

In Custody without Case

A seven-year-old boy was picked up by police from his shanty at Mohammadpur on Sunday purportedly for interrogation by a sub-inspector of Mohammadpur Police Station. The boy was kept in the thana hajat (lockup) for four days before being released by the Officer-In-Charge who thought there was no case against the boy of that tender age. The ill-fated child had been picked up by the SI for questioning for the loss of a cellular phone of an Engineer who was moving from one part of the city to another. The boy's father was helping out with sibling by his side as a curious on-looker. Reports suggested that because of the interest taken by a group of newsmen who went to the Thana on Wednesday noon, the boy may have been released. The OC admitted to The Daily Star correspondent that there was some 'irregularity' in the case. The sub-inspector concerned has been put under suspension.

The boy Firoz should consider himself extremely lucky to have come out unscathed from a thana hajat. Although he has been released, there is no satisfactory explanation from the police, far less an apology, why the child of seven was detained in the first place when no case against him could be entertained by them? A thana hajat is the last place where a father would have wished his child to spend as many as four nights with other criminals. There have been instances where policemen picked up street urchins and vagabonds, specially before any hartal or street agitation, to avoid chaos and untoward incidents. Even under ordinary circumstances they sometimes do it. These street urchins, tokais and vagabonds are picked up without warrant and then either let off or kept in custody. They are also picked up from time to time under different laws, especially the Vagrancy Act, and detained in hajat and jails without any case or trial. There may be many who are languishing in the jails and subjails of the country without trial or without having committed any cognizable offence. Hundreds of under-trial prisoners are also passing hard days in jails.

This does not speak well of a democratic society to which we all belong. We strongly urge the Home Ministry to constitute a task force immediately which will undertake visits to all the jails, prepare an authentic list categorising the inmates and set free those against whom there are no cases as a first instance of justice and fairplay and then deal with the rest in accordance with the law.

Let Them Live

SUDARSHAN, the 23-year-old African lion at the Dhaka Zoo, is in its death bed. Sad though it is, solace for one of the oldest inmates of the zoo may be that it awaits death at a mature age. Sultan, the five-month-old baby elephant, was not so lucky; nor were the four tigers, the giraffe, the orang-utan, the camel or the dolphin that had died due to lack of care. Alarming increase in the number of unnatural deaths of zoo inmates plus, of course, media coverage of purported foul-play compelled authorities to initiate a probe into the matter. Subsequent investigation report, reviewed by the minister for livestock and fisheries himself, led to a rather regulation measure: the curator and three more officials were fired. End of the affair. Highups in the ministry concerned must have given themselves a pat on the back for a job well done. Question remains: is it done? Absolutely not.

Over the years, the ministry concerned has been sluggish to react to the number of allegations against zoo authorities of maltreatment of the caged animals together with pilferage of their food. A few animals had to die before they were fully convinced that something sinister was actually on. A closer look revealed cruelty, not indifference.

It is highly unlikely that the disciplinary measures taken by the ministry will change the lives of the inmates of the zoo, for it is no longer a question of replacing a few personnel. On the contrary, attitude of the authorities needs a change. The zoo is in a dismal condition, devoid of proper facilities and required manpower, especially veterinarians. Unless of course drastic measures are taken to improve the condition, the animals will be far better off if they are freed and let back to the place where they came from, and the zoo is closed. The authorities have proved that they are not up to it.

A reminder for the government: it has shown a certain degree of proclivity towards nurturing projects initiated by the father of the nation; they are certainly aware that the zoo was also his brainchild.

Liquor Deaths Again

FIVE liquor casualties in Rajshahi last week, on top of the huge number of people who had earlier succumbed to fated addiction, clearly indicate that the suppliers of the "deadly brew" are still in business. The larger part of the iceberg has started showing up. An increasing number of people are getting so addicted to alcohol that they blindly indulge in anything passed off as liquor including a deadly quantity of methanol. Recent horrifying deaths in Narsingdi may have sent some scary signals to liquor consumers, but the consumption overall has hardly lessened, not to speak of giving up the habit. Now the liquor-related deaths are not confined to certain districts only. Even after recent tragedies at Dhaka, Gaibandha, Tangail and of course, Narsingdi, the vicious trade continues, may be just only less openly.

After the Narsingdi catastrophe, the Narcotics Control Department set up a committee which has submitted its report to the authority concerned. But its suggestions are yet to be made public. The reported move to implement a set of safety regulations on "liquor" will generate little effect on the ground in view of the dismal performance of the implementing agencies in this particular area.

The authorities do not seem to have been seriously bothered by the series of liquor related deaths in the country. Have they really carried on raids on the blackmarket? If they have, how many of the suppliers and brewers of the deadly mix have they hauled up? The citizens would like to know where they stand in their fight against the recalcitrant merchants of alcohol. The society is already saturated with episodes of liquor-related mishaps. It does not want anymore of it.

It's Sad and Surprising

The statement by both sides that it is a war-like situation is ominous. The ray of hope is that the two Prime Ministers still talk about the Lahore Declaration, which eschews hostilities.

THERE are no infiltrators; they are freedom fighters who are fighting for their right of self-determination." This was Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's reply to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who told him that the infiltrators must vacate the territory they had occupied on the Indian side of the Line of Control (LoC).

Hearing Sharif's reaction, Vajpayee said: "If you are of this opinion, then how can the matter be resolved? The conversation took place on the telephone after the incursions in Kargil. Since Sharif has himself disclosed this at a function in Lahore, there is no reason to doubt its authenticity.

Had Sharif made the observation some years ago, it might have had a ring of credibility. Then the rigged state polls had eroded the faith of most youth in the ballot box. Many of them crossed into Pakistan for training and returned with weapons. They were the ones who raised the arms. It was a response which shook Kashmir and the rest of India.

Yasin Malik and Shabir Shah, the two popular young leaders, were among the freedom fighters. They and many like them spent years in jail. Several lost their lives. They wanted the Kashmiris to decide their fate themselves. Their stand has not changed since. But their methods have. They have realised that a peaceful expression of grievances is far more effective than violence.

After they turned their backs on violence, the insurgency in the Valley ended practically. A bit of it has been kept alive by Islamabad through bribery, instigation and the export of mercenaries, including the Afghans and the Sudanese. From Pakistan which is dotted with training camps. Participation of locals is very little. But the ISI has kept it going in the Jammu region by picking Hindus at Doda and other places and shooting them down point blank.

To describe the armed men whom Pakistan pushes into Kashmir as freedom fighters is an insult to those who did at one time rise for the cause they consider dear. That they feel still alienated is a different matter. But they have come to believe that their problems can be solved by sitting across the same table. They want a tripartite conference, the Kashmiris participating in the talks between India and Pakistan. Many of them resent Islamabad's intrusion which, they think, is not helpful to them. Neither do they want the peaceful solution they are seeking.

It is apparent that Islamabad has been finding less and less response among the Kashmiris for continuing insurgency. Otherwise, it would not have depended first on mercenaries and now on their regular forces. It has been proved beyond doubt that the Pakistan soldiers crossed the LoC to fight, lead and help the infiltrators in the Kargil sector. At places, the Pakistani forces have been fighting without even dressing up as infiltrators. It means that the Pakistan forces have been fighting on the Indian side of Kashmir.

That may well be the reason why Pakistan foreign minister Sartaj Aziz has said that the LoC is not clearly demarcated. He forgets that after the Shimla Agreement in 1972, the military establishments and surveyors of the two countries took months to delineate the entire LoC, except the 47 miles which comprise the Siachen glacier area. As many as 19 maps were signed by both sides. How can Pakistan now challenge the very demarcation of the LoC? The Shimla Agreement said that the LoC would not be altered unilaterally. The Lahore Declaration endorsed the Shimla Agreement. How could Pakistan be so categorical in agreements when the LoC was vague?

That Pakistan was building a case to justify the violation of the LoC goes without saying. But it was not clear that it would use it as an argument to perpetrate the occupation of the territory in

Kargil it was able to grab through subterfuge and New Delhi's negligence. Then why should Sharif say that the Kashmir problem should be settled by sitting across the table. Islamabad has already begun using methods which by no stretch of the imagination suggest peace. He says he is a man of peace! How do you square the statement with what the Pakistan forces are doing?

Such a thing should happen soon after the Lahore Declaration is both sad and surprising. It only underlines the fact that the armed forces call the shots. They did not like the atmosphere of bonhomie which was spreading in the two countries. They have retarded the process.

Linking the Kargil incursions with the immediate talks on Kashmir does not make sense. The caretaker government in Delhi has no authority to negotiate a settlement with Pakistan on any subject, much less Kashmir. A new government, coming with a popular mandate, is the party to be asked. Strange, Islamabad is not willing to wait till mid-October when the new government will be in the saddle.

This is, in fact, the first time that Pakistan has tried to settle the Kashmir issue through infiltrators. It was done in 1965. Pakistan's calculation was that if it were to send infiltrators, there would be uprisings in Kashmir and it would justifiably intervene. The plan failed. After the Bangladesh war, I met Ayub Khan in 1972 at his residence in Islamabad. He denied having anything to do with 1965 war. "It was Bhutto's war," he told me. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto did not deny the charge. He said he was of the opinion that India would go from strength to strength, with the establishment of ordnance factories on the one hand and the public undertaking on the other. If Pakistan was to defeat India, this was the time.

In fact, they were Kashmiris — Mohammed Din from Gulmarg and Wazir Mohammed from Mendhar, Jammu — who were the first to tell the Kashmiri police about the infiltrators. Pakistan's plans to distribute arms and ammunition to the local population and to organise a revolt remained on paper. There was no response to General Ayub's broadcast to the people of Kashmir to exercise their right of self-determination. Yes, the 1965 war took place. Surely, this is not the intention this time also.

In his book, Ayub Khan, Altaf Gauhar, his information secretary, has described how Ayub Khan was not fully aware of Operation Gibraltar under which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the then foreign minister, sent mujahideen into Indian territory. The directive issued by Ayub Khan was: "The aim was to take such action as would defreeze the Kashmir problem, weaken Indian resolve, and bring her to the conference table without provoking a general war. However, the element of escalation is always present in such struggles. So, whilst confining our action to the Kashmir area, we must not be unmindful that India may in desperation involve us in a general war or violate Pakistan territory where we are weak. We must, therefore, be prepared for such a contingency."

One hopes that a similar directive has not been issued with respect to the present situation by both sides that it is a war-like situation is ominous. The ray of hope is that the two Prime Ministers still talk about the Lahore Declaration, which eschews hostilities.

At Lahore, Sharif read part of a poem written by Vajpayee at the banquet given in his honour at the Red Fort (Lahore). The poem, captioned "We shall never allow war to break out," was an undertaking not to ever have hostilities between India and Pakistan. Subsequently, at a civic reception, Vajpayee himself read the full poem, poignant with hope and promise.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

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Is War Imminent?

Because of the Indian blunder and the Mujahideen resolve, the Nawaz Sharif government, it's Foreign Office, the Army, the ISI and others have coalesced beautifully to convert essentially a tactical situation to strategic advantage. Faced with this, will India risk an all out nuclear war? Maturity demands that India accepts Pakistan's offer for talks to restore peace in South Asia before the situation escalates out of control.

ILLINDIA lost two combat jet aircraft in quick succession, one a MIG-21 the other a MIG-27, followed by a helicopter gunship, the world cared two hoots about an unknown place on the map called Kargil. The wreckage parked a few kilometres inside territory indicating clear violation of Pakistani airspace, intelligence planners in the west suddenly started to have nuclear jitters if the scrimmage escalated to full war-scale. Against the market forces, the Dow Jones Index on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) went down. The mountain ridges dominate for quite a length the only fair weather supply road to Ladakh (and more importantly Siachen), the Mujahideen occupying it have withstood powerful barrages unleashed from the ground and from the air by the Indians. According to the Indians, they had vacated these mountain posts along the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir during the winter and a composite Mujahideen group composed of Afghan war veterans, Kashmiris, etc.

backed by regulars of the Pakistan Army had taken advantage of the light winter snows this year to deploy in these abandoned positions before the Indians could re-occupy them.

Pakistan's contention is that the Mujahideen are acting on their own as they have done for many years but if the Indian Armed Forces violate a largely undemarcated LoC in that area or shell or attack any area on our home side, Pakistan would retaliate like it did when it shot down at least two of the three aircrafts downed. To defuse the building tension Pakistan immediately proposed that Senator Sartaj Aziz visit New Delhi on June 7, 1999 for peace talks. In a conciliatory gesture Flt Lt Nachiketa was released. In a blatant diplomatic snub, India refused this peace overture through a fire and brimstone Vajpayee address to the nation. India continues to give well-attended daily military briefings to the media, both in New Delhi and Srinagar about "successes" in evicting the "intruders". After having given the local Corps Commander one week to clear the mess, they sacked a Deputy GOC of the rank of Brigadier.

According to the initial figures given by the Indians about the size of the "invasion force" (about 500-600) and the casualties inflicted on the Mujahideen, they have been "wiped out" several times over. They have now paraded out the identity (ID) cards on three bodies as "evidence" that they belonged to the Northern Light Infantry (NLI) of the Pakistan Army. This may be a new one, if Pakistan had to send in this force as infiltrators, would they have allowed ID Cards on their persons? In the meantime other than a clear Vajpayee threat to Pakistan, a significant development has been the banning of viz (1) all news media from the entire battle front in Kashmir and (2) Pakistan TV from being seen in India. As for the second, it is really unfortunate that the so-called world's largest democracy should curb information flow in such a crude manner and as for the first, other than hiding the truth about casualties and the real situation, it could be to prevent reporting about a military buildup with respect to a possible Indian adventure either elsewhere along the LoC or in order to relieve the pressure in and around Kargil or even a massive heliborne attack behind the ridges to cut off the Mujahideen occupying them. Attacked directly the Pakistan Armed Forces will retaliate, how long will the on-going conflict be kept localised?

At this time there are exchanges of artillery and small arms all along the LoC in Kashmir. The Indians are deliberately targeting civilian villages in a callous form of "ethnic cleansing" to force the inhabitants (who are Muslims) to leave the area. Dead children, internal refugees and devastated villages are powerful evidence for the world media to absorb.

Pakistan's firepower has been focused on Indian military locations as one cannot expect our government to target their own brethren living across the LoC in Indian-occupied Kashmir. To cover their military deployment and build-up the Indians have done a planned evacuation of civilians in the Kargil Sector. As regards the Mujahideen, the whole world knows about the internal revolt within Indian-occupied Kashmir since 1989, a period of repression in which

election against a resurgent Congress under Italian born Sonia Gandhi. The local results in Goa have shown a trend of voters coming back to Congress (40%) against a BJP's 25% of the vote on the strength of the charisma of the Nehru name. Having its core strength drawn from nationalism based on the dominance of the Hindu religion (Hindutva), the military reverses have been a severe political setback for the BJP. If India does not look good from this fracas, the voters will desert them in droves in the national elections, enough to tilt the balance to Congress, who even without a majority will have enough seats to make a stronger coalition government than did the BJP. India has been flaunting its military might during the tenure, with Defence Minister George Fernandes carrying a particularly big mouth. Despite the daily bombast of their press organs, the Indian Army has been wrong-footed and in calling up air power and in losing the three combat aircraft, one of them the vaunted MIG-27, their Air Force has also suffered tremendous loss of prestige. When both the civilian and the military have been placed in an embarrassing situation, one has to logically expect some military adventure to even the "loss of face". As regards violation of the Simla Agreement by breaching the LoC, the Indians have taken ground three across the LoC, not counting the Siachen incursion, what about those violations? On September 6, 1995, India launched a full-scale invasion of Pakistan across its international borders. Ostensibly the reason was Pakistan Army's end run to Akhnoor in Kashmir, the occupation of the bridge would have closed the supply route to Indian-occupied Kashmir. Such a set-piece attack in strength by many divisions as the Indians did on Lahore and Sialkot to relieve the pressure requires considerable amount of time for planning and logistics. The die was cast in April/May 1995 with the severe mauling of Indian forces in the Rann of Kutch, causing then Indian PM Lal Bahadur Shastri to threaten a war "at a time and place of our choosing". Thirtyfour years later, almost to the day, the Indians have suffered an extensive loss of men and material but above all, of prestige, Indian PM Atal Behari Vajpayee has given the same threat. We can only wait to see whether the Indians will keep war localised to Kashmir, go for a major incursion in some sector, or even attempt a "final solution" of the "Pakistan problem" by coming across the international border at a time and place of their choosing. The imminence of war is rhetorical, it is almost inevitable. If the Armed Forces cannot hold them despite our numerical inferiority in conventional forces, will we refrain from resorting to the unconventional? Because of the Indian blunder and the Mujahideen resolve, the Nawaz Sharif government, it's Foreign Office, the Army, the ISI and others have coalesced beautifully to convert essentially a tactical situation to strategic advantage. Faced with this, will India risk an all out nuclear war? Maturity demands that India accepts Pakistan's offer for talks to restore peace in South Asia before the situation escalates out of control.

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To the Editor...

Startling views of Star News!

Sir, I was watching the Star News on the Star TV on 1 June at 9:30 pm, i.e. the day after Bangladesh cricket team's historic victory over Pakistan in the World Cup. The Sports Report came as usual where the news of Greenidge's dismissal as the coach, Miandad's possibility of becoming the new coach etc., were being telecast. At one point the newscaster, referring to the victory of Bangladesh, commented: "... yesterday's 'shocking' win over Pakistan."

This came as a rude shock to me and, I believe, to many others who were watching that news. In the newscaster would have said: "...Pakistan's shocking defeat to Bangladesh", if we have made sense regarding cricketing point of view.

But how come this unique victory of our team appear "shocking" to the Star News? Bangladesh in that game snatched victory outplaying Pakistan in every department. Even Wasim Akram admitted the fact and appreciated Bangladesh as the better side of that match. True, the result was unexpected, even to us. However, there are quite a good number of lexicons in the English language which express "wonder" and "appreciation" at the same time for describing such unexpected wins. But as a neutral media, this very treatment of the Star News was utterly negative. As a cricket lover I, along with my friends, am severely disappointed.

Feeda Hasan Shahed, 1st Year (Commerce) Notre Dame College, Dhaka.

Money from abroad

Sir, We all know that the second largest foreign exchange earning of our country come through the remittances of our people living abroad. But unfortunately more than 50 per cent of such remittances still are not coming through proper channels. The major part of it is coming through a third country, most cases India.

People who work abroad, get a little more than what they would if they send their money through innumerable agents engaged in this business.

GDP 5.2 per cent?

Sir, Earlier our government projected 3.8 per cent GDP and now our Finance Minister SAMS Kibria, Agriculture Minister Begum Motia Chowdhury and State Minister for Planning Dr Mohiuddin Alamgir claim the growth rate 5.2 per cent in the current fiscal 1998-99.

The World Bank Representative in Dhaka said the growth rate was miraculous, the former Finance Minister Saifur Rahman has termed the claim absurd, irrational and doctored. He said that any person who has minimum economic sense would believe that the

growth rate cannot be 5.2 per cent GDP this fiscal year.

We, the common people, are in a fix to understand and to realise the truth and reality.

For the sake of accountability and transparency, knowledge and information we would request the relevant authorities to kindly let us know in detail as to how under what formula and on what basis, they have enumerated and worked out the GDP for 1998-99, and what is the accurate GDP according to their respective calculations?

O. H. Kabir, 6, Hare Street Wari, Dhaka-1203

Agri output

Sir, With keen interest I have gone through an article titled — "Agricultural Extension in the 21st Century" by Prof Dr Muhammad Hussain, Vice Chancellor, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) published in some newspapers and which was based on the speech the VC had delivered at a symposium on Agricultural Extension at BAU recently.

The article has very creditably focused on some important strategies of Agricultural Extension to meet the challenges in the coming century. But unfortunately I could not locate anything stressing the importance of Agri. Extension in a profitable economic investment in the article. As per economic research, investment in agricultural extension yields high returns on investment.

According to a UNDP survey, worldwide, nearly \$6 billion or only about 0.5 per cent of the agricultural gross domestic product (AGDP) is being spent on agricultural extension. In the developing countries like Bangladesh, investment in the Agri. Extension sector is too meagre. Same is the case with agri. research. But in order to increase agricultural productivity and development, adequate and sustained investment in agricultural extension as well as research is a must.

We would like to draw the attention of the government to the above stated matter.

M Zahidul Haque, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.