

## A Presidential Warning

In his address to the nation on Tuesday night, Acting President Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed has been forthright in discussing a number of problems facing his caretaker government as well as in offering a few new proposals whose implementation might help in the holding of a free and fair election. We are sure that leaders of all political parties have studied the contents of the Interim President's speech carefully and that their response to Justice Shahabuddin's proposals, especially about drawing up a code of conduct for the parties, will be positive.

In the first place, one must note that Justice Shahabuddin made the speech to underscore his concern over a growing trend of conflicts and clashes between the political parties, especially the major ones. He expressed his fear that these conflicts may be increasing with the approach of the election date. The Interim President noted, perhaps more in sadness than in anger, that he had not received any help from the political parties in resolving an acute crisis like the rioting in jails.

Since we have no reason to think that Justice Shahabuddin has exaggerated his problems, we are obliged to say that he has indeed been placed in an extremely difficult situation—paradoxically by the same political groupings that were responsible for putting him where he is today. We do not believe that these parties or their leaders are deliberately adding to the problems of the Interim President. However, the series of verbal attacks launched by political parties against one another have vitiated the atmosphere, raising the spectre of rising violence and creating the fear that the situation would be exploited by anti-social elements. Herein lies the concern of Justice Shahabuddin and indeed of the nation as a whole.

If the parties believe that the present situation should be remedied in the best interests of the country, they would be well advised to take up Mr Shahabuddin's proposal for the framing of a code of conduct. We understand that this will require further discussion, not only with the Acting President but also among the parties themselves. While such talks are going on, the parties should demonstrate the utmost patience, moderation and tolerance towards one another, besides helping the administration to maintain peace and order.

Once these steps have been taken there would be an opportunity for the parties to formulate their response to the other significant proposal of Justice Shahabuddin: the formation of an all-party volunteer corps to help the law enforcing agencies on the eve and during the polls. It is important that the political parties approach the situation with the same sense of urgency which was reflected in the Acting President's speech on Tuesday. We cannot emphasise too strongly that time is running out and that if the situation does not show a marked improvement in the coming weeks, many in this country, not just the Acting President, will be filled with frustration.

## A Death, and Our Duty

We mourn the tragic death of Mithu—the 19 year old, 11th class student of the Dhaka City College, who was killed in a police firing on Monday. We regret the outbreak of violence between the police and the students. We welcome the appointment of an enquiry commission and invite all parties concerned to fully co-operate with it so that the guilty can be punished.

However, we consider it appropriate to raise a few questions. First, how could a quarrel between the students and the alleged visa brokers at the adjoining Indian High Commission become a clash between the police and the students? Second, how the clash between the police and the students could have been allowed to go out of hand to result into a pitch battle, paralysing an important section of the city? Finally, what caused the renewal of clash on the second day (Monday) which led to Mithu's death and the subsequent spread of violence in other parts of the city? Implicit in these questions is a serious doubt about the capacity of our police to handle small incidence of violence and unrest.

Linked with the above is the more serious question of sporadic outbreak of violence and our attitude and responsibility towards it. While we mourn Mithu's tragic death, we cannot help but ask what relation did it have with the burning of cars and damaging public transport. There is also the question of illegal arms being used by anti-social elements who exploit situations like the above to create unrest and raise public doubt in our ability to hold a violence-free election.

We must be fully aware that occasional outbreak of violence may create serious concern in public mind and affect the turn out of voters on the election day, thereby depriving individuals of a basic right and the nation of a valuable public judgement on the programmes and policies of the various political parties.

It is our collective duty to prevent that from happening.

We are moving towards a general election, the first ever, let us hope, for a free and fair polls which will pave the way for an elected government to take over the affairs of the state and run a democratic system.

Democracy is not an ideology but a historical process in the progress of a given society. It is also a way of life; it is a faith and not slogan. Freedom calls for a government that governs least but in a changing society of nascent democracy certain norms are to be kept in view for achieving the minimum expectations. Hence, the question of priorities.

It is now generally agreed that the attempt to demarcate clear cut functions of government is impossible. Government is a continuous process. Administration today is no longer just the execution of policy; it reacts upon policy and actively participates in its making.

Firstly, we must look at the question of accountability of the administration. This is the most important aspect which demands top consideration of the elected government. Art. 77 of the Constitution contemplates the establishment of the office of Ombudsman. A law had been passed in 1979 but no appointment had been made. The Ombudsman has power to investigate any action taken by a ministry, a public officer, or a statutory public authority. He will prepare an annual report to be laid before the par-

The trade of Asia, the region with the highest growth in the world, reflects world trade as a whole.

The biggest exporters of many products—raw materials, components or final goods—are in this region, from tin, rubber and rice to cars and ships. The volume of garments and electronics, dinner plate and ceramic ware, is at the same time very huge.

Asian countries are also very good customers abroad. In 1990, China, Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Hongkong and Australia will together have imported over US\$15 billion worth of goods between them, which show up in other countries' and regions' exports somewhere.

In 1990, the region as a whole probably exported about US\$800 billion worth of goods and imported US\$700 billion worth. The difference is the value added or net foreign income.

If average growth rates are calculated on a trade-weighted basis, then the region's exports rose 8 percent this year and its imports rose eight and half percent. Total trade rose a little over 3 percent.

These are excellent figures, especially in view of the many problems which have beset us all today. The calculations are in current prices; if we wring the inflation out of them, we get a real growth rate of 4 percent for total trade for the year, which is

Many United Nations member states call the absence of North and South Korea as full-fledged members of the UN a 'relic of the past era' of Cold War confrontation.

The governments of both are on speaking terms, the Soviet Union has established diplomatic relations with South Korea, and even China, traditionally the mentor of North Korea, has warmed towards Seoul.

Both countries have observer status and are full members of specialised UN agencies such as the World Health Organisation, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Food and Agriculture Organisation.

A Chinese veto in the UN Security Council of South Korean membership looks less and less likely after China and South Korea agreed to formalise trade ties in October and set up trade offices in each other's capitals. In the recent Asian Games in Beijing and the 1988 Olympics in Seoul, athletes from both countries participated.

Diplomatic sources also recently reported that Beijing rebuffed a North Korean demand that China commit itself

# Some Priorities Suggested for the Elected Government

Justice Badrul Haider Chowdhury

liament. The institution has played an effective role for clearing administration in many countries. Pakistan set up this office few years back. The task before the elected government is to gear up the administrative machinery for keeping the wheels moving.

The State to encourage litigation. Litigation brings misery for both the parties. Modern tendencies all over the world reduce litigation and go for arbitration or mediation. While decentralisation of the executive branch of the government has merit, the setting up to

Fundamental principles of State policy in Part II of the Constitution.

Art. 16 says: The State shall adopt effective measures to bring about a radical transformation in the rural areas through the promotion of an agricultural revolution, the

equipments at cheaper rate and completion of flood projects demand immediate attention.

Agro-based industries are to be encouraged and loan facilities are to be streamlined.

Electrification of villages: This should be given top pri-

**Democracy is a way of life and it can be sustained only when the economic structure of the society is well founded, instead of being based on slogans.**

Corruption has become so rampant in all spheres of life. It will not be possible to eradicate it immediately but the process should be initiated.

Next, comes the separation of judiciary from the executive. Art. 22 says that the State shall ensure the separation of the judiciary from the executive organs of the State. This has not been done in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the setting up to upazila courts which have mushroomed has created havoc in the social life. Touts, hangers on, and parasitic elements thrive in such a setting. It is not the function of

courts at village levels in the name of bringing 'justice to the door steps' has disrupted peaceful social life and led to unproductive government expenditures. These courts must be wound up in planned phased manner.

Thirdly, a good government is judged in terms of specific economic achievements, by the production of food and its distribution at a reasonable price; by production and equitable distribution of essential commodities and by the promotion of employment opportunity. The priorities of an elected government can be had from the

provision of rural electrification, the development of college and other industries, the development of education. Art. 17, focuses attention on free primary compulsory education and for producing properly trained citizens to serve the social need.

These priorities should also cover the following economic objectives:

Promotion of agriculture: Food problem is to be solved as quickly as possible. The world does not owe us a living and certainly not perpetually. All efforts must be directed to this goal. Irrigation, fertilisers, loans for seeds, supply of

orty because that will help the cottage industries and other related small industries. Lenin once said socialism means electrification of villages.

Skilled labour: The education system needs to be overhauled. What the country needs most is skilled and semi-skilled labour. This labour force will not only help augmenting the internal economy, it can also be foreign exchange earner abroad. Compulsory primary education will help the growth of the semi-skilled labour.

Gas is to be fully utilised: It should be taken to all the other regions. This will help

# Prospects Are Still Bouncy

by Alan Chalkley

**We enter 1991 with a big momentum of trade, enough to out-ride any but the most catastrophic of storms**

good for most years.

Then there is the trade in "invisibles," all the tourism, transport, banking and professional income. In recent years these have soared, and in some countries account for nearly as much gross and net income as the visible goods, especially when remittances sent home by overseas nationals are added in.

These invisible incomes are highly profitable: professional overheads, for instance, are far lower than factory overheads. Judging by airline activity round the world (strongly up), by hotel occupation (still well up despite vast construction of new hotels), banking development (very expansive in Asia, though perhaps not so elsewhere), and the growing volume of cargo carrying, one can estimate that invisible receipts and payments are certainly as buoyant as visible trade.

The shipping figures are bright. Lloyd's Register, the globally accepted authority, reports that in mid-1990 the world's merchant fleet stood at 423.6 million gross tons, showing a good rise in ship-

ping activity in 1989-90, after continuous falls during 1982-88 when owners junking their old vessels as fast as they could.

The container trade is especially buoyant. With a 15 percent increase in boxed traffic between Europe and East Africa, container ship operators have ordered 132 new vessels -- an all-time record. By the way, 1990 has seen Hongkong tipped from its perch as the world's busiest box-handling port, yielding to old rival Singapore.

Three countries in Asia have recently cut back their imports: China reduced them sharply to improve her foreign payments balance; the other two were Australia and Taiwan, but only to a small extent. Among the leading exporters, only Indonesia reduced her exports (mainly of oil, but with the Middle East crisis, her income will rise again).

We thus enter 1991 with a big momentum of trade, enough to out-ride any but the most catastrophic of storms. But there are pessimistic

quarters which, concentrating on one threatening trend or another, should get a hearing on this.

First, an optimist. The World Bank produces figures showing that East Asia entered the 1990s with an average real growth of 6.7 percent a year during the 1980s, and that record bounce is unlikely to brake sharply, as it pushes and pulls international trade into the new decade.

What of South Asia? This is usually perceived as a region of poverty and low growth -- but in recent years there has been a remarkable U-turn into growth, averaging 3.2 percent during the 1980s. According to the Bank's long-term forecasts East Asia will get a 5.1 percent average real growth for the rest of this century. South Asia will get 3.2 percent. This scenario implies an inevitable boost for foreign trade.

There is little consensus among international bodies, however. The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) warns that "the

world economy seems to be slipping into recession" and that only Asia and parts of Europe will continue to grow.

But it wrote its opinion last August, under the shadow of the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. In its clouds, there was one silver lining -- it did acknowledge that world trade was still strong, and growing faster than total world output, in fact.

One of the big shadows over world trade prospects as 1990 ended was the angry conflict between the US and the European Community at the talks on a new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Consensus on farm subsidies, textile and footwear barriers, banking services and intellectual property has been fragile, at best. The farm and textile shut-outs are the longest-lasting and most widespread obstacles to freer trade.

But the more liberal quarters at the talks were not completely downcast. "Free trading will break through bit by bit. There are many ways to avoid these barriers."

What these quarters believe

establish industrial base. This resource must be fully utilised. Reduce import: Import policy should be reviewed keeping in mind the country's social needs. Unnecessary items must be banned. For example, there is hardly any justification for importing milk products by spending over 400 crores of Taka annually. Small dairy farms in the village levels should be encouraged and livestock and milk-producing good variety of cows could be imported from neighbouring countries for distribution amongst individual rural families.

Export oriented industries need encouragement and facilities for instance, shrimp culture is an important foreign exchange earner. The land is blessed with an abundant supply of shrimps and fish in the rivers, and canals. The country can be divided in shrimp culture zones and leasing on long term of these cultures zones will encourage joint venture which will augment revenue in foreign exchange and employment.

These are some of the priorities of the elected government and the sooner they are given full consideration the better for democracy. After all, democracy is a way of life and it can be sustained only when the economic structure of the society is well founded instead of being based on slogans.

The writer is a former Chief Justice of Bangladesh. He has written this article especially for the Daily Star.

is that countries which limit trade "shoot themselves in the foot." No better examples of this can be seen than the collapse of the "centrally planned economies" of Eastern Europe, and the brilliant successes of the open trading economies of the five Asian "dragon economies."

The growing expansion of multinational manufacturers, transporters and hotel managers also breaks down national boundaries, freeing the movements of men and money.

The Asian Development Bank takes a very cautious view of the region's outlook, mainly because it expects higher oil prices to worsen the foreign payments balances of most countries (only China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia are significant producers of crude oil). But the ADB is always notably careful about its forecasts, and it may have over-emphasised the effects of the Middle East crisis.

On balance, there is more going for Asian trade in 1991 and afterwards than there is going against it.

And as for those fears for recession in the West. It should be now realised that the American and the European share of world trade has fallen in recent years. A sneeze in New York may make us say, "Sorry, fella -- take an aspirin." But it no longer gives us the influenza. — *Depthnews Asia*

## Both Koreas on the Road to Full Membership of the UN

by Ted Morello

**For years, Korean membership of the UN was blocked by superpower rivalry. Now the superpower thaw means South Korea is only one vote -- that of China -- away from coming in from the cold. And if South Korea gets in, North Korea will not be far behind.**

to vetoing any South Korean membership application.

During the opening weeks of the 45th General Assembly mounting sentiment for membership was evident from speeches by heads of state, government leaders and delegates. Speaker after speaker called for Korean admission.

Some limited themselves to welcoming the recent high-level contacts between Seoul and Pyongyang as a step toward the UN's avowed goal of universality of membership.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Wong Kan Seng went a step further and said his government welcomed South Korea's interest in UN mem-

bership, adding: "We would also welcome the Democratic Republic of (North) Korea if it wishes to join."

In an allusion to a major Pyongyang objection, Wong said: "Membership for the two Koreas... need not preclude their efforts for peaceful reunification."

Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans followed suit, saying: "The Republic of Korea has stated its desire to become a full member, and we support admission of both Korean states either simultaneously or separately." Italy's Foreign Minister Gianni de Michelis said the UN "must prepare to welcome both."

North Korea insists that separate admission of the two countries would contribute to perpetuating the division of Korea. But the recent reunification of Germany and the merging of the two Yemens belie this argument.

East and West Germany were, like North and South Korea, originally confined to UN observer status. They were admitted as full but separate members in 1973 and merged on October 3. The (North) Yemen Arab Republic was admitted in 1947, two years after the UN was founded. The People's Democratic of (South) Yemen became a full-fledged member on independence in

1967. The countries merged on May 22.

It remains unclear when South Korea will its formal application for UN membership. UN Ambassador Hong Choo Hyun of South Korea has indicated it may apply before the current General Assembly sitting ends in mid-December.

Application will in part depend on the continuation of high-level talks between the government of South and North Korea.

The Security Council would first act on the application. If Seoul escapes China's veto there, the council's recommendation for admission would go to the General Assembly for ratification. Given the support voiced for South Korean membership, it would sweep into a UN seat by a comfortable majority if not by consensus or acclamation.

And once South Korea is admitted, North Korea would also apply so as not to give Seoul exclusive representation of the Korean peninsula. — *GEMINI NEWS*

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## To the Editor...

Letters for publication in these columns should be addressed to the Editor and legibly written or typed with double space. For reasons of space, short letters are preferred, and all are subject to editing and cuts. Pseudonyms are accepted. However, all communications must bear the writer's real name, signature and address.

### Begging

Sir, Begging has almost become a profession in our country. There's not much of a sex or age discrimination too. This is quite heartening mainly for the womenfolk of our country as they are not treated equal to men in many areas.

You turn your head and there is someone holding a hand in front of you and

most commonly it is a woman clad in a dirty saree, with small baby in her arms, that too quite unclean.

Male beggars follow a different style. Many of them prefer to have a certain portion of their body bandaged with rags, this I suppose is done to attract attention. Again many of them do not walk but roll on from one side to the other along the street.

By saying all this, I do not intend to be unsympathetic towards beggars, or mean that there are no genuine ones, in our country. My intention is to point out the various ways adopted by those who have taken this seriously as an occupation. And why can't do something nobler for their more humane survival?

Zohurul Hoque Barisal.

### Bitterness of bite

Sir, It appears that APSU activists are treated more like heroes than compatriots. We appreciate their contribution to the ultimate freedom against a dictatorial regime. We also request them through

your column to show greater humbleness befitting their chivalry.

I am compelled to write the above to you, due to some of their attitude towards the bureaucrats. They term all bureaucrats as enemies, although a good government servant is there to serve any government. That is precisely what his job is all about.

Some day, one of them might become a bureaucrat. Why then be a realisation of the bitterness bite?

Abdul Hakim Meah Wari Dhaka

### Picnic

Sir, Every year winter is the time when people—families or members of

different clubs, or offices organise picnics. They hire a bus and go to some pleasant spot in the out skirt of the metropolis. It was such a common view to see people going for picnics. To me its a sport mingled with more of joy.

However, this year somehow there have not been so many groups going for the fun. I wonder what could be the reason for it?

Is it the most common cause of it all—the price hike? In hardship nowadays people do not feel the need to enjoy anymore!

Khaleda Sarwar Azimpur, Dhaka

## WHAT OTHERS SAY

### 'Linkage' Doesn't Work

If the facts are against you, pound the law; if the law is against you, pound the table. In his extraordinary plea before the bar of world opinion, Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz of Iraq adroitly embraced this old chestnut of lawyers' advice. The proposition he pounded was that "what happened on the 2nd of August" arose from Iraq's compassionate concern for the Palestinian cause.

This argument constitutes untenable, brazen bluster worth rebutting because hostilities may be imminent—and because of new hints of a murky "Arab solution" involving unacceptable linkage.

Mr. Aziz rightly argues "this situation" (meaning Iraq's invasion and annexation of Kuwait) is part and parcel of "a general situation in the region" (meaning Israel's occupation of disputed territory). But how does Iraq's refusal to relinquish Kuwait advance Iraq's professed goals: peace, security and stability in all the Middle East?

However flawed the parallel, it may still seem to have rough justice—especially to Arabs and Europeans who fear a calamitous war. Decades of Israeli resistance to territorial compromise have left a diplomatic burden. Even so, the right response is not to link separate disputes. It is to reaffirm consistent and reasonable American policies—and make plain Washington will stand by its friends

— *The New York Times*