

Manpower Business Code

Often enough there is news in the press about young people from Bangladesh being returned from some Arab countries or being caught in Malaysia or Japan for illegal entry.

At long last government is going to clear up the Augean stables. The Daily Star reported yesterday that a stringent code of conduct is being formulated providing for payment of compensation to affected people by the recruiting agencies failing them.

This is a good step but obviously very late in the day. And it is evident the government action is going to bring under control and accountability only those operating above the surface.

And it is good that the parliamentary committee on labour and manpower has been seized of the problem and the 'code of conduct' move actually emerged from a meeting of the committee recently.

A Welcome Move

Coordination is a perennial problem in the implementation of any government decision in our country. Rarely government's own agencies put their efforts together to pull off a work opportunity.

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Repatriation Made Thorny

Myanmar's self-imposed moratorium since July 1995 on the last leg of Rohingya refugee repatriation from Bangladesh has spawned new complications for the process to be resumed any time soon.

The cases pend with the Myanmar authorities through a rigmarole of re-verification of a previously agreed upon list. Whole families are stranded in our camps because of objections raised to entry of any particular member of these with the result that children have become adults and the refugees have had a boom of 30,116 new-borns to-date.

The gridlock has also stiffened from the fact that some vested interests have fomented religious sentiments to stall any further repatriation.

It was little more than a coincidence that I had been in Paris in the fall of 1989. Had I not, I would have never appreciated the full significance of the remarkable time that it was; neither would I have known how the soul of France was so emotionally linked to the cataclysmic events of the bicentennial commemoration which was still in progress in the great city.

During my earlier trips to Paris, apart from its history it seldom appeared to me anything other than an exotic place of great tourist attractions frequented by at least twenty million visitors a year and innumerable connoisseurs of arts and cultures.

Strangely, the revolution that produced the first Declaration of the Rights of Man had to be swallowed up by counter-revolution and within years it practically died down when Napoleon — himself a child of

Bringing about an Interface

There was a touch of Grand Vision in everything that came up in commemoration such as the pyramidal transformation of the Louvre. The vision was obviously refracted through the prism of the nation's past which had been in the same way studded with grandiose features.

the revolution — seized power, installed himself as new emperor and the French people were brought back under the rules of the society's higher echelon. For the revolution, the last nail in the coffin was driven when after the fall of Napoleon, the Congress of Vienna restored the effete royal houses in Europe which again succumbed to the forces of reaction.

Two centuries later in the fall of 1989 the blood of the French was still alive with the fever of its memory. Their vein tingled and a flaming mood took possession of them. The eternal flame of the revolution glowed on — both in the 'city of lights' and in the hearts of the millions of proud Indians of the world who celebrate the centenary of the great revolution



PERSPECTIVES by Brig (Rtd) M Abdul Hafiz

of their revolutions, ideals and lofty mottoes abruptly ended there and hardly crossed the border of their verdant beautiful country. They very much wanted liberty for themselves but did not demur in taking others'.

How Relevant is the Non-Aligned Movement Now?

When President Joseph Broz Tito of Yugoslavia, President Gamal Abdel Naser of Egypt and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru of India took initiatives to form a movement in the early sixties to stay away from the power blocs in a bi-polar world, the meaning of the non-alignment was different.

THIRTY-six year after the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was founded by the leaders of the third world countries, a sea-change has taken place in the world scenario and to the extent that the very reasons for which the non-aligned nations came together to form the movement have disappeared in a way in the present-day world.

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Over the years, the movement had grown stronger as more and more nations attracted to it and the membership has swelled from an initial 25 to 107 now. However, there is no denying that the question of relevance of the movement and what exactly should its role be came for introspection when the power bloc games collapsed with the dismantling of one of the super-powers — the Soviet Union and subsequently the WARSAW pact led by it as a logical corollary to the development.

The other super power — the United States — remains in the scene of a unipolar world and the change had an immediate impact on the role of the non-alignment and the movement.

(NAM) took place in Jakarta in 1992 as the first summit in the era after the cold war, the leaders grappled with the question of the much-talked about role of the Movement in the changing circumstances. While they had taken into account the major changes which had altered the global scenario, the leaders had resolved to carry forward the Movement as they felt the Movement remains relevant as before although with a new dimension and priority.

When now, when the 12th summit is held in the city of Durban in South Africa, once again the question that will dominate the proceedings of the conference will certainly be the relevance, role and priority of the movement in basic terms while other issues of common political, economic and social interest will obviously figure prominently in the deliberations.

What effective role in the NAM can play currently in the global scene, particularly when the cohesion among the members of the group has waned in some forms and the rhetoric about the power bloc rivalry is no more a strong subject to discuss about? How the NAM can keep its members under a bond of firm commitment as the very catchy terminology of 'non-alignment' is no longer expected to arouse significance an emotion that it used to generate in the cold war era?

Then, evidently, its role is now of more economic and social matters but the question is that, can the grouping provide the much-needed direction or assistance in these fields when the Movement itself is based on essentially political ideologies? How can the NAM remain relevant and strong as a force when the pattern of international behaviour is going through changes for a variety of reasons and where ritualistic demagogue may appear somewhat meaningless? There are other questions and issues as well about the NAM as it prepares for the 12th summit in Durban within a couple of days.

In effect, the process of the summit has already begun with the senior officials preparing the ground for the foreign ministers who are meeting for the conference of their leaders. Certainly, the leaders will address themselves to these issues which are very close to the heart of the NAM since they cannot turn a blind eye to the questions which are so pertinent to the functioning of the movement.

Hopefully, they will find answers to these questions and spare no efforts to evolve and explore avenues so as to turn the NAM which was so assiduously developed over the last 36 years meaningful and helpful for the nations which constitute it.

The Durban summit of the NAM faces both challenges and promises as, indeed, it has been the case during the 36-year history of this amorphous loose alliance of the largely third world countries. The primary challenge is certainly to turn a ceremonial summit into something of a dynamo — a power centre of new and newer ideas which the organisation itself will put into effect. The member states which are the third world

have been agog with promises and expectations, and it is necessary to give a guideline to these thoughts and imaginations by the NAM so that it can survive meaningfully with its member-nations.

Other innocuous forums like the Commonwealth Organisation (OIC) or even the SAARC in our region have definite policies and priorities with established headquarters and secretariat and these help them make their presence felt. The NAM lacks it for obvious reasons since the movement had stemmed from international political milieu that existed at that time threatening the security of those who were not aligned to power blocs. As such, the NAM has a difficult task before it to keep the pot boiling as far as its presence is concerned and indeed, the success of the Movement lies in accomplishing the task of making itself strongly felt among the members.

The movement, therefore, has to convince its members that it has a definite role to play even though such a role is differently different in the quality of a dynamo — a power centre of new and newer ideas which the organisation itself will put into effect. The member states which are the third world

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To the Editor...

Hate the (corrupt) politicians — Not politics

Sir, I have read with interest the article — Hate the (corrupt) Politicians — not Politics published in The Daily Star issue of 25th instant. I congratulate you and the writer for this courageous piece of work. The article truly reflects the views and sentiment of most of the sensible, educated and patriotic people of the country.

The article should serve as an eye-opener to the present lot of politicians as to how they are rated by the society. The present trend of politics has led the country to the brink of disaster. Education, economy, administration, law and order, and national discipline are in shambles. The situation has come to such a pass that either the people have to abandon the present set of politicians or the politicians have to abandon the present trend of politics if they want to be in business for the good of the nation.

Problems with Ten Taka note

Sir, Recently, the government has released new Ten Taka note with the picture of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on it. It is a welcome decision. The new note looks very attractive. But unfortunately, we are facing problems while exchanging this note. Some people write comments on it which consequently creates such problems. It also humiliates the motto behind printing the father of the nation's photograph on it.

Incidents at JU

Sir, What has happened at Jahangirnagar University (JU) is absolutely condemnable. It is matter of shame for us who are studying at university level. Three students were violated allegedly by some armed cadres of an influential political party. We don't know specifically that influential party. Following the incidents, general students demanded punitive actions against those involve in this act. The acting VC formed a probe body to investigate the matter.

At this point, the government-backed Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) unit of JU called on an indefinite strike in support of their demand for punishment of those culprits. But I don't understand how the authority will work if the university remains closed. They are demanding punishment of the culprits and creating a chaotic situation together, so that the probe body cannot work properly.

We think, nobody will be identified if the investigation is delayed. Isn't it an irony on the part of the BCL? The general people might not think otherwise.

America strikes back

Sir, 'America strikes back.' That is the world news headline. There is 'compelling evidence' that apparently need not be shared with the 'international community'. It should be enough that we have been told; no question needs to be asked. But questions to remain. Can we be certain, the strikes were not the urgently needed diversionary ploy for domestic consumption when the President is deeply plagued with a sex scandal? Or is it genuinely preemptive strike? It does not require extraordinary imagination to conceive

SOF(LOOD)

Sir, The floods now raging almost throughout the length and breadth of Bangladesh including the capital's posh diplomatic enclave and are expected to worsen with each sunrise till September 1998, as appears in the print media.

The moot question of donor involvement has of late arisen and also, the 64 million dollar question, raised by those who apprehend corruption involving such massive relief operations. Already we find that, there is a yawning gap of: 1. Approximately 9.5 lakh metric tons shortage of food grains now, vide DS of 20.8.98 quoting Mr Kibria, the Foreign Minister, this quantity is bound to increase once the flood recedes and the true picture is revealed.

2. Logistics is the 64 million dollars question raised as above, which in other words are the lack of hovercrafts which can travel both on land and water, seacrafts etc. once used by the American Sea Angels during the 1991 cyclone in the Chittagong division? SOFA could have automatically triggered the floodgates of not only relief and rehabilitations from USA but also from the other western countries through the electronic media. The stranded poor and helpless Salimuddins and Kallimuddins i.e. the daily wage earners now dieting silently and unsung, would have been the beneficiaries.

I, now appeal to those so-called patriotic intellectuals of both progressive and not-so-progressives to crawl on all fours and beg their foreign masters. Let's hope and pray this deluge will at least open the eyes of our so-called intellectuals all

A Concerned World Citizen

If mere 'suspicion' can trigger punishment, what is the message of this doctrine to international law? As the only super power and a staunch defender of international law, the US has extraordinary responsibility. The US is expected to behave with abundant restraint commensurate with its professed moral authority.

Salahuddin Y Jamal Firozshah, Chittagong

"Non-fat fresh milk"

Sir, I refer to the letter "Non-fat fresh milk" published in the DS by Mr Serajul Haq. The points mentioned by Mr Haq are very important and need urgent attention by the milk producers/distributors of our country. As a doctor I have to prescribe many aged patients to take non-fat fresh milk regularly to maintain their health. Most of these patients complained to me that they are not getting this product in the market. Only imported tinny dry non-fat milk is available at times but the price is very high which is not within the reach of most of the patients. In order to maintain the health of a large section of the aged people it is necessary to provide them with "non-fat fresh milk".

US foreign policy image

Sir, Many non-US people won't understand the US policy of official missile attack of suspected strongholds in foreign sovereign countries such as Sudan and Afghanistan (DS, Aug 21). Suppose it were the other way round, that is, attack by a foreign country at suspected bases located in the USA or US territory? How the Americans and the US government would have taken it? Has the US declared war on these two countries? Or is it a diversion of zip diplomacy? The puzzling

A Bangladeshi Citizen Dhaka

Knowing Syed Ali Ashraf

Sir, Thanks to Fayza Haq for her article on Prof Syed Ali Ashraf published in the DS on 17th August '98. He was one of the most brilliant products of the Department of English of Dhaka University who also proved his worth in Cambridge. It is unfortunate that very few in Bangladesh know about him. It is interesting that he had a vast knowledge and authority over not only English language and literature but also Bengali. I had the opportunity to meet this great scholar on several occasions. On one such occasion I was surprised to see his knowledge of Bengali literature when he was speaking about the poems of Amiyo Chakrovorty. I am personally indebted to him for his valuable comments and advice on my translation of the book Sayings of Muhammad (SM) by Allama Abdullah Suhrawardy from English to Bengali.

Syed Ali Ashraf devoted himself for the development of an education system combining Islamic thoughts with modern concepts. As a man of Sufi-trend, he also devoted himself to other religious activities. And deep in his heart he was a non-communal man. Asjadul Kabra Gabtall North Masdar Narayanganj-1400

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US policy may be clarified to global satisfaction, otherwise the supporters of the great United States of America will continue to decline rapidly. US foreign policy had been lousy traditionally, and it is steadfastly constant in its chronic bungling (including its attitude towards the Muslim world). As it is, the US power-rattling stance is none too palatable. Might is not right in all cases.

The UN has been made impotent, and the Security Council has been Americanised. What is left of any world forum? Are we all going to become hotdogs and 'burgers for cannibal snack? A Bangladeshi Citizen Dhaka

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