

The WB statement

Emphasis laid on law and order again

THE statement issued following World Bank President James D Wolfensohn's meeting on Monday with Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman has been thought-provoking. It is laudatory of the government's 'early actions' in reducing fiscal deficit and shoring up a declining foreign exchange position. The 'politically courageous step' to close down the hugely loss-incurring Adamjee Jute Mills as part of structural reforms programme has come in for a pat on the back.

So far so good. The WB statement then went on to catalogue the failures in terms of reducing corruption, recovering loans from bank defaulters and curbing systems losses in the power and gas sectors. But the World Bank with its insistence on good governance as being pivotal to sustainable national economic development perhaps finds a test-case in a country where the law and order situation has slipped out of control. The statement, we believe, is spot-on with its diagnosis of the ailment: "Weak law enforcement in Bangladesh severely undermines personal security, encourages pervasive extortion and stands as a major obstacle to any development activities."

These are basically echoes of the views that the media and economic analysts in Bangladesh have been airing from time to time. If we had proceeded on the basis of such a broad understanding of the stakes involved in governance, many of our problems would have been solved by now.

To improve the quality of governance with the ultimate objective of restoring public confidence in the system, we have to carry out thorough-bred police reform and establish independent anti-corruption commission, human rights commission and Ombudsman's office without any delay. The World Bank is 'ready to be a supportive partner' in Bangladesh's long endeavour. But being in a race against time, we cannot drag our feet on institutional preparations that are needed for good governance.

The government cannot fail to see that whatever good work it has done could be negated if the law and order situation is not quickly improved upon. The recent killing spree in the city snuffing out lives of ward commissioners has been extremely worrying for the government. There is talk of BDR-Army deployment for law and order vigilance being apparently prompted by 'police failure' to stem the downside. That the government is seized with the problem of a serious downturn in law and order augurs well; but mere realisation will not be enough, some effective action is needed.

Exporters' quality control initiative

A sensible step in the face of shrimp importers' warning

THE Bangladesh Frozen Foods Exporters Association and the Agro-based Industries and Technology Department Project have indeed taken a sensible step. They have initiated a process to institute a self-policing system to monitor and ensure the quality of exportable shrimp and other frozen foods. The planned seal of quality programme aims at establishing an alternative to the government certification system, which the fisheries and livestock secretary has himself said needs to be upgraded "as importers are setting new standards for quality". A private sector testing, inspection and spot-checking mechanism has indeed become a necessity following warnings about suspected presence of bacteria in Bangladesh shrimp from the European Union and the United States, who account for two-thirds of the US\$ 350 million the country earns from shrimp export. Encouragingly, the step is being taken by none other than the exporters themselves.

At its September 22 meeting following the warning from the EU and the US, the fisheries and livestock ministry officials reportedly advocated that the government should not let go of the authority of certification. Such insistence should be avoided. In July 1997, the EU slapped a ban on import of Bangladeshi shrimp products on the ground that the exporters did not meet the hazard analysis critical control point regulations. The EU voiced its lack of trust in the efficiency of controlling measures by the Department of Fisheries. The US has also expressed dissatisfaction over the same.

The message is clear. Both the EU and the US want to see an alternative quality control mechanism instituted. There is no reason for the government to feel awkward about it, because the fact of the matter is the situation has reached such a pass that a firming up of the quality control mechanism could only prove advantageous for us. Therefore, the government will be well-advised to devise ways to accommodate the self-policing system the exporters have planned into the overall quality control system as soon as possible.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR

"Simi, Trisha and others"

I thank all the writers of the boxed letters "Simi, Trisha and others" (October 2). There are many people who are shocked at the lenient punishment meted out to the culprits in Simi Suicide Case and who heaved a sigh of relief at the verdict of Trisha case. But only a few people like the writers of these letters who made their voice heard, tried in their own way to let the authorities know that people are watching.

We should all come forward and let our voice heard as well. This is one of the many things we can do to improve the condition of the oppressed and the violated.

Shamima Chowdhury
Banani, Dhaka

Ward commissioners

I feel absolutely no remorse for the criminal ward commissioners being gunned down one after another.

Why did the BNP nominate wanted criminals in the first place?

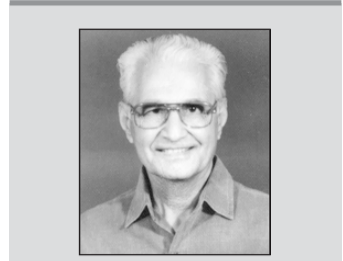
It's amusing to see in another front-page article that the BNP is totally frustrated with the police. Well BNP is the one criminalising the police, they are the ones who won't equip or train them properly. What's there to be frustrated about? Why should the police protect criminals from each other?

This is a fitting commemoration to BNP's anniversary of misrule. Even Khoka who many considered to be a better man than Hanif has been a disappointment.

Mismanaged Mirpur Zoo

In how many zoos of how many countries do you see bears and tigers have humans for lunch? In how many zoos of how many countries do you see wild animals escape their cages and cause a reign of terror? In how many zoos do you see how many countries you see cur-

Subcontinent's blight



M B NAQVI
writes from Karachi

THE incident in Indian Gujarat state's Gandhi Nagar Hindu temple on September 24/25 night that killed 31 worshippers and another on September 25 in Karachi that murdered seven persons in the office of an NGO, Idara-i-Amn-o-Insaf point to an ominous aggravation of negative trends in India and Pakistan and the rest of South Asia.

The Gandhi Nagar carnage is sure to give a handle to the hate merchants peddling a fundamentally anti-Muslim Hindutva, thereby increasing Hindu-Muslim polarisation in Gujarat. That BJP and the rest of Sangh Parivar hope to win elections thereby is an open secret; these groups, looming behind BJP, rode to power on the crest of anti-Muslim feelings following the destruction of Babri Masjid, widespread rioting and the growing communal polarity. Such incidents can help the hate merchants no end.

That incident has other consequences too. It impacts on India's Pakistan policy. Indian government has already held Pakistan responsible. Although, India's reaction to December 13, 2001 attack on Parliament with mobilizing the Army and threatening Pakistan with an imminent invasion was losing credibility, these suicidal killings in Gandhi Nagar may -- on the tit-for-tat logic of communalism -- force Vajpayee government to make a demonstrative response to assuage the hurt Hindu sentiment.

Consequently, India-Pakistan military tensions would again aggravate. Communal passion, already widespread, will be reinforced by official spin of blaming Pakistan.

That should superficially make war certain but both sides remain hesitant because of Nuclear Deterrents. It is however a moment of supreme test for deterrence doctrine: would it continue to hold back the Hindutva-preachers from taking a perhaps limited -- but nevertheless demonstrative -- action?

It is pointless getting involved in the validity or otherwise of deterrence concept. We can assume the two states will continue to prevent

that which glorifies a reconstructed past. Democracy thus may increasingly become shallow throughout South Asia for similar reasons.

The Karachi incident is certainly alarming. Terrorism in Pakistan is hydra-headed. Authorities are fond of blaming India's RAW for all atrocities in Pakistan or even in India. That is no defence against Pakistani failure to protect minorities. Indian propaganda of blaming ISI for all terrorist incidents is a photocopy

confrontation with India.

A militant Kashmir policy resulted in Army's political pre-eminence, able to spend most of the revenues and determining the development policy. This enriched both wings of bureaucracy while strengthening Army's hold on power. It needed justification. A bogus Pakistan ideology was invented based on a new interpretation of orthodoxy. It served the US well in 1980s -- to the immense enrichment of generals --

ply of Islamic extremists straining at the leash to strike at -- minorities, sectarian and religious minorities, Indians and Americans or whoever. Pakistan has just told the Americans that 33 dangerous activists of Harkatul Mujahadeen al-Alami are still freely operating in Karachi, after it had earlier arrested 24 of them in joint operations with FBI. For all a layman knows, this group is perhaps as small as that. But what about the many thousands of their

India, Europe, US and indeed everywhere to help change Pakistan's social, political and economic conditions that beget and sustain bigotry. Promotion of tolerance is the task, requiring more employment and cultural development as a prerequisite.

The particular Karachi incident does not seem to be a simple killing of Christians by undifferentiated Islamic fanatics. It is not the first of its kind in methodology -- first overpowering the victim(s) through heavy sedation, tying their hands behind them and then taping the mouths and noses for killing them through asphyxiation. Reason for selecting them remains obscure. There was a similar case recently in Karachi: two persons were murdered in a similar fashion (without the use of a gun) in the office of Irtqa Institute in Gulshan-e-Iqbal locality. Even the putative murder of Omar Asghar Khan is said to have been a similar case. One understands that many more incidents of the kind have taken place in Karachi. The police is reluctant to publicise them for some reason. But it shouldn't be.

Other victims of the same kind of killing were not members of minority sect or religion. There seems to have been nothing common among the victims, except one: some link with, or a reputation of 'progressive' ideas or left-of-centre politics. If this is true, we have a new specie of terrorism -- some version of ultra-right death squads, so characteristic of so many Latin American republics. That opens up a whole new vista for inquiry. Another commonality is: all religious fanatics are also ultra rightists in political preferences and so are their friends and supporters.

MB Naqvi is a leading columnist in Pakistan.

an all-out war either themselves or with American help. The net result will not be peace but prolongation of the present no-peace-no-war situation, with both taking limited hostile action but stopping this side of war. American influence over both Islamabad and New Delhi is bound to grow. That will reflect on the rest of Asia. Islamabad however seems scheduled to see the other face of US diplomacy. The US may put harder and unbearable pressure "to do more" in Kashmir -- and that might include accepting a final solution of Kashmir against the wishes of Pakistani hardliners.

The Subcontinent is likely to remain dominated by communal passions that stoke the fires of militarism. In India this militarism issues from a supposed 'manifest destiny' and has deeper roots, while in Pakistan it emerged ad hoc, first through international intrigue with Pakistan's powerful bureaucratic coterie that had already usurped power. Futile justifications predicated it on a shallow Muslim Nationalism and later on an Islamic Ideol-

failure of its own security agencies. What good are they, if they cannot stop the other country's spooks from causing mayhem inside their own countries? We had better look for true causes of terrorism in injustices and communal hatred.

Pakistanis should concentrate on terrorist killers that after all did not arrive from India. We must think about the process that created these terrorists. Mother of all terrorism was the emergence of Kashmir policy as a national cause by the bureaucratic coterie that had cornered power by April 1953. This latter involved many things: the collapse of Muslim Nationalism in which a powerful group of politicians enabled bureaucracy to thwart democracy. Simultaneously the US diplomacy bought over the bureaucratic coterie, supported by C-in-C Ayub Khan, rather cheaply. This international intrigue also helped shape domestic and foreign, especially the Afghan, policies. The culmination of these factors were the Taliban regime, nuclear detonations, Kargil and the current military

and later in Kashmir Jihad. Becoming power drunk after the Bomb, the generals could 'safely' convert Kashmiris' spontaneous and non-violent movement in 1988-89 first into an armed rebellion and later an Islamic Jihad. A red hot Islamic ideology provides inspiration for the Jihad. That it had no link with the Subcontinent's Islamic ethos bothered no one.

Bewildered Indians squirmed, tried to counter the Jihad with armed repression. Eventually South Block remembered it too had the Bomb, only bigger. So, when the Jihadists boldly attacked the Indian Parliament, India confronted Pakistan with all its might. India went on an offensive and threatened war. India is daring Pakistan to fight a limited war and if it uses the Bomb, it would invite India's nuking it in return. Which is where both India and Pakistan stand deadlocked. No one can go further. The Americans are able to play the honest broker to their own political advantage.

Net results of Kashmir and Afghanistan policies is an oversup-

soul mates who are Taliban, the many Kashmir's Jihadi outfits, not to mention the factions that content themselves with killing local Shias, Ahmedis, Christians, Hindus etc. Their number would be much greater. They are all the same: religious zealots of more or less the same theoretical origins. Minorities and the country do need that they are reclaimed with required patience.

It is a problem that has to be sorted out by Pakistanis. The US interest is limited to preventing them from attacking American or western targets. Indians only want Jihadis and zealots to stay at home and leave them alone. But this country is now a snakepit of all manner of Islamic extremists, wanting to kill all Kafirs, Indians (Hindus first), foreigners -- a travesty of Islam in historical India. These fanatics are a bigger danger to Pakistan and its plural society. For this American money, technology and advice is irrelevant, though these might help if they are used to fight crime. It is vital to seek the learned humanists from

communities from being inadvertently penalised. Tony Blair, however, was not available -- he was spending the week-end at Chquers, forty miles away from the capital.

The marchers had travelled to London from around the country on 2,500 coaches and 31 specially chartered trains, and many had used their own transport. The whole event was supervised by 1,600 police officers along with 1,800 stewards from the Countryside Alliance. The route taken by the marchers -- marked with placards bearing the words 'Liberty Route' -- started at Blackfriars across the Thames, converging in Parliament Square in Central London. Five giant screens were erected along the route with a 'counting zone' in Whitehall to give a live running total of the numbers marching. The police closed off 20 roads, diverting all vehicular traffic to alternative routes. As one tabloid newspaper described the march -- "Picture an FA Cup Final crowd. Picture that entire crowd walking in the same direction down Whitehall. And every hour, along comes another one. Hour after hour." But despite the enormous numbers flooding into the centre of the city, it was an extremely well organised and orderly event. At the end of the day, Scotland Yard reported only two arrests, both thought to be anti-hunt demonstrators. Among the high-profile persons joining the march were the Opposition leader Ian Duncan Smith and Earl Spencer, brother of the late Princess Diana. Supporters from the United States, Australia and elsewhere in Europe had also flown in to take part.

Mind your language!

SAGAR CHAUDHURY

BRITISH Home Secretary David Blunket frequently comes up with suggestions for the ethnic communities in this country to make themselves better equipped to integrate with the national mainstream.

Unfortunately, hardly any of his suggestions meet with the approval of those for whom they are meant. In fact, they almost always provoke angry protests from the target groups. Earlier this year, Mr Blunket was accused of racism when he called for a "re-think" of arranged marriages in the British Asian community. Again, when talking about the number of asylum seekers' children in schools, his use of the term "swamped" provoked furious criticism. Commenting a few weeks ago on the riots in Bradford last summer, he remarked -- in an oblique but quite clear reference to the Asian perpetrators -- that "the maniacs who were engaging in this are now whining about the sentences they have been given." Adding insult to injury, in a manner of speaking, he said: "For every sentence, for every tough new law, for every sensible measure, there's some bleeding heart liberals who are there wanting to get them off, get them out and reduce their sentence."

Mr Blunket's comments, made to business leaders in his Sheffield constituency, angered the members of the Fair Justice Campaign who have accused him of arrogance and ignorance of the rioters' plight and caused the wives, mothers and daughters of the rioters to come down to London to protest outside the Home Office. More recently, in his contribution to a book of essays called *Reclaiming Britishness*, published by the Foreign Policy

Centre think-tank, Mr Blunket has urged the ethnic communities to speak English in their homes and has drawn accusations that he is "targeting the Asian community." The Home Secretary says that almost a third of the British Asians speak only their native languages in their homes, whereas if parents converse with their children in English at home then "it helps overcome the schizophrenia which bedevils generational relationships." Mr Blunket is staunch in his belief that a sound knowledge of

before going on to the university. English is the first language of most of his friends and colleagues at work and his own command of the language is in no way inferior to that of the natives, it is in fact superior to some. But he is equally fluent in spoken Bangla, albeit a little rusty in the written language, and never speaks anything but Bangla to his mother and to me or to our Bangla speaking friends and relatives. And he is certainly not an isolated example.

Another prominent Asian public

opportunity -- it could improve his English." In another interview given to Channel 4 News Mr Vaz said that the Home Office had to become "more sensitised to the needs of the Asian community."

The Asian community, however, is not quite undecided on the issue. The Asian headteacher of a school in Mr Vaz's own town thinks that Mr Blunket is right in making the comments. "I agree with Blunket in a positive context of improving the progress for our children," says Mrs Hussain who believes that the Home

refreshing breeze, trees shedding their leaves as they always do with the coming of the Fall, people taking their time to wake up and get out of bed following Saturday night's binge. Trains and buses also take their time to start plugging on a Sunday and shops open late as well. This Sunday was no exception, but for one thing. It was the day on which nearly half a million people -- all participants in the Liberty and Livelihood March -- descended on London and forced the heart of the city to a standstill for the rest of the

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English is crucial to a fully integrated society. This belief is central to his new legislation on asylum and immigration, which requires all immigrants arriving in this country to attend English classes. He is particularly anxious to see Muslim womenfolk learning English as a way of breaking down barriers.

Mr Blunket's comments, however, have not found much favour with Asian community leaders. Habib Rahman, the Director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, said that he speaks Bangla to his two children at home and would certainly continue to do so. "Those who come from other cultures often want their children to be able to communicate with their grandparents when they go back," he says: "You cannot go about telling people what language to speak at home." Personally speaking, I am in wholehearted agreement with Mr Rahman. Our own son -- who is nearly twenty-two now -- has spent most of his life in England, has attended Junior, Primary and Secondary schools in London

figure, Shahid Malik, a member of the Labour Party's National Executive, said: "David has been targeting the Asian community, saying where they should marry, now it's what they should speak -- tomorrow it may be what they can eat." Keith Vaz, Labour MP for Leicester and former Minister for Europe, accused the Home Secretary of turning immigrants into a "cheap target" and said: "If this was a Conservative Home Secretary he would have been asked to apologise by now..."

What David is saying has no basis in reality. No Asian family in Leicester does not speak English at home. In many cases they speak it better than Mr Blunket himself." Speaking on BBC's World At One programme, Mr Vaz challenged Mr Blunket to spend a night with a family in his constituency. "I am issuing an invitation to people in my constituency to offer Mr Blunket a night in Leicester," he said: "One night in Leicester with an Asian family and he will see how wrong he is. I hope David will take up this

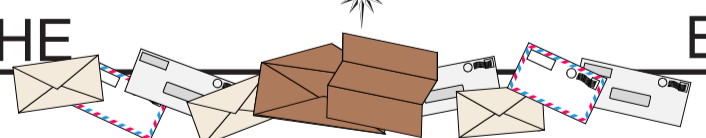
Secretary has probably been misquoted, since he is actually encouraging families to speak English alongside a native language, which she also agrees with. And Paramjit Dhand, Labour MP for Gloucester, also feels that the whole furore has been made out of nothing. "We're just talking about one sentence in a very long essay," said Mr Dhand: "and it doesn't say that Asians should abandon their mother tongue." Meanwhile, there are signs that the Foreign Office is trying to soften the tone of Mr Blunket's latest comments. A spokesperson said that the Home Secretary would "never tell people what to do in their own homes" and that he was "simply pointing out the advantages to children if English is spoken at home, as well as their mother tongue."

The day London nearly stood still

WELL, at least some parts of it. Sunday, 22nd September dawned like any normal English Autumn Sunday -- weak sunshine, cool but

day and well into the evening. The march, claimed to be the largest public demonstration in Britain since the 19th century, was organised by the Countryside Alliance in protest against the government's intention to ban fox-hunting and Labour's neglect of the countryside. Protest against the proposed ban on fox-hunting is probably a symbolic gesture only, although it is taken very seriously by the rural gentry as one of the most important components of a traditional British way of life. The march, organised at a cost of £1 million, also aimed to increase awareness of such rural issues as low incomes and poor services, the need to safeguard rural people from attacks on all field sports, ensuring respect for rural values and customs and addressing the real problems in the countryside. The organisers planned to present the Prime Minister with a 10-point charter of demands covering hunting, farming, and improved provision of local services, as well as government legislation and action to be "rural-proofed" in order to protect rural

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDITOR



"Not so great navy"

Mr. Riki, don't you people have anything else to do except blaming the army, navy etc?

In your opinion navy operates those bars for their business purpose but do you know that in last three months navy caught: -

- 1) 04 cargo boats,
- 2) 05 engine driven country boats,
- 3) 350 colour TV,
- 4) 170 cassette player,
- 5) 120 deck sets,
- 6) 1011 V.C.D sets,
- 7) 20 sound boxes,
- 8) 20 table fan,
- 9) 536 ton fertilizer,
- 10) 1614.23sq. ft. shundori wood,
- 11) 900sq. ft. bain wood,
- 12) 675sq. ft. kewra wood
- 13) 655sq. ft. wood for burning,
- 14) 11600 canned whisky,
- 15) 40900 canned dry gin,
- 16) 10510 canned beer,
- 17) 21000 bottled beer.

The total price of these products is 3,63,93,100 tk. All these items are illegal.

My point is if navy run those so-called bars, then they would not have shown the last four items to the customs. They would sell those to their bars and would make more

bars with the woods. Try to respect the military. They never sleep so that we can sleep safely.

A Customs Officer, Chittagong

Thank you Mr Riki, I appreciate your view. But that of our Concerned Citizen, living in Chittagong, seems to be a patron of that road and does not want it disturbed.

I wonder what he would do if some enterprising guy sets up a cigarette stall in front of his house and also starts trading in drugs as it is the job of the narcotics and not his, even to complain.

What a concerned citizen!
FM, Chittagong

Road re-construction

Recently, the authorities concerned have taken initiatives to repair the roads in the older part of Dhaka on a temporary basis. This is indeed a commendable step.

After repairing these roads with brick fragments, within a few

days it reverse back to the previous poor condition. Therefore the authorities concerned should repair the roads in such a way that it would last at least a few months. Otherwise it would only be wastage of money and the commuters' sufferings would never decrease.

Sohel Hara, Tophkana Road, Dhaka

Notice
The coming 10th of October will make the 1st anniversary of the present BNP led alliance government. On this occasion we invite our readers to write us letters in 200 words -- giving their assessment of the government's performance preferably mentioning the biggest success and the worst failure. The readers may also wish to refer to the BNP's election manifesto, PM's pledges, role of parliament, MPs, party activities including that of student and youth wing.
--- Editor