

The Daily Star

Founder-Editor: Late S. M. Ali

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Counterfeit Notes: Step up Alert

A disquieting piece of news was frontpaged in this newspaper's Thursday issue under the title, "Sham notes threaten the north." Those in Dhaka who sometimes are peevish by one or the other shopkeeper twitching the corner of his eye at the presentation of a Tk 500 note would not quite know how menacing the circulation of counterfeit money has become in some thanas of Natore, Rajshahi and Pabna districts. The confidence he now exudes about the genuineness of his note in the capital city is bound to be shaken by the creepy feeling that the counterfeit money which is so dreaded in the northern districts at the moment might easily get into his pocket one day. Who knows, some of these could have already found their way into Dhaka or Chittagong markets!

It is obviously the unsuspecting rural folks that the fake note manufacturers target hoping to evade an instant detection. No wonder, the big haats and bazaars of the northern region are afflicted by a profusion of such notes. And it may not also be a matter of coincidence that the affected thanas are along the border belt. But this is only a conjecture that must not basically preclude our responsibility in the matter.

The problem with forged notes is that once they have left their authors they are on a circulatory swing of their own dynamics. Therefore, we cannot quite appreciate the perception of some senior police officers in the northern region who suggested that the problem was not yet endemic enough to stir them into a big counter-action. On all available indications, it is the opposite picture we get from the report filed by our correspondent from Natore. The big dilemma here is that a carrier of only a few counterfeit notes who has presented them before a bank or a trader may look exposed as a swindler, but in point of fact, he actually is not one. What is perhaps equally preposterous is that on being spared as a matter of compassion, he might well pass it on to others to obviate personal loss rather than burn it to ashes in a noble gesture of sacrifice.

The banks can call the police in when a number of forged notes are sought to be deposited over the counter setting off its mental alarm bell. An odd person coming with a fake note or two to change which somehow fell into his hands can hardly be dubbed as a 'criminal'. Similarly, if the police should try to be hard-driving against someone 'caught' with a counterfeit note, it would amount to harassing a deceived person while the real culprit goes scot-free. But all of these bits and pieces ought to be put together by the law-enforcing agencies to trace the origin of such fake notes and put their manufacturers in the dock.

Currency forgery is a very serious crime, so much so that it is equated with acts of economic sabotage and treason. That is why there are unbillable sections of law whereby this crime can be appropriately dealt with. It is a pity that the police are yet to invoke such provisions in most of the counterfeit note-related cases. As if that was not enough, they have hardly prayed for remand of the arrested to carry out any meaningful investigation into the sources of the crime and its network. The law-enforcement agencies, especially the intelligence network need to be put on a high alert and gear to spot the fake note racketeers wherever they may be and bring them speedily to justice.

Let the Bangladesh Bank launch an education campaign on the 'security threads' of high denomination notes to warn the people of the currency-related deceit and fraud that seem to be on the rise. While the audio-visual media should be harnessed for the purpose, we, in the print media, will be too willing to help.

"TIME heals all things except a leaky tap," so goes a popular saying. Had it been so, time would have 'healed' the 'wounds' inflicted by constant global tensions and conflicts over bilateral or multilateral disputes on claims and counterclaims. Perhaps, exception proves the rule. Time stands helpless before a 'leaky tap'. In fact, all the trouble spots around the world have their own leaky taps that have been 'oozing' all the time defying all attempts to stop the leak.

Security Network: Today we are literally drowned under tensions, national and international, due to conflicts over this or that. And to conflicts over a big or super power is to take the lead with its protective umbrella of a security network to save the situation from chaos and confusion. Hence took place the recent three-day session of Asia's premier security forum, ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) that brought 22 nations together — 10 from ASEAN member countries and 12 from around the world, including USA, Russia, China, Canada and Japan, to discuss and take stock of the deteriorating 'security' situation in the Asia Pacific region. The agenda items included tension across Taiwan Strait over China's threat to Taiwan as a renegade province, and Taiwan's posture of 'independent option' as a state, the dispute over the Spratly islands in the South China Sea with six countries — four ASEAN members and two outsiders — each claiming a part of the islands, big power relations, particularly in the context of China-Taiwan tussle, and situation in the Korean Peninsula, over test-firing of missile by North Korea, and last but not the least, India-Pakistan row over Kashmir.

Leaky Taps in the Region: It is true that such periodic or annual sessions of the Foreign Ministers from ARF is not expected to lead to any instant solution to the problems the region is faced with. At least it focuses attention on the smoke and fire, and to be precise, on the 'leaky taps' in the region. It thus exposes the extent of the rising tensions and who is playing what role to escalate and deescalate the situation. However, it cannot but white-wash here the 'double role' played by America and other big powers in such situations, to consolidate their position as the 'archangels' of peace. The same pattern has been observed all through since the 'cold war' period, following WW II, down to the current period running since the demise of the former Soviet Union.

Albright's Swan-Song: Cohen's Verbal Missiles: While the US Secretary of State Albright was presenting at the Singapore session of the ARF, her swan-songs about improvement in Sino-US relations, since the

Rising Tension in Asia-Pacific Security Network under US Umbrella being Strengthened

by A M M Shahabuddin

America has now assumed a special responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region. But to win the hearts of the Asian people she will also have to give up her double standard and must not forget that war-mongers and peace-preachers cannot sail in the same boat.

bombing (by mistake, they say), of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade by NATO bombers. US Secretary of State for Defence Cohen was on a tour de force in Tokyo firing verbal missiles against North Korea warning against any test-firing of missiles. Japan and South Korea, of course, were in unison in their joint warning. But somebody was showing a 'slip' that made the gimmicks more attractive. Side by side with sending out the warning of consequences to North Korea, South Korea announced its shopping list of some 100 Popeye missiles from America, costing about 80 million US dollars, between 2000 and 2003. These missiles can be attached to F-16 fighters and B-52 bombers which had already been supplied to it by USA. (It may be mentioned here that the same America never supplied F-16 planes to Pakistan during the last decade or so, although advance payment in millions of dollars were received by them on the plea that it might 'disturb' the 'balance of power' in the subcontinent. What a hypocrisy!) I will come later to this hypocritical double standard policy of the West, particularly America.

Decisions of ARF Meeting: Now let us see some of the substantive achievements made by the Singapore meeting of the ARF. The most outstanding achievement of ARF session has been the pledges made by the two Asian giants — China and India — to participate in a 'nuclear free zone' in the Asia-Pacific region, once it is established. The meeting also decided, among other things, that during the next year, the 10 member countries of ASEAN will look at moving from confidence-building to preventive diplomacy to deal with disputes among the member countries. A major priority will be formulation of a code of conduct to manage conflicting territorial claims over the Spratly islands in the South China Sea. Besides four ASEAN countries, China and Taiwan also claim portions of the islands. The meetings, however, by-passed the thorny issues like the crisis between China and Taiwan over Taipei's recent claim of equal stathood.

Future of Taiwan: China's Domestic Matter: Chinese Foreign Minister Tang, however, warned 'other nations of the possibility of armed conflict', if they interfere in what, he said, was a 'domestic matter'. Although Tang has not mentioned the name of any country, perhaps for courtesy's sake, but the obvious reference is to America, the 'god-father' of Taiwan. The point is that when America, along with Japan and South Korea, send out a warning of harsh punishment to North Korea if it does not refrain from going ahead with its test-fire of a missile, a veiled threat also goes out to China, because China and North Korea are of the same feather and naturally they 'fly together'. Similarly, where China threatens of

War and Peace: Big Powers' Double Role: But the irony of the situation is that these slogans of 'regional and global peace and stability', raised by USA and others do not necessarily match with their overt or covert 'gainful practices' of adding fuel to the fire, when they are seen organising huge arms sales promotion 'bazaars' at vantage points in the Middle East and other places. It is an open secret that today, America is the largest arms exporter in the world. And which country is the second largest? It is, of all the countries, that 'sick nation of Europe', Russia, whose leader Boris Yeltsin, who is said to be more sick than its economy, has occupied that prestigious position of the second largest exporter of arms in the world.

America, as the only remaining superpower, is already established in the region as a policeman to maintain law and order, through its security network spread over South East Asia. Where the 'trouble-spots' have already been earmarked, the security arrangements agreed upon by Japan and USA in the seventies, have been further tightened recently by the defence guidelines approved by the Japanese Parliament in view of the growing security threats in Asia.

armed conflict if any country interferes in its domestic matter over Taiwan, the oblique reference is undoubtedly to America. The Foreign Minister of South Korea has already said that if North Korea does not desist from its test-firing of missile, then South Korea, 'in collaboration and cooperation with USA and Japan, will respond with firmness that matches the seriousness' of the missile launch as "a threat to regional and global peace and stability". So the question of test-fire of a missile by North Korea is already being focused as not only a threat to regional peace, but also to global peace and stability! (A mere repetition of what has been said in US-Japan Defence Pact of the seventies).

These so-called advocates or champions of global peace and security are expert actors in blowing hot and cold at the same breath, playing a double role of hunting with the hot and running with the hare. Look at the current Far Eastern scenario, in the context of China-Taiwan relations and North and South Korea bubbles and the role being played by America there. Isn't the picture blurred a bit?

Birth Defects of Peace: Perhaps peace still continues with its birth defects, since it was born out of violence. Its umbilical cord perhaps still remains uncut with the merchants of death and destruction. It is they who organised a grand arms exhibition, officially called the International Defence Exhibi-

Secare-crow: Keep the Pot Boiling: This has been the order since the end of WW II, when the 'bogy' of international communism, led by that 'evil' regime, the former Soviet Union, was raised by the West, led by America, to unite the West against it during the whole of the post-war 'cold-war' period. It led to a constant stand-off between the NATO powers and the Warsaw Pact countries till the 'great fall' of the Soviet regime in the eighties. It was then expected that the world would now be free from any 'evil germs' of tensions of the by-gone days. No, that didn't happen; perhaps time couldn't heal the leaky taps. So new bogeys were raised to keep the war-mongers and great arms-dealers in their saddles. The pot was kept boiling. So after the demise of the Soviet Union, the bogey of militant Islam was spread around the world to create panic and push the arms sale up. The Middle East monarchs were scared to lose their seat of power to these Islamic militants, the fundamentalist Islam preached by Iran and the new dictator grabbing others lands. Saddam of Iraq. Then came the bogeys of regional conflicts, tribal conflicts, ethnic conflicts, domination of small countries by their big neighbours in the Asian region. So there is no end to it. It comes and goes like 'bubbles'. Hence the great concern expressed recently by the ASEAN Regional Forum, about

the rising tensions caused by the deteriorating China-Taiwan relations and the North and South Korea stand-off, is not at all something new. Such tensions will be there. It all depends on the 'stoking the fire' by someone at the right moment and at the right place.

US-Japan Defence Arrangement and Asian Security: We have already seen how such a situation is being warmed up in the Asia Pacific region. America, as the only remaining superpower, is already established in the region as a policeman to maintain law and order, through its security network spread over South East Asia. Where the 'trouble-spots' have already been earmarked, the security arrangements agreed upon by Japan and USA in the seventies, have been further tightened recently by the defence guidelines approved by the Japanese Parliament in view of the growing security threats in Asia. Some 47,000 US soldiers had been stationed in the Japanese island of Okinawa in 1972 for use against any eventuality and troops are still being maintained. That arrangement, as enunciated by the guideline package, will give America access to Japanese logistical expertise and civilian installations for defence of Japan and for the first time — in support of US missions in the Asia Pacific region. Under the US-Japan defence treaty, Japan and USA are 'committed' to maintain current troops level in Okinawa to preserve regional and global security. It may be recalled here that during the 1962 Indo-China war over possession of disputed territory, America came to the help of India, with necessary war materials and equipment, including fighter planes. Who knows that India would not need such US assistance in a similar situation in future? India's well-known strategist, Bhabani Sengupta, predicted sometime back saying, "While Delhi and Beijing were moving closer (through diplomatic channel by establishing new economic ties), there continues to be opposition from Indian strategic experts who claim that China poses a military threat." Thus the US security umbrella is already working in the region for obvious reasons.

America has now assumed a special responsibility for maintaining peace and stability in the Asia Pacific region. But to win the hearts of the Asian people she will also have to give up her double standard and must not forget that war-mongers and peace-preachers cannot sail in the same boat. Only then will their security network over Asia meet a tremendous success. Otherwise, there is every possibility of its being ripped through.

The writer is a retired UN official.

Is Security Council Avoiding its Responsibility in Withdrawing Sanctions from Iraq?

by Harun ur Rashid

Iraq was able to dismantle the UNSCOM appears to be a diplomatic victory for Iraq. It is not certain how the inspections by the UN will be carried out. Till the time all the members of the Council agree on a mechanism to carry out the inspection, it seems grossly unfair that the sanctions continue against Iraq.

about the causes of Iraq's invasion on Kuwait, it has been asserted by some writers that the dice were weighed in favour of war because of the disputed oil fields in Kuwait. Iraq failed to realise that vast political and economic forces had created a geopolitical consensus in which the West would support the other oil-rich countries in the region. While Iraqi leadership were steering the ship with sure hands, they appeared to be unaware of the other hands on the wheel.

In the Gulf War, victory was achieved through a combination of sophisticated missile systems and bombs launched from distant locations. In short, technological superiority of the US-led alliances meant that they hardly risked any ground forces for weeks together. Subsequently, troops were deployed to mop up after Iraqi forces had been devastated. It was a war which has

other neighbouring countries. However, after the war, crippling sanctions on Iraq were imposed till the destruction of weapons of mass destruction and the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) was set up to monitor and carry out the inspection and destruction of the weapons.

Almost nine years have passed since the sanctions were imposed on Iraq by the UN. There is no end of the sanctions in sight till this date. There is a view that the sanctions were slanted on the country to put the people in extreme hardship who in turn would revolt against the Saddam Hossain's government. The West expected that the street protests they witnessed in Yugoslavia against President Milosevic after the end of Kosovo war would occur in Iraq. But it did not happen. In fact, it appears the opposite has occurred in Iraq. The sanc-

hypocritical and political expediency of the US. The sanctions were viewed through the prism of double standard by the people in Iraq and they find them as grossly unfair and unjust. The history between Iraq and the UNSCOM is well known in particular of the period when the latter's Chief Inspector was Mr. Richard Butler. There was no love lost between him and the Iraqi leadership. He was not diplomatic enough in pursuing his duties. Iraq called him a 'mad dog'. Iraq perceived Mr. Butler representing the US interests and not those of the UN and lost confidence in him totally. Mr. Butler's recommendation of non-compliance led to the bombing in Iraq by the US-British forces in mid-December last year. The UNSCOM had to withdraw lock, stock and barrel from Iraq and has not been able to return there since that time.

The five permanent members of the Security Council, who have the veto-power, are divided on the issue of sanctions. China, Russia and France are on one side and the US and Britain on the other on the mechanism of inspection in Iraq. The three powers are inclined to withdraw the sanctions while the other two object to it. The issue appears to be almost deadlocked. As a result Iraq continues to suffer from the sanctions. The UN Secretary General appears to have been quiet on his pro-active diplomacy with Iraqi leadership because of the deep division among the permanent members of the Council.

become known as remote-controlled warfare. The same strategy was adopted by NATO in Kosovo war.

The Gulf War against Iraq could have disintegrated the territorial integrity of Iraq but it is now reported that Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia cautioned the US leadership not to dismember Iraq as a political entity for the sake of their interests. If Iraq was dismantled, the forces of destabilisation would have reverberated in

tions have united the Iraqi people and strengthened the hands of President Saddam Hossain in the country.

Why has this happened in Iraq? There is a view that the US despicible policy of the UN despite Israel's non-compliance of resolutions of Security Council demonstrates its double standard attitude — one policy for Israel and another for Iraq — in this region. The Iraqi people and others in Arab world perceive the double standard as

The present position is that no agency of the UN is carrying out the inspection of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Iraq claims that the sanctions should be lifted immediately because it had complied with the Security Council resolutions. Iraq further claims that there was no need of UN inspectors in the country as the UN inspectors had completed their tasks. That the Council did not withdraw sanctions from Iraq is seen by Iraq as a political

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In recent times Mr. Butler (at present attached with the Foreign Affairs think-tank in the US) has accused the Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan of appeasing Iraqi leadership and of handing over "the greatest possible prize: the destruction of UNSCOM" to Iraq. He said that Mr. Annan hired an ex-CIA agent to spy on UNSCOM as part of a campaign to undermine the inspection team. Mr. Annan refused to comment on the allegations of Mr. Butler. Mr. Butler has also criticised the role of some of the members of the Security Council and warned that to tolerate breaches of arms-control by Iraq would be a 'mortal failure'.

But Mr. Butler's comments have been dismissed by some of the members of the Security Council. Since his contract was not extended beyond 30 June this year, Mr. Butler's criticisms are being taken with a grain of salt as he lost his credibility and impartiality to some of the Security Council members for his lack of objectivity and his US-bias. Many believe that Mr. Butler's comments were prompted by "a case of sour grapes".

The bottomline is: the fact that Iraq was able to dismantle the UNSCOM appears to be a diplomatic victory for Iraq. It is not certain how the inspections by the UN will be carried out. Till the time all the members of the Council agree on a mechanism to carry out the inspection, it seems grossly unfair that the sanctions continue against Iraq. It is hoped that the right attitude of some of the members of the Council may be abandoned for more constructive disposition towards Iraq.

The author, a barrister, is former Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN, Geneva.

Friday Mailbox

Transit to India
Sir, Organised by the Daily Inqilab, a round table on transit and corridor facilities to India via Bangladesh was held on 24-7-99. There the speakers expressed divergent views on the subject. While some of the speakers pleaded for extending the facilities to India, others opposed to it vehemently. It is, however, observed that no one of the speakers touched the following points connected with the transit facilities:

1) India has road link with its eastern provinces. In fact there exists a railway track for last 52 years with Assam and other states (provinces) of India. India has ample scope to improve their communication network through their own land by construction of roads and other means of communication. It is not understood why India wants transit and corridor facility through Bangladesh.

2) India refused transit facility between Nepal and Bangladesh through India. Then why India wants similar facilities through Bangladesh? The so-called globalisation of the economy is for all and not for "big brothers" only.

M A Laskar
Mohammadpur, Dhaka

Transit to Nepal and Bhutan
Sir, Protest and counter-protest is going on about giving transit facility to India. But the fact remains that transit facility to India will discourage Indian investment in Bangladesh as the Indian industrialists will find it easier to transport their goods to seven sister-states rather than going through the process of setting up industries here and then transport them to the seven sister-states.

Besides, Bangladesh entrepreneurs will find it difficult to sell their products in those states as earlier conceived and our trade with India will remain imbalanced for years to come. The road condition will always remain a problem as the heavy traffic movement will obviously damage the roads and the expense of maintenance will outweigh the benefit we receive as duties and taxes from Indian government.

Earlier, we have seen that the Indian government did not allow transit facilities between Nepal and Bangladesh due to unknown reasons, then how does India want this facility from us for her seven sister-states? India should also allow transit facility for us to Nepal and Bhutan.

GMF Abdur Rob
DOHS, Mohakhali
Dhaka

Mishandling in JU
Sir, The recent mishandling in one of our prestigious higher education seats has given a serious blow to our national morale. It has painfully revealed the ugly faces of our highly esteemed intelligentsia as well as the ethical bankruptcy of our ruling party.

Frequent use of adjectives like "rapist" and "killer" to denote the quarrelling factions of ruling Awami League's student front has really tarnished our feeble image in the international arena. Nothing in this regard is going on the right way.

Can this ill-fated nation expect from our ever antagonistic and apparently very strong opposition a positive role in redressing this par-

ticular wound?
Hossain Chowdhury
119-120 Motijheel C/A
Dhaka-1000

A cautionary signal!
Sir, There is a well known truck stop in Dhaka city at Tejaon area. Ten years back it was adjacent to the Tejaon railway station and beside the CSD (government foodgrain store). Nowadays, the number of trucks have increased at this stand and a good number of lorries/trailers have also been registered.

The boundary of this terminal is expanding very fast towards the industrial area. Is this expansion legal? If not, then it should not be allowed to use public area for a truck stop rather should arrange a vacant place for this purpose.

Satrasta, the gate of this area where seven roads have crossed a point has already been captured by trucks. Throughout the way one might find trucks parked on roads around the crossing causing enormous problems to the pedestrians. Other adjacent roads in the area are also flooded with trucks, lorries and trailers. It is observed that the main road from Satrasta to Mohakhali is also turning into a truck terminal. Every evening one can observe a number of trucks loading and unloading goods on the road.

Both sides of all the roads from Satrasta to Tejaon railway crossing have also been illegally occupied by transport companies. One will not find any footpath there. The government-made footpaths have turned into a number of private transport companies, tyre repairing shops and are being used for other businesses purposes. The narrow space remaining for rickshaws and other vehicles always remains jammed due to trucks.

It is time to evacuate this place to its former one. Otherwise the day is not far away when a public area will be lost to a truck stand.

Syed Tariqul Islam
Dhaka

Problems of BAI
Sir, The Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, situated at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka, established in 1938 is the oldest agricultural educational institute providing 4 years Honours degree titled BSc Ag. However, at present it is beset with manifold problems such as shortage of teachers, classrooms, books in library and accommodation of the students hampering the academic activities of about 1200 students.

Previously, when every year not more than 100 students were allowed to get admitted, there was no problem. But from 1996 this number was raised to 185 without increasing any academic and infrastructural facilities. For this, the institution has become a problem-ridden one. Specially departments of Crop Botany, Plant Pathology and Animal Husbandry are suffering severely due to teacher shortage. Animal Husbandry department is being run by only one assistant professor. It is time the authorities concerned should look into the matter.

Ahu Hanif Tipu
Final Year, BAI
Dhaka-1207

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