

World Crisis in Kosovo

President Boris Yeltsin of Russia has steered a careful course, while condemning military action of NATO led by the US but refraining from any military involvement. In the Russian parliament the scene has been different, where Gen Lebed and ultranationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy have demanded a suitable response to NATO military action.

Rotten to the Core

The CID investigation into the strange case of the decomposed body found in the overhead tank of the DB office has been dammingly revelatory already. One of the major leads in the case has apparently sprung up with the CID team reportedly suspecting that Jalal Ahmed Shafi's murder might have been caused by a row over distribution of a heroin sale booty worth Tk 2.5 crore.

So far we have been critical of the police role in general but now the finger is pointed at the detective branch playing football with its criminal detection responsibilities and straying into the dark world of torture and brutality. Recall the Rubel case to memory also. Who have unleashed them, who control them, do they or their bosses feel accountable to any one? Such is the barrage of questions that flies right into the face.

We have a specific suggestion to offer. Let there be an overhaul of the intelligence and investigative agencies before we embark on broader police reform. The CID, as the acronym suggests, is the criminal investigation department while the special branch deals with the political side and security issues, etc. Their mandate is more or less clear, but DB has had hardly any well-defined role to play.

It is high time we carried out a thorough review of the charter of duties and the role of intelligence and detective branches of the government in a resolute bid to reform them in deference to the universal demand for transparency and accountability, the two hall-marks of democracy we miss today.

Novel Way of Cheating

Carefully conceived traps have been laid, as usual, by a section of unscrupulous people in collusion with some government officials to cheat a huge number of candidates for jobs as primary school teachers. About 27 thousand candidates who passed written tests are competing for nine thousand posts of primary school teachers in 63 districts. They will be taken in by June this year.

Consider the scope and range of cheating and one will be shocked at the gigantic scale in which these innocent candidates will be hoodwinked. Even if half the total candidates are cheated of Taka 50 thousand each on an average, more than Taka 70 crore will be pocketed by these rackets of thugs. This is a horrendous prospect that must not be allowed to materialise.

What a Shame!

The government's failure to arrange an appropriate programme to observe the first National Day of the Disabled Persons has certainly come as a big disappointment to the people the day is meant for as well as the whole nation. That it failed to keep its promise made last year on the International Day of the Disabled Persons has certainly put a big question mark on its commitment towards the cause of the disabled people.

It is hardly acceptable that the government could not arrange funds in more than three months since the announcement on December 3 last year. If what the government has said is true, then it certainly exposes a flawed planning mechanism in the ministry concerned. Saving grace was its extension of support to the programmes designed and executed by the National Forum of Organisations Working with the Disabled (NFOWD).

Anyway, the government has put itself to shame by not living up to its promise and it has to be forthcoming in dispelling misgivings about the ministry's pitfalls in pursuing the cause of the disabled. That little progress has been made towards formation of a promised foundation for the disabled is in no way reflective of any serious commitments either.

WORLD is witnessing a global crisis in Kosovo. It is a tiny place in the south-east of Yugoslavia and technically a part of Yugoslavia. Yet for all practical purposes it has broken with the mother country and in spite of the horrendous crisis that she is faced with, her destination is clear. It is independent Kosovo.

Yugoslavia is a hotch potch created by the will of a single man — Josif Broz Tito. Armed with the prestige of successfully facing the mighty Nazi war machine during the second World War, Tito pieced together a state in the heart of Europe, where there were a large number of ethnic varieties, several religions and many languages.

With the death of Tito, more than a decade ago, this artificial state started splintering. The old Yugoslavia had two main religions — Christianity and Islam. Christianity was subdivided into Orthodox like the Russians and the Greeks and Catholics. The Orthodox were an overwhelming majority. As Yugoslavia started splintering the Catholic states like Slovenia and Croatia had a relatively painless exit.

The first problem arose with Bosnia-Herzegovina. The majority of the population was Muslim. In the fifteenth century when the Turkish Ottoman Empire extended its sway throughout southern part of

Western Europe, what it today's Yugoslavia became a part of the entire. Thus right in the heart of Europe there existed a pocket of Muslims. One interesting aspect of the Turks is that they maintain their separate identity, although they live within foreign cultural milieu. They maintain their religion, language and way of life. Thus the Bosnians have maintained a separate identity within Yugoslavia. Indeed there are more Bosnians in Turkey than in Bosnia itself.

The majority Serbs have a long memory and have never forgiven the Ottoman Turks for conquering their land and occupying it for six centuries. Through folklore of various kinds they have kept alive their burning hatred of the Turks. I remember that once I stopped in Nis, a Yugoslav city on the border of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, where only objects were mementoes of atrocities of the local Ottoman Governor against local uprising. It is this hatred of the Serbs, which is at the root of 'ethnic cleansing'.

The Western world remained for a long time spectators of the barbaric onslaught of the Serbs of Yugoslavia against Muslims of Bosnia. The Serbs unleashed a barbarism of a kind that ultimately war crimes trials had to be instituted against Serb military and civilian leaders. In

this brutality they put Hitler's generals to shame. After a veritable blood bath in which the Bosnians took the most severe knock, with the direct intervention of the sole superpower US, a solution was pieced together in Dayton, Ohio by Richard Holbrooke, the Special Representative of US President Bill Clinton.

Fortunately in the case of Kosovo, the West has learnt its lesson in Bosnia and put it to

arm NATO have taken upon itself the task of finding a negotiated solution of the problem. A cease fire was arranged in October last year. It was short-lived. The forces of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic started hounding the Kosovars making their lives unbearable. As the cease fire virtually broke down, a peace conference was convened in Rambouillet, outside Paris. The peace proposals included withdrawal of Yu-

Yugoslav army in and around Kosovo. The NATO led by the US have unleashed the most sophisticated weapons. The objective is to destroy the war making potential of Yugoslavia on the hapless Kosovars. The targets are so precisely hit that so far there has not been any outcry from Yugoslavia on civilian casualties. Unfortunately the war is widening and the US has sent the latest helicopters in order to strike at tanks inside Yugoslavia. Thus this escalation of violence is likely to cause casualties on NATO forces.

US President Bill Clinton has so far refrained from sending ground troops to destroy the Yugoslav war machine. It is a difficult decision. It would surely lead to casualties among NATO forces. There is bound to be outcry within the US and other NATO countries. As the war continues over the skies of Yugoslavia, the danger of ground forces getting drawn in rises continuously.

There is another pressure growing on the West. That is the flight of refugees from Kosovo. It has taken the shape of a flood. Starting with a few thousand it is now estimated to have reached the enormous number of half a million. That is exactly a quarter of the population of Kosovo. NATO countries have reacted energetically and

have offered to take refugees. Germany with 40,000 is the largest recipient whereas US and Turkey with 20,000 each are not far behind. British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook has said with justification that Milosevic does not need to talk about peace, all he needs to do is withdraw his forces and accept the Rambouillet peace plan.

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There is curious silence from OIC. After all the Serbs are massacring Islamising fundamentalists in Kosovo. OIC played a significant role in the Bosnian conflict by supplying funds, weapons and even manpower. There is curious silence in the case of Kosovo conflict.

From all accounts it would appear that NATO led by US is attempting to break the military machine of Slobodan Milosevic and bring him to accept the Rambouillet peace plan. That explains the hesitation in putting ground troops into action. The flow of refugees, which is assuming flood proportions, may force the hands of NATO to send ground troops. That would be the ultimate escalation with consequences difficult to foresee at this point of time. Let us hope that good sense will dawn on Milosevic.



Arshad-uz Zaman

good use. The two situations are very similar. Kosovo is virtually the last piece of real state that Yugoslavia possesses. She has been attempting to hold on to it by brute force. For the Kosovars have said good bye to them. The Kosovo Liberation Army has taken up arms against the huge military machine of Yugoslavia. In this David and Goliath situation, outgunned and outnumbered, the Kosovars have been fighting the Yugoslav military machine mainly in the hills.

goslav forces from Kosovo and around, granting autonomy to the Kosovars and stationing of Western troops to ensure proper implementation of the accord. It is this last part of the agreement that Milosevic rejected. Richard Holbrooke, the Special Representative of President Clinton, made a last ditch effort to persuade Milosevic to accept the Rambouillet peace proposals. He returned to Washington empty handed.

Thus began a little over two weeks ago bombing of selective targets in Yugoslavia and the

Haj-e-Akbar

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comes across as such a helpful, caring ambassador.

There is no doubt that the handling of Hajis by the Saudis is tremendous logistics feat. Even for someone trained in organisation and management, it is simply overwhelming, mind-boggling. Almost 2.5 - 3.0 million people have to be processed, their transportation arranged, their meals and accommodation catered for, their basic needs of washroom facilities provided, almost at one time. The grandeur and magnificence of the re-construction of and around the Haram Sharif and Masjid-e-Nabvi notwithstanding, the specific attention to each detail is awesome.

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As one approaches the "Khana-e-Kaaba" wearing the Eshram for the first of the Haj rituals, the Umra, one can never cease to be awestruck by the first sight of the Kaaba, this despite the fact that we had done several Umras earlier. The pure splendour of 'The House of God' marked by the constant stream of people circling in 'Tawaf' with hundreds and thousands all around kneeling in prayer, cannot be described in simple words. The quenching of one's thirst by 'Aab-e-Zamzam' or the running between Safwa and Marwa is virtually done in a spiritual daze, a repeated confirmation that there is no God except Allah and Muhammad (PBUH) is His Prophet.

AS I SEE IT Ikrum Sehgal writes from Karachi

Every time you enter the Haram Sharif, the feelings are virtually the same, engulfed in a sea of humanity from different parts of the world. Turkey, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chechnya, Somalia, Iran, China, Uzbekistan, etc., different faces, different builds, different languages but having the same common faith of Islam. There can be no equal to the togetherness of this congregation, separate in all the identities except for being united in one religion. You wonder at the strength of this vast multitude in one melting pot. You are drawn to this core acting like a magnet, the same as for all Muslims everywhere.

Nothing can really prepare you for the awe-inspiring spectacle at Arafat. We left for Mina to be there by the evening of 8th Zil-Haj, so as to be able to reach the site of the greatest congregation in the world before noon on the 9th Zil-Haj. Wearing the 'Eshram' is compulsory, two pieces of unsewn white cloth, they magnify your anonymity, an equal among equals in a vast sea of human multitude having no distinction among each other, the basic tenet of Islam: all are created equal before God.

To cope with the time and space, even the prayers are combined, Zuhr and Asr are 'Zuhrain'. Maghrib with Isha. Arafat is an occasion to exchange views and ideas on a scale unheard of in this world on any other platform by any other religion, or

for that matter country or organisation. Even in that vast gathering, one feels special and elevated, to be there as a participant is a privilege that begins with the 'Call'.

Some points need more attention by the Saudis, most points need the Pakistanis fending better for themselves. The fireproof fibreglass desert cooler installed tents in Mina were a Saudi miracle which must be commended, the location and number of washrooms need to be doubled. 'Muzdalfa' definitely needs to have permanent washrooms on the same ratio, not only for ablutions and the basic call of nature for 2 - 2.5 million pilgrims in a 25-30 sq km area but also to keep the area clean.

The Saudis did a good deal for medical services but when one aged lady had heart problem and was too heavy to be moved medically safely, the doctor on duty refused to send an ambulance and said she had to be brought to the centre, even given the nature of the emergency. On being pressed he shut further conversation by saying he had no time. Eventually after persuading a police car, a Saudi Red Crescent Society vehicle arrived and thereafter she was medically processed fairly smoothly. My wife had a very bad throat and fever, she was being sent away with 'Panadol', which she was taking already. She only got an Anti-biotics dose on her own insistence (but for one day only) with about as much rudeness she could take

while on Haj. The Pakistan Medical Mission must have been somewhere, in the seven camps. I personally enquired there was no sign of them.

PM Mian Nawaz Sharif is personally very much interested in the welfare of the Hajis, in Senator Zafarul Haq he has an able God-fearing enthusiast to manage the job but I do not think their message is filtering through, certainly the intent is not. We did not come across one single official of the Haj Mission, nor did many of the people in many of the camps, at least none in those I visited.

I was in No. 17, the farthest at one end of Mina, so I had to traverse the entire area up to the other end to perform 'Rami' at Jamarat. Most of the officials were naturally busy in Haj themselves, which one does not begrudge, but they had another duty to perform, to look after their countrymen and at least show their existence instead of catering to VIPs and regrettably, their own kith and kin or friends or connections. Then there is the matter of the Pakistan Mission. Why does not the PM task the DG ISI just to investigate why accommodation has been rented out more than 1000 metres from the Khana-e-Kaaba against standing instruc-

tion and what was the consideration when similar accommodation was available cheaper? The Haj Mission presently does not fulfill its mission and that needs to be rectified for the future. Instead of being comfortable in solitude of the 'Pakistan House', let the personnel of the Haj Mission be distributed to each camp to be effective.

Personally, I had no illusions about the blessings of God, as He always does. Despite running a high fever since the morning of 8th Zilhaj, I had to keep me going, not the least of which was because my wife kept me plied with medicine and water. Instead of disintegrating under stress and strain, at times groups tend to come together to help each other, sometimes they cannot climb over their own selfishness. Someone remarked on the 3 km walk under the hot sun to Namirah Mosque and then back that it was will power. Fortunately for me, I know better.

The ONE who had given the 'Bulawa' in the first place is the ONE that kept me going. My fever peaked at Namirah Mosque just before the Khutba and as I searched for and leaned against the wall to rest my back, a Turkish gentleman with two extremely old ladies kept plying me with water. Among the many prayers that I beseeched Allah on Arafat that day, one was, 'thanks to you Allah has been rented out more than 1000 metres from the Khana-e-Kaaba against standing instruc-

OPINION

Consumer Rights and Left-overs

A Husnain

It is encouraging to note that the print media is spotlighting the Consumer Rights concept, which is non-controversial, exists in black and white but not in colour. The pathetic tales of abject indifference and negligence are well documented. Now there is a small consorsatory bonus item: the new draft Act is being readied for submission to the JS within 3-4 months.

There is no time to lose, with global marketing trend in full swing, and consumerism on the rise in Bangladesh, with perceptible rise in the purchasing power of some classes of the society in the urban areas — the recent Eid shopping trend hinted the circulation of grey money chasing grey and black or non-standard goods.

There is another trend, a large number of consumer and other goods are now produced in the country, some of export quality, but the rest at the mercy of the indolent monitoring and prosecution teams, if there are any.

Even after the glamorous Act is promulgated, the law's delay will negate many of the good provisions of the new Act. Besides, the consumers have weak representational platforms (such as the CAB), and the officialdom is hardly interested in hastening the building up of the infrastructure. The country has a large number of legal protective devices in place in many sectors to protect the citizens, but only paper work leads nowhere (the proof of the pudding lies in the eating).

There are two major sufferers in the country: the consumers of sub-standard goods, and sub-standard democratic services. The politicians cannot be blamed when the relevant cultures have not set in; in this case the protection of the consumers' rights, to start with, provided there is a consensus on the priority to be accorded to this non-essential service.

The consumers (they are in a vast majority, equal to the number of voters, and millions below the voting age) are at the end of a long queue of political and administrative priorities. We are still in the opening chapters of our changing history.

The cynical question is: first the country or the consumers? A very pertinent question, depending on who are being questioned.

The moral degradation of the society is also linked up with the protection of the consumers. If the inspectors do not inspect, the testers do not test, and the prosecutors do not prosecute, and the law is a Rip Van Winkle, then how the ball will be set rolling? The answers lie with those who are eager to run the country.

Why we cannot take off in any public sector? The Public Administrative Reforms Commission has advertised a set of questionnaires for the public to respond to. It appears to be a wild goose chase: asking the victims how they should be treated; instead of telling the physicians to cure themselves first. After so many Commissions of the sort, still a public questionnaire, but, still a public question, to gain time, or reinforce sagging confidence? A questionnaire may also be issued to the consumers — the right to be questioned, whatever it means.

Then there is the formidable private sector, which supplies the goods and the services in several grades: First Class, Business Class, Economy, and Substandard. Money speaks, and money can ensure silence. The private sector is the main target, not the consumers — the latter are supposed to enjoy the indirect benefits of the tightening measures. The powerful bureaucrats have to concede a point — that the business community could be more wily and oily.

Anyway, the consumers are ready for any service or sacrifice, provided they are kept healthy and slim-pocketed, kept away from *dut number maal*. Why Zinjira is not being declared as an industrial zone for popular products at popular prices, with 'popular' checking and inspection?

To the Editor...

Army General into Politics

Sir, In a country like ours the retired Army Generals or officers of any rank should stay away from politics, indirectly this would develop some sort of politics in the Army as evidenced in the recent past. Our Ex-Army Chief has joined the BNP. Perhaps he does not know what awaits him to face the cruel fact of life in politics.

Things are becoming very hazy with the participation of ex-Army officers who are supposed to act as models for the people. It is a pity to see its bad impact on the country's politics.

M A Osman Ali Ameer Complex Uttara, Dhaka

Job seekers deceived

Sir, There are many adverts inviting application for different jobs in the national dailies almost everyday. If one takes the trouble to go through these ads carefully he or she will find that many of them ask for bank draft ranging from 50 to 200 taka with the application. It is needless to mention that the money is non-refundable.

My question is, if some of these advertisements can accept application without any bank draft then why can't others? Even if we take it for granted that an advertiser needs money for maintaining official formality (regarding advertisement expense and something of that sort) the amount cannot be in any way 200 taka. So, the most reasonable explanation one can conceive is that some opportunists are taking advantage of the desperate job seekers alluring them by the exaggerated promise of attractive

salary and bright career. Capitalising on the susceptibility of these frustrated and desperate job seekers, some people are losing the 'non-refundable' money. These youths who don't mind paying 100 or 200 taka for securing a job are thus being deceived.

Will the authority concerned look into the matter and stop this fraudulence?

Shamim Ahsan 64/M R K Mission Road Gopibagh, Dhaka-1203

Outdated road maps

Sir, Developing Bangladesh's road maps cannot keep pace with the new roads coming up each year, as these are missing in the current maps available in the market for the use of tourists and the general public. Apparently there appears to be a severe lack of co-operation and coordination between the builders of the roads (R&H Dept and the map makers (LR & Survey Dte). The map makers are not developing, and cannot keep pace with the times.

A recent advertisement reveals that the map office has gone in for computerisation map making and printing (it should have been done much earlier, as the computer logist support is available in the local private sector). The PR section of the Land Survey Office needs to be strengthened, so that the latest local maps are mass produced and published in popular form for general and tourist use (what Parjatan BPC doing?).

Subsequently the printing and publication of non-classified maps may be leased to private local firms at popular prices. The road map of Bangladesh and metropolitan Dhaka has changed beyond

Electricity bill defaulters to face stern action

Sir, The DS of March 24, 1999 published a news under the above heading. But when DESA is itself a defaulter in sending the monthly bill then what stern action to be taken, and against whom?

Usually we get the monthly bill after one month i.e. we are supposed to receive the bill of January in the first week of March. But during the last three-four months we are not getting our bill regularly. On 31st March, I still did not get the bill of January 1999. I went to the DESA's office (Executive Engineer, Sales Near Asad Gate) on March 21st to inquire about this unusual delay and met the officials concerned. I came to know from them that the bills are prepared in their Computer Department and they (in the Sales Office) have to collect from that department. I asked them when that will be collected. They replied that within a couple of days. So, I went after two days. But I found that still the bill has not been collected. Again I went on 24th March to collect the bill, this time the su-

pervisor said that the bill has been sent to my house. Up to 2:00 pm of 25th March I did not receive any bill, so I again went to DESA's office and met the supervisor.

So I returned back without the bill. Now my question is who should receive the stern action?

M Shamsuzzoha House # 2A, Road # 2 (Kha) Mohamma Road

India and Pakistan

Sir, India and Pakistan are trying to improve their relation through *bus diplomacy*. But it appears both Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Nawaz Sharif know that they are making this gesture only to impress their countrymen and the world, at the aftermath of exploding nuclear devices. But at heart they are almost sure that there cannot be a real friendship between the two hostile countries.

Nawaz Sharif cannot make a real friendship with India without a solution of Kashmir problem, which India will never approve. Moreover Pakistan is always suspicious about the slogan of undivided India and development of new missiles and sophisticated weapons by them. Further Pakistan is not happy about the failure of India to stop anti-Muslim riots.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee cannot make friendship with Pakistan, as Pakistan will always blame BJP for demolition of the Babri Masjid. Further Pakistan will never accept undivided Mother India.

So friendship between Vajpayee and Sharif may not last long. But the bus service may continue.

A F M Moeenul Islam Chittagong