

# Disaster to Growth: Is it Possible?

## For a Nuclear-free Earth and Space

President George Bush's decision to destroy all United States battlefield nuclear weapons in a far-reaching unilateral move, represents a bold and timely step forward. In addition, Bush's proposal announced Saturday to eliminate all US and Soviet Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM) armed with multiple warheads is qualitatively the most significant disarmament proposal since the nuclear arms race began in the late 1940s. Land-based strategic missiles with upto 14 warheads targeted independently or in a bunch have posed the gravest threat of mass destruction in the nuclear era. Their departure from the scene will be one of the most unlamented passages in the history of warfare.

The move represents an explicit recognition of the fact that, with the end of the Cold War and disappearance of the perceived Soviet "threat", nuclear weapons have outlived their usefulness. Nuclear arsenals of the West and the USSR have always been justified on the grounds that they helped to preserve peace by making the likely cost of a superpower conflict, in terms of human casualties and environmental damage, too colossal to contemplate. With the threat of superpower conflict now gone, President Bush has shown he has the essential honesty and courage required of a statesman by getting down to some serious denuclearisation at the very first opportunity.

However, Bush's announcement that the B-2 Stealth bomber project and the trillion-dollar Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI or Star Wars) would not be affected by the down-grading of nuclear deployment and preparedness, showed even he had to give something to military-industrial interest groups in order to make his proposals acceptable to all at home. After all, what would be the use of deploying anti-missile systems in space if there are no ballistic missiles for them to shoot down? Similarly, if all US strategic bombers are going to lose their nuclear payloads, then would not the B-2 be far too costly a vehicle for dropping conventional bomb loads?

It is true that the SDI programme has branched off into so many areas of technology that it has contributed more to the accuracy and lethality of conventional weapons than to its intended development of anti-missile capability. That is one reason why Bush probably cannot simply axe the programme. According to expert opinion, there may even be scope for the civilian sector of the US economy to benefit from spin-offs of SDI-related research.

However, we need to be assured that SDI will shed its Star Wars components, even if research continues in new areas of technology. In other words, SDI research must not lead to deployment in space. While a bold initiative has been taken to free the earth of nuclear weapons which has every chance of success, the US must make sure, for the sake of peace in the future, that the resources thus released will not be used to militarise outer space. Space is the next frontier for the human race, and we need to be assured of a combat-free prospect of exploration for the benefit of all mankind.

The Bush initiative has now opened an opportunity for the other three nuclear powers — Britain, France and China — to come into the mainstream of world disarmament. With a positive Soviet response to Bush's proposal almost certain, every effort must now be made to persuade the other three Permanent Members of the United Nations Security Council not to modernise their existing stocks of weapons. Instead they should put their weapons up for negotiations for a global end to nuclear confrontation. Only then can sufficient pressure be brought on the pretenders to nuclear-power states — Israel, South Africa, India, Pakistan and Argentina — in order to achieve a totally and permanently nuclear-free world.

## Rather than Grieving, Let's Celebrate

The 'Eternal Vagabond' was not so vagabond after all. Forget his modest birth and unsure childhood in London or the still unsurer groping about life as an immigrant in America, the rest of his life is one brilliant success story with its usual undulations. Was he a success with women? What makes us to remember Charles Chaplin 14 years after his death and why does that particular question comes to mind?

By the time he was 54 and one of the world's most famous men, Chaplin had married three and all three had left him. Or perhaps he has left them. Three jewels of beauty and charm, three Hollywood idols. Well, that can at the very best be a dubious testament as to his success with women. And at the selfsame 54 he met Oona, the great playwright Eugene O'Neill's youngest daughter. She was 18. They married and lived happily ever after which was in fact a 34-year span from 1943 till Chaplin's death in 1977. Oona had to pay for her great love duty. The great Eugene rejected his wayward child for good.

Lady Oona died last Friday at her home at a Swiss hillside village. The news brought back to those that were grown up enough to be mentally embroiled in the furor created in '43 by their marriage so many memories full of so much full of worries and anticipations. To many of us Oona was a little darling all of a sudden turned into a great heroine. Great she proved in many ways, not the least of which was that she bore the aging Chaplin — O, don't wince — eight children which in their had already begotten 17 grand-children.

Oona's death reminds us that the Bedouin of a character found his oasis in a little girl when he was past his prime. And their grotesquely unequal and nevertheless wonderfully successful marriage cannot but remind us of an even more unequal and as peaceable and blissful a marriage — that of the world's greatest cellist Pablo Casals. At 81 he had married his 23-year-old student and lived happily till his death well into his nineties.

But we are talking about very 'unequal' people. Chaplin and Casals, to borrow from the physicist — cosmologists specially from Stephen Hawking, are 'singularities' where all laws of the world break down. And these human 'singularities' do not occur in society even in centuries. Ordinary mortals should beware of taking cues from such.

Rather than grieving over her death let us celebrate Oona and Charles' great love on the occasion of her funeral tomorrow.

THE shattering experience of 29 April left the nation momentarily stunned and muted. One of the poorest countries of the world is being repeatedly devastated by natural calamities. The floods of 1987 and 1988 were menacing blows to our food production. The respite during the following two years did not enable the national economy to fully recover the losses due to political turmoil. The net gain however has been return to democracy.

The catastrophic cyclone and massive tidal waves in the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh severely affected 10 per cent of the population of 112 million. At least one-eighth of the boro crop was lost. Millions rendered homeless. The total loss of human lives is anybody's guess since accurate estimates are impossible. In the most intensely devastated areas, perhaps the entire livestock population has been wiped out. So is the case with shrimp farms constituting third highest foreign exchange earner for the country. In terms of human suffering, simply a living hell descended upon the coast.

Bangladesh suffered from a similar natural disaster in 1970. It was relatively less severe but more people were killed at that time because protection to human lives was hardly in existence. Better cyclone warning system, disaster preparedness and construction of a limited number of cyclone shelters saved many lives this time. But it wasn't enough. There were and still are pending schemes for construction of more such shelters. Since life must be pro-

tected at all costs, such schemes cannot be weighed in terms of benefits to be derived against the cost of such projects. The severity of cyclone and tidal surge of 29 April must compel us to realize that for life to survive, there simply is no alternative to the construction of sheltered villages or raised earthen platforms surrounded by a protective belt of trees of high economic value, for example, coconut, — an ideal choice for the purpose.

If during the last 20 years since the last great devastation of 1970, we had built up the vital infrastructure for protection of human lives and also a large part of the livestock population, then the crops, shrimps and the salt would have been lost but these losses are temporary and can be replenished within a year or less. It is the human loss which is irreplaceable and is the seed of disaster.

### Sheltered Village

For the 12 million severely affected coastal population, what is necessary is to construct 1,200 sheltered villages, each accommodating around 2,000 families, on the average. The existing concept of cyclone shelter is too restrictive, protecting human beings but not the vital capital resources of coastal villages. The sheltered villages, relatively large in size can safeguard livestock, poultry, fishing boats and nets as well. With secured source of fresh water, emergency food stock, telecommunication with the outside world and basic medical facilities, such sheltered villages can take care of themselves in the critical period immediately

following a cyclone and tidal onslaught. Not only that resumption of economic activities would be facilitated on a self-sustained basis with minimum outside help, the rehabilitation/reconstruction period will be curtailed in spite of the havoc that destroy the croplands.

What is emphasized here refers to self-reliant coastal habitats which are sheltered from tidal onslaughts. Destruction of the standing crops is a time-bound phenomenon. Within a year, cultivable land can be restored back to its past glory but not the human loss, the destruction of homes, or loss of vital

### Fish: Employment

Canning of imported tuna, can be a significant source of employment for the sheltered villages. Not only tuna, our export of fish is mostly in the frozen form. Attempts should therefore be made to export more canned rather than frozen fish. The value added would not only increase export earnings but promote highly labour intensive industry along the coastal belt and outer islands. Other industries, particularly those in support of deep-sea fishing can also be promoted as a part of the development of sheltered villages.

the coastal habitat.

Land-use planning will then be effective: the most vulnerable areas nearest to the sea can be left to permanent trees, coconut in particular and mangroves. Only then the desired forest belt to bear the first brunt of the tidal onslaught can be created on a permanent basis.

Fishing should become the major occupation of coastal villagers. It is true in the rest of the world. Bangladesh is the only exception since the overwhelming preference is for fresh water fish. The country possesses 480 kilometres of coast line and claims 40,000 square kilometres of the continental shelf as the fishing territory. In fact a vast tract of 2.8 million hectares, bordering the northern apex of the Bay of Bengal constitute the coastal and offshore area where fishing could not only be promoted but at several suitable locations, cultured fishery, particularly of shrimps and shellfish, is possible.

### Accretion, Afforestation

With the growth of forests in the newly formed lands, the rate of accretion itself would be accelerated. Since 1970, we have been harping that 10,000 square miles of new territory, virtually a new Bangladesh, is under formation out in the disaster-ridden Bay. It is a myth today but could be a reality tomorrow if hundreds of thousands of land hungry peasants could be prevented from going in to the sea and staking out their claims. And, this can best be done by creating enough opportunities of employment and income in the proposed sheltered villages of the coast.

The extreme reaches of the newly formed lands should then be subjected to a vigorous afforestation programme. Literally billions of seeds and seedlings should be planted. For this purpose, the new tissue culture technology has to be mastered by our experts in order to produce the very large quantities of planting materials. Tissue culture for accelerated coastal afforestation through coconut seedlings in particular is an urgent necessity. Why it has not come about so far is simply a mystery to me.

The rapid expansion of forests in the Bay of Bengal would not only develop the major barrier to fight against tides and storms, it would create niches along creeks and salt water marshes — the ideal breeding grounds for shrimp and shellfish. But this can come much later.

At present, from disaster to growth is a feasible proposition through sheltered village development for economic rejuvenation of the coastal economy where fishery, fish processing and poultry are the main sources of growth. At the next round — within 10 years — millions of acres of coastal forests and new fishing grounds would release new momentum of growth for coastal Bangladesh.

The main cause of the disaster of 29 April was not the storm or the tide — it was poverty. People are too poor to withstand the ravages from natural calamities. Sheltered villages are the nucleus for economic growth and the assault against poverty; while afforestation is the defence against the angry sea.

## From LDC to NIC by Shahed Latif

assets like cattle and fishing boats. At the same time, embanking the vulnerable coast with very high embankments or depopulating the newly formed lands for generating the growth of mangrove forests through regulations are extremely difficult, if not impossible tasks.

Instead, if we concentrate on building up sheltered villages with sheltered areas for fishing craft and intensify deep sea fishing as well as fish processing for export, then not only protection against natural disasters will be ensured, the growth of the village economy based on fishery might also be brought about. It should also be feasible to develop intensive shrimp culture or shellfish farming with the limited protective embankments for sheltered villages.

Production of fish meal from the trash fish which are wasted at present will be a new type of industry to develop. Cultivation of a dryland coarse grain crop, which is salt tolerant combined with the fish meal can lead to the establishment of poultry feed factories. Production of egg and broiler meat should then follow in the sheltered villages.

Fishing, processing thereof, other agro-based industries, and poultry farming constitute the major sources of employment vital for the success of the anti-disaster programme. This is because alternative jobs and income earning opportunities, if available, would generate sufficient inducements to coastal people to remain in the sheltered villages and not venture out to the newly formed lands and open them up for grazing, paddy cultivation and eventual disaster of

# Objections to VOA Radio Station

Harold Pieris writes from Colombo

Sri Lanka has to take Indian sensitivities into account before allowing a Voice of America construction project to go ahead

INDO-Sri Lankan relations are manifestly of the mend after the setting up of a Joint Commission to boost cooperation between the two countries. But a contentious issue has yet to be ironed out: the future of Voice of America in Sri Lanka.

A decision by the Colombo government to allow the United States to set up a Voice of America (VOA) broadcasting station in the country caused some concern to India as soon as it became known.

The government is due to sign an agreement with the United States for the construction of this station on a 318-acre site at Iranawila in the north-west of the country. The accord would be seen as replacing a 1985 agreement between the then US Ambassador and Sri Lanka's Broadcasting Corporation chief.

The project came to a standstill in the aftermath of the Indo-Lanka Peace Accord, signed in July 1987, which saw a tilt in the island nation's foreign policy towards India. Although the accord signed between the then President JR Jayewardene and the late Rajiv Gandhi dealt mainly with Sri Lanka's ethnic crisis, letters exchanged between the two leaders at the time promised that Sri Lanka's territory would be used in any way to threaten India's security.

The new station would comprise three 500-kilowatt transmitters as well as some 250-kilowatt ones. It would

beam shortwave broadcasts to many Asian countries, including India. Reports also say that this project would be linked to Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

Another construction scheme has become associated with the projected broadcasting station. There are plans to set up a multi-million-dollar tourist resort — consisting of villas, rest-houses, golf links, etc. — in the same area of the north-west.

Now, both projects have run into trouble.

Iranawila, in the Puttalam district, is a predominantly Roman Catholic area and is in the electoral constituency of Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Harold Herat.

It was among this community that the first signs of resistance to the schemes emerged. Led by local priests as well as community leaders, residents of the area argued that both the VOA station and the tourist complex would result in "declining moral standards" as well as the displacement of residents.

The protests occurred in early May, just a few days before the island-wide local government elections. Although the government moved quickly to reassure the residents, the ruling United National Party (UNP) led the elections in an area which it had held for many years; this contrasted with the party's success in other areas. Analysts felt that the two projects has swayed

some voters against the government.

The acting Ambassador of the United States, Donald B. Westmore, led a delegation to meet the area's Roman Catholic Bishop, Frank Marcus Fernando. In these discussions, and also in a letter to the bishop, the US envoy gave assurances that the VOA project would not disrupt the day-to-day life of the people and also pledged that residents would not be evicted from the area.

The diplomat also told the bishop that the project would result in the building of new roads and an expansion of water and electricity supplies.

Meanwhile, the Federation of Assemblies of Muslim Youth in Sri Lanka (FAMYS) has written to President Ranasinghe Premadasa protesting against the plans for the VOA station, warning that its presence would be a threat to the country's security. The main thrust of the organisation's representations has been that the VOA station would antagonise India by failing to take account of well known sensitivities.

Indeed, the Indian factor is seen as the major cause for concern. In late June the

Indian Foreign Secretary, Muckchund Dubey, held talks with his Sri Lankan opposite number, Bernard Tilakaratne, on the proposed station. During the talks, described as informal, Indian fears were expressed that the expanded facility might be used for covert military activity against India as well as intelligence gathering.

Sri Lankan officials have been quick to emphasise that the facility would be used only for the purpose of broadcasting radio programmes. However, politicians here have not forgotten that in the past the main reason for Indian interference in Sri Lanka's affairs has usually been that it felt that

its own security was threatened.

Up to 1980 India and Sri Lanka enjoyed good relations. Then, under the UNP government of president JR Jayewardene, foreign policy took a turn towards the West.

Speculation that the natural harbour of Trincomalee on the east coast would be given as a base to the United States; fears that the oil tanks in that port would be leased to western firms; the setting up of an Israeli interests office in Colombo — all helped to antagonise India, which began helping the Tamil separatists.

It was not until the Indo-Lanka Accord that relations between the two countries began to improve.

The controversy over the VOA station comes at a time when the United States is considered as the government's closest Western ally, following a deterioration of relations with Britain over incidents which led to the expul-

sion of High Commissioner David Gladstone.

Government sources stress that India has nothing to fear from the VOA station. They point out that Sri Lanka has also allowed Radio Deutsche Welle of Germany to set up a broadcasting station in Trincomalee; and that from 1950 Colombo was used as a VOA station, albeit in a limited way.

The project is not apparently considered a top priority by the US government, especially with the easing of relations with the Soviet Union. It has been even scaled down from earlier plans in the 1980s.

Yet many Sri Lankans feel that in the long term it would be prudent to reassure India rather than ignore its security fears. Insensitivity, they warn, could lead to deteriorating relations, which in turn could have a profound impact on the ethnic crisis and the war in the north. — *Depthnews Asia*

## OPINION

### Migration of the Talented: Looking through the Chart

We should, perhaps, think over the migration of the talented, the resourceful and the unemployed ambitious together with other groups (not shown in the chart) and their contribution to the country/countries migrated. Then, the simple arithmetic of what we receive from abroad and, due to our mismanagement, what we are losing. The amounts of loss invisible though, are in actual effect, no less colossal than the amounts received from abroad. In a word, I wish to invoke the history from the forced slavery to the present voluntary migration.

The President or Prime Minister of a Third World country, Bangladesh not excluded, in his/her capacity as the Chief Executive (CE) is in actual practice much different from what he/she looks like. The chart below explains CE's position and its links in the total context.

The international exposure leading to the formation of the political landscape from which the political parties emerge, briefly speaking, is a comprehensive stage of investment. We have our resource vacuum which cannot be denied. There are many other complex problems, too. These problems also cannot be overlooked.

From abroad, therefore, the situation is studied as a prerequisite to filling in the vacuum and for that matter, groups are re-vitalised or they are re-arranged. In doing so, superior knowledge in our situation is tied up with financial sanctions or conditionalities. The people are no more than an assumption, cut into pieces, to be controlled by the forces of terror in varying degrees. The role of semi pseudo

intellectuals has also been focused in the chart. The vested groups need no elucidation.

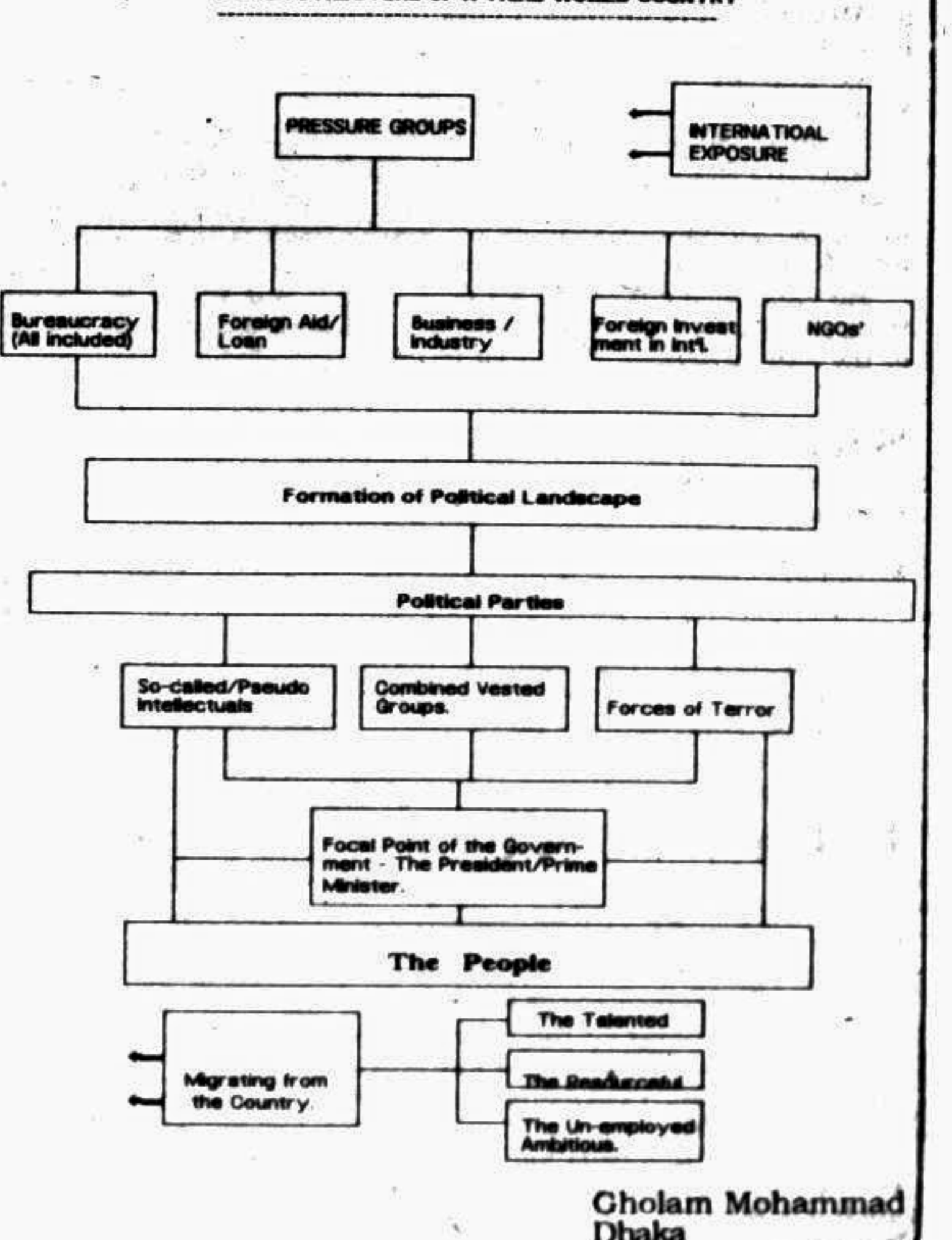
What is very important is the migrating point releasing the talented, the resourceful, the un-employed, ambitious etc., because, this marks the re-cycling of the investment process. From this stage onwards, arithmetic should set in motion to show, in figures, amounts obtained from abroad as assistance and lost abroad on account of brain drain. This

is, however, not a new phenomenon although its form is changed from forced slavery to voluntary migration.

We should take upon ourselves the blame for mismanaging our affairs creating a vacuum for superior forces to enter into. In the chart, therefore, the need to adjust and to introduce new boxes cannot be ruled out to correct the imbalances as far as possible keeping in view the resource and constraint positions.

Time is, perhaps, ripe now.

POWER STRUCTURE OF A THIRD WORLD COUNTRY



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.

### The neglected

Sir, I am commenting on the writing of Fayza Haq for a real touchy feature entitled "It's a hard day's work" — a topic on the neglected teenager of the street — a tea boy named Hameed Mia — fighting for the cause of his family, published in your esteemed daily dated Sept 27.

Fayza Haq definitely deserves congratulations and deep appreciation for depicting so vividly the frivolous twitterings of human lives — especially of the conditions of the overlooked children, the teenagers of the streets, the aged and the old and also the neglected destitutes of our society in which we very much live but never take a straight and serious look at these hapless humans nor do we have time to think, act, or even suggest anything to motivate the affluent people around us!

Problems, therefore, are multiplying every moment, all around, and we are just sitting on our problems. The street beggars, the "Tokais", the destitutes are just increasing in numbers while the improved versions like Hameed Mias are

also coming into picture for earning their bread forgetting their favourite 'chocolates' or 'ice creams' or even an hour on games.

A continuous process of national and international problems therefore are taking root in the society of which we are totally unconcerned and have no time to think of. However, Fayza Haq possesses the requisite degree of feelings and sensitiveness alongwith the technique to analytically portray the conditions of the wretched and neglected class of our people. It is presumed that she has also the heart bleeding for these people. It is presumed that she has also the heart bleeding for these people and not only the pen as a sword to fight with for their sake.

Anwarul Mohsin Jigatola, Dhaka - 1209.

### State religion

Sir, According to our Constitution Islam is the state religion of Bangladesh. Is there any legislator to

kindly explain what it stands for? Or, it is just a decoration!

Mohammad Kamal Chowdhury Tobenbee Circular Road Dhaka-1203.

### Waterlogging

Sir, With only an hour's downpour half of the Metropolitan Dhaka appears to be inundated. And it takes not less than half of the day's time for the waters to recede. This is the state of Dhaka's drainage, and citizens are seeking redressal for more than a year. But authorities appear to be more silent than effortful as yet. What we are going to experience next monsoon!

Juber Alam Khilgaon, Dhaka.

### Prostitution

Sir, All political parties, legislators and government executives oppose the continuity of prostitution in Bangladesh. But nobody comes forward for making law prohibiting the profession of the prostitutes. It is very difficult to read the intention of the government.

Is there anyone who can speak? If none speaks we have to presume that prostitution gets tacit encouragements in Bangladesh! Mohammed Fazlul Haq Motijheel C/A Dhaka-1000