Defence Budget of Bangladesh: An Analysis

HERE are two opposing views on defence expenditures. On one side are those who consider defence expenditures as a burden on scarce national resources. They argue that money spent for defence could be better utilised in various development activities. Others view defence forces as guarantor of peace and tranquillity, a prerequisite for overall social development. In the real world, we need to draw the right priorities. While we cannot wish away the need for defence forces, and therefore, of defence expenditures, we cannot also sacrifice socio-economic development.

World-wide Trends in Defence Expenditure

Defence allocation reflects the state's response to perceived threats. During the Cold War years, the Western countries were heavily investing in building up formidable defence establishments. Since the end of the Cold War, defence budget has been declining in the West and so have been their forces. During the last decade, defence expenditures in North America and Europe declined by 30 per cent and 55 per cent respectively. Defence as a percentage of GDP declined in the USA from high of 9.5 per cent during the Vietnam conflict to 2.9 per

Defence Budget in the **Developing Countries**

The 'peace dividend' following the end of the Cold War was not so evident in the developing soon crossed 1 per cent of the countries. While the defence ex- GDP and since then varied bependitures in the West are in tween 1.5-1.9 per cent of the decline, those in the Southern GDP. In recent years, while the Hemisphere remain high. For average GDP growth rate hovexample, in 1997 while UK, France and Belgium spent 2.8 per cent, 3 per cent and 1.6 per cent of their GDP on defence re- budget growth rate was highest spectively, those of India, Pak- i.e. 17.6 per cent in 1995-96. istan and Sri Lanka were 3.3 Since then however, the growth per cent, 5.8 per cent and 6.1 per rate has been declining. In the cent respectively. Defence ex- financial year 1999-2000, the

penditures in the less developed countries often reflect military's power and influence rather than the perceived military threats. Pakistan can be cited as an example. Military intervention in politics in Pakistan largely contributed to her break-up in 1971. Pakistan's huge military expenditures ensured perpetual presence of the military in the domestic politics, but could not ensure security and stability of the state. Too much military hardware and not much food or other social services have created states of anarchy in countries such as Somalia, Zaire, and Rwanda. Ethnic strife, poverty, disease and hunger threaten the very structure of these states; tanks, guns and bombs are of little use there.

Defence Expenditures in Bangladesh In the early years after inde-

pendence the defence budget of Bangladesh was 1 per cent or less of the GDP. The perception of external threat was minimal at the time due to close and friendly ties with India. However, defence expenditures showed a sharp rise after the military takeover of 1975. The military regime apprehended intervention from across the border. Meanwhile, the insurgency in Chittagong Hill Tracts intensified. At the same time, the Ganges water issue became a major irritant in the Indo-Bangladesh relations. The result was increased military spending. The defence budget ered little more than 5 per cent. the defence budget increased by double digit annually. Defence

There is a need to review the role and task of the defence forces. The forces should be asked to perform only those roles, which they could with the given resources. It is better to do fewer tasks effectively, rather than trying to do too many tasks and not being able to do any one well. On army's part, there is a need to tailor the force to fight the type of conflicts that we visualise in the future. In the same way, we should think of the number of squadrons in the air force and the shape and size of the naval fleet.

by Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury

growth rate is only 8.4 per cent. Signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, the Ganges Water Treaty with India, and improvement of relations with both the neighbours - India and Myanmar are apparently having their impact. Yet critics argue that the defence budget is high and it should be further reduced. Let us examine the validity of this criticism.

Threat Perspective of Bangladesh

Bangladesh shares 4000-km land boundary with India. Except for a stretch of 6.5 km, the rest of it is demarcated. Our land boundary with Myanmar is well-demarcated too. The maritime boundary between Bangladesh and her neighbours are yet to be demarcated, but there is little likelihood of a major conflict on this issue in near term. There are unresolved issues and minor irritants between the neighbours, but none are likely to flare up into major armed conflict. One, therefore, concludes that, in short term, the threat of external aggression against Bangladesh is negligible. Meanwhile, the military will continue to perform the traditional role of acting as deterrence against possible aggression, however remote may be the possibility. It will continue to support our diplomacy so that we could negotiate from a position of strength with our neighbours. While the external threat environment remains calm, new threats are emerging

around and inside Bangladesh. The most probable security threats against Bangladesh in the coming decades are:

arms resulting in deteriorating law and order situation in the country.

Growth of organised Mafialike criminal gangs engaged in extortion. kidnapping and ransom seeking. Disenchantment and

isolation of ethnic and religious minorities from the mainstream politicosocial life resulting in violence and insurgency. Foreign intelligence agencies using Bangladesh

prosecute their individual objectives. Insurgents in the India's NE states and Myanmar using Bangladesh territory

as a launching pad to

as sanctuary or hideout. Rise of religious fundamentalism Bangladesh and its attempt to seize state power through violent revolution.

Socio-Economic Conditions vis-à-vis **Defence Budget**

Human Development Indicators (HDI) published by the UNDP shows that out of 175 countries of the world. Bangladesh's position was 143 in 1997; it was 147 in 1998 and 150 in 1999. Our HDI is the lowest in South Asia. Despite having one of the lowest life ex-

In the Poem "Fariad"

His "Shramik Majur

And the learned ones

But now we know our power,

And will suffer oppression

These our hands constructed

The same hands can bring

Nazrul wrote songs in praise

of the labourers, peasants and

fishermen and exhorted them

to demand their rights from so-

place like a fiery minstrel,

Nazrul moved from place to

cheated us, and retained the

The world you created

(complaint) he tells God :

Belongs to all.

oppressed class:

no longer.

the palaces

them down.

here.

and butter.

broken rice

pectancy and highest infant the role of defence forces in mortality in the world, we allomeeting those threats. Ratiocate only 2 per cent of the GDP nalisation of the defence exfor health and social welfare. penditures should contribute Proliferation of drugs and compared to 3.5 per cent in Paktowards achieving the national istan and 5.6 per cent in India. security objectives at the least In the absence of an immediate cost. Assuming that the defence budget remains at the current threat of external aggression. level i.e. about 1.5 -1.7 per cent we need to consider putting a moratorium on the upper limit of the GDP, we should plan to make the best use of the availof defence expenditure vis-a-vis the GDP. At this stage, maxiable resources. Our aim should be to inmum national resources should be invested in productive seccrease the force effectiveness by tors of the economy so that the GDP grows at a faster pace. If our GDP increases, then, even

allocating greater percentage of funds to equipment procurement and training. There with a moratorium on the upper should be a review of the existing establishment of manlimit, we could spend far more power; non-essential manfor defence in future than what power should be gradually rewe could today with a small duced. Large numbers of non-GDP. For example, while Japan combatants, more of a legacy of spends less than 1 per cent of the colonial era, should be disthe GDP for defence, because of pensed with, replaced by conthe very large Japanese GDP, tractual labour as done in the her defence budget in 1998 was West. We should reduce overthe fourth highest in the world, after the USA, Germany and head cost by amalgamating three separate Services' Head-France. If the GDP growth rate quarters, the AFD, and the MOD continues to languish at 4-5 per into a reorganised MOD. There cent, it would be difficult for should be rationalisation of the Bangladesh to get out of undertraining establishments. We development. Even if the decould amalgamate training esfence budget is increased to 2-3 tablishments of different serper cent of the GDP, we still will

> There is a need to review the role and task of the defence forces. The forces should be asked to perform only those roles, which they could with the given resources. It is better to do fewer tasks effectively,

> > Nomenclature

vices, thus reducing their num-

bers and the overhead cost.

rather than trying to do too many tasks and not being able to do anyone well. On army's part, there is a need to tailor the force to fight the type of conflicts that we visualise in the future. In the same way, we should think of the number of squadrons in the air force and the shape and size of the naval fleet. Should we continue to operate aircraft and ships, which have no operational utility, or should we concentrate on a small but effective fleet? We need to tackle these important questions now.

Since the restoration of democracy in Bangladesh, we witnessed a gradual shift towards transparency and accountability in defence budget formulation and spending. This trend should continue. We should encourage greater popular participation in security and defence policy issues. The defence budget should truly reflect popular consensus.

Conclusions Bangladesh's defence expenditures, which was less than 1 per cent of the GDP in the early 70s, was close to 2 per cent in the mid 90s. However, in recent years, while the gross defence budget continued to grow, its share of the national budget and the GDP showed a declining trend. Defence is still one of the largest heads in the revenue budget and consumes about 9-10 per cent of the government's total expenditures. Some critics argue that this is too much.

Bangladesh shares a peaceful border with her neighbours. Despite some unresolved issues, she enjoys good relations with both the neighbours - India and Myanmar. There are no tangible external military threat against Bangladesh in the coming decades. However, there are emerging threats to the national security where de-

tant roles to play. These threats are mostly of internal nature arising out of the complex socio-political forces that are at play. In future, lack of social progress and underdevelopment is likely to threaten the state and society. These issues have no military solutions. However, military forces will have to be on guard to provide vital backing to the government to restore law and order and ensure continuation of an orderly, democratic society. Defence and development

fence forces will have impor-

dilemma has to be resolved by giving priorities to our economic development. Paul Kennedy writes, "Wealth is usually needed to underpin military power, and military power is usually needed to acquire and protect wealth. If, however, too large a proportion of the state's resources is diverted from wealth creation and allocated instead to military purposes, then that is likely to lead to a weakening of the national power over the longer term."

In Bangladesh, due to our poor socio-economic condition, it would not be prudent to spend more than about 1.5-1.7 per cent of our GDP for the defence. We need to make the best use of the defence resources. The need for long-range defence planning cannot be over-emphasised. The aim should be to increase the force effectiveness. The forces should be organised. equipped, trained and motivated to meet the security challenges of the future. Defence budget could be an effective management tool to tailor the force structure. It could ensure that the nation get the best value for the scarce resources that it spends on defence.

The author is a Group Capt in Bangladesh Air Force. The views expressed are in his per-

Tender No

Dated: 18.5.2000

Kazi Nazrul Islam — Poet of Renaissance

THE word renaissance means rebirth or revival, L but metaphorically speaking it is the re-establishment of human glory. Historically, Renaissance refers to the intellectual and artistic movement beginning in 14th century Florence (Italy) and extending throughout Europe by the 17th century. It is the cultivation of reason, love, beauty and imagination.

The central truth of renaissance has been expressed in a few words: "man is the measure for everything". This is why free thought is given superiority over any particular doctrine. Let us have a cursory glance

at our country and literature now: We are acquainted with some idea or hint of renaissance in our mediaeval Bengali literature created by Muslim writers and poets. This age was the age of cultural opulence and prosperity for the Muslims. This is why their endless curiosity, at this time, opened the floodgate of scholarly pursuits. It is only when the Muslims

of bygone age took up myopic doctrines as the only guiding force of life that they fell into the deep pit of ignorance from the pinnacle of glory and enlightenment.

It was Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam who appeared as the 'messenger of spring abruptly, to refurbish our cultural iden-

With the emergence of Kazi Nazrul Islam, renaissance came into our literature. He gave vent to the pent-up feelings and imaginations of the Bengali people, thus opening up a newhorizon of humanism in our literature. His 'Rebel' is nothing but the epic of human glory.

Who does not know that modernism is also indebted to traditionalism in endless

An attempt at the co-ordination of history and tradition is apparent in the poetic life of Kazi Nazrul Islam. Nazrul's pomodernism and traditionalism.

It was Nazrul who epitomized the Hindu and Muslim renaissance. He felt, heart and mythology into his poetry and soul, the deep yearnings for music, which speaks volumes for his broadness of outlook. Such vastness and valour is the our dormant faculties. Those symbol of renaissance.

James Bond

BY WA FLEWING

DOLLARDIC BY HORAK

THEN WELL

SIMPLY WATCH

I PUT A MOUSE-

TRAP IN THE FRIG.

TOM & JERRY

the Hindus to bring about an interaction and ad-mixture of both Hindu and Muslim mythology," wrote late Motaher Hossain Chowdhury in one of

"Because it is the Muslims who possess both the heritages that they can work miracles of the scale of modern European civilization by fusing these two

his articles on Nazrul Islam.

by Abul Kalam Elias men, raise your head and de-

impression. Renaissance does not apply to the consciousness of a particular nation only. Renaissance is for the humanity as a whole.

The re-awakening of the teeming millions has found predominance in Kazi Nazrul Islam. This is why now, at this



cultures into a vast new cul-

A versatile genius possessing the poet's birth anniversary, to inexhaustible vitality, indomitable courage and emotional exuberance, Kazi Nazrul Islam was able to coalesce the joys and tears of two cultures. uniting the two and singing the ems carry a unique blend of songs of reunion, harmony and reconciliation.

Nazrul is the inspiration of emancipation of the spirit within. He infused vitality into who mistake him only as the "It is the onerous responsi- harbinger of Muslim renaisbility of the Muslims and not sance are labouring under false

WHEN JERRY

GOES FOR HIS

MIDNIGHT SNACK ...

hour of trials and tribulations

of the nation on the occasion of

remember Nazrul is to remem-

Nazrul who kindled the

ber the rank and file of Bengal.

flame of hope in the breasts of

myriads of down-trodden; op-

pressed, depressed, and sup-

pressed humanity, knew it full

well that none on good God's

people. Because, Vox populi -

vox Dei — voice of people is the

that Nazrul was among the first

There is no denying the fact

voice of God.

seeking to inspire the youth and to rouse the teeming millions through his poems, songs and speeches. He may be rightly described as the most passionate patriotic poet for the proletariat. As a poet of sorrow. sympathy welled up within his heart for the have-nots. It is Nazrul who wrote his

"songs of the peasants" which is to a great extent applicable even to this day to the present day society of Bengal:

"Arise O peasants and citizen of the world and hold your plough straight and tight. The exploiters are sucking

our blood like liches and snatching away our plated rice. Our children die at our breasts. But we cannot prevent their death.

The cunning are playing ducks and drakes. with our innocent daughter's earth can silence the voice of

With fire at home and storm outside we have no place for shelter. The hordes of Yazid are

By Hanna-Barbera

striking us from all sides, wake protagonists of the working up peasants, wake up." class movement in the country. Nazrul was most unhappy at In an article he says, "My brave the sight of the demoralised, de-

caving Muslims of his time. He clare, we are all kings. In his felt that they had forsaken the poem 'Samya' (equality) he depath of truth and justice, forgotscribes thus his ideal society: ten the teaching of equality, "There is no king or subject liberty and brotherhood of Islam stooping to a life of foolish luxury. He wrote poems after None there is poor or rich, poems, composed songs after None can here enjoy milk songs in a bid to rouse his fel-While others do not get even low-brethren from their deep

small GDP.

That a Muslim is cosmopolitan, is beautifully expressed in

not be able to create a balanced

force structure because of a very

Meeting the National

Security Objectives

defence budget is the question of

meeting the national security

objectives. We need to clearly

identify the threats and define

Closely connected with the

his songs. "Not for the Muslims alone had Islam come.

One who owes allegiance to (Labourer) is a manifesto of the And seeks truth, above all

"We were ignorant, things Is indeed a true Muslim. ."Let us all the Muslims of the world combine again,

It will be an act more virtu-

and form a mighty commu-

Than going a holy pilgrim-

"The red torch of Islam is blazing forth again. And spreading its light on

all sides. Now, you too must shake off your stupor You must wake up from your

Now you too must light the lamp of your life."

"Like Ashab-Kahaf we go on sleeping for a thousand years. Should we wake up even

The world will tremble again

with every footsteps of ours. Nazrul was greatly pained by the laziness, cowardice, superstition and ignorance of his countrymen. His heart bled to see their moribund condition and immeasurable plight. He was hard on false patriots and so-called leaders. Now that our present day society is undergoing an ordeal, we cannot but remember Nazrul at this hour of national crises.

Today our land is sadly lacking in true patriots, ideal leaders and ideal students - valiant fighters who can stem the tide of any calamity and danger lurking in the distant horizon. In his Poem "Bidroher Bani" Nazrul describes the false pa-

DFP-12567-22/5

DFP-12441-21/5

triots thus : "They mouth the slogan of

But their thought is always of money alone. To become a leader is all

they want, Liberty is an idle talk." In the Poem 'Chor O Dakat' (Thief and Dacoit) Nazrul says:

"The world has become

have become dacoits. Thieves are hand and glove with each other. Losing food, health, mind,

prison — custodians and guards

soul, hopes and aspirations and everything. Human beings have become

bankrupt.

I, think this poem is very appropriate for the present day society of our country and its unhealthy politics using stu-

They are on the brink of

dents for the realisation of selfish ends. In a nutshell, Bidrohi, the poem which gave Nazrul worldwide fame, is an impas-

sioned outpouring of the spirit of freedom:

Say hero — Say, I hold my head high At the sight of me

The Himalayas bows down its head in shame" Nazrul was first and fore-

most a poet, out and out a poet - he was above all a poet of humanism, of revolt against injustice and tyranny of society. for all times and climes. He was a Poet of Renaissance.

The writer is Principal, South Sandwip College.

Directorate General Defence Purchase

Ministry of Defence New Airport Road, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215

Tender Notice

Date of Selling

1. Sealed tenders in local currency are invited from bonafide manufacturers/dealers/suppliers (For enlisted firm only) for evaluation of the following item for Bangladesh "Army"

Date of

Currency

Opening From Spare Parts for 28-5-2000 25-6-2000 26-6-2000 214/925/P-2 Local Radio Set PRCcurrency 1099, RT-100/MP & PRC-1077 Qty = 15 lineSpare Parts for 28-5-2000 27-6-2000 28-6-2000 214/926/P-2 Local Honda Generator EM-650

Qty = 14 line 2. Tender schedule with detailed specifications/conditions will be available on payment as per I/T selling rate (Non refundable) during office hour between 0800 hours to 1300 hours. The tender can be dropped latest by 1000 hrs and opened at 1005 on the specified date of opening in presence of all tenderers (if present).

Lt Col ISPR/Misc/2000/465 DFP-12332-21/5

For Director General

Office of the Chief Conservator of Forests

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ban Bhaban, Gulshan, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212 Tender Notice

Tender Memorandum No 43/CCF/FAP/99-2000

Tenders are hereby invited from importers/agents/dealers/suppliers in sealed envelope for purchasing the goods mentioned in the short schedule below: Short Schedule

Amount of earnest | Place of delivery Time allowed for Name of goods Short description completion of the with quantity money supply Plain paper Completely new: 2.50% of the Ban Bhaban, 7 days from the date of issue of Mohakhali, photocopier (2) Latest Model, quoted amount work order Dhaka Desktop type

The procurement will be under Food Assisted Rural Development Project financed by GOB as per detail schedule of requirement and specifications embodied in the relevant tender document

2. Tenders will be received in the name of undersigned on 4.6.2000 till 1-00 PM at the office of the Assistant Chief Conservator of Forests (General) and on the same day the tenders will be opened in presence of tenderer (if any one remains present) at 2-00 PM. Name of work, tender memorandum number and date have to be mentioned on the envelope while

submitting the tender. 4. Details about the tender i.e the tender document with schedule of requirement, detail specifications,

instructions to the bidder, general conditions etc can be collected on payment of a non-refundable price of Tk 400/- (four hundred) only from the office of the undersigned up to 1.6.2000 during office hours except Fridays, Saturdays and other government holidays.

Md Yunus Ali Asstt Chief Conservator of Forests, (General) for Chief Conservator of Forests, Bangladesh

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Pubic Works E/M Division-7, Dhaka

Dated, Dhaka: 14-5-2000/31-1-1407 BS Memo No E/M-7-126/4483

Tender Invitation Notice

No 177/1999-2000

Tenders on item rate basis in Bangladesh Form No 2911 under sealed cover are invited from Public Works Directorate's Electrical/Mechanical work enlisted special 1st class/1st/2nd class contractors having valid ABC/BC class contractory & supervisory licence issued by Bangladesh Electrical Licensing Board, Dhaka and VAT Department's Registration Certificate & TIN Certificate for the undermentioned work. Tenders will be received in tender box kept at the office of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8, Dhaka Public Works E/M Workshop Division, Dhaka Public Works E/M Timber Workshop Division, Dhaka, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka up to 12:00 Noon of 23-2-1407 BS/6-6-2000 and opened on the same day at 12:30 PM in presence of the tenderers (if any).

Tender form, schedule of items, terms & conditions etc can be purchased from the office of the Executive Engineer, Public Works E/M Division-1/2/3/4/5/6/7/8, Dhaka, Public Works E/M Workshop & Timber Workshop Division, Dhaka, Public Works Eden Building Division, Dhaka, subject to cash payment of Tk 425/= (non-refundable) during office hours up to 22-2-1407 BS/5-6-

Contractor himself or his authorised representative can purchase tender form on production of Registration Book with necessary papers. Earnest money at the rate 2 per cent of the total quoted amount in the form of Bank Draft/Pay-Order/Treasury Challan/Call Deposit from any scheduled bank in favour of the undersigned should be deposited with each tender.

Estimated

cost

Name of work No Supply installation & wiring of roof top security flood light & metal helide light fittings in the front ground of building with a view to enhancing beauty & light security of the National Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases & Hospital at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar.

of the total month. quoted price

Earnest

money

At 2 per cent 1

Approved

time

(one)

Md Aminul Haque Executive Engineer Public Works E/M Division-7 Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka.

THE AREA WHERE YOU SAW THE MAN FROM THE HOSPITAL -VON RICHTER TO APPEAR NHICH HOUSE IS THE ENEMY







