

## Balkan Peace

Nudged by the United States of America the delegations of three warring parties — the Serbs, the Croats and the Muslims — of former Yugoslavia signed an agreement for peace. President Clinton who took a personal initiative in bringing about this diplomatic solution to a protracted war has rightly described it as a 'historic and heroic' achievement. The opinions of the presidents of Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia run like this: under the present circumstances it was the best that the leaders could do.

The Dayton agreement, however, has not pleased some of the rebel leaders of the breakaway Serbia. Even response from Serbian leader Radovan Karadzic is yet to come. Pockets of such discontent notwithstanding, the deal has largely been hailed as a most comprehensive one. There has been swapping of lands in the redrawn map of former Yugoslavia. But the small corridor the Serbs demanded for them to be part of greater Serbia has been left for further negotiation. Sarajevo remains unified under Bosnian control and the refugees can — if they so wish — return to their homes.

The voluntary movement of refugees and the free movement of people throughout the whole of the former Yugoslavia which are deemed to be essential for the deal to become effective — may not get off the ground initially. But its virtue will be best reflected in the future and in concert with Europe. Yet the best guarantee for the deal to achieve its goals lies in the Bosnia-Croatia federation the Muslim and Croat leaders have agreed upon.

Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic, who has turned from a war-monger into a harbinger of peace appears immediately rewarded as a number of international sanctions have been lifted from his country. Others in the deal are also going to enjoy similar easing of international sanctions. This is very important. Those charged with war crimes have been barred from politics. So, both pressure and indulgence would be at work to isolate the hawks. That is how the constituents of the federation will learn to live with each other.

## A Foolish Ban

A very well-received book has been proscribed by the government four years after its publication. The book is now in its fourth edition and has already sold more than 20,000 copies — almost a record for this land of very poor readership. One can disagree with Dr Humayun Azad, a professional linguist and a professor of the Dhaka University higher than which there isn't a label for intellectual distinction, on a hundred points but his book 'Nari' is decidedly a serious book, a truly serious read from start to finish.

Actions like banning books tells upon the health of both the government and the society. It diminishes democracy by a big measure. Colonial powers needed this weapon to clobber at material not congenial to their unjust control of people not their own. In an independent nation only usurpers and dictators can find this handy to suppress signs of rejection. Why should a government waxing eloquent at every breath over its being democratic, resort to book-banning? Nevertheless, there are dark recesses in the big government machine going about their own businesses like banning books without ever involving the visible government of the PM and her ministers. Does the Prime Minister know that an important book, a kind of achievement by a Bangladesh scholar, has been banned by her government? Does she like the action, is she ready to defend it?

The government has justified the banning by saying that the book contains objectionable comments contrary to feelings and fundamental beliefs of the Muslims. By what process of just and fair enquiry did the government get deep down the feeling — which is the most private matter of an individual — of a Muslim, or a substantial number of Muslims to arrive at such a bizarre conclusion? Fundamental beliefs of a Muslim reside in his 'iman' and the heart of this is couched in Kalima Taiyeb. Does Dr Azad's book challenge God's oneness or Rasulullah's apostleship or messengership? We condemn the foolish banning of 'Nari'.

## Safety of Children

On Saturday last two school students were missing from their homes on a Gulshan road. The same day two other boys vanished from the Madhubagh area of the city.

Mamun, a student of class V in Barguna, came to visit his kinsmen in Dhaka in October. On the 18th he went out of his grandfather's house for a stroll and has not returned since. But a letter demanding Tk 50 thousand ransom money arrived. The deadline was November 18 and the letter was received after that date. If the money was not delivered on time the boy was to be despatched to India. In case police help was sought, the boy would come to harm, the letter said. Family sources have complained that police were not taking any interest in the case.

Weeks ago police did very creditably recover a child kidnapped from a KG school. One expects the same kind of response and quite a bit of smartness on their part in the above and similar cases.

Dhaka must be saved from many things. Foremost among these is making it safe for the children. Our administration and the highest political levels must wake up to the urgency of the problem. All progress will be dashed to nothing if the children are not safe.

ONE of the major factors contributing to Karachi's bad law and order situation is the unchecked flow of immigrants. Of the estimated population of 10.8 million, 4.8 million are new Sindhis (or Mohajirs), 1.5 million Punjabis, 1.5 million Pathans, 1.4 million Bangladeshis, 500,000 ethnic Sindhis, 500,000 Kashmiris, 200,000 Afghans, 150,000 Balochis, 50,000 Iranians, 50,000 Burmese (Arakan origin), 150,000 miscellaneous, 1.2 million Bangladeshi immigrants reached Karachi after 1971 in different stages, viz (1) 1972-1977 approximately 200,000, (2) 1977-1985 approximately 300,000 (3) 1985-1995 approximately one million.

The Afghan population has now reduced by about 50 per cent from its mid-'80s high of 400,000. Most of the Burmese Muslims of Arakan origin entering Karachi after 1978 are illegal, while the illegal Iranian immigrants came in three waves. About 750,000 Pakistani citizens of Mohajir origin stranded in Bangladesh have come to Karachi, half a million during the period 1972-1977 whereas 250,000 have come from 1978 onwards leaving a balance of 250,000 still stranded in Bangladesh who want to come to Pakistan. Pakistan has a moral obligation to accept these Pakistanis of Mohajir origin stranded in Bangladesh.

About 150,000 each a Punjabi and Pathan origin also came back from former East Pakistan, very few to Karachi. Of the original 1.5 million refugees from India and their descendants, 500,000 have since merged into the Bangladeshi mainstream. Between 1972 till date, almost half a million Mohajirs (between the ages 15 to 25) directly from areas in India have joined their brethren in Pakistan, almost all of them illegally and mostly now resident in Karachi. Between 1972 till date, there has been an addition to the population of

three million people from outside Karachi.

Karachi's population being 5.5 million in 1971, it has almost doubled now, the maximum influx being 1.5 million Mohajirs. With employment opportunities increasing in Punjab, NWFP as well as Kashmir and as the law and order situation has worsened, depressing the economic opportunities in Karachi, on the average there has been a consistent reverse flow in the direction of Punjab, NWFP and Kashmir. Though there continues to be a fair turnover, the population figures of those originating from these areas has decreased (especially in the last 5 years) by about 15 per cent on an average over the past two decades.

The natural growth of any modern metropolitan city is to rise by 15 to 20 per cent every 10 years. Given this computation, Karachi's population should have been maximum around eight million today, even then the present socio-economic infrastructure and services would have been barely adequate to cover the needs of the citizens.

Imagine, then, the plight of a city that has to cater to three million more residents than its already over-burdened services can cope with. In fact, Karachi's housing, water, electricity, gas, sewerage, roads, transportation, medical facilities, etc. can give only 'below average' service to less than half the present population. The quality of life available in this city has, therefore, rapidly deteriorated. With the reduction of employment opportunities in the city, the social structure has started to coalesce around ethnic lines as each racial community competes for the steadily reducing number of jobs.

Though in numbers, un-

like the Pathans, the Punjabis and Kashmiris do not live in "ghettos" and as such are non-existent as a community force in Karachi. This sharing of the ever-reducing economic pie, which as a process remained quite fair till 1985, became a racially selfish exercise after the "Bushra Zaidi" incident (named after the riots when the school-going girl was run over by a yellow minibus). The youth of the Mohajir community came together at perceived discrimination and persecution due to their ethnic background, making a

etc. (5) miscellaneous jobs, 5,000, (6) families (women and children) not working, approximately 200,000. The industrial labour is self-explanatory, other than the jute mills, textile mills, garment factories, etc. their value to industrialists is because (a) these workers are satisfied with much less than the minimum legal wage in Pakistan and (b) they cannot form Unions or protest at lack of other facilities as any dissent leads to immediate deportation at the behest of the industrialists in connivance with the local authorities.

not attract official attention at the local, regional and national level.

It is all very well to threaten to send them back but immediate displacement would cause severe economic dislocation disrupting industrial momentum in Karachi as well as causing a crisis in domestic harmony of Karachi's middle class, etc. Other than the commercial and emotional stress, the logistical exercise would be staggering. Even if it were possible to send back 2 plane-loads a day every day of the year (300 people per day), in a year that would mean about 1,000,000 people the whole exercise would take 14-15 years, in which period, given the available women and children, another generation of about a million descendants would be ready for deportation.

Given that the 1.4 million Bangladeshis resident in Karachi are a *fait accompli*, no nation can afford to allow unchecked immigration on this scale. Aren't people deported regularly from the US, UK and Europe as illegal aliens? In particular, the strife-ridden city of Karachi, already under ethnic tensions, can ill afford the opening up of another such emotional front. Pakistan cannot afford any further influx from anywhere.

What about those who are already here? There is an element of humanity that we cannot ignore. There is always the danger of spoiling the deep relationship between Pakistan and Bangladesh that has taken years to build after the catastrophe of 1971. Already the first shots have been fired in acrimonious and rather undiplomatic exchanges, no doubt India will add fuel to the fire. The pragmatic course would be, given that the alien gives proof of an identifiable place

of work, to register all the immigrants as "ALIENS". This card should double as a WORK PERMIT with a service fee (around Rs 1,000 to Rs 1,500). For the issue of registration cards there must be a cut-off date i.e. latest by 30 Jun '96. As long as the ALIEN pays a monthly service charge of Rs 300 and his employer (or himself if the man is self-employed) pays a monthly service charge of another Rs 300, the Government of Pakistan (GOP) should accept this status of residency with stiff penalties including immediate deportation if someone has or tries to get Pakistani nationality (National ID or a passport).

By declaring Bangladeshis as illegal immigrants, GOP has already declared an open hunting season on them, making them game for excesses by the local police to line their own pockets. Already SITE and Korangi associations have lodged their protest at their members having their factories raided by police looking for illegals. Chinese restaurants have met the same fate. Money to the tune of Rs 15,000-20,000 per individual is changing hands but certainly not going into the Government's coffers.

It would be better to employ the private sector (or organisations like the citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) for ALIEN REGISTRATION as well as the servicing of ALIEN need, acting as the local bridge with the laws of the land. We have to work out a pragmatic solution that not only makes it a disincentive monetarily for future "illegals" but also makes it commercially feasible for Karachi to bear the burden of the existing immigrants, whether they be Bangladeshis, Afghans, Iranians, etc. The only way to get out of our "Immigration blues" from becoming a catastrophe is to act now in a mature, sensible and organised manner.

# Immigration Blues

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## AS I SEE IT

Ikram Sehgal writes from Karachi

political movement called the Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM). While the other communities did not resort to the same "circling of the wagons", with its solid vote bank in "ghettos" the MQM quickly became a major political force in the urban areas of Sindh. Linked with its problems in the other urban areas of Sindh where the ethnic Sindhis in rural areas surrounding these urban enclaves were in an overwhelming majority, MQM's birth inadvertently initiated the present decade of racial strife (1985-1995).

The major immigrant community in Karachi is of Bangladeshi origin. The approximate composition in a rough estimate in various work descriptions are, viz (1) 750,000 industrial labour (2) 300,000 in domestic employment, (3) 50,000 working in commercial entities i.e. restaurants, cooks, waiters, etc. (4) 25,000 fishermen, (5) 25,000 white collar workers as clerks, cashiers,

Those domestic employ "feed" from up-country dried up (people headed for greener pastures in the Gulf i.e. "Dubai Chalo").

What is worrying is that almost 200,000 Bangladeshis are women and children i.e. entire families have established new roots. Most Bangladeshi immigrants used the land route through India to use Karachi as a staging port on their way to the greener pastures of the oil-rich Gulf countries. A massive number stayed back in Karachi due to lack of opportunity. In a planned and organised manner, the Indian Border Security Force (BSF) first allowed these people into India across the rather porous international border with Bangladesh, and then looked the other way as they crossed the international border into Pakistan. Three million people in 20 years means an influx into Karachi of more than 400 people per day on an average, this is not a insignificant number as to

## Secretaries Committee: Whither Achievements?

The older committee is, in fact, popularly known as the "Shingara" Committee, whose meetings give one an opportunity to snack and socialize. Indeed, although it sits once a week and spends at least two hours of solid office time on a busy working day, it cannot boast of having achieved any substantive results.

the creation of new ones. — to consider any other matter relating to reduction of government expenditure, increase of efficiency of public service and expeditious implementation of government decisions.

This Committee may meet as frequently as required.

The ground situation is that neither of the two Secretaries Committees are operating at the optimal level. The older committee is, in fact, popularly known as the "Shingara" Committee, whose meetings give one an opportunity to snack and socialize. Indeed, although it sits once a week and spends at least two hours of solid office time on a busy working day, it cannot boast of having achieved any substantive results. Generally, minutes are not taken and recommendations are not put up to higher authorities. To put it another way, in the manner in which it is performing at present, it would have hardly made any difference to government output if this committee ceased to exist. On the contrary, critics would say that

had the Secretaries remained in their respective offices instead of attending the Committee meetings, they could have at least got more time to dispose of urgent files and daily "dak" and see a few more visitors. One can also notice instances of duplication in the terms of reference of the two committees. At a time when the whole world is talking of

tee consisting of all Secretaries and Additional Secretaries-in-charge should be made to meet only once a fortnight. The main purpose of this meeting should be to brief the Secretaries on important government policies and programmes and their implications for the country. In addition, current problems faced by various Ministries in implementing

mental heads to its meetings, depending on the nature of the problem discussed. It should also be allowed to form sub-committees for specific tasks. Its recommendations should regularly travel to either the Cabinet meeting or to the PM directly for decisions to be taken, again depending on the importance of the subject addressed. Secondly, there should be a political direction and an effort to activate the Secretaries Committees. These should indeed be seen in a positive light, a complementary and supporting structures for the PM and the Cabinet of Ministers, and this also needs to be acknowledged by having the Secretaries Committees addressed by the PM and the senior Ministers from time to time. Unfortunately, this has not happened as frequently as it should have, and that is perhaps one of the reasons for the moribund situation. Thirdly, the smaller Secretaries Committee should be regarded and used as an in-house collective think-tank for all government affairs.

rather than as something like a fire-fighting machine for use in emergencies. Thus, with proper encouragement and direction from above it could be made to produce policy papers for consideration of the PM and the Cabinet of Ministers.

Particularly, inter-ministerial matters and administrative issues of common interest should be their area of concentration. In this regard, special mention needs to be made about the urgency to update and improve important administrative instructions/rules/regulations in operation, such as the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, the Government Servants (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1985, the Bangladesh Service Rules (BSR), the Fundamental Rules, the Treasury Rules, the Secretariat Instructions, etc. An active Secretaries Committee could indeed accomplish such a task and thereby contribute to a better performance by the government. Accordingly, the terms of reference of the two Secretaries Committees should be reformed. Finally, much will depend on the initiative and drive of the Cabinet Secretary as the head of these two Committees.

## Making Government Work

by Analyst

downsizing government, one also wonders why the terms of reference of the second Secretaries Committee should specifically refer to the creation of new bodies and corporations!

However, from objective considerations, it is extremely important that the two Secretaries Committees should play a dynamic and meaningful role. Towards this end, a number of suggestions are in order. Firstly, the older and the larger commit-

cabinet decisions may also be discussed by way of sharing information and as an input for the second committee's deliberations. This meeting should not last for more than one hour, including the time for tea and Shingara. However, the newer and smaller Secretaries Committee consisting of the more important Secretaries should meet if possible twice a week. It should, of course, be allowed to call for one or more Secretaries/Depart-

## To the Editor...

### Fake promise

Sir, Few years ago, the Chairperson of the ruling party laid down the foundation stone of the proposed TV studio in Rajshahi. It was announced that the construction work of this studio would begin shortly. But it is really disappointing that no construction work has yet been started at the proposed site.

Election is nearing. I fear that the ruling party will have to pay a high price in this constituency for making a fake promise.

A citizen  
Rajshahi

the political crisis and also do not want to know even a little about it. They demand only two meals a day and want have sound sleep at night. If so, why the political parties are causing sufferings to them. Who have given them the right to play games with the lot of the common people?

I fervently request them to come to a solution to the on-going political impasse so that people of the country can live in peace and happiness.

Maruf Hasan  
Gulshan, Dhaka

### Island of peace

Sir, My attention has been drawn to a letter captioned "Is the island of peace vanished" by O H Kabir published in The Daily Star on November 12, '95. He says that he heard about the island decades back, to be somewhere in Chittagong. He requested the readers to give some light on the matter.

For his kind information, I would like to inform that the 'Island of peace' is in Chit-

tagong. He may contact the TCCA (Thana Central Cooperative Association Ltd) authority about it. They have an Annual Report '92 (the 17th Annual General Meeting). In the report, a brief history of the 'Island of peace' is contained. He may get his required information on the matter. It is run under BRDB (Bangladesh Rural Development Board).

Mr Abdullah  
Senior Assistant Director  
BRDB, Chittagong

### Development indicators

Sir, On the occasion of the opening ceremony of the country's second Stock Exchange in Chittagong, Bangladesh Television telecast the development activities of Chittagong during its Bengali news bulletin at 8 pm on that day. I was thrilled to see such developments in Chittagong. The finance minister often says by giving a figure of Taka 500,000 million spent by the BNP government during their tenure towards development activities. I shall be tempted to see such development activities as completed by the BNP government in other

divisions like Rajshahi, Khulna, Barisal and Sylhet.

In this context, it may be mentioned that the World Bank annually publishes country-wise report comprising various data like GNP, literacy rate, life expectancy, food-intake, energy consumption, industry, urban population, exports, imports etc. It would be nice if similar data of development indicators in line with the World Bank publications are made public so that people do not resort to strikes, gheraos, etc.

Salmi Ally  
Elephant Road, Dhaka

### When can we fly?

Sir, Air Parabat Limited is a flying academy in private sector. After receiving air transport licence from Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh about two years ago, it imported two Cessna-150 training aircrafts from the USA. But these aircrafts are still standing idle at Tejgaon hangar. The CAAB took four months to look at the aircrafts. Although the aircrafts and their records are in order, permission for test flight is being delayed with-

out assigning any reason. About 22 student pilots have completed their ground courses two months ago, but they could not be given flight training due to CAAB's non-cooperation in issuing airworthiness certificate.

We expect, the minister concerned will give personal attention so that we can become pilots by spending *taka* at home, not *dollars* abroad.

Shakil Ahmed Selim  
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

### Thanks to the Prime Minister

Sir, Jagannath University College, established in 1896, is one of the oldest and the largest educational institutions in Bangladesh. At present, there are thirty-five thousand students who are studying in this college. The institution offers Honours and Masters courses in 20 subjects with day and night shifts and has an academic council, four faculties and four deans. So it was eligible to get recognition as a university. It was a proper and just demand of the students. At last, the demand has been fulfilled by the Prime

Minister Khaleda Zia. On 2nd November, she declared Jagannath University College as a full-fledged university which was commendable as well as a pleasure to us. As an ex-student and on behalf of the students of the college, I convey my heartfelt thanks to the prime minister for this act of hers. I also greet the principal, teachers, and the student leaders who tried their best in different ways to accomplish the purpose.

Bikash Kanti Debnath  
An ex-student of Jagannath College

### Bengali dubbing of English movies

Sir, With reference to the various letters appearing in your esteemed daily on the captioned subject, I wish to make only one comment that Bangladeshis have become so much accustomed to having adulterated stuff in every spheres of life that they have become totally incapable to digest anything original. You get what you deserve.

T. Sardar  
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