

# The Daily Star

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## The Greatest Show Begins

THE XXVII Games of the modern Olympiad get off to a start today at Sydney exactly 44 years after Melbourne had hosted the XVI Games in 1956. Times have changed since the first games of the modern Olympiad were staged rightly in Athens in 1896 and so have the number of participating countries and that of their representatives increased over the years. The disciplines of contest have also increased in number, and in these days of women's lib and gender equality, some such sports are included which were once the exclusive domain for male competitors thus making the modern games more challenging for the human body and competitive for the indomitable spirit of mankind.

The ancient Olympic games began in 776 BC in Greece with cultural and religious events which continued until 394 BC whence it was banned by Emperor Theodosius, the First. But the spectacles survived in the poems of Homer and writings of Plato and in the paintings and art work of the time. It was the young Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin who developed a particular interest for Olympism. For Coubertin believed that humanity must draw from the heritage of the past all the strengths that can be used to build the future. Olympism in one of these. So the first Games of the modern era were staged in Athens, Greece in 1896. Soon the games achieved the proportion of a movement worldwide and continued to stride forward only to be disrupted by the two World Wars. The growing popularity and enormity of the modern games have been successfully exploited by the most modern technology and the vivid images of success and failure, frustration and disappointment and the agony and the ecstasy of competitors reaching such remote places where even a decade ago there was hardly any electricity. The result has been stupendous in terms of commercialisation and money-spinning that brought vices and indignity among the organisers and the athletes alike. Trepidations about doping and its consequences on the results of the competition and the psyche of the future athletes have become a cause for concern. Drug scandals have already stalked the XXVII Games before these could even start.

The bribery scandal that shook the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in recent days dented prestige of this august body to a great extent but not enough to even touch the self-respect of its chairman who should have accepted all responsibilities, and perhaps resigned in the best of traditions. It seems that lure of liquid cash and the glory of globalisation have had their adverse impact on the controlling body of the Games.

Yet with all its shortcomings and pitfalls the Olympic Games remain the most powerful movement for bringing mankind closer to each other. It is only here that the two Koreas decide to leave their past behind them and march under one flag, it is only here that the Palestinians will carry their colours, it is only here that the two Chinas may in future march under one banner and all these can be achieved despite the racial policies of some countries. Someday, hopefully, the Olympic movement will lead human beings irrespective of race and colour to the glory of Paavo Nurmi to Emil Zetopek to Herb Elliot to Jesse Owens to Muhammad Ali to Armin Harry to Mark Spitz to Nadia Comenici to Sergei Bubka to Carl Lewis to Christian Otto. Let us all rejoice in the winning spirit of mankind for its desire and capacity to soar higher and higher, run faster and faster and gain from strength to strength.

Human spirit can never be dominated.

AND still they come, braving heavy odds, running bone-chilling gauntlets, hanging on gossamer thin thread between nightmarish experience and the dream of gold at the end of the rainbow. But not all are lucky to survive the ordeal to tell the tale. Some meet horrible end through slow asphyxiation cooped in sealed trucks hidden behind frozen tomato paste or fish. Some have watery grave when the rickety vessel carrying them founders on submerged shoals or capsizes in the choppy sea. A few daredevils meet their maker in the undercarriage of planes, crushed and mangled by huge tyres. Others are betrayed, robbed of everything, raped, murdered, and thrown overboard by their guides. Then there are those, apparently the lucky ones, who manage to jump through all the hoops, evading ferocious dogs, razor-thin barbed wire, and run through labyrinth of passages over and underground only to meet their captors face to face in a cruel denouement reminiscent of the final scene in Andrei Wajda's *The Canal*. Dazed and drained of all energy they spend a few days in well guarded detention centres before returning from where they started the long-day's journey into the night their home country crestfallen. And still they come.

They are the new nomads of the human race with a long and ancient lineage behind them. But that past is history now and cannot even be mentioned seriously, for they belong to a different time and space: they are the illegal migrants from the third world seeking El Dorado in the West. Whether the "new nomads" reach or fail to reach their destinations, dead or alive, the men, women and children have a long and tortuous way to follow to prepare for the most arduous, painful and demeaning journey ever undertaken by human beings anywhere at any time in history. The tragedy (and triumph) of the illegal migrants have epic proportions. Law-breakers they are, coward and faint-hearted they are not. There is something glorious about their ambition and heroic about the struggle against stupendous odds that somehow seem to redeem all their transgressions. In their death-defying endeavours they even evoke wonder and awe. The least that they deserve is recognition as normal human beings who are simply trying to eke out a living in a new pasture. Neither pity nor contempt nor condemnation does justice to their atavistic urge to move on, trying to turn over a new leaf.

It is not easy or simple for them

to attempt to break out of the vicious circle of poverty, underdevelopment and corruption in which they find themselves trapped. Desperate to change their destiny, they work day and night to save some money or sale the tiny plot of family land or beg and borrow to pay a slew of human sharks who promise to procure such whereabouts of their dream journey as passport, visa, job abroad, transportation, etc. Many of them are often duped and lose their lifetime's savings, the only asset the family had, or the borrowed money to the con men or the agency authorised by the government to 'export' manpower. The lucky ones, who finally arrive at the country of their dream circumventing all the risks and uncertainties, sometimes discover that the jobs promised to them earlier are not the same that they are being offered or being forced to accept. Minor girls end up in sleazy joints to pander to the perversion of paedophiles. Women given the rosy picture of working as waitresses have to suffer the ignominy and risk of selling their bodies to HIV-infected male customers. Men, women and children who enter illegally cannot dare to protest against long hours of work, under payment, sexual abuse and inhuman exploitation that they are subjected to because of the fear of being turned in to the authorities. In this exploitation and human trafficking are involved criminal minded citizens of both the developed and the developing countries. Without this international collusion and networking the degrading business of modern day slavery could not have flourished.

The men, women and children who are accused as illegal migrants share the common offence of trying to improve their sordid and miserable lives. They are unskilled, poor, unemployed or under-employed having no future in their own countries. Whatever development has taken place at home has passed them by. It does not matter whether they are from China, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Iran, Morocco, Nigeria, and Mozambique or from anywhere. They share the common fate: poverty and unemployment condemn them to a life of hunger, misery and despair. Refusing to accept their destiny at home they try to get out of this trap and take the risk of leaping into a future that may or may not give them a better deal.

They make headline news in print and electronic media all over the world when they are unfortunate enough to be caught, dead or alive, at the gate of the host country. People sitting comfortably in their well-appointed homes have the immediate reaction of annoyance, shock and indignation. The illegal migrants are roundly condemned for breaking the international law and for trying to enter clandestinely occupied and colonised a vast empire, they also sent hardened criminals to a penal colony Australia where the aborigines met even a worse fate than the American Indians their children were forcibly taken away from their family in the name of civilising them. The "Stolen Generation" is yet to trace their origin and find their parents while the Australian government stubbornly refuses to apologise. The number of Indians sent from the Indian sub-continent to island colonies as bonded labour was so high that in some of them they have become the majority by now. The Dutch sent large number of Malays to South Africa as slave labour and carried out pogrom on the local population in the Muluccas to secure spice trade. Colonisation, slave trade and mini genocide went in tandem and sustained the development in the Americas and Europe.

Of course, the above exploits of the developed countries in occupying territories, killing innocent multitudes and transferring population from one country to another did not violate any international law because the great powers were the arbiters in international events and makers of unwritten laws. One of the tenet of this corpus of unwritten law in those days was that might was right and nothing succeeded like success. But legal questions aside, the moral principles are universal and immutable like eternal verities. If it was not immoral to colonise and exploit nations (and tribes) why should it now be reprehensible to try to go to another country where a better life beckons? After all we are living in a global village which has been brought closer through the

information super highway providing a clearer glimpse of life everywhere, particularly in the developed rich countries. The Siren call of the West has become irresistible because it is so near and persistent. Add to this the fact that there is demand for the labour of these illegal migrants in those countries. Immigrants, legal and illegal, contribute to their GNP significantly by doing some of the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. (In the 1980s Japan allowed immigrants for work in three categories of work which they called "3K" (i) Kitane dirty; (ii) Kiken dangerous; (iii) Kitoni hard.) Contrary to popular view, they do not depress the wages in the organised sector and the rise of productivity in the underground economy eventually raise the wages of the immigrant labour as well.

Whether the developed coun-

## IN MY VIEW

### Hasnat Abdul Hye



tries will be so tilted in the near future that the pension system will break down under the weight of liability to pay. Even Japan, the most conservative and cautious country is in the middle of its first

big rethink of immigration policy. So a wind of change is blowing which may make a difference in the life of many of the potential migrants. In the near future the world is likely to see more legal migrants "the new nomads" arriving in open day light in the countries of their choice travelling in conventional mode of transport and with dignity. But it is more likely that these "new nomads" will belong mostly to the skilled category (IT specialists, investments bankers etc.) because of the narrow self-interest of the developed countries. Already countries like America and Japan (if Prime Minister Mori's visit to Andhra Pradesh is any indication) are wooing software engineers while Britain is welcoming with open arms doctors and nurses. It is known that the USA issues 2,50,000 visas for software specialists every year. Along with the skilled labour some semiskilled (technicians, service sector employees, etc.) ones also may be lured away by the developed countries to cope with the demographic transition. This trend poses two problems for the developing countries. Firstly, this will accelerate the brain-drain through which they are already losing some of their best talents who could make great contribution to their own country. Attracting them in large numbers just when they are already at home to bridge the "digital divide" will be a severe blow to their efforts to catch up with the modern technology. Even large-scale exodus of semiskilled labour will create hurting vacancies in hospitals, industrial units, public utilities and educational institutions. On the other hand, lack of interest for the unskilled labour shown by the developed countries will aggravate the poverty situation in the developing countries continuing the flow of illegal migrants as at present. Since there is demand for the labour of unskilled categories also in the developed countries it only makes sense to allow their emigration. Otherwise the illegal immigrants "the new nomads" will continue to arrive in wave after wave the law, restrictions and hazards notwithstanding.

It cannot be denied any longer that the international labour market has become one and integrated. Though there is imbalance in the supply and demand of labour of different categories in a particular country, the immigration and emigration policy of the developed and the developing countries can be doved-tailed in such way that the minimum requirement of skilled labour in both groups of countries are met. Moreover, to put some restriction on brain-drain of the highly skilled labour (IT engi-

neers, doctors, etc) they may be allowed to work as migrant workers for a limited period, say, five years after which they should return to their own countries. A new batch of skilled workers can emigrate to fill up their place and this process (with necessary exceptions) may be the permanent arrangement. As regards the unskilled workers there should be a more open and liberal policy allowing them to enter the developed countries where demand for their labour is apparent. In this category also a restriction on the period of foreign employment may be imposed but for a different reason. Their emigration may not pose any problem for development in their home countries but in view of the cyclical fluctuation in the economy of the developed countries it may not be possible to keep them permanently or for a long period in the host country. Moreover, in this category also there should be turnover of workers to give the opportunity of foreign employment to a larger number of workers. Calculating the number and fixing the timing will be little complicated here but given the sophistication of economic forecast it should not be an impossible task. International organisations like ILO can help the member countries in manpower planning of this nature.

The long-term and enduring solution to the problem of illegal migrants, however, is to accelerate the economic growth of the developing countries so that there is growing demand of workers of different categories at home and employment is assured to most of the new entrants with remunerative wages. If the developed countries help the developing countries to grow rapidly and bridge the income and employment gap between them then the narrowing of disparity in the standard of living will itself discourage emigration on a large scale. Very few would want to leave their home unless there are compelling reasons and dire circumstances. If our world truly becomes a global village through balanced development integrating employment, income and life style of the people with free options to go abroad there may not be many gatecrashers at the borders. Like their ancestors the "new nomads" also will then become mere history. Or very much close to it. But to turn that wishful thinking into reality a great deal needs to be done, particularly by the developed countries in a spirit of enlightened self-interest. There should be greater flow of resources from the North to the South, both official and private to accelerate the development process in the latter.

It is high time that the developed countries stopped treating illegal migration as only a legal problem. The "new nomads" represent a problem that is neither wholly political (genuine asylum seekers are few) nor exclusively legal (immigration laws and restrictions are not foolproof). It is starkly and squarely an economic problem. Globalisation will be an empty slogan and a one-way traffic if economic issues like migrant workers are left beyond its purview.

## Friday Mailbox

### "Sylhet businessman..."

Sir, I was quite disappointed after going through the DS article of 27 August, Sylhet businessman blast Unocal statement on gas reserves. It stated that the VP of FBCCI denounced US oil company Unocal for stating that Bangladesh has sufficient gas deposit and could go for export. Well, I think this is a very irresponsible statement as IOC's in Bangladesh are here not because they think we have gas reserve but because they know so. These companies (and it is not fair to single out Unocal) have invested millions of dollars because they have spotted good business prospects in Bangladesh. While it is true that an internationally reputed firm should conduct the reserve study, the emphasis should be on the reputation of the firm, not its nationality. And another question is who will pay for the IOC costs? Certainly not Petrobangla! It is statements like these that jeopardise the environment conducive to further investment. We must remain objective and put an end to the mistrust between local and foreign companies involved in the gas sector as a whole. The immediate benefit of gas export through pipelines is evident as Canada and other countries have gone for it and now enjoying the fruit. Should we remain a poor country with large gas reserves that have no value just remaining under the ground or export the gas and make an attempt to develop the economic infrastructure of our country? In order to ensure successful utilisation of gas reserves in Bangladesh, we must remain objective and seriously consider the proposals IOCs. We have a unique opportunity to accelerate growth and bring sustainable development to our economy but it is indeed not by blasting each other and mistrusting each other's intentions.

**Kazi Navidur Rahman**  
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Gulshan, Dhaka

### Retail frozen food stalls

Sir, The Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters' Association (BFFEA) would do well to open half a dozen retail stores/stalls in the city for awareness, publicity and retail sale; on the eve of the Fair starting at Sonargaon Hotel on Oct 21 (DS, Sept 9). Local publicity is essential for PR and public support. Information flow is never a liability, (although the over-flowing in the Internet is a nuisance).

Nowadays, a large number of women work outside homes, and would welcome authorised and franchised frozen food retail outlets (at controlled prices) for daily shopping, saving a lot of time by not going to the wet market regularly. The public general knowledge about Bangladesh's frozen food export is poor due to indifferent public relations, although it is such an important foreign exchange earner. Why not spend 0.001 per cent (one-thousandth) of the annual export earning (S\$43m) for local PR?

In Kuala Lumpur, for example, sliced frozen fish is available on mini trays, surrounded with cut splices, ready for cooking a boon for working men and women. Our entrepreneurs have to think one step ahead, in providing that one extra small service, for earning goodwill.

**A Citizen  
Dhaka**

### Public service and punishment

Sir, Former president Ershad's jail sentence case is attracting wide attention in the press from different public quarters; and various views are being offered for or against, at different levels: legal, political, cosmic or mystic. Generally it is a case of crime and punishment, but at the highest level of public service.

The other side of the issue is that what makes a powerful autocrat tick, unless he has some qualities of the head and the heart, to reign over a nation for long nine years (some ruled absolutely for two or three decades in other lands). Why Ershad could not be toppled down in say three, five or seven years? It was his weakness, considering that the janata of millions participated interactively?

There is another scenario. The way the present regime is turning out to be law court oriented is reaching the proportions of a huge comedy. Thousands of cases have been prepared for court cases of political workers and others not friendly to the regime. The objective being, as the critics claim, to keep the alleged offenders busy with law suits, to divert these minds from further mischief! Now even the judiciary is under political pressure for delaying judgements (a judge has, on the average, several hundred cases pending in his court, according to a report, which would need several years to dispose off). If the litigation rate is so high, then the normal public service will slow down. It is not enough to suspect the motivation of only one of the parties to the dispute.

**Curious Citizen  
Dhaka**

### Ritualistic politics

Sir, Our political culture is too ritualistic, depending too much on the past glories (since 1971), and paying cursory attention to the future, and leaving the present rather casually and patronisingly. This unpractical attitude has resulted in poor governance, with the elected representatives depending too much on the bureaucracy, which is slow to move (due to the flywheel effect). The politicians talk too much politics and neglect their field of assignment, namely public-oriented observations in which the non-political citizens are interested. It is boring to listen to politicians haranguing others on politics all the time. Since politics is a tool and not a goal, its output must be beyond politics, and wide-embracing.

Another nuisance is too much praise for their supreme leader. After sometime it sounds ridiculous. The voters have to think seriously about the effectiveness of dynasty rule. The incumbent gets too much benefit of the doubt, and accountability is diluted. The great can also commit lapses, some of them serious. We are too forgiving, but at the same time vindictive. Our politics is based on hatred, and nurtured on animosity. This leaves a bitter after-taste, which sours relations at the top level, and creates intolerance, leading to violence at the base. The leaders have to perk up their standard, and be really willing to suffer for their principles. There is too much floor crossing, eroding dependability.

**AMA  
Dhaka**

**T**HEY were found dead in an abandoned flat like pummeled rodents huddled in a hole. Their faces were swollen and bodies bloated, while putrid smell of their decomposing remains filled the neighbourhood air one fine morning. Such was the way to go for a top-terror and his two associates whose reign of terror had petrified this entire city. They had a sumptuous meal and a few drinks on the night of their murder, the way sacrificial animals are readied for altar. Afterwards they must have entered the gorge of death in the horror of disbelief that the friends they had come to spend the night were waiting to finish them.

It vindicates the old adage that those who live by the sword also die by it. But that hardly discourages the stream of recruits who come to the underworld and undertake terror as a means of living. And how terror perpetuates in the resilience of its own dynastic ambition! Only days after the father of the top-terror lost his third son to terror's inescapable tragedy, he initiated his fourth son into the game. Insoomuch as terror marks a deplorable turning on the long stretch of moral shoreline, it also reminds us that there are deadly beasts prowling right on the precincts of our own minds. As the Romans said, courage is not the only virtue, but it is the single virtue without which all other virtues are meaningless. Terror succeeds because it attacks that virtue in a victim and inundates his soul with fear.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the former Israeli Prime Minister, writes in his book *Terrorism*: How the West Can Win. "Terrorism is the deliberate and systematic murder, maiming and menacing of the innocent to inspire fear for political ends." The entire history of Russian terrorism can be summed up in the struggle of a few intellectuals to abolish tyranny, against a background of

silence poplance. In fact, use of terrorism for political ends has been practised throughout history and throughout the world. The ancient Greek historian Xenophon wrote of the effectiveness of psychological warfare against enemy populations.

Roman emperors such as Tiberius and Caligula used banishment, expropriation of property, and execution as means to

discourage opposition to their rule.

The Spanish Inquisition used arbitrary arrest, torture, and execution to punish what it viewed as religious heresy. The use of terror was openly advocated by Robespierre as a means of encouraging revolutionary virtue during the French Revolution, leading to the period of his political dominance called the Reign of Terror. After the American Civil War defeat Southerners formed a terrorist organisation called the Ku Klux Klan to intimidate supporters of Reconstruction. In the latter half of the 19th century adherents of anarchism in Western Europe, Russia, and the United States adopted terrorism. They believed that the best way to effect revolutionary political and social change was to assassinate persons in positions of power. From 1865 to 1905 a

such as automatic weapons and compact, electrically detonated explosives gave terrorists a new mobility and lethality. Terrorism was adopted as virtually a state policy, though an unacknowledged one, by such totalitarian regimes as those of Nazi Germany under Adolf Hitler and the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. In these states arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution were applied without legal guidance or restraints to create a climate of fear and to encourage adherence to the national ideology and the declared economic, social, and political goals of the state.

But the burden of terror, which is crushing our lives, has become an endless thing without ends.

What political ends are there when a mugger frisks his victim at gunpoint or a pervert rapes a terrified woman? What political

ends are there when political rivals zap each other, more to settle private scores than to underscore any public cause? It seems that in the womb of our sanity, we have seeded a terrible madness. If terror was once encouraged as a means of politics, now politics has become the means of terror.

More often than not, the end justifies the means. Tkachev, the Russian revolutionary who died insane and was an inspiration for Lenin, believed that it was justified to seize power of the State to achieve human equality. He proposed to suppress and eliminate all Russians over the age of twenty-five as incapable of assimilating the new ideas, and professed that it would be a really inspired method where the fanatical education of children is carried on in the midst of terrorised adult population. But he condemned individual terrorism to the extent that it revives values incompatible with the domination of historic reason. He wanted to restore terror on the level of the State with the creation of an ultimately deified humanity as its sole justification.

The terror in our lives justifies nothing including its own horror. What fanatical education are children getting when the adults live in the thick of terror? It is said that being deprived of the morality of Goethe, Germany chose, and submitted to, the ethics of the gang. Between the two wars an epidemic of suicides swept through Germany as the country passed through a state of mental

confusion. There was no longer any standard of values, both common to and superior to all these men, in the name of which it would have been possible for them to judge one another.

It is possible that the terror in our lives is nothing but the expression of chaos seething in the centre of a jumbled confusion. And that confusion is