himself in peace talks with his Arab neighbours. The agony of the diaspora and the holocaust vividly remembered by every Jewish citizen it was not easy for Yitzhak Rabin to ultimately think in terms of Peace for Land. In war he defended his country's interest, fought for the truth as seen by the State of Israel, but in peace he must have imbued the spirit of the Old Testament and the wisdom contained therein. Solomon's Temple must have occupied a central place in his decision to move towards engagement

for peace. The temple first destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar in 588 B.C. and again in 90 A.D. this temple was sacked by Vespasian and Titus. Don't we remember when two harlots came in front of King Solomon carrying a live and a dead baby, each claiming the live baby as her own. Solomon ordered the live child to be cut in half, and shared between the two claimants? Upon hearing this, one woman implored the King to give the living baby to the other woman. rather than kill it. Solomon knew perfectly well who the true mother was!

The General-turnedpolitician, Yitzhak Rabin, was sensitive and alive to the reality of the day. It is not a surprise therefore to learn that Solomon was his

favourite reading. Many situations were against Rabin but slowly and surely he made his moves towards peace. One of the problems he faced was the UN Resolution 3379 adopted

in the General Assembly in 1975 equating Zionism to Racism. This resolution was certainly one of the darkest chapters in the history of the organisation. The UN reputa tion was at its nadir. The founding fathers of the UN and the framers of its charter in San Francisco fifty summers ago certainly did not envision a situation such as this. Rabin set it right in December 16, 1991 when the UNGA repealed this resolution by adopting a fresh decision No. A/46/L 47, with 111 votes in favour, 25 against and 13 abstentions. By repealing the resolution of

tween Egypt and Israel, in 1977, was transmuted into the handshake between the PLO Chairman and the Israeli Prime Minister.

A brave soldier, the Israeli leader was also an astute diplomat. He, along with other leaders, took note of the force of the 'Intifada' which was pulverising the whole of the Middle East. particularly the land occupied by the Israelis. The valour and the bravery of the Palestinians could no longer be ignored by the Israeli leaders. A significant portion of the Western media was hitherto tilted towards Israel. But the non-violent protesta-

Waliur Rahman

to the universal wisdom that one wrong cannot be righted by another wrong.

1975 the world body acceded

Yitzhak Rabin could now afford to proceed carefully to the path of peace. Known as a Hawk and an uncompromising leader he sent his Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. reputed as a Dove amongst the Arabs', to Norway to sit in secret negotiations with the Palestinians. A lesser leader, could not have done this. Rabin understood the meaning of the Latin phrase - Nihil vidantum durable (nothing that is violent will ever survive). He was in many ways a perfect archetype of Plato's philosopher-King.

The famous handshake between Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, hitherto two inveterate enemies, on September 13, 1993, with President Clinton looking on was the outcome. Peace in the Middle East and the process of peaceful settlement of disputes between Israel and its Arab neighbours, was inevitable. The seeds sown at the Camp David Accord betions of the Palestinian youths, with only stones in their hands, dramatically changed the media perception. Young boys with stones in hands, facing a kalashnikov or a tank reminded many of the Biblical struggles of David and Goliath. The symbolic impact of this circumstance was not lost on Rabin. Suddenly Western viewers were seeing the other side of the story. Hannah Ashrawi, Faisal Hosseini and Elias Fraiz the mayor of Bethlehem, were on their screens, telling the world of their story. Hitherto a sympathetic West, was exposed to the horrors of the conditions of the homeless and humiliated Palestinians who had been hounded out of their homes — much to the chagrin of the Israeli leaders. Yitzhak Rabin knew that the time had come to forge peace - and renounce war..... 'to everything there is a season, a time to be born and a time to die, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to weep and a time to laugh.

hate, a time for war and a time for peace. The time for peace has come. With the moral strength deriving from the Ecclesiastes, Rabin carefully but surely made the giant move towards peace.... on September 13, 1993

On a very personal level the handshake did not come to me as a total surprise though. He had once attended an informal gathering addressed by the late Israeli Prime Minister at B'nai Beth. the Jewish cultural centre on 46th Street, 1st Avenue in Manhattan. With Chairman Arafat I have had many encounters both in Bangladesh and other parts of the world. I had no doubt in my mind that they both wanted peace. a comprehensive settlement in the Middle East. And they both were waiting for an opportunity

The bullet that killed Yitzhak Rabin, following a peace rally on Saturday night November 4, 1995, trumatised the entire world. The forces that gunned down President Sadat in 1981 for the self-same reason - forging peace, in another form took the life of Yitzhak Rabin The unprecedented assemblage of world leaders underlined the dimension of the gravity of the situation. As President Clinton, and King Hussein of Jordan said the bullet that killed Rabin should not kill peace. The imagery of the 'Divide' invoked by King Hussein who had seen his grand-father gunned down in Jerusalem was conceived in the same way as Blaise Pascall stated "a strange justice that is bounded by a river; can anything be more ridiculous than that a man should have the right to kill me because he lives on the other side?"

Chairman Arafat did well by expressing his condolences to Leah Rabin personally. His anguish must be second only to Leah's. He lost a friend and above all a partner

Acting Prime Minister Shimon Peres needs allout

support at this juncture. Memories of Eliah Geladi or Arlsoraph or Rabbi Kahan should not blind our vision. Whether Yagal Amir acted as part of a conspiracy or on God's orders as a religious fanatic, is a matter to be decided by the law of the land. By ordering the Israeli troop redeployment on the West Bank, the Acting Prime Minister has put his priority in the right place: as Disrali said in the House of Commons on May 1, 1865: "Assassination has never changed the history of the world......"

Postscript

Egypt and Jordan have

establined diplomatic relations with Israel. Most recently Qatar is reported to have signed a \$3-billion-dollar deal with Israel. Morocco has always played a catalytic role in providing meeting ground for peace-parleys to help Israeli and the Arab diplomats. Chairman Arafat, after having spoken to Leah Rabin, paid a personal visit to her on Nov. 10th, to express his condolences. Many other Muslim countries maintain informal contacts. Amongst the SAARC countries, India has established diplomatic relations with Israel sometime ago. Monmohan Singh was present at the slain PM's funeral. Sri Lanka sent an official message of condolence to the govern-

ment of Israel. In the next weeks and months countries like Bangladesh who have played a pioneering role in the UN, in the OIC and the NAM and the Commonwealth in support of the cause of the Palestinians for a comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East, will do well to reckon with the new reality fast emerging in the Middle East.

And may we pause for a moment and remember what the Holy Koran revealed in the Sura Abraham.... "Their greeting shall be PEACE. Do you not see how Allah compares a good word to a good tree? Its root is firm and its branches are in the sky; it yields its fruits in every season by Allah's leave. Allah gives parables to men so that they may take head."

Okinawa: No Solution So Far

Monzurul Hug writes from Tokyo

Faced with Okinawa governor's refusal, the Japanese prime minister expressed his intention to sign the lease contracts on behalf of the landowners. This might provide a temporary face-saving solution of the problem for the government. But ...

trators of the crime were three US servicemen stato sign the necessary docutioned in American military ments for the extension of base in Okinawa. The alleged such facilities. But the rape of criminals, on their return to the minor Okinawa girl and the bases, temporarily the subsequent developments slipped out of the hands of concerning the incident Japanese prosecutors, who forced the governor to take a had to interrogate the sustough stand on the issue. pected rapists in designated Bowing to the popular dehours approved by the US mand of the islanders, governor Ota refused to sign the That was not all. To make thing worse, Japanese prosedocuments unless their are clear indications that their cutors were asked to interrodemands will get positive regate them at the presence of sponse from the concerned US representatives, as it is mentioned in the relevant

authorities of both Tokyo and Washington. US President Bill Clinton is scheduled to visit Japan soon. The Okinawa issue is bound to get prominence during the bilateral talks between the leaders of Japan and the US. Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama is well aware of, and in a last ditch effort to convince the Okinawa Governor about the significance of signing landlease contracts forcing reluctant landowners to lease their property to the US military in Okinawa, he met Governor Ota recently in Tokyo. But the meeting failed to bring desired result for the government. Murayama was unable to persuade the governor to change his mind, and as a result, the prime minister will now have to meet President Clinton later this month without any set-

contracts on behalf of the solution of the problem for before the end of this year. the government. But there exist the danger of makin people of Okinawa feel be trayed by Tokyo, who already complain of being neglected by the Japanese authorities on various issues related to US presence in Japan.

Since the incident of rape. Okinawa people have stepped up their demands for revision of the 1960 Japan-US Status of Forces Agreement as well as reduction of US military bases in their islands. Recently, around 100,000 people gathered at a rally to protest the incident This feeling of the islandenthat something must immediately be done to reduce the large US presence close to their home does not obviously keep much room for negotiations open for the governor About 75 per cent of US bases in Japan are in Okinawa. Okinawans complair that the burden of the Japan-US security arrangements falls too heavily on them.

But the problem is, no other prefecture in Japan at present is willing to share that burden voluntarily, and the United States has no intention to reduce the total number of US troops in Japan. In a recent meeting between US Secretary of Defence William Perry and Japanese leaders, it was

not available at the Gulshan

Post Office. It is the only post

office which cater to the

needs of a post residential

number of foreign digni-

taries, high-ups and elites of

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ing Badda are also the suf-

ferers for want of a night

post office at Gulshan area.

There is also no night post

office at Mohakhali and

The businessmen, traders

area habitated by quite

the city.

ple?

intention to sign the lease agreed to promote consolidation and reduction of US landowners. This might pro- bases in Okinawa and make a vide a temporary face-saving decision about some of them

a time to love and a time to

while maintaining 100,000 US troops in the Asia-Pacific region, including 47,000 in

It might not be easy for

Japanese and US authorities to find out an alternative for Okinawa. But at the same time, more the US will insist on maintaining the present level of their troops in Japan, more there are chances that many people in Japan as well as in other parts of Asia might start talking once again about the "Ugly Americans", this time policing the post-Cold War world with the intention of imposing their own version of peace and freedom.

A K M Jalaluddin

Bureaucratic Mystique in South Asia

What the CSPs were Taught—XVI

Soldiers among Civilians

TT TE were fortunate to have been attached to the 2nd East Bengal Regiment (EBR). Almost all its troops were Bengali and most of the officers were also from East Pakistan. It gave us an opportunity to see the hardships and difficulties that the Bengalis had to cope with in the Pakistan Army. Despite many constraints, 2 EBR was one of the best battalions of the Pakistan Army.

We were given a briefing regarding the organisation of the Pakistan Army by Captain Sultan of 19 FF Regiment. It had two main elements: a) Arms, b) Services.

vided into : i) Fighting Arms (i.e. Infantry, Armoured), ii) Supporting Arms (i.e. Signals, Artillery, Engineers).

The Services were as follows : a) Army Medical Crops (AMC), b) Army Dental Corps (ADC), c) Ordnance (AOC), d) Remounts Veterinary and Farms Services (RVFS), e) Army Post Office (APO) - Activated only during wars. f) Army Corps of Clerks (ACC). g) Armed Forces Nursing Services (AFNS), h) Corps of Military Police (CMP), i) Army Service Corps (ASC). Army Education Corps (AEC). k) Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (EME).

We were told that this was the standard organisation of a conventional army. Apart from the above Pakistan prided herself in the elite cadre of soldiers: SSG (Special Service Group) popularly known as the Commandos. Usually they were assigned extra tough tasks and sent for, what others thought to be missions impossible.

Force), iv) East Bengal.

There were no infantry troops raised from Bengal until Pakistan came into being. Jinnah ordered the raising of an infantry regiment from East Bengal. The class composition of the Punjab, Baluch and FF Regiments was 80% of PM (i.e. Punjabi Muslims) - and the remaining 20% were raised from other parts of West Pakistan. EBR consisted of 100% Bengali troops. The regiments officers were appointees belonging to various parts of Pakistan. There was no CC class composition) for offi-

General Ayub Khan had a racist prejudice against the Bengalis. And he was calling the shots regarding recruitment to the army since 1950 (as Adjutant General of the Pakistan Army, 1950-52). later as its C-in-C and finally as the President and Supreme Commander). Ayub believed that the Bengalis showed "all the signs of downtrodden race" and their psyche was ruled by a kind of "defensive aggressiveness." He believed in the validity of the theory of so-called 'martial race".

No wonder, then, that given these constraints EBR till March 1971. Our stock rose in the estimation of the Pakistanis when the 1st EBR gave a gallant account of itself in 1965 war under the command of Lt Col A T K Haque (in the Khem Karan Sector).

As stated, the rules laid down that 100% of Jawans sepoys in the EBR.

military installations were in East Pakistan. So the chances of a Bengali being posted in East Pakistan was negligible. Although Bengali and Urdu were the state languages of Pakistan — it was Urdu and Urdu alone that was used in the Pakistan Army. The incongruity of a Bengali Major addressing his EBR-troops all Bengalis — in Urdu can be appreciated only if one looked at the overall discrimination the Bengalis suffered in all fields of national activity in erstwhile Pakistan.

We came to know a number of Bengali officers during our attachment. We came to know, personally, Maj (later Lt Col) Masud, Maj (later Major Gen) Shafiullah, Major (later Major Gen) Muqtadir, , Capt (now Lt Gen) Nasim, Capt Reaz Salim. Lt (now Maj Gen) Azizur Rahman. Lt (later Lt Col) Mahfuz. Capt Nurul Huq (Signals). Among West Pakistanis were the C.O. Lt Col (later Major Gen) Zair Hussain, Major Rouf, Major Kamal , Capt Rafiq (who was the RMO), Capt Riyaz, Lt Nagvi and Lt Ahmed Jan who had just completed an equitation course.

Needless to say the Bengali officers were especially kind and extended all possible courtesies and consideration to us.

The eight-week attachment was meant for us, the civilians, to live with the soldiers (during their collective exercise). We came to Dhaka on 15 Jan, 1969 in aid of civil power (Govt of East could raise only 7 battalions Pakistan). After a week or so it was clear that the winter exercise would be called off because of the IS duty.

> Meanwhile we were al lowed to shift to our own accommodation - as the soldiers were given the task of enforcing curfew among civilians during the anti-Ayub movement. We were dined out (i.e. farewelled) by the unit at their Joydevpur Mess on 1 March 1969. They gave us, in token of their affection, a beautiful tie (EBR regimental tie). And we felt immensely proud that 'our unit' (i.e. 2 EBR) was in the forefront of the independence

Irregular supply of water

Sir, We, the residents of Zakir Hossain Road (Asad Avenue) Block E Area, Mohammadpur, Dhaka have been suffering from acute shortage of water for the last couple of

weeks.

Whenever we went to lodge complaint with WASA, Lalmatia they replied "there was some mechanical trouble in chabi (gate valve) which has been set right today. Water would be supplied to you from now on regularly." We returned to our residences with the hope of getting the supply. But to our utter surprise, when we checked our reservoirs we find not a single drop of water had been supplied.

When we again went to lodge complaints, the WASA, Lalmatia gave us the same reply as before. We do not understand as to why the "chabi" is not being repaired for which we are suffering greatly. WASA, Lalmatia even do not register our complaints on the above plea.

tlement on the base issue.

Faced with Okinawa gover-

nor's refusal, the Japanese

prime minister expressed his

Will the higher authority of WASA look into the matter urgently so that we get a regular supply of water. Sufferers

Zakir Hossain Road Mohammadpur, Dhaka

at Gulshan Sir, It is a matter of great regret that the night or

Banani areas. I firmly believe there is ar urgent requirement for a night post office in the area. Will the postal authorities Night post-office rise to the needs of the peo-

M A Rub evening postal services are

Dakkhinkhan, Uttara, Dhaka

The Arms were sub-di-

Infantry was the mainstay of Pakistan Army. It had four Regiments: i) Punjab, ii) Baluch, iii) FF (Frontier

for the East Bengal Regiment would be raised from Bengali Muslims. Some posts of NCOs, and JCOs were still filled up by non-Bengalis as there was a dearth of senior

The Bengalis had to suffer a lot in the Pakistan Army. Only 10% of Pakistan's huge