ing with Chakma Raja Devashish Roy,

Mong Raja Pai Hla Pure Chowdhury

and Cha Hla Pure, son of Bohmong

Raja Saw Hla Prue on 30 August was an

important step given the many uncer-

tainties associated with on-going

development programmes initiated in

the CHT by the UNDP. It is hoped that

LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY NOVEMBER 1, 2003

Competitiveness index

Slipping down the ladder

ANGLADESH has lost some rating points in the Global Competitiveness Index and the Business Competitiveness Index in the last one year. A Centre for Policy Dialogue survey has given a detailed account of the factors inhibiting growth of business.

It is like a leap backward, as the country was expected to improve upon its performance in business competitiveness. Clearly, things are going wrong in several areas. The big companies doing business here have given a long list of problems that they are facing.

The problems can be divided into two broad categories. First, there are constraints like poor infrastructure and financing facilities which stem from chronic economic backwardness. These can be eliminated through long-term plans and their timely execution.

Second, bottlenecks which are but the results of negligence, inefficiency and dishonesty on the part of the bureaucracy hinder business activities more than anything else does. The survey has identified 'corruption' as a major problem, along with bureaucratic incompetence and the absence of public trust in the honesty of politicians.

These are all inter-linked and intricate issues that successive governments have failed to address successfully. Corruption accounts for a huge rise in business costs, as the big companies have complained. It is pointless to expect that the business environment will improve appreciably as long as corruption eats up a big chunk of the money invested in business.

Similarly, bureaucratic incompetence, which is attributable in part to the widespread corrupt practices, is slowing down the pace of business activities to a great extent. The government has made some organisational adjustments and changes to add the element of dynamism to handling of business issues, but lack of coordination among the agencies is still very much visible.

The decision-makers must find answers to the questions raised by the survey if they want the country's business competitiveness to improve.

Massive power outage

Can't we avoid it?

HE sudden power outage on Wednesday, the longest ever, only added to the woes that people had been suffering from for a while. Without any doubt, nobody was prepared for such unprecedented cycle of events in the power sector when 21 power plants tripped one after another leaving the whole nation without electricity for hours. Naturally, panic and confusion enveloped all of us. Only after the news of countrywide power cuts spread, did we take it for real. But woes prolonged. Power was only resorted, partially in Dhaka, three hours later, the rest continued to suffer on a hot and humid day for a much longer

As always, an inquiry committee has been formed to detect the exact cause of such huge power cut. We can only wait until the committee finishes its work and reveals findings. But before that we would like to make some pertinent points. First of all, nobody was expecting anything of this magnitude, then can the authority really be spared? Tripping of power plants is not a new phenomenon in the country. Governments always blamed poor maintenance of the plants and supply cables for the disruptions. Did the authority ensure proper maintenance of these things as to avoid any kind of unexpected power cuts like Wednesday's? Secondly, the State Minister for Power, Iqbal Hasan Mahmud defiantly told reporters at a news conference that if a power cut could take place in America, then why not in

The comparison sounds extremely silly. Grid failures in the United States are as much rare as it is common in Bangladesh. There have been many occasions in the recent past when the whole country went into darkness because of power failures. We give the authority credit for doing their best to reinstate power at the earliest possible time, but can they give us any assurances that such massive disruption will not happen again, at least not in the near future? Probably they can't. The minister himself had told this newspaper in an interview not so long ago that he was in dire need of money to guarantee a good service. We can only hope that the latest power cut and its huge economic impact would give the government enough reasons to ponder over the situation seriously.

The simmering Chittagong hill tracts



MUHAMMAD ZAMIR

WO important steps have been taken recently with regard to the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). On 30 September, the Government declared that the three hill districts would be considered as a Special Tourist Zone. On 14 October it was also reported that the government had decided to continue giving free ration to the nearly 60,000 tribal refugees who had earlier returned from India to their ancestral lands. Apparently, such a step would be taken despite the absence of any formal allocation for this purpose within the current budget. It has been indicated that the government for the time being will meet the supply for rations from the stock set aside for disaster management and then will subsequently try to arrange additional funds for ration in the next budget. This has been a good decision and should help to restore confidence.

These were interesting developments given the steady deterioration of law and order and increase in violence in this south-eastern part of Bangladesh. One can only hope that the government will now attach more importance to what is happening in that troubled region and take necessary administrative steps to ensure better coordination of its various agencies involved in this area.

We have been reading disturbing reports about this beautiful part of the country. It is alleged that illegal fire-

arms are entering the CHT through the 365 kilometre border route with Myanmar. Recently the BDR has recovered hand bombs and time bombs, grenades and explosives from Nakhangchari (the border region of Bandarban district). The worrying aspect was the presence of wireless sets, large quantities of safety fuses for making bombs, white potash, 23 containers of acid and also an army uniform. From other places the army has also recovered one AK-47 rifle, one 9 mm SMG, one M-16 rifle and appro-

between the two main political organidangerous brew.

The government needs to take the activities of the UPDF with seriousness.

lands and homes. They need to identify what has gone wrong, keeping in mind the 16-point rehabilitation package of 1994, 20-point package of March 9, 1997 and Articles 1, 2 of Chapter D of the Peace Accord signed on December 2, 1997. The Administration also needs to review their reluctance to from the Task Force on Welfare of the Jumma

It is true that solution of problems in the CHT is not going to be easy. The ethnic tribal population feel threatened. They feel that the rights accorded

the question of land ownership. It is being alleged that a large section of the hill people including many thousands who have returned from India are still without their dwelling houses, jhum mahals, identified areas of reserve forest and crematoriums. The underlying cause for being unable to decide on land ownership originates from the absence of (in most cases) proper registered documents on the part of the hill people who have traditionally owned land on the basis of ancestral cognisance associated with property

this exchange of views will be seen as a confidence building measure and will ensure uninterrupted development work in the six upazilas, two each from the three hill districts. In this context it would be worthwhile to note that the government's decision to set up District Judge's and Session Judge's Courts in the three hill districts has also been a good idea. However, for the purpose of adjudication, care needs to be taken to ensure that tribal customary laws and practice are given due importance in the formulation of laws that will govern plaints of this area. This may be considered as

long as any of these laws are not ultra vires of the constitution. Such a step, in the long run will ensure the preservation of ethnic values and will strengthen cultural plurality. If normalcy and peace have to be assured in the CHT, there has to be devolution of power. Through equity and justice the people of the CHT must be made to feel that they are not being discriminated against and that they

region. They have to understand that in the long run, if there is stability, there will be economic advantages. There has to be a process of continu ous dialogue but at the same time we must recognise that dialogue cannot be a substitute for the holding of elections in the three hill districts. Joint decision making between Dhaka, the tribal political and traditional leaderships and the elected representatives

have a stake in the development of that

potential of this area as a Special Tourist Zone. Muhammad Zamir is a former Secretary and

Latif possibly cost Bangladesh an addi-

will be the key that will unlock the

sations of the hill region -- the Jana Sanghati Samity (JSS) and the United People's Democratic Front (UPDF). The situation has also further worsened after the August 26 events in Mahalchari. Both sides are now imparting clandestine armed training to members of their cadre and buying firearms from smugglers. This is a

It may be recalled that this party came

POST BREAKFAST

If normalcy and peace have to be assured in the CHT, there has to be devolution of power. Through equity and justice the people of the CHT must be made to feel that they are not being discriminated against and that they have a stake in the development of that region. They have to understand that in the long run, if there is stability, there will be economic advantages.

priate ammunition. The presence of such sophisticated arms is obviously a cause for worry.

The fact that such illegal weapons are being used for creating panic and extortion is evident from the numerous demands for ransom that have terrorised the people inhabiting Ghahrabazar, Reserve Bazar, Chaeri Bazar, Kutubchari Bazar, Maillachari, Magachari, Manikchari, Bhengerdoba, Bagarbil, Islampur, Ranirhat, Dhamairhat, Rajarhat and other areas. It is also understood that such ransom collection is being used to purchase

As such, the decision of the government to declare CHT as a Special Tourist Zone can only imply for ordinary citizens like us that the government is finally going to take suitable steps to bring back normalcy in this

Today, peace remains elusive in the CHT because of growing hostilities former leader of the ISS deserted that party and launched the UPDF on 26 December, 1998. They appear to be the more extreme faction having come into being through their protest against Santu Larma, the leader of the JSS for having signed the Peace Agreement in 1998 with the then government. Two other organisations have also surfaced -- the Democratic People's of Arakan and the Bengal Tiger Force. This development does not help matters.

into being after Prashit Bikash Kisha, a

The Government and its Agencies have to be more pro-active. The Ministry of Hill Tracts Affairs, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on CHT Affairs and the Chittagong Hill Tracts Regional Council -- all these arms of the government should sit down and carefully scrutinise the different claims of the affected people of this area. They should try to ascertain the reasons for delay in rehabilitating the refugees who have returned to their ancestral

istration under the Regulation of 1900 have effectually been taken away. They allege that the slight gains they made through the report of the National Committee for CHT in 1988 was never fully realised. They point out that several negotiations have since taken place, both during the first BNP Administration and an Agreement signed during the past AL Administration. However, some of the basic problems still remain unresolved.

to them by the British Colonial Admin-

Some of their complaints appear to be well worth a second thought. Many of the 'prabidhans' (bye-laws) that needed to have been set in place never materialised. This might have facilitated the proper discharge of several responsibilities that had been given to the Hill District Councils. This would have probably also enabled the creation of a functional multi-ethnic police force for that area.

The biggest difficulty appears to be

some in the 1997 accord. The Rajas of this area have on the other hand suggested that the management of the land should be given to the Zilla Parishads. It is understood that the Law Ministry is

and pursued the traditional format of

nomadic slash and burn cultivation.

For the last decade the government has

been trying to put in place a cadastral

survey, but for obvious lack of support-

ing documents and records is facing

problems. In the meantime, criminal

opportunists have been taking advan-

The JSS wants the formation of a

Land Commission and wants the

Regional Council to be given total

power, as was agreed upon, according to

tage of the unsettled situation.

trying to resolve this issue amicably in consultation with the CHT Ministry. Understandably, if a resolution is not found to this impasse urgently, it will affect the scope for development in this

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's meet-

An ultra-professional game

PORTS or games, whether solo or team events, do not usually call for a father figure or progenitor, as it were. Cricket affords an exception in the larger than life shape of Dr. WG Grace, who has traditionally been accorded just such a status, or perhaps even a higher one, almost that of presiding deity of the game. There are cogent enough reasons for this, of

Grace was a medical doctor by pro-

fession and an amateur cricketer. With his full and flowing beard and ample figure, he could, in fitting attire and minimal make-up, have played Santa Claus in any pantomime or at a pre-Christmas sale at Harrods with perfect aplomb. Alongside of Gladstone, he was said to be the best-known Englishman of his time. By the time he called it a day, WG had, in 43 seasons of first class cricket, scored 54211 runs and taken 2809 wickets. He was thus by any definition a genuine all-rounder. It was primarily as a batsman though that he was pre-eminent. The measure of his ascendancy is underscored in a laconic comment attributed to Alfred Shaw of Nottinghamshire, a master of length bowling who bowled the first ball in test cricket: "I puts the ball where I likes and the old man he puts it where he likes". His philosophy of the game was simply, almost simplistically, explained in a characteristic observation: 'I don't like defensive strokes, you can get only three runs from them"

WG's first class career began in 1865, after over-arm bowling had been legalised. He possibly reached the apogee of his phenomenal skills before the dvent of test cricket. In the season of 1871 he scored 2739 runs at an average of 78.25. The person nearest to him in average was Richard Daft -- 37.66, for an aggregate of 565 runs. WG was the first to score 100 centuries in first class cricket, a feat emulated by only 23 others since then. By the time test matches started, he may have passed his high noon but was still a formidable player, scoring a century on debut. He played in an era of uncovered and underprepared pitches, when shooters were not a rarity and protective gear less than reliable. True enough he did not have to contend with such modern refinements, contrivances or innovations as the googly, the swerve or reverse swing, but as Sir Neville Cardus once put it so aptly, genius in one set of circumstances should be equal to adaptation in a different set. As a creator of

much as for his prodigious prowess, personality and charisma, WG has placed himself outside the pale of invidious comparison.

WG was no slouch at gamesmanship either -- whether or nor he invented it. Anecdotes abound about this aspect of his play, some of which at least must have a basis in fact. It was not unknown for him to successfully claim a catch off his own bowling, after picking up a bowl on the bounce. He was once clean bowled, first ball, but unperturbed proceeded to put the stumps and bails back in place and take guard. The thoroughly nonplussed umpire and bowler were told with authority -- and not without an eleMandela, then incarcerated and sequestered from the world in Pollsmoor Prison. Mandela's first words to Fraser, according to a senior Commonwealth official who had accompanied the Group, was: "Tell me is Don Bradman still alive?" Bradman or "the Don" was not given to gamesmanship but there was nothing of the Laodicean in him. He played a hard game but never meanly and invariably accepted, without dissent or demur, an umpire's deci-

From the time of WG to the early 1960s, English cricketers were divided into two distinct classes, amateurs or gentlemen and professionals or players. Amateurs played for pleasure and

claimed a catch to dismiss Lara, which, re-plays showed, had not been taken cleanly. During the 1973-74 West Indies-England series, in the first test Tony Greig ran out non-striker Kallicharan after the 'close of play'. Following off-the-field discussions and diplomacy, the appeal was withdrawn and the decision in effect reversed. Did Greig's action constitute fair play? In the second test of the 1990-91 West Indies-Australia series, Dean Jones, not hearing a no-ball call, thought he had been bowled and was walking back when Hooper fielded the ball, pulled out a stump and appealed successfully for run out. It was a bad umpiring decision but more significantly did Hooper infringe the spirit of sportsmanship by

also has a well-deserved reputation for the lavishness and warmth of its hospitality to foreigners, which is why it is perplexing that a few cricketers after a tour there have written uncharitably or disparagingly about their tour experiences. One English player observed that Pakistan was the place to send one's mother-in-law for an extended vacation -- mothers-in-law are all too often the butt of unkind jokes in the West. Another player claimed to have discovered the secret of the 'burkha' during a tour of Pakistan; namely to hide the homely or far from comely features of the wearer. He confided that he had bought two 'burkhas' for his

The Bangladesh team had a bizarre

LIGHTEN UP

From the time of WG to the early 1960s, English cricketers were divided into two distinct classes, amateurs or gentlemen and professionals or players. Amateurs played for pleasure and love of the game and brought to bear a sense of individuality. For the professionals, the game was their livelihood and they exemplified a more competent if also at times dour uniformity....Cricket today is an ultra-professional game, to be played in a sportsmanlike fashion to be sure but without much room for chivalry or sentiment.

ment of truth -- that the vast crowd had paid good money and assembled to see him bat and should on no account be deprived.

To be sure, even WG did not always get his own way. A quicker ball once beat him and just kissed a bail, which fell to the ground. Turning nonchalantly to the umpire, WG casually observed: "Windy day, isn't it", by way of explanation for the fallen bail. Equal to the situation, the umpire replied brightly even solicitously: "Sure is Doc, make sure it does not blow your cap away as you return to the pavilion". Yet another time after having benefitted from a few dubious umpiring decisions, he was bowled by a ball of devilish pace which uprooted two of the stumps. As he started toward the pavilion, the long suffering bowler could not resist a Parthian shot: "Why are you going Doc, one stump is still standing" The great man was not amused.

The next colossus to bestride the world of cricket was, of course, Bradman. Diminutive of form, this colossus of cricket beggared description. In 1986, a Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group headed by Malcolm Fraser of Australia and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria visited South Aflove of the game and brought to bear a sense of individuality. For the professionals, the game was their livelihood and they exemplified a more competent if also at times dour uniformity. Douglas Jardine was an amateur with a thoroughly professional approach to the game. This has been ascribed variously to the Scottishness in the man or even to the fact that he had his schooling at Winchester and not Eton, Jardine was not averse to gamesmanship -- a la WG Grace. Learie Constantine recalls in his book "Cricket in the Sun' that in the second test of the 1928 West Indies tour of England, Jardine trod on his wicket. The appeal was instinctive and the verdict a mere formality. Hurriedly Jardine interposed and expounded the law to the umpire; he had completed his stroke before treading on the stumps and was thus not out. He was given the benefit, not of doubt because there was none -- but, as Constantine recounts with gentle irony, of the decision

Some other examples of gamesmanship in more recent times. In the first test at Lord's in 1971, Snow barged into Gavaskar to prevent a run. He received a one match ban as penalty. In a tour of the West Indies, Steve Waugh

such an appeal? Umpires unlike Popes have no

claims to infallibility. Some cricketers in their memoirs have charitably commented that umpires may be good, not so good or even inept but never dishonest. Perhaps. A few cricketers have also written about less than happy experiences with 'patriotic' umpires. Television re-plays clearly and cruelly expose umpiring deficiencies nowadays. It is inevitable that umpires, like players, should occasionally err. The difference is that, unlike batsmen and bowlers, umpires do not pay for their errors, someone else or perhaps a team does. In the event of a patently poor decision, perhaps the third umpire, with the benefit of modern technology could intervene. This should make for a more congenial playing atmosphere. It would clearly be unseemly for a player to appeal directly to the third npire even in such cases

The Bangladesh cricket team has recently completed its maiden tour of Pakistan. Pakistan has been the enigma of cricket; a team brimming with talent and yet so often faltering on big occasions. When on song they can compete with the best on equal terms but so often they fail to gel as a team. Pakistan

experience when they were made to fly economy class while the home team travelled in a superior class. This cannot be explained, understood or glossed over. It goes against every notion of hospitality and high tradition in which Pakistanis take legitimate pride. If such a cavalier attitude has been manifested toward earlier touring teams, it would explain the mother-inlaw jokes and also others which make these seem benign and bland. On the other hand there were the warm words of welcome and encouragement to the Bangladesh team from the President of Pakistan himself. Eric Hoffer's apothegm on prejudice is worth bearing in mind: "There is a tendency to judge a race, a nation, or a distinct group by its least worthy members"

Bangladesh's most fervid supporter did not expect a series victory, in tests or one day games. A victory in a test or one day game, however, was surely not beyond the realm of possibility and Bangladesh did come tantalizingly close to both. Why we failed has as much to do with playing skills as with mental approach. A dash of luck or the lack of it may also be added to the list of $reasons.\,Umpiring\,ineptitude\,and\,a\,bit$ of gamesmanship on the part of Rashid

tional and crucial 20-30 runs when Kapali was wrongly given out in the last test. Latif paid a penalty, a ban from five one-day games. Indirectly he paid a higher price. His captaincy ended precipitately and his reputation may never be the same again. Latif reportedly believed that he had taken a legitimate catch; but then there are also people who believe that we inhabit a flat earth and live in a geocentric universe Secondly it's an axiom of cricket that matches are won by bowlers and not batsmen unless they are of a superlative class. Bangladesh's main strike bowler was rested in the final test, which could have suggested that mentally we had all but conceded the match and were focusing on the oneday games that were to come. And finally Rafique by not running-out nonstriker Gul, who was backing up too early, certainly displayed a generosity of spirit, but also a misplaced, almost which let down his team.

The first time such a dismissal took place in tests was during the 2nd test of the 1947-48 Australia-India series when Vinoo Mankad ran out non-striker Bill Brown for backing-up early. The Australian captain, the redoubtable Bradman wrote of the incident as follows: ".. in some quarters Mankad's sportsmanship was questioned. For the life of me I cannot understand why. The laws of cricket make it quite clear that the non-striker must keep within his ground until the ball has been delivered. By backing up too far or too early the non-striker is.. gaining an unfair advantage. On numerous occasions he may avoid being run out at the opposite end by gaining this false start..

Mankad was an ideal type and he was scrupulously fair that he first of all warned Brown before taking any action There was absolutely no feeling in the matter as far as we were concerned, for we considered it quite a legitimate part of the game". What was good enough for Bradman is surely good enough for Ban-

Cricket today is an ultraprofessional game, to be played in a sportsmanlike fashion to be sure but without much room for chivalry or sentiment. For a team to compete credibly, let alone excel, a certain mental toughness or resilience is almost as essential as playing skills.

TO THE EDITOR TO THE EDIT

Letters will only be considered if they carry the writer's full name, address and telephone number (if any). The identity of the writers will be protected. Letters must be limited to 300 words. All letters will be subject to editing.

Bangladesh Betar and VOA

We are living in a global village where information technology plays a vital role in getting the latest news from all the corners of the world. Internet, television, satellite are the media, which are much appealing, but at the same time the usefulness of and entertainment from the radio is indeed undeniable. Though old, this particular media still has its popularity competing with the modern media. In this context our national broadcasting centre "Bangladesh Betar" is not an exception. Moreover, the recent initiatives of engineers' training programme taken by the Voice of America (VOA) to boost the quality of Bangladesh Betar is greatly appreciable. This will not only improve the technological standard of broadcasting programme but strengthen the ties tween the two countries also.

As a regular English news listener of Bangladesh Betar, I would like to thank VOA for its timely step. I would also like to request the concerned authority to arrange training programmers for broadcasting news so that we could listen to some free, passionate, pleasant and lively voices where news would be an entertainment rather than giving merely some information.

I hope, getting the proper training, some good news-broadcasters we have would one day maintain the international standard like that of VOA and BBC and make this media more

Traffic roundabouts

While going through Sultana Rahman's city column in your paper of 27th October on "Fountain on a faulty roundabout" made me remember parts of a write up in a US "Traffic Engineering" publication many years

In that article it was mentioned that roundabouts are suitable for managing traffic in intermittent low density traffic pattern where proper driver discipline can enable traffic to cross at right angles or take ninety degree turns without traffic lights or traffic policing. However it was stated that there must be clear all round visibility across the roundabout without any visual hindrance. In contrast in Dhaka the round-

abouts are profusely blocked with fountains, hoarding and dense bushes. There is no visibility across the roundabout. Regarding traffic stream, it is bumper to bumper usually and continuous. Of driver discipline the least said the better. Four policemen are needed for all the four roads that come in and out of the roundabout. and the policemen too cannot see across the roundabout. Too sum up; a real mess of a situation is created by our road builders, architects and advertising income hungry city corporation. Nobody cares or bothers about the needs of traffic management or road safety. The excuse is that there should be traffic lights to control the traffic lights is another mystery!

The minimum requirement for a satisfactory traffic control needs traffic lights with automatic change over timers, high quality bulbs, voltage

regulators and large capacity UPS to cater for the power shut outs that could extend any where from minutes to hours! All this needs a lot of money. I wonder if we have taken proper steps in this direction? Any stopgap or technically incomplete setup will cause the same problems again. However if there is a will there is a way. Do we have the will; or we prefer to live in confusion? SAMansoor

Confused! A few days back, as I was reading the

newspaper. My eyes caught the sight

of a news about Jainal Hazari. In the news, the word 'alleged' was used while mentioning about the crimes he had committed. I think that no sincere and sane person has any doubt in mind, about the true nature of this person. He was directly responsible for almost killing a journalist, and his men were also responsible for many misdeeds in Feni. His crimes had also been proved in court, and verdict had been given against him. So why is there so much confusion, in the mind of the correspondent of that

Primary school text books by mid-December, 2003 For nearly two decades, we have not been able to give our primary school

TO THE EDITOR

children their books in the first week of January. Though this year has been an exception, due to the alertness, sincerity and on the ground work of a noble state minister. In fact it is possible to do miraculous things in this country with sixty or more ministers. It is only our vision and purpose in life that makes the difference. CS Mahtab