

Employment Bank

FINANCE Minister S A M S Kibria while inaugurating a conference of branch managers and field representatives of Karmasangsthan Bank (employment bank) expressed a wish which we think should strike a responsive chord in most of us. Visualising a role model for the newly-emerging Karmasangsthan Bank he suggested that he would like to see it flourish like Grameen Bank along service-oriented lines rather than being totally commercial, interested in netting profit alone. Actually his emphasis seemed to be on the evolution of a banking system that would put service ahead of the jingle of coins. That it is not a utopian concept has been proved by the protagonists of new wave banking who maintain that helping the poor to a solvent economic footing broadens the baseline of wealth which in turn provides sinews to the banking system.

So, by service we do not mean customer service alone but much more than that encompassing service to the process of nation-building through facilitation of human-resource development in a country with a large illiterate population.

Most people think that taking out a bank loan entailed parting with a cut in the end or payment of bribe at the time of initiating the process of lending. Kibria rightly warned the Karmasangsthan Bank that if it were to acquire any stigma of corruption from the start, the goodwill it needs to be effective as a specialised bank would elude its grip down the line.

It is understood that the 'employment bank' is designed to provide loan to the unemployed without being insistent on traditional collaterals such as physical assets to lend the money but to rest content with his or her promise or potential to make good use of the loan given. Let the Karmasangsthan Bank finance self-employment projects proposed not just by individuals but also by cooperative groups.

We have always felt and said as much whenever any occasion arose that if there is one change-agent that holds the potential to bring about a sea-change in the intractable unemployment situation in the country then it has got to be some specialised bank for the youth. Youth Bank, for short. Basically, modelled on self-employment oriented successful microcredit operations of the Grameen Bank, which does not insist on material collaterals to lend money, a string of youth banks could be set up as part and parcel of a strategy to develop tertiary growth centres all over the country.

These ought to be the constituents of a specialised banking institution complete with inbuilt provision for consultancy services to take up the right kind of enterprise and to sustain it through proper merchandising and marketing inputs coming from microlevel experts.

Lease Trouble

THE prevailing tension over lease of a certain ferry ghat in the old town, as reported in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo on Thursday, has a familiar ring about it. There are many such instances of ruling party leaders and activists fighting amongst themselves to lay control on one business establishment or the other. There have been bloody skirmishes and even deaths. Shockingly, in this particular incident, two prominent Awami League leaders are involved - one a state minister and the other an influential legislator from the old town. The trouble seems to have begun the moment the state minister for inland water transport used his discretionary power to lease out the ferry ghat to a new lessee. The decision has enraged the local legislator so much that he has stationed his men to prevent any take-over bid. Violent clashes may break out any moment.

Now, the minister does have it in his authority to lease out as many as 50 ghats to anybody he wishes without any tender process. The member of parliament opposing his decision certainly stands on the wrong end of the law and should stand down. If he doesn't the law enforcers should intervene. But, that is just one aspect of the issue at hand. There seems to be a systemic flaw in the whole process of leasing. Why would the state minister have in his discretion the power to lease out 50 ghats to whomever he wishes to? Such an arrangement certainly breeds corruption, favouritism, nepotism, so on and so forth.

Certainly, tension at Panghat highlights the need to reassess and rearrange the process of leasing out the 293 ghats under government supervision. In our view, there should be bidding for each of them. There is a parliamentary standing committee on inland water transport. However, since the ghats return huge revenues there should be a separate body overseeing the activities at these establishments, which would regularly report to the JS body along with recommendations for operational improvements.

Safety for Adivasis

THE reported homicide of Alfred Soren at an adivasi village in Naogaon on August 18 and the attestation by the victim's sister, Rebecca Soren, at a press conference on Tuesday last sent shivers across the society. The lack of social security of aborigines in Bangladesh indicates our attitude of neglect towards this section of our population. This is a sort of social disease and must not be allowed to continue. The absence of appropriate set of protective policies as far as rights of the adivasis are concerned has kept them vulnerable to many rooted ills and injustices of society. The authorities must devise laws that protect the rights of aborigine or adivasi citizens. We hope the people who matter will start searching answers to such questions as: why, after all these years, appropriate laws for protection of adivasis have not been formulated? Why their interests have been overlooked and underestimated?

However, a good number of non-governmental organisations are working to uphold their interests. But there's more to do. Adivasis themselves have to speak out, demand of the government to respond to their needs. The 'prudent circle' must encourage the 'aggrieved' to make their voices heard at local, regional and national levels. Committed efforts of lawyers and legal organisations are needed to develop an effective strategy to stop violation of adivasis' rights. Safety nets have to be created to provide succour to the victims of rights violations. We want the authorities to involve in such sincere activism as would remove the stigma of human rights violation from remote villages where adivasis live.

Palestinian State and Chairman Arafat's Dilemmas

Chairman Arafat is caught in an intractable situation. It is like 'he is damned if he did and he is damned if he did not.' Only hope for Arafat as well as the Israelis is the US Ambassador to Middle East Dennis Ross's current diplomacy in trying to salvage the deadlocked peace talks. Hopes arise from the fact that at the end of the failed peace talks both sides in their joint communiqué reiterate that 'two sides understand the importance of avoiding unilateral actions that prejudice the outcome of negotiations and that their difference will be resolved only through good faith negotiations.'

VERY recently the legendary Palestinian leader Chairman Arafat was in Dhaka to drum up support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, a cause that is very dear not only to the Palestinians and the Arabs but also to the Muslims all over the world. Dhaka has always expressed its solidarity with Palestinian people due to the twin factors emanating from its bond with Muslim brotherhood and its belief in the just cause of the struggling people for their right of self-determination. Thus, not a bit surprising that Bangladesh extended its all out support to Arafat's proclaimed intention to declare unilaterally an independent Palestinian state by September 13, 2000, following the deadlocked Middle East peace talks brokered and negotiated by President Clinton in July this year. Dhaka's empathy adds to Arafat's list of hundred and twenty countries including permanent Security Council members like Russia, China and France, who are committed to his professed intention. An impressive achievement, no doubt. It does make Arafat's whirlwind tour a worthwhile endeavour. It seems that the world does appreciate a visibly aged and ailing Chairman's efforts to make his lifelong struggle to have a homeland for his people a reality. With this kind of seemingly favourable world opinion behind him, the questions, thus, arise: Is Chairman Arafat going to declare a Palestinian state unilaterally by September 13, when the present peace agreement expires? If so, what would be the consequences of such unilateral declaration? And what are the actual ground realities? What are the dilemmas he faces at home and internationally?

Middle East crisis is one of the most intractable conflicts in post-World War II and post-Cold War international order. Kashmir having the 'honor' of being the second most. The world is more or less aware of the factors that give rise to its present state of condition. It is well known that though the roots of Palestinian-Israeli conflicts lie deep in history, religious or otherwise, the present one manifested since the establishment of Israel in 1948 when Palestine was divided to accommodate the Jewish demand to have homeland of their own. The Palestinians' and Arab world's repeated attempts to regain the land through as many as three wars ended in fiasco with dispersion of 3.7 million Palestinians in other Arab countries, loss of West Bank and Gaza strip as well as Jerusalem, which is claimed by both Israel and Palestine as their respective capital. Ever since then a state of undeclared war existed between the Palestinians along with the Arab world and the Israelis. And there has been the violent in-

ffadash and blood letting in both camps.

Peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, an endeavour of President Jimmy Carter's unrelenting peace negotiations at Camp David in 1978 made the first breakthrough in Middle East peace process. But lasting peace remained as elusive as ever despite peace agreement at Wye Plantation and Oslo Accord of 1993. The issues remained as complex as ever between the two direct antagonists and in most of the Arab world, with only Egypt and Jordan having concluded peace agreements with Israel. President Clinton's latest peace making efforts in the mountains of Maryland in July this year has been yet another serious attempt by an American President in the backdrop of impending return of violent conflicts by the time the latest peace agreement expires on September 13, 2000.

With no final peace agreement in sight despite seven years of stop and start negotiations, besides perhaps his own ambition for a legacy, Clinton felt the urgent need to convene such a summit. There were also restiveness among pro-peace elements of both Israelis and Palestinians on the continuing stalemate of the peace process. All in all Camp David summit of year 2000 only heightened the desire for peace in the region. For fifteen days the three leaders along with their aids remained engaged in most intensive and hard rock discussion - something that has not been done in Middle East peace process since Camp David summit of 1978. President Clinton expected that both Israeli and Palestinian leaders would 'stare at themselves in the mirror and also face the abyss'. The point he wanted to make home was that without a peace agreement neither side was going to win this 'prizefight of all ethnic, religious and territorial conflicts'.

A number of very complex issues have been at stake before the leadership of both Israeli and Palestinian leaders both of whom understood the dire need for peace but at the same time were also aware of the tight rope they would have to tip toe in the context of their respective domestic compulsions. Barak who has been under increased criticism by his opponents for making concessions to Palestinians was facing even more daunting challenges if the terms of the peace talks were not upto the expectations of majority of his countrymen whereas Arafat's dilemmas were even more

acute. Arafat knew that his every move was being watched by his critics at home including the moderate Palestinians as well as the Arab leaders in case he caved in and gave away what constitutes the very heart and soul of every Palestinian, the fate of Jerusalem.

During the course of negotiations issues like borders and land swaps, questions of Jewish settlers, return of about three million refugees to their homeland and security of future Palestine state as well as Israel were discussed and in principle agreed upon. Of the various issues Chairman Arafat accepted borders and the question of Jewish settlers in principle. With regards to security of future Palestinian state demilitarization was called for and Israel was to retain manned early warning stations on the Jordan Valley heights and could deploy

plex. A 35-acre compound, known as Mount Temple, shored up by Western Wall, the site of First and Second Jewish Temples. It is also the holy ground of the Dome of Rock, from where the Muslims believe Prophet Muhammad (SM) ascended for a spiritual communion with God. Obviously it is very dear to the followers of both religions. Both Israelis and the Muslim want sovereignty over Jerusalem and want it to be the capital of their respective states.

It is, thus, easily discernible the difficulties the leadership faced while trying to resolve the issue of sovereignty of the old city without arousing deep and intense religious emotions among both Jews and the Muslims. And as expected it is Jerusalem that became the thorniest issue between the Israelis and the Palestinians.



Dilara Choudhury

forces into the Jordan Valley if military threats arose. It also sought unrestricted use of skies above the future Palestinian State. On the question of the Palestinian refugees the reaction was mixed as Israelis agreed to the return of only 100,000 refugees in a one-time 'humanitarian family reunification programme' which Palestinians would call the selective exercise of a right of return. There was an agreement to create an international body, including the United States, European Union states, Japan and Canada to supervise the resettlement and compensation of the refugees.

But the whole negotiation came crumbling down as the summit leaders tried to discuss the fate of Jerusalem. The holy city was captured in 1967 and later annexed by the Israelis, in exchange for broadening the geographical boundaries of the city to include several Jewish settlements. It is the home of the holiest shrines of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. From a distance one can see the walls of the old city that embrace Islam's golden Dome of Rock, Christianity's towering church spires, and Judaism's Western Wall with its massive Herodian stones. The spiritual, religious and historical links of Judaism and Islam are even more com-

Prime Minister Barak's proposal of shared sovereignty, which was put forward by the Americans, relinquishing Israeli control of the Palestinians in the outer and inner suburbs of East Jerusalem was not acceptable to Arafat. President Clinton thought that the concession was a radical departure from the established Israeli policy that Jerusalem was united, undivided capital of Israel, and as such should be accepted by the Palestinians. But to the Palestinian leader it was not good enough. It was expected that since the Palestinians had agreed in principle to concede Israeli sovereignty over West Jerusalem as well as Jewish Quarter of the walled Old City and the Western Wall, the Israelis would allow them to have full sovereignty over East Jerusalem, which Arafat could not and would not make, in the context of the fact that even to moderate Palestinians loss of sovereignty over East Jerusalem is something of an anathema. This point has been made in most uncertain terms as 'pro-peace' Palestinians commented that 'there is very little room to negotiate when it comes to Jerusalem'. So the fate of Jerusalem became the sticking point and eventually

brought the recent Middle East peace negotiations to a dismayed deadlock. Along with the deadlocked peace talks there are now apprehensions of the return of violent conflicts in the region as evidenced by Israeli movement of tanks into West Bank and beefing up of the Palestinian police in their parts of West Bank.

The possible return of violence and collapse of the peace talks have made the American administration, which blames Chairman Arafat for its failure, edgy. President Clinton considered the peace talks to be best possible ever offered by the Israelis and insisted that Arafat accept them. He also tried to convince Arafat about the scope and timing of a peace agreement by stressing the fact that at times when America's economy was booming it would be easier for him to persuade the Congress to pay the huge bill necessary to support a Middle East peace opening the floodgates for aid from other countries. The offers were tempting but the Palestinian leader had to consider its impacts back at home and in the Arab world. He had to weigh very carefully the pros and cons of making a compromise on Jerusalem. He was fully aware about the emotional and religious attachment the Palestinians and Muslims have for Jerusalem. On this issue, the sovereignty over East Jerusalem all shades of Palestinian opinion as well as the Arab leaders, whose support he needs, are united and one, whether pro-peace or anti-peace. Even the Egyptian leader President Mubarak, who has been involved in Arab-Israeli peace efforts for years and toured the Arab world during Camp David talks and took American line on other issues, did not push Arafat to make a compromise on Jerusalem.

Even he understands that Christian and Muslim Arabs around the world could accept only certain 'parameters' when it comes to Jerusalem. Arafat, thus, knew well that if he made any compromise on Jerusalem that would be the end of him as Palestinian leader. It is in this backdrop of uncertainty that Chairman Arafat has undertaken his worldwide tour. He has now with two options. He will have to either declare an independent Palestinian State unilaterally or make peace with Israel. In the context of the above mentioned scenario one can easily discern Arafat's dilemmas. He cannot have a peace agreement unless he compromises Jerusalem. And if he does

it would mean, as mentioned earlier, the end of his leadership. Arafat is least likely to take such a stand. At the age end of his career he is not expected to make a political suicide when he is desperately trying to leave a legacy of his own. It is understood why he cannot let his lifetime work slip by in the same vein, without a peace agreement if he declares a Palestinian state unilaterally he not only forfeits American goodwill without which Palestinians' dream of having a homeland of their own remains as elusive as ever, but also allows revival of violent conflicts that would not be looked upon by major powers kindly, as evidenced by the Japanese Prime Minister's remark during his recent meeting with Arafat. Mori sympathized with Arafat's cause but warned that Japan recognizes the Palestinians' right to a sovereign state, but they would have 'much to lose' if nationhood is declared unilaterally. He noted that a regional explosion would be more damaging to Palestinians than any other actors of that area would.

Chairman Arafat is, thus, caught in an intractable situation. It is like 'he is damned if he did and he is damned if he did not.' Only hope for Arafat as well as the Israelis is the US Ambassador to Middle East Dennis Ross's current diplomacy in trying to salvage the deadlocked peace talks of July Camp David. As such there are still hopes for peace and a negotiated settlement. Hopes arise from the fact that at the end of the failed peace talks both sides in their joint communiqué reiterated that 'two sides understand the importance of avoiding unilateral actions that prejudice the outcome of negotiations and that their difference will be resolved only through good faith negotiations.' Hopes also emanate from the optimistic faces of Palestinian chief negotiators Saeb Erekat and Mahmoud Abbas commenting at the end of Camp David summit that the negotiations had laid groundwork for an agreement by September 13. President Clinton expressed similar hopes who has been quoted as saying that the summit was not all failure because this is for the first time that the Israelis and the Palestinians have discussed hard core issues dividing them and profound and complex questions that long had been considered off limits. Obviously such hard and core issues are not expected to be resolved so easily. Hopes are there as Chairman Arafat and President Clinton decide to meet on September 6, 2000, on the sidelines of the General Assembly Session. As America remains the most vital partner the quest for peace in Middle East is still on. Hopefully, Chairman Arafat's dilemmas would be over and the Palestinians' just and right cause would be upheld in a peaceful manner.

Supplementary Report of Hamoodur Rahman Commission: Some Relevant Extracts

Eighth instalment

Brigadier S A Ansari, Brigadier Manzoor Ahmed and Brigadier Abdul Qadir Khan have been named in the supplementary report as cases requiring departmental actions. Aside from the six generals recommended for trial by court martial, the Commission also deals with the performances of four other major generals and the junior officers.

Continued from yesterday

Cases Requiring Departmental Action

1. Brig S A Ansari, ex-Commander, 23 Brigade (Div) - This officer assumed command of 23 Bde on the 14th of November 1971 and was responsible for the civil districts of Rangpur and Denajpur, except the small area of Hill which was under the control of 205 Bde. Right from the beginning he seems to have been losing ground, starting with the loss of Bhurungamari which was attacked by the Indians on the 14th or 15th of November 1971. His troops then lost the important position of Panchagarh mainly owing to Brig Ansari's inability to readjust his position. He then abandoned Thakurgaon between 28th and 30th of November 1971 without offering any resistance to the enemy. As a result of these reverses he was relieved of his command on the 3rd of December 1971. His Divisional Commander, Maj. Gen. Nazim Hussain Shah formed a poor opinion of his performance in battle and we have no hesitation in endorsing the same for evidence coming before us. We are of the view that he did not display qualities of courage, leadership and determination. The Commission feels that this Officer is not fit for further retention in service.

2. Brig Manzoor Ahmed, ex-Commander, 57 Brigade, 9 Division

This Officer did not conduct the battle with sufficient grip and caused the loss of fortress

of Jhenidah without a fight, owing to his inability to clear an enemy block at Kot Chaudpur. Then, contrary to the Divisional concept and without orders he withdrew his Brigade out of the Divisional area and had to be placed under 16 Division. He became detached from his main Headquarters and remained so till the end. He could therefore make no contribution to the war and his performance created the impression that he was shaky in battle. He does not appear to be fit for further retention in service.

3. Brig Abdul Qadir Khan, ex-Commander, 93 Brigade, 36 Division

The work and the conduct of Brig Abdul Qadir Khan has come to the notice of the Commission in two capacities, namely as the President of the Inter-Services Screening Committee of Dacca and later as Commander of 93 (Ad hoc) Brigade under 36 Division. In the former capacity, he was responsible for the screening of military and civilian personnel as well as non-officials who had either defected during the Awami League movement or had otherwise come to adverse

notice. Allegations were made that some persons in his custody were eliminated without trial, or even without any ostensible cause. However, the allegations were not substantiated so as to fix personal responsibility on him. As Commander 93 (Ad hoc) Brigade, he was captured by the Indians while withdrawing to Dacca from Mysingh under the orders of Eastern Command. He seems to have reached his ceiling and the Commission formed the impression that his further retention in service would not be in the public interest. We were informed by the GHQ representative that the Officer had since been retired.

Performance of Other Senior Officers

9. Besides Lt Gen. A.A.K. Niazi, Maj Gen. Mohammad Jamshed, and Maj Gen. M. Rahim Khan, with whose cases we have already dealt in the preceding paragraphs, there were four other General Officers serving in the East Pakistan at the time of the surrender, namely Maj Gen. M.H. Ansari, GOC 9 Div., Maj Gen. Qazi Abdul Majid, GOC 14 Div., Maj Gen.

Nazar Hussain Shah, GOC 16 Div., and Maj Gen. Rao Farman Ali. Adviser to the Governor of East Pakistan. Similarly, besides the Brigadiers, whom we have noticed in the preceding paragraphs, there were 19 other Brigadiers serving in various capacities as Brigade Commanders or Commanders of technical arms. Finally, there was a Rear Admiral of the Navy supported by three Commanders and one Air Commodore commanding the PAF in East Pakistan.

10. While we shall deal with the case of Maj Gen. Rao Farman Ali separately, as he was not commanding any troops at the relevant time, we cannot help remarking that all the senior officers stationed in East Pakistan immediately before and during the war of 1971 must be held collectively responsible for the failings and weaknesses which led to the defeat of the Pakistan Army. However, while assessing their individual responsibility, the Commission was obliged to take note of the limitations imposed on them by the concepts and attitudes adopted by the Eastern Command, the admitted short-

ages and deficiencies in men and materials, faced by them as compared to the vast resources of the enemy and the general demoralisation which stemmed from the culpable acts of commission and omission on the part of the Army High Command at Rawalpindi and the Commander Eastern Command, at Dacca. Finally, there was also the unfortunate over-riding factor of a long and inherited tradition of unquestioned obedience and loyalty to the superior commander, which prevented most of these officers from questioning the soundness of the critical decisions and actions taken by the High Command, including the final act of surrender. Apart from a few individuals, the large body of officers and men operating in East Pakistan accepted the final decision without any thought of disobedience, even though the majority of them were undoubtedly willing to fight to the last and lay down their lives for the glory of Pakistan.

11. Keeping in view these factors and circumstances we have examined the individual performance and conduct of these senior officers, as will be ap-

parent from the relevant portions of the Main Report and this Supplement where we have narrated at some length the military events as they developed from day-to-day and we have come to the conclusion that adverse comment reflecting on their suitability for continued retention in military service would not be justified. We have also not thought it desirable to single out officers for special praise either, although it goes without saying that in several cases the officers did act with dedication and valour beyond the ordinary call of duty.

Performance and Conduct of Junior Officers

12. In the very nature of things, the Commission was not in a position to examine at any length the conduct and performance of officers below the Brigade level although some cases necessarily came to our notice where the performance of these officers had a direct bearing on the fate of important battles which were fought on various fronts, or where their conduct transgressed the norms of moral discipline. Such cases have found mention in the relevant portions of our report, but by and large cases of these junior officers must be left to be dealt with by the respective Service Headquarters who have ordered detailed briefing reports from all of them and are also in possession of their performance by their immediate superiors.

The ninth and final instalment appears tomorrow

To the Editor ...

Contempt cases against the PM

Sir, Several contempt petitions and counter petitions have been filed against the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the last couple of days. It all began when the PM, in an interview with the BBC, told something relating to the judiciary which is said to be 'tantamount to contempt of court'. However, I wonder whether there was any need of filing so many similar cases on a particular issue. In my opinion, what the PM told, is partially true. We, the general people do often wonder why the known criminals are given bail by the court who after being freed, are committing the same crime for what they were

arrested. It is really frustrating for the law enforcing agencies if they find their hard arrested terrorists got bail by the court. In this regard, the PM accused the lawyers who appear for the criminals and help them getting bail. But isn't it a partial view of the whole story? We all know that justice is based on facts and documents, not on personal judgement, emotion or influence of higher authorities. The lawyers appear for the criminals as their professional duties and the verdict given by the justice depends on the documents presented against that criminal (one is not considered a criminal in the eye of justice till he is convicted). So, if the evidence provided by the law enforcing agencies against anyone, is not sufficient to prove one's guilt, the court is supposed to give him bail to uphold the

right of an individual ensured by the constitution.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) president has filed a contempt petition against PM and so is done by the opposition lawmakers. Now, it is sad to see that the PM and her party men have, personally, come down heavily on the president of SCBA as he filled the case. If the PM believes in rule of law and faith in justice, she should follow the legal procedure and should refrain from spreading propaganda.

We request the ruling party to act according to the law of the land and protest the contempt petition filed against the PM in a legal way.

A citizen
Dhaka

Who's 'wary' of 'origin'?

Sir, An article in The Daily Star of 28 August has amazed me immensely. Mr. Bangaru Laxman, the first 'dalit' party chief of India's ruling BJP, vows to foster closer ties with the country's 120 million Muslims who have long been 'wary' of their Hindu low caste origin!

I find the statement that all the 120 million Muslims have originated from Hindu low caste or the untouchables to be completely erroneous. May be Mr. Laxman is misinformed and ignorant of the history of India ever since the middle of the ninth century AD right up to the advent of the British Raj.

During this time there were invasions by Muslims of Arabia, Persia, Afghanistan and Turkistan. The Arabs captured the coastal regions of Sind. The Pathans established their dynasty by conquering Delhi and further expanding their empire right up to Bengal. The Moghuls came and ousted the Pathans from Delhi. Later they conquered almost two thirds of India - I should say the sub-continent of India!

While the Muslims were ruling in India there were hordes of adventurers from Afghanistan, Turkistan and Persia who came to the lush country to have a better and easier life. Then there were many sufis and saints who

came to India and spread out all over the country to settle and preach.

Does Mr. Bangaru Laxman think that the descendants of all these Muslims went back or were they all converted to be Hindus? Perhaps he may have thought they had all disappeared in thin air!

And I do not understand why the 120 million Muslims of the present India have to be 'wary' of their origin. Is Mr. Laxman 'wary' of his own origin? He need not be because all the matter of high and low blood is nothing but the outcome of social injustices!

Shehida Haque
144, New Bailey Road, Dhaka