

## Russia's pain in the neck

A M M SHAHABUDDIN

PUTIN is carrying a pernicious pain in his neck. But can he get rid of this much-veiled pain? Perhaps it depends on how long he can endure it. As they say, it is difficult to keep head when the neck is on the line. Russian President Vladimir Putin had, wittingly or unwittingly, put his neck on the Chechen line. Only a last-minute mercy handshake with the Chechen 'rebels' or 'terrorists', whatever he calls them, may save him from a catastrophe.

Russia, with all its arms and ammunition, powerful ground and air forces, has not yet been successful, since 1994, to wipe out the Chechen rebels, who are fighting for an independent state, seceding from Russia. Putin has now come out with a bold public confirmation of this failure, in a statement, after attending the recent G-8 Summit held in Canada, when he had said that Russia's Chechen operation had been a failure to achieve its objective. The main purpose of this public admission of Chechen failure seems to rally round Russia international support and sympathy in its drive against Chechen terrorists. In today's global political scenario, when the international community stands united on one platform to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, Putin might have considered it as the best way to boost his drive against the Chechen rebels. Thus, what Putin aims at is to turn the so-far-waged "colonial war" in Chechnya (as former US Secretary of State Dr Kissinger had called it), into a war against terror and thereby draw the

sympathy, particularly, of his G-7 colleagues whom he had met in Canada Summit recently.

### Hard history

But, unfortunately, history is not loyal to him to reveal the truth. It speaks louder, which disowns Russia's claim over Chechnya. According to history, it was the Czarist rulers who had grabbed the land and forcibly made it a part of the Czarist empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was then inherited by the Communist regime that ruled Soviet Union since 1917 and after some seven decades was inherited

appeared on the Russian political scene, to become its President, following the 1991 August putsch, made by the Communist hardliners with the help of some like-minded army generals, that overthrew then President Gorbachev. Yeltsin, the blue-boy of the West, used Chechnya as a trump-card, particularly for his success in his presidential election campaign for the second term. But as the sick man became rather incapable to run state affairs, America began searching for a suitable replacement. And Putin appeared like a bolt from the

"primary source of popularity is the brutal military assault on Chechnya." Thus Putin hit the nail while it was red and wanted to keep it hot for his strategic use whenever necessary.

### Unsuccessful operations

But after running the country as President for two years or so with the blessings and support from friends abroad, Putin had to admit that Russia's Chechnya operation had failed to achieve its objective. The same pathetic story was heard when Yeltsin and his generals were out to annihilate the Chechen

stationed there. Under the circumstances, it wouldn't be surprising at all if Putin thinks of a new strategy to face the Chechen menace by attracting international cooperation, particularly of Anglo-US forces, in the name of a sweeping war against terrorism, as it is now being done in some countries.

### An escape-route?

It is true that Russia, with its present day sinking economy, is completely unable to bear the huge daily military expenses of millions of dollars in Chechnya, when it can't even pay regularly the monthly salaries of its

Putin from the suffocation in Chechnya which is standing there as a constant pernicious pain in his neck. But will that be enough for Putin to save his neck which is already on the Chechen line?

Perhaps he still can do it, provided he shuns the bloody war-path against the Chechens, taking hard lesson from other colonialist powers who once had their hey-day but ultimately the sun set for them for good, when they honourably quitted the 'occupied' lands after a friendly handshake. The latest case in point is the handshake of Indonesia and its former territory, East Timor. A beacon-light indeed for others!

### Much that needs 'fixing'!

The writing on the wall is clear and vivid for those who want to read it. This is the time when Putin should concentrate more on rescuing Russia's shattered economy. Russia, once proud as a superpower, is now limping on the mercifully provided economic crutches by others. Russian economy seems to be in a worse position compared even to a poor Third World country. Russia's national currency 'Rouble' is literally lying under the rubbles. This humiliating situation needs Putin's attention more than his carrying on an unending 'colonial war' in Chechnya, leaving the vast majority of the Russians in abject poverty. As the *New York Times* sometime back remarked: "There is much that needs fixing in Russia today." Putin should go round, with his tools, for fixing the urgently needed things for the restoration of honour and glory of the Russian people than running after the Chechen mirage.

A M M Shahabuddin is a former UN official.



All health information to keep you up to date

## It's about Epilepsy

Epilepsy is explained by seizures causing convulsions and loss of consciousness. It is defined by a tendency to recurrent seizures that can lead to loss of awareness or consciousness, disturbances of movement, sensation (including vision, hearing and taste), autonomic function, mood and mental function.

In this subcontinent, basic perceptions about epilepsy were refined and developed during the Vedic period of 4500-1500BC. In the Ayurvedic, epilepsy is described as "apasmara" which means "loss of consciousness". It has described plentiful of references to all aspects of epilepsy including signs/symptoms, etiology, diagnosis and treatment. Babylonian textbook of medicine also described about this illness in detail. In fact, many of the different seizure types that were described in that book as far back as 2000BC, doctors recognize today.

Of the 50 million people in the world with epilepsy, unfortunately some 35 million have no access to suitable treatment. This is either because services are non-existent or because epilepsy is not observed as a medical problem or a treatable brain disorder.

After the invention of human electroencephalograph (EEG - brainwaves) in the field of epilepsy, the presence of electrical discharges in the brain is clearer. It also showed different patterns of brainwave discharges associated with different seizure types. The EEG also helped to locate the site of seizure discharges and expanded the possibilities of neuro-surgical treatments. Another recent stimulus towards the understanding and treatment of epilepsy in the last few decades has been the development of neuro-imaging equipment. Such technology has revealed many of the more subtle brain lesions responsible for epilepsy.

Phenobarbitone and phenytoin were the main drugs for its treatment during most of the time of last century. In recent years, a number of new drugs are available and seizures can be controlled much better than before. There are many people around us who still prefer not to disclose or discuss their epileptic situation. There should be social (and as well as from doctors) campaign against epilepsy to improve prevention and management for people with this illness. We need public awareness for a supportive environment in which people with epilepsy can live better.

**Did you know:** Julius Caesar, Czar Peter the Great of Russia, Pope Pius IX, Fyodor Dostoyevsky and the poet Lord Byron were all epileptic. Although Dostoyevsky's caring wife described his seizures in a way that would indicate they were of the major variety, involving an aura which had a mystical quality. In contrast, his doctor thought many of his fits were of hysterical nature, as the aura was described as being ecstatic.

Next : Around the world.

## Tale of two cities: The most expensive and the cheapest

AFP, Singapore

Hong Kong has replaced Tokyo as the world's most expensive city, and Asia is the most expensive region, according to a global survey released on July 8, which placed Johannesburg as the cheapest place to be in.

Higher prices in the basket of goods belonging to the personal care, domestic supplies and transport categories, contributed to Hong Kong's ascent to the most expensive city rank.

Moscow is now considered the second most expensive place to live in, followed by Tokyo which has fallen from first position last year, the survey by multi-national firm

Mercer Human Resource Consulting showed.

Using New York as the base city at 100 points on the index, Hong Kong scored 124.2 and was three-and-a-half times costlier than Johannesburg at the bottom of the table with 34.4 points. New York moved up from 8th to 7th place.

Chinese cities were also seen to be climbing the scale, with Beijing and Shanghai ranked fourth and fifth, ahead of Osaka in Japan which was sixth with an index of 103.2.

Of the world's 15 most costly cities, 11 are located in Asia with Singapore, long touted as Southeast Asia's most affluent venue, not among them.

Singapore has dropped to 24 on the scale from number 16 world-

wide last year, with a decline in retail prices and a 4.7 per cent depreciation of the dollar, compared to the US dollar, contributing to the fall.

The survey found that the gap between the world's most and least expensive cities was reduced by nearly 15 per cent in the past year.

"Increasing globalisation means that international companies are now producing more high-quality items locally, reducing the need for imports," Mercer's senior researcher Marie-Laurence Sepede said in a statement from Geneva.

"This particularly affects the living costs for expatriates in developing countries who often pay a premium for imported food and household goods from the West."

The annual Mercer survey, which covers 144 cities, measures the comparative cost of more than 200 items in each location, including housing, food, clothing, household goods, transport and entertainment.

The data is used to assist multinational companies in determining compensation allowances for expatriate workers.

Worldwide, New Zealand and Australian cities are still the cheapest, with the highest quality of living. Most Australian and New Zealand cities have indexes under half those of the world's costliest cities, while ranking amongst the top 30 for quality of life.

Sydney is the only Australian city amongst the world's 100 most

expensive cities at 95, while Auckland is 140th of the 144 cities reviewed.

London remains by far the most expensive city in the European Union, pushed up to 10th from 12th last year by high accommodation and transport costs as well as high duty on items such as alcohol and tobacco.

After London, Copenhagen is the next most expensive EU city at position 62, followed by Milan, ranked 63rd, Dublin in 73rd place and Paris at position 74.

Behind New York in North America is Los Angeles at 19th position, directly followed by Chicago and San Francisco.

The most expensive Canadian city is Toronto which ranks 104th,

while in South America the political turmoil and economic crisis plummeted Buenos Aires from 23rd last year to 133rd.

Caracas in Venezuela is the most expensive city in Latin America, ranked at number 55 while Asuncion in Paraguay is the cheapest city in the region, at 143 spot with 41.6 points.

The cost of living in the Middle East has been stable, with Beirut in 18th position and Dubai in 45th place, showing little movement from last year.



Hong Kong, the world's most expensive city.



Johannesburg, the world's cheapest city.

## How good is globalisation?

SALAH UDDIN MOON

ONE night I was chatting online in a Yahoo chat room. Suddenly my grandfather came into my room and asked me, "What are you doing now? Its 3 o'clock go to sleep." I told him, "I can't go to bed now... I am chatting...please don't be angry with me." He surprisingly asked me, "What's that?" I told him, "I am talking to a girl in Brazil." He seemed to think I had become mad. He was astonished to hear about online communication. His comment was, "You have become too modern." Yes I agreed with him, but how modern? Bangladesh has a reputation as one of the poorest countries in the world. We struggle with poverty and hunger, but globalisation gives us more freedom to fight poverty and hunger. However, Bangladesh has become at least partially modern after opening its borders to free trade and investment.

The idea of globalisation and modernisation was born out of the capitalist market mentality in the age of technology. "Globalisation occurs when an organisation extends its activities to other parts of the world, actively participates in other markets, and competes against organisations located in other countries" (Holton p 36). Bangladesh allows foreign companies to enter into its market. Our companies are also allowed to enter foreign markets. Globalisation makes international borders vanish and increases competition in the market place. In the modern world, globalisation also has an impact on our culture and social life. For example, MacDonalds introduced

American fast food to other parts of the world. Foreign media introduces different cultures to the different nations.

Our history says that we had been far behind the modern world during the colonial rule. Both Britain and Pakistan ruled Bangladesh for 200 years and 23 years respectively. They used their power to exploit the Bangladeshi people and there was no democracy or freedom. This kept us separate from the rest of the world and made it impossible for us to become a modern country. "The birth of Bangladesh in

investment creates 10,000 new jobs every year in Bangladesh" (Jahan, p 64). Foreign and export oriented industries are changing the economic and social scenario of Bangladesh which results in an increase of living standards. The World Bank Country Director for Bangladesh examined the 1990 average ratio of trade to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) in Bangladesh and explained that it had risen from 19 per cent to 35 per cent. He also described the story of a village woman whose life was changed for globalisation.

society modern by breaking the traditional social taboo.

Increasing globalisation is motivating the Bangladeshi people and enhancing modernity in our society. "Motivation refers to the forces within a person that effect his direction, intensity, and persistence of voluntary behaviour." (McShane, p62). Foreign investments create high paying jobs, which require more knowledge and skill, therefore motivating people to work for a higher education. Bangladeshi students are performing better than before. Advertisements for foreign

resources. Globalisation gave us the opportunity to use modern technology. We got world-class telecommunication technology, which was not possible without foreign investment. For example, a telephone company that had been monopolising mobile telecommunication services since 1992, was diminished by the global movement. At that time only a few people were able to use it, for it was incredibly expensive and their services were below average. They also provided very few jobs in that sector. When some other foreign companies entered our market, the monopolist company lost its power. Now the competitive activity of many telephone companies has increased people's income levels and employment opportunities, which in turn has to an extent reduced poverty. Modern telecommunication technology connected us to the rest of the world. In comparison with the modern world, our country is also getting technological advantages like computers and the Internet, transportation and online banking. We are earning foreign currency and creating many new jobs by exporting computer software. Globalisation has made a big social and economic change in Bangladesh.

There can be no doubt that the result of globalisation in Bangladesh has been positive. When my grandfather was of my age, it was a dream for him to use Internet. Maybe he never thought about today's modern technology. Most people in our country do not know what globalisation is, but they have got a higher living standard for globalisation.

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1971 was the first instance of an ethnic linguistic nationalist movement succeeding in creating a new state in the post-colonial period" (Jahan, p12). Our independence gave us the opportunity to share knowledge with other nations and led us towards modernity.

Globalisation is increasing the living standards of poor people in Bangladesh. Industries from foreign investments create employment opportunities for a large number of people including young women who, for the first time, can visibly enter the male dominated public space. Because of the traditional cultural norms of behaviour for young women, they were not allowed to show their faces in pre-modernised Bangladesh. "Foreign

Hosne Ara Begum, a 40-year-old garments worker, hardly had a chance for a decent job. Now she not only can survive physically, but also dream of a future in which her school-going children [will] have much better prospects. Hosne Ara is not looking back anymore. She is striding forward to the future. For a Hosne Ara, the introduction of Bangladesh's garments industry to the global market was a blessing. (Temple)

There are many women like Hosne Ara who have found a better way of life. In most cases, these jobs have empowered women, who are now in greater demand for marriage and they receive more respect in their families because of their income. Our women have made our

products also motivate people. Globalisation allows foreign companies to advertise their products in the country. When people watch advertisements for expensive foreign products, they want to buy them even if they don't have the ability. This motivates people to strive for a higher education to increase their skill level thereby to increase their income. Personally I am motivated since I grew up in the Bangladeshi global environment. I came a long way for a higher standard of living. Motivated Bangladeshi people are making their country modern.

Bangladesh has largely benefited from the transfer of technology. One nation cannot produce everything, because it has limited