

Effective Motivation to Control is Imperative

by A. Qayyum

Li Peng in India

The current visit to India by the Chinese Premier Li Peng promises to mark a turning point in Delhi-Beijing relations, with prospects of introducing new positive trends in the regional politics. In this sense, the event can be compared, to the growing thaw in the relations between Beijing and Hanoi.

The visit of Mr Li, the first by a Chinese Prime Minister since that of the late Chou En-lai in 1960, two years before India and China fought a border war, seems carefully designed to place the relations between the two neighbours on a new footing in both political and economic fields. Both sides will, it is said, discuss their continuing border dispute, but they will probably avoid any moves which complicate creation of a new framework for better bilateral relations. The best that the two sides can do at this stage is to let their officials continue their low-key discussion on their differences, knowing full well that there is unlikely to be another flare-up on the border in foreseeable future. There is also bound to be a discussion, perhaps a heated one, on the activities of the Dalai Lama in India, with the Chinese side probably complaining that the Tibetan leader is given far too much freedom by New Delhi to indulge in political activities within the country and abroad.

The Chinese assurance that Mr Li's visit to New Delhi would not hurt Beijing's relations with a third country is obviously directed at Pakistan. Islamabad has no reason to treat this assurance with any reservation, in view of the strong foundation which serves as the basis of Sino-Pakistan ties. However, it will undoubtedly please Islamabad if Mr Li's visit can produce a reiteration of Sino-Indian endorsement of Pakistani proposal to declare South Asia a nuclear arms-free zone. In this context, the two sides should discuss what Beijing and New Delhi can do to contain the spread of nuclear weapons, even if they are not yet ready to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty — which, we think, they ought to — as suggested by both Washington and Moscow.

On the positive side, the discussion on the economic relations should prove more productive than talks on political issues, with prospects of long range developments. Both sides see each other as a vast market, with immediate possibilities of raising the level of the two-way trade which, at the moment, stands at a modest \$280 million a year. Later, the two countries can look at the area of technical co-operation as well as at an exchange of knowhow in such fields as flood control, protection of environment and family planning. There are no reasons why co-operation between China and India in these areas cannot be expanded to cover the involvement of such South Asian countries as Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh. All these possibilities can be explored when the two countries — and others in the region — view one another without undue suspicion and recognise that, in the changed international climate, Asian countries — especially the two giants, India and China — must move forward towards co-operation — bilateral and regional — under their own steam and volition. In this context, the visit of Premier Li Peng to New Delhi has come exactly at the right time. It deserves to be a success, setting a process in motion in the best interest of the two countries and the region.

Democracy in Myanmar

We value our relationship with our neighbours. We have always stood for friendly and most cordial relationship with Myanmar. But we also value democracy. We have fought numerous battles with military juntas during our Pakistan days and have just celebrated the first anniversary of bringing down the nine-year-old autocratic regime of Gen Ershad. So we, more than many other nations in the world who have not suffered in the hands of military dictatorships, understand the need for and value of the importance of a democratic system of government.

While the world is honouring the leader of Myanmar Aung San Suu Kyi, the authorities are persecuting her. While the international community is singing her praise as a democratic leader, her own government is keeping her interned as a subversive element. It is perhaps expected of a regime which has never had any right to rule its people, and lost whatever—if ever—legitimacy it had after its total rejection by the people during the last elections nearly two years ago.

While Suu Kyi was being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Burmese students who were protesting her house arrest and continued detention, were being rounded up — yet once again. According to reports, 4,000 university students were locked inside the campus.

In a typical move for any military dictatorship, afraid to face the wrath of the people, the Burmese SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Committee) shut down all of the nation's universities, colleges and technical schools. It is to be noted that Rangoon University, the hub of pro-democracy movement, has been closed for nearly two years. The Burmese junta must realise that time has run out on them and today or tomorrow they will have to bow to the will of the people. They may have already waited a bit too long, giving rise to fears that the Burmese Generals have expressed to the Philippines Foreign Minister that they are afraid of a "Nuremberg-type Trial" if the military should step down now.

THE size of our population is now estimated at about 110 millions and we are increasing at the rate of about three millions a year. Even at a slightly reduced birth rate, our population by the end of this century is estimated to be in the region of between 130 and 135 millions. The question is whether even with the highest rate of industrial and agricultural growth, this tiny land of ours would be able to sustain so vast a population above the poverty line. An equally important aspect of this problem is the possibility of our landmass shrinking over the years. According to the New York-based Worldwatch Institute, large areas of Bangladesh, nearly 75% of the entire coastal belt, are barely five feet above the surrounding sea level and coastal storm erosion in the delta regions is more rickety than almost anywhere in the world. Natural disasters in the Bay of Bengal must be considered more rather than less likely in the future years. As a result, the low-lying areas will gradually become less and less habitable and the housing, roads and other infrastructure necessary to accommodate the displaced people will make the habitable and arable land still more scarce. There will be the greatest concentration of human beings on the smallest land mass on earth. No amount of industrialisation and agricultural production will be able to sustain so vast a population, far less improving the quality of their lives. The very thought of it is indeed terrifying.

Our present economic planning does not seem to take into account the spectre of population which is staring at our face. We continue to harp on some borrowed pet theories which, for our future survival, are not even distantly as important as our foremost need for containing the population and also for taking simultaneous steps for poverty alleviation and providing for at

least basic primary education for the vast majority. What may be relevant to other countries need not necessarily be relevant to ours, for circumstances differ from country to country and each country must, therefore, so adjust its plans as will best serve the country's special needs.

Industrialisation is capital intensive. On a large scale, it involves larger capital investments, thereby necessitating the diversion of scarce resources from other more urgent sectors. With the capital required to create one job in an industry, several hundred jobs can be created in agriculture and its allied fields. Except for absolutely essential industries, other industries can wait. When we have some

and, in fact, will make it worse day by day. The bulk of our resources should, therefore, be allocated, first, to population control and, secondly, to poverty alleviation activities and education. Poverty alleviation activities can be in the fields of increased productivity in agriculture, co-operative-based cottage industries, community-based pisciculture-cum-duck and poultry farming, etc., which are now being so successfully practised in many fast-developing countries of the East.

The traditional method of motivating people for family planning is a long process. As time does not wait, such a

Contraceptives and pills should be supplied free or at a nominal cost at all clinics. Sterilisation at the clinics should be equally free. Voluntary sterilisation should be encouraged by the offer of substantial rewards. Male sterilisation being much easier and also absolutely harmless compared with female sterilisation, rewards for the former should be double of that of the latter.

Corruption of any kind at the clinics should be severely dealt with. Preaching against family planning should be barred by law. It may also be made compulsory for all Imams of mosques to make the benefits

one-child or two-child employee should be given preference over those with larger families in matters of promotion, special increments, etc. An employee retiring with one or two children should receive additional retirement benefits and increased pension compared with employees with larger families. Conversely, employees having two or more children should forfeit further increments or promotion with the birth of an additional child and so on.

Our present system of the distribution of agricultural inputs is not only faulty, in fact, it discourages farmers to use modern methods of increasing their productivity. Fertilisers and insecticides are available at Government sales depots

marked thereon, including the commission of wholesalers and retailers. These items will then be easily available at all grocery shops and departmental stores throughout the country. Such a procedure will serve the purpose of its own advertisement, for, in order to maximise their commission, the wholesalers and retailers will do their best to motivate the buyers to buy more and more of their merchandise. By such a method, the Government will be able to save a huge amount currently being incurred in maintaining numerous sales depots for direct sale. The savings could go towards reducing the prices of fertilisers and insecticides. The Government should also immediately expand its activities for poverty alleviation on a war footing similar to those for population control.

Unless we can contain the population within the earliest possible time, our long-term grandiose plans will remain plans only on paper, for whatever growth we are able to achieve in the industrial, commercial and agricultural fields will forever be overtaken by population growth and we shall only get poorer than we are today. With poverty on the one hand and widespread unemployment on the other, it will be like sitting on a volcano which could erupt any moment and destroy the entire fabric of the society. There would be no economic or political stability and crimes and lawlessness will be continually on the increase which no Government will be able to contain. Economic decisions should be taken on economic considerations alone so as to benefit the greater number and not on political considerations or for cheap propaganda purposes without having regard to their economic consequences.

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breathing time and, thereafter, the resources, we can easily make up for the lost time. The population explosion, however, does not wait. The boom must, therefore, be halted right now and today. Once millions and millions are born, the country shall have to sustain them for decades to come and such a situation can only compound our already existing multifarious problems. In consequence, any growth in our economy will remain only a distant hope and a totally unattainable goal.

We are already one of the poorest and at the same time most-populated countries of the world and unless urgent and drastic measures are taken to contain the population, stark poverty will continue to stalk us for all time to come. Our present economic planning and resource allocation are more in favour of those who are already at an advantage compared with the vast majority. Under emphasis on industrialisation will only perpetuate the existing situation

method is bound to negate its own purpose. In the context of the special circumstances prevailing in our country, our immediate and principal aim should, therefore, be to tackle our problem No. 1, i.e. population boom, on a war footing in the same manner in which the entire nation was mobilised to face the calamity which befell us early this year. There should be a crash programme for family planning, say, spreading over a 5-year period. Family planning is an intensely personal matter. Besides, the vast majority of our population are illiterate. What is needed is a person-to-person and house-to-house approach. Two field workers, one male and the other a female, should be assigned to each of the 85000 villages and, perhaps, about 10,000 or more bustees and slums in the urban areas. A network of clinics should be established within a radius of every 2/3 miles throughout the country. A few weeks' orientation course should be adequate to train the field work-

of family planning a part of their Friday 'khubas'. There should be no dearth of field workers, for we have millions of unemployed educated boys and girls who will be only too glad to find some employment. There should also be no dearth of doctors, provided their remuneration is reasonably attractive and they are also provided with accommodation with minimum basic necessities. The principal aim of the crash programme should be to contain the population at the earliest possible time, particularly in areas where the growth is the highest, i.e. in villages, bustees and slums. People with smaller families, say, with no more than two children should be rewarded in the form of cheaper rations, bank loans at reduced rates of interest, etc. There should be a similar programme in cities and towns where the success of the programme could be made more effective. In all organised institutions, public and private, such as offices, mills, factories and large establishments, a

alone. The depots are widely dispersed and farmers find it difficult to obtain their requirements without taking a day off from their work. More often than not, more than one visit becomes necessary due to lack of supplies or otherwise the sales staff being away on authorised or furlough leave. This is the personal experience of the writer who, living in the metropolis, has to spend about Tk 50 on transport to buy just one kg of fertiliser at a cost of Tk 8. If this is the case in the metropolis itself, it is not difficult to imagine what the actual conditions are elsewhere in the country. This is considered excessive and beyond the reach of most farmers. The distribution of fertilisers and insecticides should be privatised immediately. The Government should sell the fertilisers and insecticides in packets and bottles of various sizes to wholesalers and retailers through Government depots at all district and upazila headquarters with the prices

Shot-and-Shell Robinson Says He'll Win Again

Lindsay Mackoon writes from Port of Spain, Trinidad

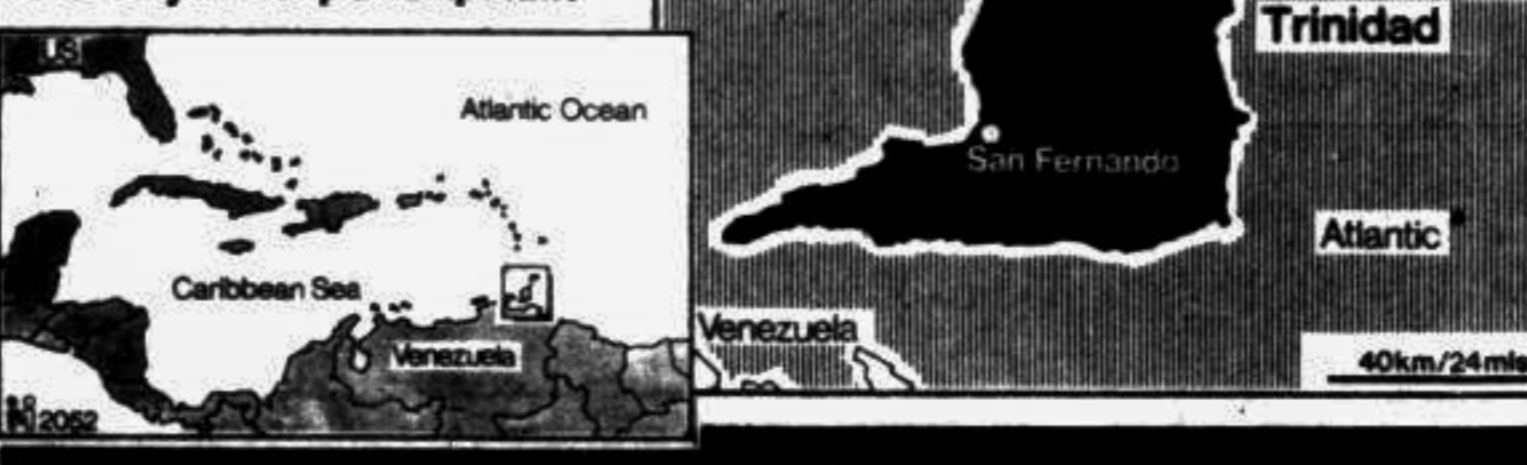
Prime Minister Ray Robinson, who survived a coup attempt last year after being held hostage in Parliament, is taking Trinidad and Tobago to the polls. Till recently he was thought bound to lose because of unpopular economic reforms. But now, an opinion poll has put his party well ahead.

Trinidad and Tobago

Prime Ministers: Dr Eric Williams, 1962-81; George Chambers, 1981-86; Arthur Robinson, 1986-



- 1496 Columbus lands, claims Trinidad for Spain
- 1802 After wars with France Trinidad ceded to Britain
- 1814 Tobago ceded to Britain
- 1888 Trinidad and Tobago amalgamated
- 1962 Independence
- 1970 Black power uprising and army mutiny
- 1990 July 27 Coup attempt fails



Robinson came into office on December 16 1986 with an overwhelming 33-seat victory to the PNM's three. The NAR cut the salaries of public workers by 10 per cent, raised taxes on phone, water and electricity, devalued the Trinidad and Tobago dollar (which now fetches 23 US cents) and slapped on a 15 per cent value added tax system.

The austerity moved led to a sharp fall in party popularity. This has now been reversed. The NAR is ahead of the PNM by nine per cent (NAR 33, PNM 24), according to the poll.

Tobago-born lawyer Robinson, whose 65th birthday is also on December 16, said the findings would give his party the courage to intensify its work in the field. But he added: "I am never carried away by polls. There is no room to be complacent."

"I personally feel my faith in the people of Trinidad and Tobago on which I have built my political life for 35 years will prove to be completely justified."

to pursue are definitely in the best interest of Trinidad and Tobago."

Events that have been taking place all over the world, he said, "have been assisting in bringing that realisation home to people generally that the NAR is on the right course. It is acting in the interest of the nation and the party deserves a second five-year term in office. We stood our ground through shot and shell and preserved our country's freedom and democracy. We have built a platform for the future progress of the nation."

But Manning is confident his PNM that led the country out of colonialism to independence and republican status will again capture government after five years in the wilderness.

He said: "I think that Robinson has made a proper decision for the first time in a very long time by setting the date. We are very happy the population now has the opportunity to decide who should serve the interest of the people of Trinidad and Tobago."

Two earlier opinion polls suggested the PNM would win. Panday, however, predicts victory for the UNC: "The

elections are wide open and our chances are as good as anyone else's. We are confident of winning a majority of seats. The NAR is going to get the shock of its life."

Before the latest opinion poll, the 57-years-old lawyer and trade unionist had said the UNC, which the poll credited with 12 per cent support, would hold "the balance of power" in Parliament. He said: "The election is about honesty and accountability."

However, the main issues are mounting unemployment (about 150,000 jobsless), soaring food prices, lack of basic drugs in hospitals, hunger and poverty, drug trafficking, and what opposition politicians call the "mismanagement of the country's economy since the NAR took office almost five years ago."

Apart from the three main parties, the NAR, PNM, and the UNC, minority groups such as the National Joint Action Committee (NJAC), the Movement for Social Transformation (MOTION), and several former MPs who have quite their parties and run as independents, will be contesting.

More than 800,000 are eligible to vote. It is expected 150 candidates will be nominated to fight for the 36 seats. — GEMINI NEWS

LINDSAY MACKOON, a former night editor of the Trinidad Express, is a widely-travelled Caribbean journalist currently based in Port of Spain.

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.

Rupsa ferry ghat

Sir, With reference to the letter of Mr Md Abed Ali on the above subject published in The Daily Star dated December 1, I am pleased to inform you that a certain degree of traffic discipline has been created since the recent visit of the Prime Minister.

On the western or city side, traffic pattern has been arranged so that rickshaws and other slow-moving vehicles have to wait for the ferry on the left lane and cars, trucks, buses and such other mechanised vehicles wait on the right side lane. A similar, but less strictly regulated, arrangement has been made for the other bank also. But the question is, whether this is a cosmetic measure designed for the visit of the Prime Minister, or will it remain as a permanent feature.

On the eastern bank of the river, vehicles remain parked on the kutcha shoulders of the paved highway, so that vehicles have no space other than the paved portion to maneuver in. The congestion of parked vehicles so close to the paved portion is because of unauthorised construction of shops and other establishments on either side. Some time ago a notice was published in the local newspapers ordering the owners of these unauthorised structures to remove them; but no action has so far been taken yet.

Most of the travelling public suggest that all unauthorised construction should be removed from both sides of the Khulna-Mongla Road from the ferry ghat up to the petrol pump; and the entire width of the space in possession of the RHID must be paved. Additional

space must be acquired for the construction of bus, microbus and baby taxi terminals. Rickshaw stands must be designated as close to the ghat as possible, and also some utilities such as one or two restaurants and other shops for essentials must be constructed as near to the ghat as possible. There must also be arrangements for a first-aid station with twenty-four-hour service on both banks.

As regards revenue collection, till lately, the ghat used to be auctioned or tendered to the highest bidder. But now-a-days, the IWTA is collecting the tolls directly. Rickshaws and rickshaw-vans are charged Taka 2.00; private cars Taka 15.00; buses Taka 50.00 and trucks Taka 75.00. There are intermediate rates for other types of vehicles, but there is no charge for pedestrians, although before the IWTA took over, pedestrians used to be charged 25 paise whether they crossed by ferry or spent extra money for crossing the river by country boat. While most of the pedestrians cross by ferry, there are enough customers to help more than a hundred boatmen to earn their livelihood from this ferry ghat.

Normally it costs one Taka to cross the river by country boat, and the boats generally take ten passengers; or else, one can charter a boat for crossing the river by paying five Takas provided your party consists of only one or two people.

Now, almost all the people who cross the river at Rupsa can afford to pay Taka 1.00 for the river crossing; as such, the IWTA may consider re-imposing the pedestrian crossing charge and fix it at the rate of one Taka per person, with exemptions for children under twelve. In this manner revenue earning for the ferry ghat could be enhanced, and the same may be spent on improving public facilities at the ghat and maintaining them at a good standard.

The metalled road on both banks of the river do not go as far as the ghat. There is a brick-soled portion between the end of the metalled road and the place where the ferry berths. Unlike the Aricha ghat, Rupsa is a permanent ghat; as such, some permanent arrangement must be made with a better standard of soling or even concreting those portions. In the present situation, the condition of these un-

evenly soled portions leads to several accidents every day.

It is hoped that the authorities concerned will take cognizance of the above grievances for their amelioration.

Anwar Firoze, Babu Khan Road, Khulna

BARI

Sir, In recent years, the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) has made significant contributions in the field of agricultural research and development. So far BARI has released several high yielding varieties of crops and designed and developed a number of agricultural implements and practices.

Recently, BARI has evolved an HYV of lentil pulse named 'Uftala' which received certification of the National Seed Board on June 5 last for releasing all over the country. This pulse variety is early-ripening and its production is 20-25 per cent higher than any other existing varieties.

Under the cooperation of the International Joint Organisation (IJO), BARI has innovated an improved 'Bari-IJO seed-sowing machine'. By changing the dispersion plate, seeds of rice, wheat, mustard

and all pulses can be sown in rows with the help of this new machine.

Besides research, BARI is also offering training to agricultural scientists and other professionals.

M. Zahidul Haque, Assistant Professor, Bangladesh Agricultural Institute, Dhaka

MRT: An appreciation

Sir, Many thanks to 'The Daily Star' for presenting verbatim report on important economic issues through Media Round Table (MRT) which was held on November 19.

The Daily Star has proved successfully that modern journalism is not only confined within reporting and editing but it has large responsibility towards national progress. Our national economic trends and issues were minutely analyzed in that MRT. Also thanks to The Daily Star that it has handed such kind of rich discussions by a galaxy of speakers.

Rafsan M. Chowdhury, East Hazrapara Dhaka