## The Baily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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## Talking Business at OIC

Depending upon what is targeted to be achieved, the international meets of heads of governments and states come in as many different kinds as the participants themselves are. But in all these there is one underlying affinity. Addresses dish out the best words in the world, ghost-written by professionals. Most often these orations and perorations do not come to anything in brass-tack action terms. Platitudes and pleasantries rule these concourses as hardly any participant would like to bind himself or herself to commitments before others doing so and before being certain that these would be specially profitable to his or her nation, more than the others.

We are delighted that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's address yesterday at the OIC extraordinary summit in Islamabad steered clear of that routine and not a word of that was articulated without being meant. Yes, there are among the OIC members-states surpluses in either material or human resources, in capital or expertise. These could be put to good use to the benefit of all members by easing up transfer and investment of these from the resource-surplus states to the resource-scarce ones. The OIC members can all gain from effecting trade preferences leading to the formation of a common market or something very close. Her seven clearly enunciated points surely stand to benefit Bangladesh in a big way — she needs foreign capital for home investment as exactly as she needs employment of her manpower abroad. But this is not anything that would be helpful to Bangladesh alone. Distribution of all the members' resources with a view to maximising benefits to all is her behest so that all could profit from all others endowments.

This is a businesslike approach, hardly needing to be padded up by community sentiments. The same could be said of the projected emergence of the D-8, a set-up for economic co-operation among as far flung areas as Turkey and Nigeria and Bangladesh.

What all this should mean is that Bangladesh is reaching out to resources that is not in her and opening herself up for partnering in progress with the states to the fore. The sooner these explorations start paying in a rapid growth of investment and employment, the better for our indifferent economic management scene so far lacking miserably in sustained and well-aimed thrust. But for that to happen this nation will be needed to be doggedly single-minded about reaching a true take-off point, not just making do by an endless recourse to ad-hocism. Travelling up to that point will call for a perfectly investment-friendly sociopolitical situation that would not be vulnerable to group pressure of any kind.

#### Big News

After our Ganges water accord with India, this is the second biggest news of salubrious neighbourly connotation we seem happily poised to welcome. Close to 50 thousand of our tribal citizens who had crossed over to India a decade ago are all set to return to the Chittagong Hill Tracts, their home in Bangladesh, by the 7th of April. A repatriation process that had got implacably mired in the ramified backlash of insurgency is now to begin on the fourth day from today and end by the eleventh day thenceforward.

But hardly has this been any proverbial Midas touch. While the political changes in both India and Bangladesh proved conducive to a positively holistic rethinking on the issue, the PCJSS and the Refugee Welfare Association on the tribal side and the National Committee on CHT affairs on our side deserve compliments in their own rights for the intensively result-oriented dialogue they held so adroitly.

The two-legged but essentially co-related negotiations conducted by the National Committee with the political wing of the Shantibahini and their refugee welfare wing bore testimony to the efficacy of dialogue as a powerful means to solve difficult problems, something we have never tired of stressing whenever the occasion arose.

The resettlement of the refugees back home need not have us rest on our oars; because, for all practical purposes, this has to be regarded as a means to an end. While they must be made to feel wanted, secure and homely and helped to find their economic feet, the questions relating to their empowerment through the district councils, their guaranteed constitutional status and their documented land rights will have to be resolved on a permanent footing early enough. And, there ought to be equal and non-discriminatory treatment to all Bangladesh citizens living in the area in accord with the basic principle embodied in the package deal.

Let us be prepared to accord an emotional welcome to the home-coming of our citizens after so many years of separation from us.

## What's Happening?

This is the latest in youth degeneracy and, therefore, the worst of its kind. A group of youths abducting a lady college teacher at Shibpur in Brahmanbaria, rescue efforts of the village folks ended on a patch of field. There she was, wreck of a victim in the hands of desperadoes who are rising like a hydra-headed social monster all around.

Ironically, where the buzz-word should have been 'refinement', in a college named after Sur Samrat Alauddin Khan, it was a brazen-faced slimy sensuality that invaded without apparently the slightest of instant resistance put up by the college authority or her colleagues.

It was an instance of crude, reactive justice that the villagers burst into a rage at the sight of the prostrate teacher on the field and put to torch 13 houses of the persons alleged to have been involved in the crime.

Their taking the law into their own hands would draw a flak no doubt, but it has admittedly brought into a sharper focus the combined failure of the local law and order machinery and community -level leadership. By not rising to the occasion they

Unless the working environment for women is improved by a special vigil in areas where this is exposed to danger, we would be making our resolve for women development sound empty.

have been giving indulgence to the morons.

## Our Culture of Delay

In our country, the process of decision-making is so long and ardous that finally, the decision tends to achieve very little. Each step in the decision-making process is a hurdle and to secure a decision after crossing all the hurdles is simply a monumental task.

F you are on time for a dinner at eight in the evening then most likely, you will cause an embarrassment to the

host and the hostess.

They are not ready yet. Guests would start arriving not before 9 PM and that would be very much on time. Bangladesh-style. Late comers may not turn up before ten or even tenthirty. To arrive exactly on time is a matter of disgrace. To be late is honourable. This is the culture of delay we have established thus far.

A sense of time is essential for the progress of the nation. In the age of instant communication — the space-time gap is being totally eliminated. A newspaper published in Singapore is edited in Australia and the final version is returned to Singapore via telecom links for printing within a few hours. Each morning, the paper is available at each door step of the City state. In Dhaka, we get newspapers as late as 9 or 10 in the morning. We hardly ever manage to travel on time. The

pounded by issues and what not. This is no way for quick and effective decision-making. Bad decision is better than no decision at all. This must be understood. The recent share market crisis offers a good example. The Committee appointed to report within one month failed to deliver the intended results. Its tenure has been extended twice it is the third month now and Committee is yet to show any positive result. here were decisions to unload government owned shares in many companies. Those are not in the market till date. New issues were supposed to be offered so that supply of shares can be augmented in a rising market, as it was then. No action so far and the market has gone down already. New demand should be created and government is in a position to strongly influence the market by inducing the institutional financing houses to pump in more funds. But nothing has been done since effective decision is conspicuously

It is the future of our next generation.

But the delay in our daily life - sometimes for the selfish gains of certain individuals must be fought. Simple tasks which can be performed in minutes often take hours and not only that — we will be told to come again and again. There is an optimisation of harassment through the illusive "Law of Management" which cannot be obviated unless and until palms are adequately greased through certain specific forms of liquidity whose quality and quartity are also not easily known to ordinary human be-

Out of 24 hours in a day, only 8 hours are meant for work. So if a particular job is not done within eight hours of the working period, it would be delayed by 16 hours until the next day. It is, therefore, easy to delay since only few hours can take a decision-making process to the next working day which again may not come because the officer is sick or on casual leave



### Window on Asia

**Shahed Latif** 

journey to northern Bengal may take any length of time — depending on the horrendous ferry-crossing hazards.

The culture of delay has particularly affected public administration of the country. Decision delayed is decision denied.

Timeliness is essential. It is critical in decision-making. If the bureaucracy gets bogged down with the quality of decision, then the best of decisions, if delayed, will be of very little worth. In our country, the process of decision-making is so long and ardous that finally, the decision tends to achieve very little. Each step in the decision-making process is a hurdle and to secure a decision after crossing all the hurdles is simply a monumental task.

An excellent way to avoid decision-making is to constitute a committee to look into the problem whose resolution called for effective decision. The committee would then take months to convene its meeting, talk and discuss for days on end. Ultimately, the result will be formation of subcommittees to probe further into segments of the same problem. There would be opinions and counter opinions, so in-depth analysis of related technical issues are called for and the end less debate will continue. Sometimes. the subcommittees may not be enough - panel of experts will be appointed to sort out technical intricacies within the issues raised before the original committee and the subcommutThe share market calls for decision on time and no Committee can deliver the desired results.

Delay does not seem to affect us at all since we are so used to delay in practically all aspects of our life. Have you ever heard of the bridegroom arriving on time for the ceremony? Never, it is against our culture. Recently at a marriage party at lunch time, it got so late that the time gap between lunch and dinner was practically eliminated. Yet nobody said a word. We are used to such delay.

The traffic congestion of Dhaka have added a new dimension of delay to our daily life. Banking hours will be over before you can reach the place and you have to go without cash. Personal checks and credit cards are not use-able in this country. Economic transactions are based on cash and a modern economy cannot be managed with cash and delay put together.

We remain backward and tend to get ever more primitive. The delay in the education sector used to be phenomenal. The University examinations got so far out of time that sessions of one war might start next year and a three-year course run into four or more.

Things have improved in the recent past but who knows. The hartal session have started and since politics take precedence over anything else in this country, delays may gain ground once again. We must be

or it is the hartal day. There can be thousand and one excuse which would inevitably follow.

which would inevitably follow.

I was once told by one of my great teachers of Dhaka University that the best way to solve a problem is to avoid it. Pass on the file to Law, Finance or Establishment — you need their comments and the ensuing delay is not the matter at issue. The problem has been solved for the time-being since it has been effectively passed over, not decided upon.

It seems that the principle of avoiding the problem has now become so rampant that files are simply moving in circle and everybody is avoiding everybody else and maintaining a steady distance from making quick decision. I was told that this is the best way to survive in the jungle of bureaucracy where no head will roll since the cause for it never arose in the first instance. It is a brilliant institutional arrangement where all movements are through the eternal labyrinth so that no ultimate decision is feasible unless we break open archaic rules and regulations for conducting government administration.

Doing business exactly on time needs to be developed with relentless persuasion so that eventually it becomes a habit — like a permanent fixture in our daily life. It is surprising that while we offer our prayer five times a day very much on time, we tend to observe no fixed time for anything else. It shows that if we try, we can maintain timeliness in other aspects of our life as well

# Human Rights in India: Need for a Fresh Look

T Ananthachari writes from New Delhi

UMAN Rights issues, especially in the field of L civil rights, have been at the centrestage even as India was making all-out efforts to grapple with unprecedented terrorism in Punjab and militancy in J&K. Many of the northeastern States have also been facing practical problems in preserving Human Rights in the face of determined offensive by insurgents. Luckily, since recently. Punjab is settling down to an era of peace following the revival of traditional and democratic political activities. It is hoped that J&K which has recentlygone through Assembly elections leading to the installation of an elected government would also settle down to a peaceful and purposeful administration.

These developments provide the right and opportune moment for the security forces and the government concerned to take stock, introspect and absorb the lessons learnt in the course of operations, particularly from 1984 onwards. Discussions on a sensitive issue like Human Rights vis-a-vis security forces, have often tended to result in strong criticism (partly justified and partly unjustified) of the security forces as well as Human Rights activists (including well-known NGOs). The fact is that the security forces have a very difficult and delicate task to perform and the NGOs a very desirable and useful role to adorn.

It is extraordinary to realise that even now there is a strong dichotomy in the overall attitude of the people to the conflicting aspects of the Human Rights problem. There is no doubt that there are a number of NGOs and other enlightened individuals who can brook no compromises in the protection and preservation of Human Rights. At the same time, there are many including equally enlightened individuals from all walks of life, who would like to tone down the rigours of Human Rights in the specific context of the enormous challenges faced by the security forces in dealing with groups and individuals who do not hesitate to resort to violent means of the extreme description. It is often brought home by them that there is pre ponderance of evidence of 'increasing combatisation of internal protests'. Statistics show that since 1947 there has been phenomenal rise in terrorist activities estimated to be 65414 violent acts in the various parts of the world, working out to an average of over 4 every day over the last 50 years continuously. As far as India is concerned it figured in the top 5 terrorist-affected countries in 1993, among the top 8 in 1994 and among the top 2 in 1995, clearly indicating how serious the problem of terrorism and violence is in India. Further, such violent acts have sought to disintegrate India which has cast a special responsibility on the security

forces.

All along, Human Rights have been sought to be viewed in the legal context and very little has been done to review and redefine Human Rights as a moral concept or political concept in the larger context of sociopolitico-military environment. Besides the use of increasingly lethal weapons, explosives and remote control devices, use of mercenaries (in many cases, foreigners), has further complicated an even otherwise complex situation. These are some of the issues which have emerged over the years and these need careful, greater and organised debate. There is no doubt an emerging need for taking a fresh look at what 'Human Rights' would and should mean in a given context, particularly with special reference to the as-

pects mentioned earlier. But this matter is by no means a one-sided debate. There are problems when security forces (particularly the para-military forces and the army) operate in aid of civil authorities. It is well-known that there are violations of Human Rights in the course of the normal discharge of duties at the PS level, like unauthorised detention, use of third degree etc. These violations can, by no stretch of imagination, be justified or condoned. There can be no extenuating circumstances in such cases, even though archaic laws, legal procedures and a moribund criminal justice system are contributory factors. It is, however, in regard to the operations by security forces while deployed amidst civilian population (in sheer contrast to border-guarding duties or

fighting a war with an external enemy) that many a controversy has arisen about Human Rights violations.

There is no doubt that, given the best of intentions, the security forces do violate Human Rights requirements on occasions. While some security forces have accepted this fact and taken remedial measures. some others have tried to wish away the same. We have reached a situation in our country where it has become routine and common to call the central forces, including the Army, to assist in the maintenance of internal law and order. Gone are the days when such forces were called out occasionally and were deployed for very brief periods. Instead, we have got used to their deployment for years together and in context of very intimate civilian surroundings. When forces like the BSF and the Army, who are trained for altogether different responsibilities are continuously deployed in the midst of denselypopulated civilian areas, the forces have no option but to realise that the public expect them, and rightly so, to adhere to the broad legal framework and what is more, be accountable in their eyes.

Therefore, there is no use for the central forces, including the Army to come up with excuses and explanations to justify special considerations in regard to them. While there should no doubt be proper appreciation of the role of forces like the BSF and the Army, it is extremely important and necessary for such forces to redefine the procedures to be followed by them while assisting the local civil authorities. Similarly, there should be far greater transparency and openness in convincing the public in regard to their accountability of the former, particularly where public complaints are involved. Instead, if forces like the Army insist on extending the special protection available to them in the context of war to even internal law and order situations, there will be no escape from facing complaints from the public of violation of Human Rights.

— Mandira
The writer is a retired (IPS)
Director General of Border Security Force.

## ME Peace Process in Deep Crisis — Danger of Conflict Looms Large

The protests in Bethlehem, Hebron and other parts of West Bank are gradually turning violent. The situation may soon go out of control. Netanyahu is blaming Arafat for inciting violence. Netanyahu does not realise that the violence has erupted because of his action ...

RIME Minister Netanyahu bulldozed Arab protests and international opinion by sending the bulldozers up in the hill top of Jabal Abu Ghueim — Har Homa (in Hebrew) — East Jerusalem to break grounds for building 6500 new Jewish settlements. There were widespread international condemnations.

Although Oslo Peace Accord stipulates status quo of Jerusalem until final status of Jerusalem and West Bank is determined. Netanyahu government unilaterally decided to build the new Jewish homes in Arab East Jerusalem which means changes in the present physical structure of Jerusalem. This was a deliberate attempt to create physical and demographic barriers between Bethlehem — a city under Palestinian administration and East Jerusalem which the Palestinians see as the capital of the future Palestine state. This hill top of Jabal Abu Ghueim (Har Homa) — the area which my wife and I had the opportunity to pass by while returning from Bethlehem to East

like a distant elusive mirage. could remain aloof if the very lives of all Arabs and Israelis and their future were not fast sliding towards an abyss of bloodshed and disaster ... Your course of actions seem bent on destroying all I believe in or have striven to achieve .....". Netanyahu of course replied but with a milder tone as probably he had in mind that he was addressing a letter to an Arab King not his though. Among other things he said. "I hold you in the highest esteem and I value your friendship and understanding. That is why I must confess that am baffled by the personal level of attacks against me.....

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King Hussein's letter clearly showed how angry he was over the issue. But the anger at the common men level has apparently reached its peak. This was reflected when two days after King Hussein's letter to Netanyahu a Jordanian solider emptied his automatic rifle on a group of Israeli school girls killing seven and wounding another six when they visited "Island of Peace" — on Yarmouk river, north of Jordan, which Jordan recovered from Israel

events are unfolding and with the history of intense animosity between these distant cousins, it looks ominous.

Unfortunately, the peace process has often been facing crisis primarily because of series of bad actions by the Israeli government and consequent reactions of the Palestinians and particularly of Hamas, often with violence. Despite hard and sustained work by the US for peace in the Middle East it faces strong criticism because of its one-sided and self-defeating polices in favour of Israel. The US knows very well that Netanyahu's decision on new Jewish settlement in the Arab East Jerusalem will ignite violence and terrorist activities and put the peace process in peril. Still the US twice vetoed Security Council resolutions — one last week and the second on March 21 — asking Israel to refrain from building new settlements. The US position seems baffling. It has always said that settlements are 'obstacles to peace'. If so, why not take appropriate action to stop it? The US also maintains that these matters should be dealt with by the par-



Jerusalem during our recent visit to Jerusalem — is situated within Arab East Jerusalem. While driving through the area we also saw some small villages inhabited by Bedouins and reportedly Israelis have also started throwing these helpless people out of area to build their future settlements.

uture settlements. As the Israeli plan is, the planting of 6500 or more Jewish families in the proposed new settlement will strengthen Israeli claim of undivided Jerusalem, as Arab character of East Jerusalem will be diluted somewhat. Netanyahu's idea is to preempt the ensuing negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem. Indeed, Israeli government representative said that they took this action to "protect Jerusalem being redivided This is why Netanyahu has formally announced the

decision to build new Jewish settlement on a day when both parties were supposed to commence negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem. As its seems. Netanyahu's extreme rightist government would not even like to discuss anything about division of Jerusalem: While addressing press conference after the bulldozers went into action. Netanyahu looked angry over international condemnation and said, "I will not sacrifice Jerusalem". This means he is prepared to sacrifice human lives which would obviously be on both sides. He knows very well that East Jerusalem has been Arab and Arabs would not allow it to be a part of Israel. Arafat already said, "There would be no peace

without East Jerusalem". Unbounded passion of both Palestinians and Israelis over Jerusalem and particularly Netanyahu's planned decision to preempt the negotiations on final status have put the already threatened peace process into deep crisis. The peace process has practically come to a halt. The tension is running extremely high. The Palestinians and Jordanians seem determined to put up all possible resistance to stop the construction of the new Jewish settlement. Violence is inevitable and Netanyahu was forewarned by his own Intelligence Chief about the eruption of violence. Even a cool and sober leader like King Hussein of Jordan who worked ahead of Palestinians to sign peace accord with Israelis reacted angrily on Netanyahu's decision and wrote an unusually strong letter to Netanyahu expressing his anger and frustration over the issue. He held Netanyahu responsible for such a disastrous decision. He wrote, "My distress is genuine and deep over the accumulating tragic actions which you have initiated at the head of the government of Israel, making peace - worthiest objective of my life — appear more and more

Unfortunately, the island has now turned to be an island of death. This was a senseless mass murder. The anger of Jordanians and more so of Palestinians over Israelis is understandable but the Jordanian solider delivered this in an uncivilized and savage manner on wrong targets — the innocent school girls.

Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and some other Arab countries have reacted with anger and despair. President Mubarak said, "The situation is very dangerous and in case they do not realise it, the consequences will be terrible". In an interview published in the current edition of the Jerusalem Post, President Mubarak reportedly said, "Don't ask us to educate our people for peace with Israel. They'll tell me to go to hell".

They'll tell me to go to hell". Syrian leaders said that Netanyahu's action might lead to another armed conflict in the Middle East. Other Arab countries called for the total boycott of Israeli goods. As the situation is, Israel is likely to face another international isolation unless it stops the settlement project.

President Arafat is faced with serious crisis due to Netanger in the project.

with serious crisis due to Netanyahu's action as protests both from Palestinian public including Hamas and his own cabinet are fast gathering momentum. An unidentified suicide bomber entered a cafe in Tel-Aviv on March 22 and blew himself up along with three Israelis and also wounding another two dozen men, women and children. President Arafat called up Israeli President and expressed his condemnation over the bombing and condolences to the affected families. He did not call up Netanyahu.

The protests in Bethlehem, Hebron and other parts of West Bank are gradually turning violent. The situation may soon go out of control. Netanyahu is blaming Arafat for inciting violence. Netanyahu does not realise that the violence has erupted because of his action and his own Intelligence Chief already warned him about this. Hamas, which was kept under control, has started taking advantage of the situation. It has virtually forced Arafat to release Hamas commander Ibrahim Muqadmeh who was in Gaza jail for his alleged terrorist activities. Netanyahu became very angry over the release of Hamas leader. Total distrust between Israelis and Palestinians prevail. The peace process has come to a grinding halt. Though Arafat appears disturbed and exhausted he has, so far, maintained a calm posture. He has asked Palestinians to shun violence. This means Arafat does not want the situation to go totally out of control. But would he succeed? As the

ties concerned and UN is not the right forum for this. If the parties themselves could settle such serious and sensitive issues that led to at least three wars in the region, then why the US and Russia sponsored peace process and why other international players and particularly the leaders of Norway worked so hard to bring the parties together and put their weight behind the peace process to bring it up to this stage? When international community has already been playing its positive role and fully supporting Security Council resolutions, why the US should use its vetoes over a Security Council resolution which seemed to be the possible way to stop Netanyahu from going ahead with the Har Homa settlement project?

The repeated vetoes gave clear signals to Netanyahu that he could go ahead; the private advice or request of the Secretary of State Albright to Netanyahu to postpone the decision was seen by Netanyahu as a pure public relation exercise and therefore. Netanyahu could merrily ignore Albright's request. The earlier meeting of President Clinton with President Arafat and President Clinton's displeasure over new Jewish settlement did not have even slightest effect on Netanyahu and his government. The US has itself relegated its own position to this level because of such self defeating policies. At least abstention in the UN and Security Council resolutions could send signal to Netanyahu that the US disfavoured settlements and this could maintain better image of the US in the eyes of the Arabs.

As the events are unfolding. at least temporary postponement of the settlement decision could have averted the present crisis. Israel could certainly build houses later after the final status of Jerusalem was determined. Alternatively, Israel could have at least commenced negotiation on Jerusalem. showed its bonafide intention to settle the issues amicably and in the process negotiated the issue of new settlements at a site acceptable to both. This was a unilateral decision on the part of Netanyahu's government to build homes on somebody else's land on the philosophy of Israelis' exclusive biblical ownership which has all along been challenged by the Arabs. Arabs were not planted in East Jerusalem yesterday by any foreign power. They have been there for thousands of years. Therefore, if the idea of undivided Jerusalem as the capital of Israel persists, the negotiations on the final status of Jerusalem is bound to fail. East Jerusalem remains Arab but some border adjustments acceptable to both seem to be the only answer.

#### To the Editor...

Age limit in public service

Sir, There has been a debate for quite some time as to whether to extend the age limit of public servants to 60 years from 57 years. Some are even suggesting it to be extended to 65 years as is already done in the case of university teachers. Those who oppose seem to protest, because they will not immediately get their promotions but what about the extended service tenure with so many prospects that would otherwise await them?

Besides, even if it is extended up to 60 years, there would be many retirements, as those already in different extended terms will reach the age of 60. There is no doubt that the government needs the services of officers/staff with long experience and as such the seniormost ones are generally those who can serve much better. In that case, the vacuum could be

gradually filled and the new government will not suddenly be denied of the expertise and services of a large number of well-trained officers. In fact, in many cases, extensions are being given, so why not generalise it and make the limit 60 for all especially in view of the promise made earlier in this regard by the present PM! There is no doubt that with the health standard and longevity we have now, public servants can serve very well up to 60 years and beyond even. Those who protest will only see a few years from now that they can perform better even up to 65! F Ahmed 5 Bank Bhaban Minto Road, Dhaka.

News headline

Sir. The caption, title or heading of a news item is very much important for attracting the readers' attention. For instance, recently while I was go-

ing through a national English daily, my attention was drawn to a news heading - "PSC signed with UMC on exploring oil in block 22". At first sight thought. PSC should be the abbreviation of 'Public Service Commission' but why would PSC sign such an agreement? Then quickly I read the news. Actually it was reported under the above caption that 'a production sharing contract was signed ... Interestingly, the abbreviation, PSC was not written in parenthesis after 'production sharing contract'. One would agree with me that the abbreviation under reference is not common but it was still used on the caption of the news, probably to make it prominent.

Well, the purpose of writing this letter is to draw the attention of the professionals concerned.

M Zahidul Haque Bangladesh Agricultural Institute Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka