

# Globalisation, Security and Civil Society

Imagination is more important than knowledge  
— Albert Einstein

## Globilisation and Security Linkages in the Coming Millennium

by Abdur Rob Khan

**Globalization endangers security of the peripheral communities when it becomes a tool to those who wield power. It is argued that globalization always tends to be elitist and capital centric and is devoid of peripheral economic, political, social concerns.**

ATTEMPTS at linking globalization to security may raise eye brows because globalization usually refers to liberalization of economies and integration with the global market. But if anything, the demise of the Cold War has led to a widespread realization that human security is not threatened by frontier and military centric issues only. A wide variety of issues tend to affect human security at different levels — global, regional, national, group and individual — both positively and negatively. The notion of security today is not confined to a protected border or the assurance of a well-prepared army. It describes a wide variety of concerns and reassurances. At the cost of sounding little bit tautological, it may be said that the single most contributing factor to this universalization of security experiences is the process of globalization. Thomas Friedman of the New York Times has observed, "Globalization is the next great foreign policy debate. Yet, as the debate expands, it gets more confusing. Is globalization a source of economic growth and prosperity, as most economists and many in policy community believe? Or is it a threat to social stability and natural environment, as a curious mix of interests ranging from labor to environmentalists ... argue?"

Indeed, post-Cold War security discourse displays diverse trends. On the one hand, one witnesses a paradigm shift from conflict-based security to cooperative and common security. On the other hand, security concerns of societies have deepened for a variety of reasons, and nation-states' search for conventional security continues all the same, leaving the level of defence spending at a relatively higher level than would have been the case under the notional paradigm shift. Arguably, therefore, the linkage between globalization and security, in both paradigmatic

### Globalization and Security Linkages

The linkage between globalization and security may be viewed in a self-sustaining and cross-cutting way. For example, economic liberalization in a conducive and secure political environment facilitates the emergence of an elite class who, in turn, creates new demands for more economic liberalization. New contacts and internationalism, in the process, infuses a sense of security in the nation as part of a collectivity. But then penetration of more and more economic actors and the resultant increased volume of transactions put pressure on the state capacity and any faulty or unpopular deal will lead to resentment and protests. The process of globalization may be implied in the process, in what follows, the different facets of the linkages are brought in.

Globalization bolsters security: Globalization strengthens the sense of security of states, societies and individuals through opening the path for export-led growth, revolutionizing communication, promoting democratic values and practices worldwide, protecting human rights, replacing a cooperative international relations for place of conflicts and use of force. Collective security is promoted by shared interests and concerns, and by creating a nexus of multilateral institutions. (Bhabani Sen Gupta, 1987)

Interstate wars seem to have become obsolescent to the extent the people recognize that success in gaining world market shares has replaced territorial acquisition as the means to survival. (Strange, November 1997). This is not to suggest that inter-state wars are not happening and will not happen. To the old causes of conflicts, newer ones like resource exploitation, access to and sharing of water and renewed ones like irredentism are being added. But the fact remains that equally forceful countervailing forces to create disincentives for waging wars have emerged. Business abhors conflicts and prefers conditions of political stability" (Babu, 1998). It is said that,

"...current emphasis on globalization would lead one to believe that world security depends on current account balances and exchange rate policies. While this may be overstating the case, cynically dismissing 'global economics' would be wrongheaded." (Book Reviews in Current History, November 1997).

Globalization also raises security concerns: The same globalization process, however, is increasing tensions, instability and sense of insecurity of nations, societies and individuals through increasing the propensity of interventions, resurgence of ethnic, group and communal feelings, poverty and marginalization, replacement of traditional but stable value systems, proliferation of small arms, fast degrading resource base and environment.

Another way in which economic liberalization may lead to ethnic and communal or even in-country regional tensions is commercial exploitation of natural resources

threatening the natural habitat, culture and livelihood of particular communities.

Other Linkages: With globalization, there has been a narrowing down of the dichotomy of the role of the developed and developing states in so far as providing security to the people is concerned. (Mills, 1997) In the Cold War era, the developed states were perceived to be able to provide security against external threats, internal threats as well as threats from hunger, malnutrition, diseases, unemployment and other hardships.

Not only the developing states

could not provide these forms of security, the state itself has been viewed as a source of insecurity to its people through corruption, oppressive instruments, and also for rent seeking and extraction activities, and other forms of bad governance.

A Recent South Asian Deliberation

An intensive deliberation of this nature was held recently in Dhaka under the aegis of the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS). A three-day Regional Workshop on Globalization and Security in South Asia was jointly organized by the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS) and the Regional Centre for Strategic Studies (RCSS) in collaboration with Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, New Delhi and Ford Foundation, New Delhi. The Workshop deliberations were split into six Working Sessions: Globalization: Nature and Direction; Globalization and Traditional Security Issues in South Asia; Globalization and Low Intensity Security in South Asia; Globalization and Environmental Security in South Asia; Globalization and Economic Security; and Global Information Society and Cultural Security in South Asia. Twenty-three papers were presented in the Working Sessions. About 70 participants including 16 from Bhutan, Germany, India, Japan, Pakistan, Russia and Sri Lanka participated in the deliberations.

**Key Issues of Globalization-Security Linkages**

Four elements of globaliza-

tion may be identified—free trade of goods, free market and privatization, environment and sustainable development, armament trade. The position of the North and the South and various institutions (WTO) on these issues is indeed wide apart.

In the context of South Asia, strained India-Pakistan relations pose formidable challenge to developing cooperative relations which are pre-requisites to building a common front vis-à-vis the North, and for that matter, the WTO. It may therefore be argued that South Asia is not prepared yet to meet the challenges of globalization. The paper argues that comprehensive idea of security and policy orientation towards affiliation is needed.

Some scholars view globaliza-

tion makes national foreign policies more transparent and increases the role of people in international relations.

Globalization relates to civil society through another security route, that is low intensity conflicts.

It is argued that with the expansion of the learning capacity and skills of the individuals, the macro level has become insufficient to explain contemporary world politics.

Attention therefore, have shifted towards the micro level for a better understanding and explanation of disintegrative tendencies and fragmentation of international and national societies.

It is the changed notion of security and aspiration of peoples and groups to enhance their sense of security that have necessitated the employment of low intensity conflict strategy by many of them.

Due to relative "autonomy" of the inter-state disputes and conflicts in South Asia, the end of the Cold War had no positive impact on the region.

At the same time, low intensity conflicts have increased in their dimension, spread and severity.

From this perspective that we can better analyze and understand the various insurrections and separatist movements, terrorism and proxy war, ethnic and communal conflict as well as instances of forced displacement in the region.

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The government of Myanmar has used low intensity conflict and the agenda of globalization to attain its goals that is to attract foreign development funds for the repatriation of Rohingyas. External actors do not care about LIC as long as their investments are returned. Thus, the minority communities like the Rohingyas have been nationally and internationally marginalized.

But then information society has revolutionized communication and changed lifestyle for billions. It depends how one capitalizes the facilities available along the information super highway. The best example is the fact that this very information system and modern technology is used by different communities not only to preserve but also enhance and strengthen local culture, group identity and primordial

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## Resisting Globalisation?

### Social Movements and Civil Society in Sri Lanka

by Nira Wickramasinghe

**S**TATES in South Asia are, in varying degrees of intensity, participating in a growing process of integration of their national economies into a global world economy. Arjun Appadurai has highlighted two meanings to the word 'globalization'. First as a socio-economic formation and second as a term of folk ideology in journalism and in the corporate world. In both senses, though, it marks a set of transitions in the global political economy since the 1970s. During the next decades multi-national forms of capitalist organization began to be replaced by transnational, flexible and irregular forms of organization. Labor, finance, technology and technological capital began to be assembled in ways that

treated national boundaries as mere constraints or fictions.

When globalization first became a buzzword, the emphasis was on its inevitability and largely on the benefits of the phenomenon. These benefits were chiefly, but not solely economic. Openness to the international market, and the harnessing of foreign investment and trade, in concert with new technologies, promised a new impetus for development and growth. The benefits of globalization have increasingly been in doubt and an integrating part of the globalizing process is perceived in many quarters as the dislocation and exclusion of large numbers of people. In South Asia though, globalization is in a teething stage and it would take a considerable leap

of imagination to locate much of South Asia within the global village. There is however a need to address the issue of the terms upon which globalization will spread in the future.

The resistance to globalization in Sri Lanka has come from social movements, a very specific component of what is referred to as civil society. Civil society is understood here as a context within which a number of collectivities are formed and interact. Civil society can comprise formal organizations of representative kind (parties, churches, trade-unions and professional bodies), formal organizations of a functional kind (schools, universities and mass media) and more informal

social and political networks, ranging from local voluntary groups and ad hoc activist coalitions to nationally or internationally coordinated social movements.

As the state in South Asia

has become a partner in the globalization of its economy and is not in a position to critique the institutions and policies that promote globalization, it is from the realm of social movements taken in a wide sense of forms of collective social action which express the contradictions of modernity as well as class based movements that a critique of globalization has emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. The politics of resistance took the rather popular form of protesting against the privatization of state ventures culminating with the Ceylon Electricity Board strike of 1995 that caused many hardships to the common man. In the 1990s the decline of traditional left parties such as the Lanka Sama Samaja Party and the Communist party contributed to taking trade union action on an unconventional and less disciplined road. This type of action is ideologically closer to the anti-systemic Janata Vimukt Party (JVP) type of approach to politics in its refusal to abide by the rules set by the state. The JVP too in both its incarnations in 1971 as well as in the late 1980s has been concerned with the external domination of the country's economy, the dependence on others countries for scientific research and technology, and the unrestricted penetration of western values through the media resulting in an erosion and eventual loss of national identity. Its critique of globalization, however, falls

quite clearly within a general critique of capitalism and the inequality in the distribution of wealth that follows. It does not address the new instruments of domination the anonymous forces as it were and the mechanisms of control that they exert on weaker economies.

An important feature of the

anti-globalization discourse in Sri Lanka is its grounding in religion. Religious groupings especially the powerful Buddhist Sangha criticize the state for subordinating culture and religion to economic and political concerns. The threat is identified as coming from the West, Christianity and capitalism. Foreign agents are often identified as belonging to the NGO sector. What is explicitly criticized is the overlap between the neo-liberal agenda of economic globalization and the human rights agenda of non-state actors with transnational partners.

Indeed, while in many developing countries the non-governmental sector has turned a critical eye on the effects of globalization on society, in Sri Lanka this has seldom happened. Paradoxically NGOs have become in the popular perception the symbol or epitome of globalization and its negative features.

Among the institutions that promote and practice globalization but that are rarely criticized by the NGO sector the World Bank occupies a place apart. The World Bank plays a crucial role among donors as the regulator, financier and coordinator of official aid donors. There is an added significance when one considers the influence of the World Bank among donors and other development practitioners, and its intellectual leadership through publications, training and collaboration with other donors.

This absence of resistance by the NGO sector can be related to a specific strategy of the World Bank: The World Bank has successfully moved from being a target of NGO criticism to position itself as a lever, an ally by adopting the language of popular participation and blunted all critical voices by adopting the very policies that NGOs initially encouraged: after partici-

ation partnership is today the weapons used by global institutions to push forward their agenda without creating any ripples among civil society.

Participation as an ideology came from the NGO sector. Indeed NGOs of different types consistently pressed for local level participation in project planning and implementation. Through their action the message was sent that investment could be implemented more smoothly if affected communities were consulted. Partnership, today's buzzword, is in a sense a variation and adaptation of the participatory approach which tries to include grassroots development in the larger picture of development as modernity. While participation involves only two actors the donor and the community, partnership deals with the entire society.

The shifting development context has led to a move away from strictly bilateral donor-government relationships and towards a greater focus on partnerships between governments, donors and civil society.

Civil society, which the World Bank often conflates with NGO sector, is the third participant in the development triad.

Partnership is couched in moral categories: "...collaboration with nongovernmental organizations is good for the Bank, the government, and the NGOs.

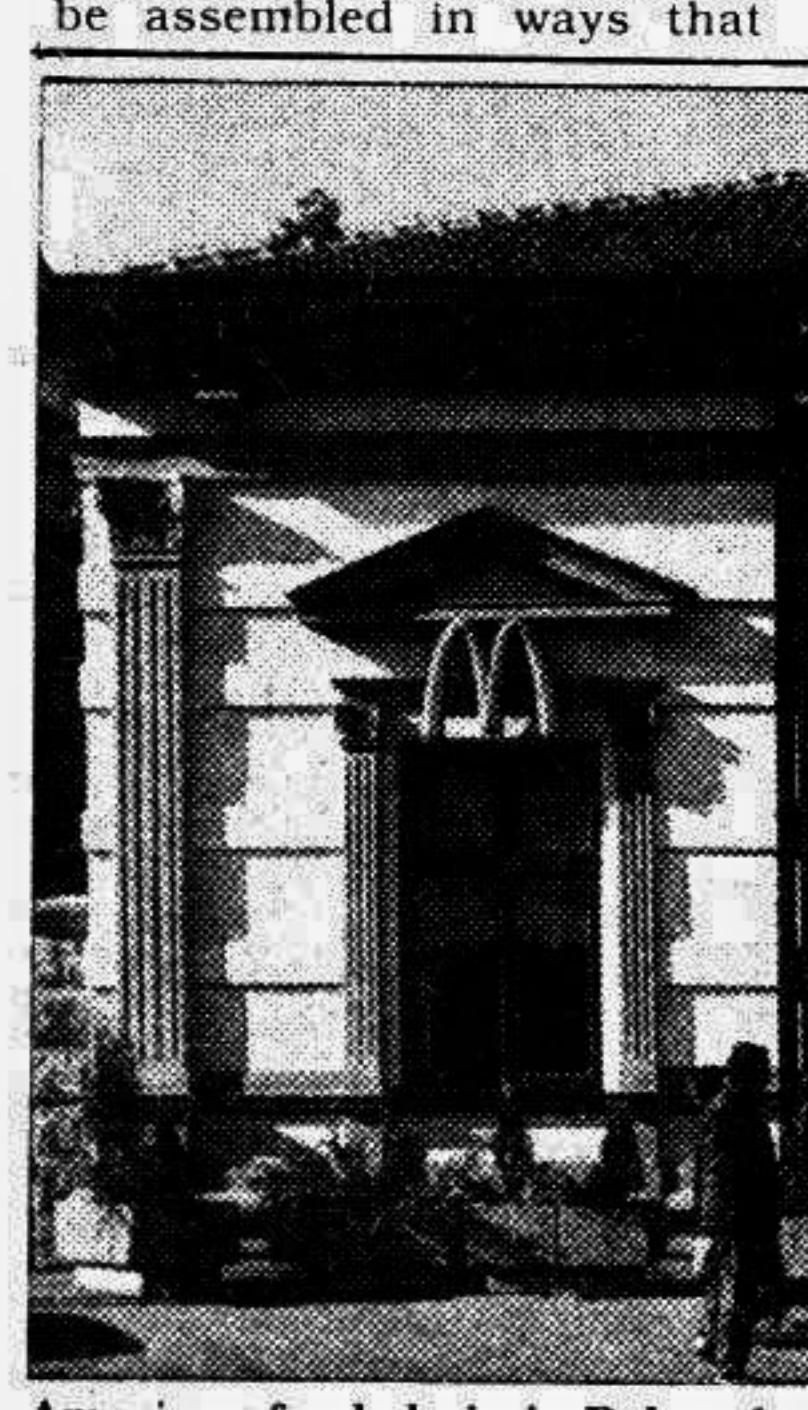
Most importantly, it is good for the people, particularly the poorest people who might not otherwise be reached."

Thus the World Bank and donors promote partnerships as project methodology couched in the language of economic effectiveness rather than of political values. It was under pressure from NGOs that the World Bank adopted participation insofar as it strengthened and promoted local involvement in project management. But through the framing of a 'partnership ideology' it has been able to blunt any call for participation in national economic policy and any potential critique of adjustment lending.

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American food chain in Belgrade

### Environmental Globalisation

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developing countries like Bangladesh embark upon the Brundtland's model of 'new' and 'less energy and material-intensive growth'?

Finally, Bangladesh looks at the issue in a comprehensive manner in terms of the main three pillars: market access, debt relief and financial/technical assistance. In the LDCs, the worst contamination is the 'pollution of poverty'. So Bangladesh focuses more on trade and development, rather than on environment. Bangladesh argues that the new round of trade negotiations should bring no new obligations, including environmental ones, to the LDCs. It urges the developed countries to provide duty-free access for LDC exports immediately after the Seattle Ministerial to be held at the end of 1999, rather than at the end of the next round of negotiations.

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### Globalisation and Civil Society

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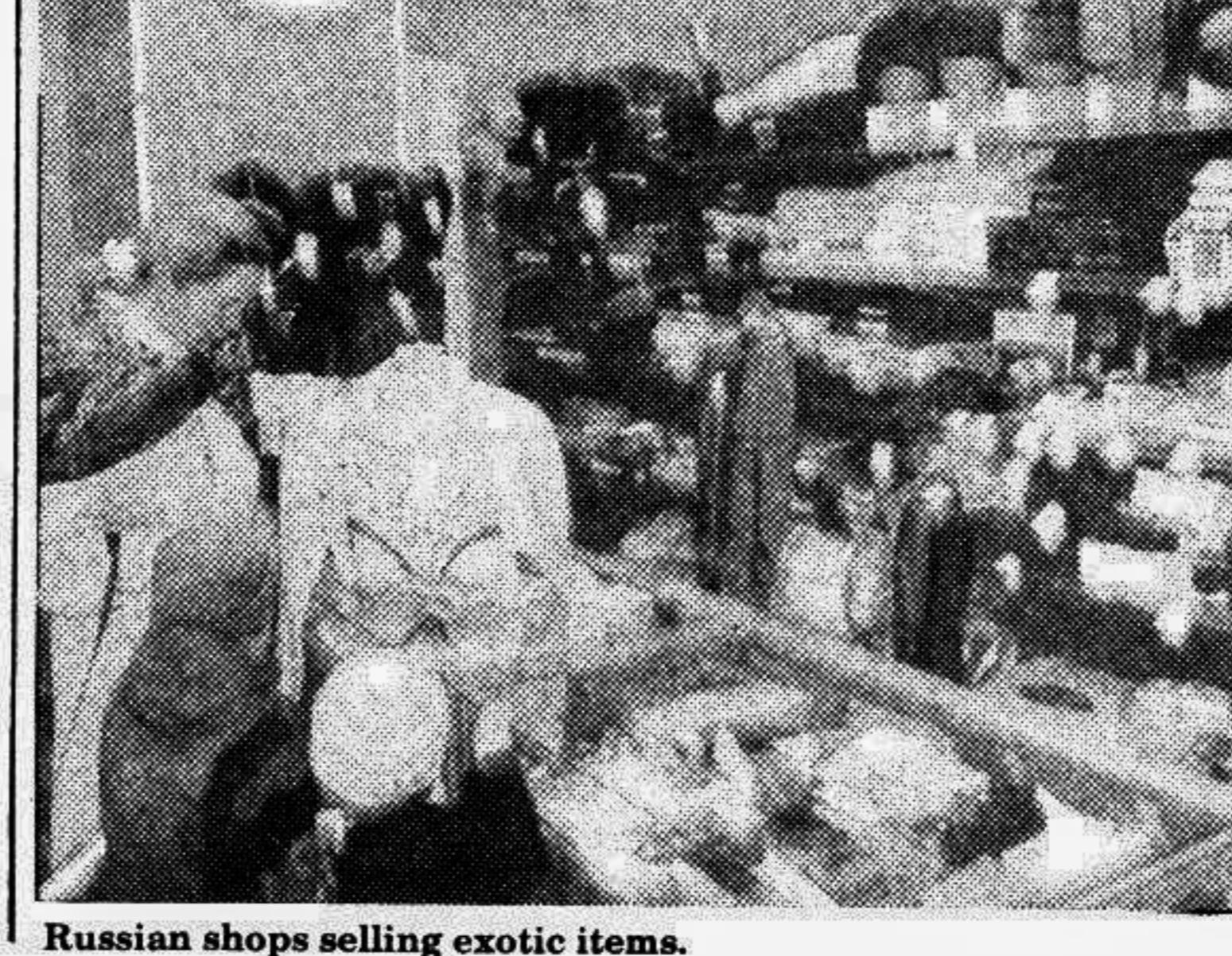
country.

d) Education and Access to Information: Education was identified as one of the major tools for fighting the adverse effect of globalization. Nira Wickramasinghe cautioned that the education policy should not only focus on the increasing the literacy rate but also on the quality of education that is being imparted to the masses. Nasreen Gofran from University of Peshawar, Pakistan, also pointed out that South Asian countries needed to develop a culture of self-criticism. Role of the media and media independence were identified as crucial factors for nurturing democratic process and for understanding how the process of globalization affect the country which would help to form public opinion. The role of the academia was also stressed in understanding the globalisation process and analysing the linkages. Ameera Saeed pointed out that globalisation is a historical process and an appraisal of what civil society has done in the past can act as a compass for the civil society actors at present.

e) Other Points: Mafuz Anam pointed out that NGOs have played a vital role in

bringing the vulnerable sections of the society at the forefront. In this context, Bangladesh's experience with the NGOs can be highlighted. Firstly, in a developing country like Bangladesh, the sole responsibility of the development of the country used to rest on the government. It is the experience of the NGOs that helped to initiate people's active participation in the field of development and help the growing of self-reliance of people and decentralisation and leadership at the grassroots level. It also helped in filtering management expertise to the local level and making women visible. The lessons of Bangladesh are unique in character and set examples for other developing countries. At the same time, these roles of the civil society actors are vital for creating a society ready to meet the challenges of globalisation. Civil society's role in sustaining the cultural practices and expertise that can be used to meet the challenges posed by globalisation was also deemed as vital.

*[Report prepared by Sohela Nazneen and Lailufar Yasmin, both Lecturers, Department of International Relations, Dhaka University.]*



Russian shops selling exotic items.

## The Other Side of Globalisation!

*[CA's Note: The readers of Alternatives would perhaps recall that we had brought out an issue on "Hazards of Flying Abroad." Among other things one of our main objectives was to focus on the harassment and ill treatment meted out to the locals by some foreign missions. Centre for Alternatives received the letter given below on 6 June 1999. The letter as the readers shall see indicates the ill treatment as well as high handedness of a particular foreign mission in dealing with very genuine applicants. It is indeed regrettable that at a point of time when the West is actively preaching the virtues of globalization, its representatives abroad make a mockery of the term.*

*Dear Sir,*  
I am compelled to draw your kind attention to the following facts for your kind consideration and thoughtful action:

1. Being a registered participant for attending the HAP Conference, as well as to join Peace March '99, I applied for Visa to the Netherlands Embassy in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and intern, they advised me to go to them on 4/5/99 with certain documents. As such, I appeared to them on the scheduled date with those documents, but the officer on duty (who happened to be a lady) told me that they need a week or two for granting Visa. At that, and because I did not have enough time to stay back that time, as I had to attend MAPUTO (First Meeting of State Parties) & GA(General Assembly) of ICBU(International Campaign to Ban Landmines) in MAPUTO on 5/5/99. I repeatedly requested her to re-consider my case with urgency but in vain. She instead of understanding the gravity of the situation asked me to withdraw the Application for Visa through signing a note. I complied to her directive, but instead my Passport was stamped with "Visa Application received on 2-5-99", which was not later on withdrawn by her, definitely as a consequence of her anger against me.

2. After completion of MAPUTO Conference, I again appeared at the Dutch Embassy in MAPUTO on 9th May '99 again for Visa to attend HAP Conference and Peace March '99, who informed me that they are unable to grant me Visa due to non-resident status.

3. Later on, I rushed to London & appeared before Belgium Embassy there (which issued Schengen Visa on my passport before on 8/10/98 last). But the concerned officer denied to consider my Application this time on the plea that it was the invitation of the Netherlands, and as such, I should apply to the Netherlands Embassy in London. So, after opening of the Netherlands Embassy in London (after passing holidays of 3-4 days) I succeeded to submit my Application to the Netherlands Embassy. But the concerned Officer examined my Application and gave her verdict in writing that since I should stay more days in Brussels, I should apply to Belgium Embassy only for the purpose.

At length, I was frustrated and came back to Dhaka from London without further persuasion, as I felt that I was discriminated, and as such, became a victim of bureaucracy & definitely was deprived to carry out PEACE MESSAGES in the Peace