

Hasina's Warning

In a sudden, though not uncharacteristic, swipe at the diplomats, Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina blamed the donors for what she alleged to be their support for BNP's one party election.

More than anything else, it is Sheikh Hasina's statement of Saturday which makes it abundantly clear that Western democracies are decidedly not in sympathy with the opposition's wishes and aims.

It is the fact of going public, and so acrimoniously at that, which gives rise to serious questions in the public mind as to how wide is the rift between the opposition and the donors?

While we agree with the opposition point of view that US State Department's comment that voters should be allowed to vote peacefully for their "chosen candidates" was thoroughly misconceived in the absence of any candidate from the opposition, yet we cannot accept that as a justification for such a sweeping castigation of donors' role in the economy of Bangladesh.

As a potential Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina needs to be more circumspect in her public utterances, and more leader-like in her comments. If donors are involved in our political negotiations, it is not without our invitation, and hence the fault is ours.

The security arrangements made on January 24 to see through the Prime Minister's launching of the ruling party's election campaign gave Sylhet the look of an embattled town. And 40 persons were injured in police actions aimed at muffling militant protest there.

Of course, the Prime Minister must be ensured foolproof security. The state owes it to the PM. And pray what kind of security requires uniformed people to bring down black flags from rooftops?

The Prime Minister's election tours are election activity where the government may very advisedly not repeat the usual anti-hartal regime. In reality, her election tours are being attended by very quick-to-the-touch police preparedness.

There is no doubt that opposition militancy in stalking Khaleda's every step since the Sylhet action, is partly responsible for police accesses. He who is hurt or is killed in the protests is the opposition's very own people.

Good Neighbourliness

Neighbours in the subcontinent cannot but be concerned over the escalation of border tension between India and Pakistan. The long confrontationist position of the two armies across the Kashmir border can wear out the nerves of those manning that difficult and uncongenial terrain and frayed nerves can lead to unpleasant eventualities in spite of the best of political intentions to keep away from such.

Pakistan has been a chronic case of instability at top as well as the social level. India has, of late, been shaken by corruption scandals and its leadership has been sapped of the composure that comes from assiduous abidance by what is morally correct.

Anti-Indianism is a congenitally received mindset of both the state and society of Pakistan. Whatever can dissipate this will add to the good of the subcontinent.

India has the Kashmir. It has only as something of a constant drain on not only its coffers and patience but also its image. End of a Kashmiri confrontation will free India to forge a more spectacular social and economic progress.

The escalation on the borders must be defused if only to minimise the possibilities of a flare-up on a wider scale between the two neighbours. We are sure one that will take more initiative in dissipating the tension will score over the others in so many ways.

THE 1848 Revolution in Europe heralded the demise of the dynastic authority over peoples as the monarchial right lost its so-called divine sanction over subjects on July 14, 1789. Lamartine exclaimed 'we are making together the sublimest of poems'...

The covenants of the League of Nations put together following the World War I had implicit in it the principle of self-determination. The UN Charter is more specific about the sovereignty of the UN member nations, inviolability of internationally recognised borders and the guarantee of human rights severally and collectively.

The franchise granted by Louis Philippe was taken too liberally and people around the globe wanted at breakneck speed to translate into action Lamartine's declaration that 'people must be left free to make mistakes'.

There is another variety of conflict which is fought in the name of the right of self-determination but in the matrix of the organized nation-state based on the Charter principles. These conflicts inevitably tend to destabilise the existing system of nation-state.

The Roman Empire was provided with three of its greatest Emperors - Diocletian, Constantine and Justinian by Illyria, modern ex-Yugoslavia.

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Many of the ruling Social Democrats' traditional supporters have bitterly criticised the mid-January expulsions of two couples and their 11 children.

Observers believe that Carlsson, who played a major role in steering the child-rights convention through the UN General Assembly in 1989, has been damaged by the affair in a country that prides itself on having a humanitarian conscience of world renown.

There is no doubt that Sweden is closing its doors," says Eva Singer, an official of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Stockholm, citing other expulsions. "The trend is worrying."

The two deported Kurdish families came to Sweden in 1994. Two men - relatives, bearing the family name Sincari - arrived among about 400 Kurds who sought political asylum, claiming they had suffered persecution in Iraq.

Swedish police manhandling women and frightened children and battling support groups to enforce deportations to Turkey, a country that has itself been strongly criticised by human rights groups for its treatment of the Kurds.

The families were bundled on to a rickety old chartered aircraft that broke down for several hours in Bucharest during the flight to Ankara. "It was torture for them," said Dr Lars Gustavsson, a member of the Paediatricians Society that has joined the chorus of condemnation.

The case posed serious questions of medical ethics, he said. The government had ignored experts' reports on the children's psychological state, said the doctor, adding: "I couldn't believe this was happening in Sweden."

An African diplomat in Stockholm said: "Sweden has lost its moral power. It cannot claim social injustice against governments abroad any longer."

And the Express newspaper suggested Carlsson should consider resigning in view of the fact that his only supporters for the action were the right-wing Conservative Party and racist groups.

Signs of a toughening of immigration policy have been growing. In December, a Kenyan woman and her two half-Swedish children were kicked out, and there are fears that any flaw in the asylum records of other refugees might lead to their deportation.

Until recently, Sweden's booming economy in an underpopulated country of less than nine million people drew in large numbers of refugees and migrants to work in factories or undertake various menial jobs. But as the number of asylum-seekers has increased - the figure swelled to more than 70,000 in 1993, partly due to the war in former Yugoslavia - economic problems have grown, and this has undoubtedly influenced government policy.

Protect the UN Charter or Promote Separatist Movements? Questions of Quebec, LTTE and Chechnya Pose a Moral Dilemma

While discussing the separatist movements one comes face to face with certain moral questions like human rights and the question of rights of ethnic and religious minorities. These concerns are raised more often than not by certain human rights groups. They often forget that cities like Dresden and Coventry were destroyed to save and secure democracy and human rights...

the United Nations as well as the Covenant of Human Rights, social, political and economic, will be jeopardised. The recent separatist movements in Sri Lanka spearheaded by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the movement in Quebec to break away from mainland Canada and the separatist movement in Chechnya - each seems to fall in a category of its own.

The defeat suffered by the Tamil Tigers in Jaffna peninsula was also predictable. The Tigers lost much of the sympathy, if there was any, after their refusal to accept the devolution package offered them by President Chandrika Kumaratunga. She was courageous and candid. We have no reason to disbelieve her sincerity.

The events in Chechnya are even more deplorable. Chechen leader Dudaev seemed to have made grievous miscalculation. Legitimate hopes and aspirations of a people, of an ethnic minority, have done it successfully.

The Turkish government heir to the great Kamal Ataturk is fully conscious of the fact that the unity forged between the Muslims and the Christian Janissaries, to a large extent accounted for the phenomenal success of the Ottoman Empire in establishing its rule over a large portion of the world.

The Charter of the United Nations and Human Rights covenants amply provide conditions for the realisation of these objectives.

the UN Charter, greater sense of responsibility, national and international, prevailed over narrow and parochial dispensation there. A United Canada can serve its citizens better in larger freedom at home and abroad. Quebec has occupied a place of honor in history. It was here that Churchill and Roosevelt met along with their chiefs of staff in 1943 and 1944. Weighty decisions were made on Mussolini, invasion of Europe, operations in Burma and the Philippines, Lend-Lease Act etc. It was here that US Treasury



Waliur Rahman

Secretary Hans Mongethaw proposed the physical removal of Germany's means of industrial production - the means of War Machine! Leaders like Pierre Trudeau and the present Prime Minister Jean Chretien are also Quebecois. The Ghost of Charles De Gaulle seems to be still haunting many Quebecois for an independent nationhood!

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Tamil Nadu, independent of the government of India! Prabhakaran likened himself to the Percivian Shining Path Movement. It was left to a second generation - Japanese president of Peru, Alberto Fujimoro to have stolen the thunder of Sandello Luminoso. When I met him in my capacity as president of the Governing Body of World Food Programme at a lunch given in his honour by then IFAD president Idriss Jazairy, he convinced us all about his policy of taming the Shining Path zealots. And he seems to

ity in particular, are important in any political dispensation. The million-strong population of Chechnya, in the election of 17 December, 1995, made clear their opposition to Mr Dudaev. About 60% voters participated in the voting, including capital Grozny and elected Mr Zavgayev as Head of State. Majority Chechens opted for addressing their demands through peaceful means. By bringing their internal problem to the neighbouring Turkish territory, by seizing the Black Sea ferry Avraasia, they not only embarrassed the Turkish government, they also invited universal condemnation. The Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller rightly said, "I cannot any act putting the lives of innocent people in jeopardy. Whatever its causes might be."

The Turkish government heir to the great Kamal Ataturk is fully conscious of the fact that the unity forged between the Muslims and the Christian Janissaries, to a large extent accounted for the phenomenal success of the Ottoman Empire in establishing its rule over a large portion of the world. The Christian Janissaries provided the backbone of the military superiority of the Ottoman Empire. No wonder that Busbequius, the Roman Ambassador to the court of the Sultan of Turkey, said "christendom subsisted precariously by the goodwill of the SOPHY - the king of Persia whose ambitions in

the East continually called the Sultan of Turkey back from his Western conquests! Ottoman Empire's rule was based largely on secular approach. Modera Turkey remembers that very well. The message of thanks by President Yeltsin to President Suleiman Demyrel for the dexterity with which the Turkish government had handled the situation in saving innocent lives, men, women, and children was there. The Russians have also shown great understanding in withholding any support to Kurdish rebels fighting for an independent Kurdistan. One would hasten to add that Mr Dudaev and others supporting him would do better to follow the footsteps of president Nazarbiev of Kazakhstan. His leadership, mixed with vision and realism has given him a role in the CIS much larger than himself. A place in greater Russian Federation ensures better future and better quality of life for the ethnic minorities in Russia.

While discussing these separatist movements one comes face to face with certain moral questions like human rights and the question of rights of ethnic and religious minorities. These concerns are raised more often than not by certain stary eyed human rights groups. They often forget that cities like Dresden and Coventry were destroyed to save and secure democracy and human rights and rightly so. A few hundred years ago the same people colonised one country after another, in Asia Africa and Latin America with the Bible in one hand and gun in the other. True that concerns of human rights are more focused today but the innate values of democracy have not changed with the passage of time. Democracy is not only universal adult suffrage, it is also a gateway to stability and peace where ethnic minorities along with the majority communities would exercise their rights for a better present and brighter future.

The Charter of the United Nations and Human Rights covenants amply provide conditions for the realisation of these objectives.

Refugee Haven 'Closes its Door'

Moussa Awuonda writes from Stockholm. Sweden's reputation as a sanctuary for refugees with a deep humanitarian conscience has been badly tarnished by its deportation of two Kurdish families to Turkey. The move signals a less-welcoming stand, but pressure is growing on the government to back down.

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The shocking news of the death of a 14-year-old boy in Khulna during demonstration is enough to shake the conscience of all the citizens in an independent country like Bangladesh. How long do we have to see and stand the use of innocent children by the political parties? The struggle for might and power have shunned all of our conscience and we are indiscriminately using our younger citizens.

The political parties are constantly using our children for slogans, hartals, processions, elections, opposition campaigns and throwing or carrying bombs and so on. If they say 'no' to this accusation, how can the children become the victims of these fierce occurrences? The children are not supposed to be present in any such places where adult protesters demonstrate their protests! Should we think that the law-enforcing people entered children's homes to kill them? Or, mothers carried their children to the spots to be killed?

Even if the children enter the trouble-spots as curious visitors or on-lookers, is it not the political party's obligations to see that underage children don't step in the scene? How can the children become active members of political parties? Instead, how can they enter as active participants in rallies? In both cases, we are using them for meeting our needs.

The children are not voters. They have nothing to do with political demonstrations, unless they are used. Is it the case that children are being used for the survival of political parties? In the name of children's brutal killings, our leaders make statements years after years and survive for political fronts - we have seen these in most of our struggles for freedom from varied chains. History starts

Asafuddowlah's suggestions

Sir, In a recent article published in your paper on the country's political crisis written by Mr Asafuddowlah, a number of suggestions to review and amend the Constitution were made. I and most of my colleagues agree with him that this political stalemate should make us take a practical look at the constitutional voids.

The upward revision of age, fixation of graduation as the minimum level of education, barring of successive terms in office and voting by party symbols and allocation of parliamentary seats to parties on the basis of percentage of total votes received - are all relevant in order to stop repetition of the same situation in the future.

We express our solidarity behind these suggestions put forward by a respected civil servant of the country.

M Ali Kabir, Shahjalal University, Sylhet

Not fair

Sir, It is now apparently clear that there is nothing left in the world that can solve or ease the long political impasse in the country. The PM's speech to the nation on 23rd of January cre-

Election '96

Sir, I was away from the country for treatment when the list of voters was being prepared by house-to-house check. I returned from abroad on the 26th September '95 and found out that my name could not be enlisted in the voters list. I immediately tried to be enlisted and filled in the forms and submitted the same at 10/10 Iqbal Road, Mohammadpur on the 2nd November '95. During the photography sessions in

our area (Tejknipara-Tejgaon), I found my name missing from the list. I visited the Election Office at Mohammadpur and was told that the revised voters list would be published in or around the 25th January 1996. To my understanding, the voters list is incomplete.

I therefore ask: "How can an election be held even when the voters list is not final. Is this not a farce?"

Thaddeus Rozario, Co-Chairman of Bangladesh Hindu Boddhday Christian Okyo Parishad, 5 Tejknipara, Dhaka -1215

'Disney Time'

Sir, I liked your 'Disney Time' - a full-coloured page, but the writing weren't clear, so I couldn't see the riddles. So please type the writing more clearly. And I'm sending two jokes.

1. What driver can never be arrested for speeding? (A screwdriver) 2. Teacher: What do you get from Germany? Student: Germ - any. I do like the page where you give comics (Garfield and Tom and Jerry)

Maha Matin, Cl-6B, Radiant International School, Dhaka

A Reader Reacts

I Protest Shamima Islam

to take shape and we hate the brutal killings but not those who use our children for making their balls run. Who are these children that are so easily used? They are poor - so poor that they cannot even eat one full meal a day. They eat the leftovers from workers' employers in many places. Half a plate rice and 'daal' is a palatable dish to many of them who are abandoned by families. They sleep on the streets, roads, foot-paths, market places, bus-stops and so on. While the political leaders talk about lack of freedom and rights with of food bowl in their hands or not food and a cup of hot tea for warming up, these children wait for our garbage to be thrown on the streets or dustbins so that they can pick up something to sell and earn for the day to fill their stomachs. This search is never-ending, and they get injuries in this search. They sleep on 'chats', torn plastics, used papers and so on, while leaders or semi-leaders go back home to take a good sleep at the end of the demonstration. In chilly winter, while leaders go out with a sweater on, the poor children, the street children, barely use a torn dirty shirt for protection from cold. They are happy, if they get chance to earn some 5-10-20 take per head for their participation in the demonstrations, more happy if they get one meal a day! To be used is fun to them and the sensible adults, who boast of struggling for human rights, forget about children's rights while torturing them politically. Is it not that we use their unlimited poverty for making speeches and statements when they are

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Even if the children enter the trouble-spots as curious visitors or on-lookers, is it not the political party's obligations to see that underage children don't step in the scene? How can the children become active members of political parties? Instead, how can they enter as active participants in rallies? In both cases, we are using them for meeting our needs.

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