Dhaka, Monday, November 18, 1991

The Politics of Deadlines

The Federation of Bangladesh University Teachers' Association (FBUTA) has issued an ultimatum to the government, to the effect that, if terror activities by various student organisations affiliated to major political parties are not ended by November 30, it would launch a movement. The statement by the umbrella organisation representing teachers' associations of nine universities clearly shows the gravity with which the academic community regard the current state of dislocation and uncertainty in the education sector as a whole, and in the universities in particular. Infact, we could even suggest that such a forthright and bold statement from teachers was long overdue, and as such, is a highly encouraging development.

However, there is, as with so many things at present, one small hitch. We are a little worried by the the issuance of the ultimatum. We may ask that, since the FBUTA has given a definite timetable for action and a deadline for clearing the campuses of terrorists, does the federation think the problem is so easily soluble?

It is an open secret that violence, which is one of the methods used by various political groups to gain physical control of the halls of residence in particular has been used for years now, and become virtually an integral part of body politic of the campus. This is the brutal reality, and it has developed over the years, not months. The teaching community, for reasons known best to themselves, failed to use their unquestioned moral authority over all these years to put an end to the process of degeneration which has finally led to the virtual institutionalisation of musclepower as part of the campus political scene.

We may hold the larger political parties responsible for bringing this situation about; we may hold the government responsible for failing to discharge its duties by allowing law and order to collapse on the campuses; but we may also hold the university authorities, including the Vice Chancellors and the teachers for failing in their duties. After all, it is academic community which should have been the first to act against this pro-

We share with the teachers the position that it is the government which must bring the law and order situation under control, before political parties can, if they are sincere enough, disengage their thugs. But it seems the politics of deadline has gripped the FBUTA as well. They know it as well as we do that things will not change in two weeks simply because somebody issues an ultimatum. Furthermore, it is a little baffling to understand what is meant by "movement". Dhaka University teachers are already, on strike, what would they do from Dec. 1? And will the positive impact of the movement, assuming it involves strike actions in other universities, be greater i. e. with longer-term benefits, than the damage that will inevitably be inflicted on the education of students through loss of classes and worsening of the current logiam in sessions?

If the teachers are convinced that a movement would bring the government and the opposition to their senses, then we wish them luck. But at the same time, we would strongly urge them to ponder over the consequences of issuing ultimatums in situations as delicate and uncertain as these. The situation is desperate, we agree, but we need cool heads to deal with it, not desperate actions and headline- catching ultimatums.

Benazir's Worry

The leader of the opposition in Pakistan's parliament, Benazir Bhutto, issued a warning last Saturday that the Kashmir issue could lead to a war between Islamabad and New Delhi, through an agency report carried by this and other papers yesterday. Although we cannot take the statement of a politician not in government as seriously as those issued by government leaders, such warnings can hardly be dismissed as mere-scaremongering either. Benazir Bhutto is well-aware of the responsible position she holds as the voice of Pakistan's opposition, and therefore, we may expect her to weigh her words carefully, lest they expose her an alarmist whose perceptions of

events could not be relied upon with any surety. When one watches the level of insurgency going on in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, the prospect of a face-off between India and Pakistan can never be ruled out. The Kashmir issue has never a straight-forward one, and since the emergence of two distinct anti-Delhi strands in the valley, i. e. one favouring independence and the other looking for union with Pakistan, it has become even more complex. However, recent statements by the Indian Desence Minister, Sharad Pawar, has tended to downplay fears of war. Despite evident Indiah frustrations with the insurgency and the security forces' apparent inability to control it, recent pronouncements from New Delhi have not been fiery enough to suggest that the psychological ground preparation necessary for war have begun. That is the good news.

While tension between the two traditional rivals may be high enough for Bhutto to become concerned, we still believe the leaders of both India and Pakistan are shrewd enough to realise that a war would be in no one's interest. A war would not solve the Kashmir problem to begin with, because that issue can only be resolved by the people of Kashmir themselves; just as important, a war this time would inflict enough damage on both countries to retard their economic development for years. Finally, it would wreck moves to forge closer ties among countries of the sub-continent.

Agrarian Reform and Industrialisation

TCE-CREAM factories based on imported milk powder Lor soft drinks where the only local ingredient is plain simple water do not constitute industrialisation. A large domestic market for varieties of manufactured goods and services must be the basis of industrialisation on which industrial competitiveness in the export market can be firmly established. But such sizeable domestic demand can only originate in the first instance within the agriculture sector. Millions of highly productive farmers ought to be the prime source of substantial demand for manufactured products. But such farmers are too few and would remain so until and unless the agrarian constraints are eliminated Absentee ownership and share-cropping will always counter growth of agriculture production. Agrarian reform and industrialisation are

deeply intertwined. Labour intensive footloose industries where the local content consist of cutting and stitching of imported fabrics or driving screws to put together electronic products can create employment on a large scale but without any meaningful technology transfer. However, in the face of stiff competition to attract such screw driving industries (or glorified tailoring shops) by very many low income countries, prospects seem to be

little Tibet or the last

Shangri-la by Western

Until two years ago,

But in July 1989, vio-

Buddhists have

tourists, India's most remote

border region, Ladakh, is

seething with sectarian and

political tensions which seem

likely to burst out in the open

Ladakh's 135,000 population,

even by split between

Buddhists and Shia Muslims,

hadco-existed peacefully, free

of the sectarian politics that

plague the nieghbouring

lence erupted in Leh, the re-

gion's capital. To control it the

army was called in and a cur-

few clamped on the town.

Though calm returned soon

afterwards, the divide between

the two communities has con-

shunned Muslims in Leh since

the 1989 clashes. Inter-com-

munity marriages, which had

been common for centuries,

have come to an end.

Buddhists refuse to buy goods

from shops owned by Muslims

or conduct any business with

Buddhists monasteries.

married a local Muslim hotel

owner 12 years ago, sighs

when she speaks of the con-

flict: "My parents have closed

their doors on me and my hus-

The rise of sectarianism in

Ladakh — particularly worrying

to New Delhi because of the

region's strategic location on

the Chinese and Pakistani bor-

ders .- is thought to owe its

origins to Ladakh resentment

against Sunni Muslim settlers

Kashmiri Muslims now oc-

cupy most key bureacratic po-

sitions in Ladakh. And

Buddhists activists complain

that Ladakh does not get its

fair share of financing from

Jammu and Kashmir, the

Muslim-dominated state to

which it belongs, despite the

Ram Singh, a building con-

region's relative poverty.

from Kashmir.

band," she says. "It's awful."

tinued to widen ever since.

at any time.

Kashmir valley.

limited. Also in the face of urgent needs to generate literally millions of jobs in the nonagriculture sectors, such assembly type export industries could absorb surplus labour; but how many? Labour supply is simply enormous. The 250,000 jobs in the garment industries so far have been a drop in the bucket.

Most important is the utter lack of technology transfer in such a mode of industrialisation where the import contents are usually too high and tend to remain as such. Prescritly, garment exports have shot up to around one billion dollars per annum; but not even one-tenth of the fabrics consumed by this huge socalled growth industry is domestically produced.

Backward Linkage

The strategy of industrialisation must not however be conceived in terms of discouraging the foot-loose, assembly type of industries. However policies must be designed in such a manner that there are strong backward linkages, so that together with garment industries, local spinning of yarn, weaving the yarns into textiles and then finishing them into ready-to-use fabrics by the garment industry are also brought about. Likewise, setting up of electronics assembly plants should inevitably lead to progressive

manufacture of components. It is very surprising but true that even the packing materials for garments are also imported Similarly, fee-cream factories and soft drink plants are well and good but should be followed by the use of local milk or the bottles for the soft drinks must be locally manu-

There is no substitute to the conscious efforts at sclective import substitution that do not impair free and fair com-

petition. The high growth

export markets. Screw-driving industries are not the hallmark of Korean industrialisation.

Lack of Demand

The main difficulty in the promotion of such chains of numerous industries, from spinning to garments or from steel to fabricated equipment where the technology becomes indigenous and manufactured goods and services are competitive in the world market. is lack of effective demand within the country. It is nei-

From LDC to NIC by Shahed Latif

economies of East and Southeast Asia have steadfastly followed the local content rule. Manufacturers are encouraged to assemble cars and televisions but gradually components have been locally manufactured thereby steadily reducing the import content of manufactured exports in particular to only 10 to 20 per cent of the export value. The large garments and leather goods industries in ASEAN and East-Asia are of 100 per cent domestic origin. Republic of Korea had boldly gone ahead with heavy industries and from manufacture of steel to heavy metal works as well as ship building which constitute a

significant share of total indus-

trial output heavily geared to

ther the investment nor the technology or liberal incentives which are constraints no doubt, but not too difficult to overcome. But unless the domestic demand for shirts and trousers, power tillers, motor cycles or television sets are fairly widespread so that several large scale factories are necessary, competitive pricing would not prevail and export capabilities cannot develop.

Let me explain the proposition through a concrete example: The demand for fabrics by the garment industry is large enough to support'several large composite textile plants. However, the size of the domestic market for such fabrics is extremely limited. Only on export demand, competition is too severe for a

sheltered niches of the domestic market which at the same time is expanding rapidly. constitute a vital necessity. Shirt is the major item produced by the garment industry. Now if such conditions are brought about whereby each Bangladeshi can afford to buy two shirts and a pair of trousers by the year 2000, then the domestic demand alone could far surpass the present size of the garment industry. Based on such scales of demand, accelerated growth of the textile industry as a whole and in all its aspects is inevitable. Only then the solid indigenous demand base for textiles should brighten the possibilities of the reemergence of golden Bengal as the textile centre of the world. The lost glories of 'muslin' from Bengal or the Dhaka malmal' - lost for the last few centuries — can be revived.

newcomer to survive. The

Basic Precondition

Growth of the agriculture sector which generates the desired scales of demand for manufactured goods and services is therefore the basic precondition for industrialisation. Not only self sufficiency in rice, but in fruits, vegetabics, edible oil, fish, milk and meat, must there be in abundance for all at reasonable prices. There is a tremendous

real foods. Therefore, fooddeficits in its broadest definition must be removed since enough can be produced from our limited lands. Although we will be 145 million by the year 2000, yet we can produce enough, and in varieties of foods, since the fertility of our land is enormous.

The breakthrough in agriculture is only possible through agrarian reforms. I have stated before and I wish to repeat again that if we want to alleviate poverty, elevate ourselves from the stigma of being least developed, agrarian reform comes first without which agricultural growth in terms of an intensive as well as diversified crop agriculture is simply impossible and without the rapid growth of agriculture, stagnation in the industrial sector can never be over-

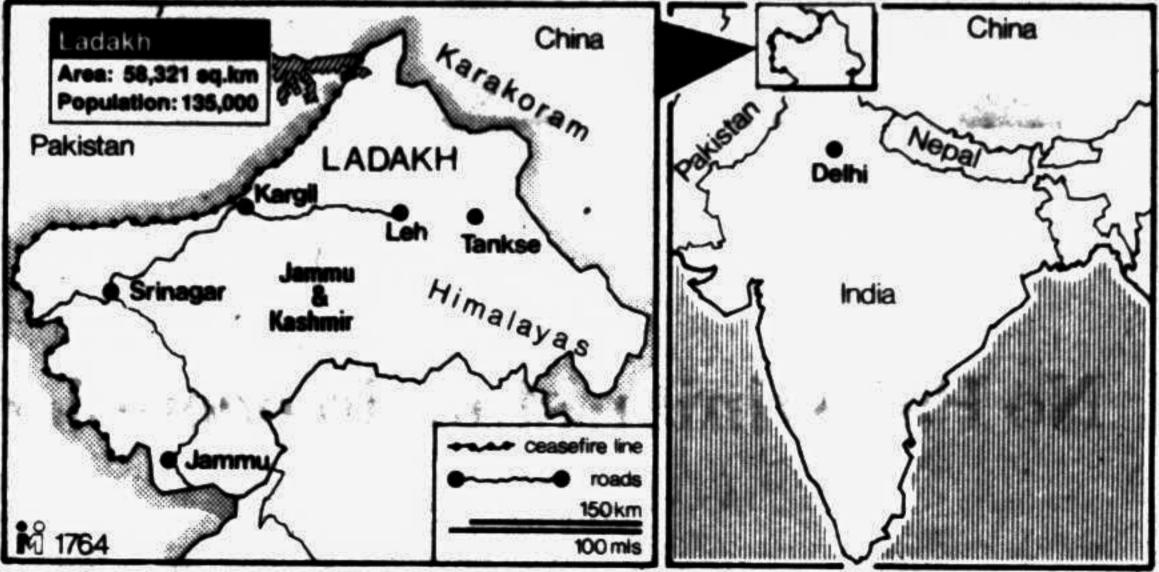
Agrarian reform in the context of Bangladesh today is not the ventilation of an ideologically charged plan of action. No political consideration is necessary. Agrarian reform is an economic necessity involving welfare of both the landed and the landless, it is the precondition for growth and development of Bangladesh economy, regardless of ideology, politics of the country or the basic state philosophy of Bangladesh.

Mounting Discontent in the Last Shangri-la ICKNAMED moonland,

A. J. Singh writes from Ladakh (India)

For centuries, Muslims and Buddhists have lived together peacefully in Ladakh, India's northernmost region. Now sectarian strife plagues the barren highland region, and Buddhist leaders are calling on New Delhi to let them secede from the Muslim-dominated state of Jammu and Kashmir. The conflict is particularly vexing to the Indian government, because Ladakh is strategically located next to two of its traditional rivals, China and Pakistan.

Bickering on the border



No Buddhists taxi driver will tractor who has lived in Lch take passengers to a hotel for almost two decades, says owned by a Muslim. And The Buddhists feel threatened Muslim taxi drivers, fearing by the Sunni Muslims of the that their vehicles will be stoned by monks or laymen, (Kashmir) valley who continue refuse to take tourists to

to call all the shots in Ladkah." Cultural difference between Ladakhis and the Sunni Dolma, 30, a Buddhists who Muslim trades from Kashmir have deepened the sectarian

Ladakhis work primarily in subsistence agriculture centred around the monastery, while Kashmiris dominate the tourist trade and hold down most government rural-devel-

opment jobs in the region. Ladakh covers 58,321 square kilometres of territory, larger area than the Kashmir valley and Jammu put together.

A high-altitu e plateau between 3,000 to 4,000 metres above sea level, Ladakh is a barren, virtually rainless area. The region owes its dry climate to the Himalaya mountains which block rain-filled

clouds from the south. The part of Ladakh which borders Tibet is called moonland because of its barren grey-brown terrain, intersected only by the occasional glacier-fed river.

Since 1988, Ladakh has been divided into two administrative districts representing distinct geographic and religious zones. Kargil, the smaller of the two zones, is inhabited primarily by Shia Muslims, while Leh is dominated by Buddhists.

Thupsten Chhewang, 45 president of the Ladakh Buddhists Association, says the recent administrative split of Ladakh is partly to blame for the the chasm between local Buddhists and Muslims.

The two new division, he adds, are the outcome of "machinations' by leaders such as Farrowq Abdullah, former chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir: "They carved out a separate Kargil district from Ladakh to divide the people of one region."

Anti-Kashmiri sentiment is thought to have prompted Buddhists to call on New Delhi in 1989 to carve Ladakh out of Jammu and Kashmir state and grant it Union Territory, or "UT" status.

tral government.

But shortly after the accord, political turmoil rocked the government of Jammu and Kashmir and the entire state was put under direct rule by New Delhi. The deal for administrative autonomy within Jammu and Kashmir could no longer be implemented.

Further complicating the situation, Muslims in the Kargil district - the newly-formed administrative district of Ladakh where Muslims outnumber Buddhists - refused to endorse the demands of the

Ladakhi Buddhists. Keeping this in mind. Buddhist activists decided that as of November, 1991, they would renew their agitation to leave the state. Henceforth, however, Buddhists would demand Union Territory status only for Leh district, where they remain a majority.

Chhewang says: "The raw deal given to Ladakhis in Leh by New Dehlt is forcing us to Status."

Leh residents appear overwhelmingly to support the renewed calls to secede from the state. Throughout towns in Leh are graffiti and posters which read : "Free Ladakh from Kashmir," and "Kashmiris go back."

The unrest worries New Delhi because of the region's strategic importance. For almost a decade, Indian and Pakistani forces have been involved in armed skirmishes at the Stachin glacier north of Leh. Both countries claim the glacier as their own. Moreover, China has occupied the neighbouring Aksai Chin area, once part of Ladakh, since a 1962 border war with India.

The right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), India's main opposition party in Parliament, now openly supports Buddhist demands for UT status. This puts pressure on the ruling Congress (I) government in New Delhi, led by P.V. Narasimha Rao, to act fast. To retain the support of Ladakhi Buddhists, Rao has little choice but to work out a compromise formula quickly with the Ladakhi Buddhist Association. — GEMINI NEWS

A.J. SINGH is a freelance Indian journalist who recently visited Ladakh.

make the project take off the

ground. Sometime after my

OPINION

Market Economy and Bureaucracy the aid money before we could

We are supposed to have adopted a policy of market economy, but no effective measures whatsoever have yet been taken to make the market economy work. In any industrial or commercial activity, time is of supreme importance, because time means productivity and, therefore, money; but our present bureaucratic and administrative systems attach the least importance to the value of time. Weeks, months and often years elapse before a final decision is taken on even small matters which can be easily disposed of in days, weeks and months. This is so because the decision-making is highly centralised, resulting in nobody taking any decision, thereby causing endless delays at all levels and at every step.

The fault in our present system lies not so much on the bureaucrats as such as it does on the system itself. If our market economy were to work as effectively as it should, decision-making should be decentralised and all concerned made accountable for their actions. Equally, it is also the lack of trust at all levels which makes decision-making so cumbersome and dilatory by way of resorting to voluminous and time-consuming notings on files. Wherever possible, decisions should be taken on the spot by personal discussions between the officials concerned.

If my own experience is any guide, I very much doubt whether our present market economy policy will go very far in bringing about any improvement in productivity in our industrial and commercial sectors. Some years ago, worked as a member of a foreign consultancy team for the implementation of a £22 million aid project. Not for the lack of any decisions on policy matters but primarily due to what can be termed as clerical and procedural delays, we had to waste about £1 million of

retirement, my former employers, a multi-national group of companies, requested me to assist one of their subsidiary companies which has worldwide operations to open a garments buying office in Dhaka. I myself completed the prescribed application form, clearly stating therein that, other than buying garments, the company shall not engage in any industrial, commercial or any other activities; that every single penny spent here by the company on expatriates, local employees, rent, rates, transport, etc. will be remitted by the company from abroad; that during the first year of its operations the company expected to buy garments worth over US \$ 1 million; and that the company was hopeful of being able to expand its operations here three to fourfold during the next 2/3 years. Running from pillar to post, it took me over 5 months to obtain the required permission. Three Directors of the company came to Dhaka from Hong Kong to formally inaugurate their buying office here. They told me, to my great shame, that they took barely a few hours to open a similar buying office in Hong Kong and only a day each in Thiland, Korea, Singapore and Taiwan.

In order to develop our economy like those in many fast-developing countries in the East, what we urgently need is an immediate and a thorough overhaul in our existing colonial type bureaucratic and administrative systems, decentralisation of decisionmaking and the abolition of hundreds of unnecessary controls and regulations which militate against the growth of economy.

A. Qayyum Ex-president Metropoluan Chamber of Comm erce and Industry

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.

Politics and courts

Sir, After vitiating the atmosphere educational campus politics is now heading towards the court compound Bangladesh. The elite of courts are apparently showing much interest in welcoming 'active' politics to them. In developed countries, few people 'practise' politics, here in Bangladesh, everybody aspires for it, though all of them do understand real politics or not, and foresee its effect or consequences thereof.

Politics is a subject which has its separate realm where it should be practised. It is painful that, this very single discipline is now being studied in every-sphere of our life. 'Politics' was allowed among the students, and we now observe its effect. Likewise, if it is invited in the courts, where only law is supposed to be the deal, who knows one day armed-fighting would not erupt to do away with that too. express my apprehension

because we are familiar more with the nasty side of the 'politics'. Supreme Court Bar Council is therefore requested to kindly keep a vigil on it, so that the matter remains within control. F.M.A Matin

Mtrpur, Dhaka.

Cricket and BTV Sir, In India, many interest-

ing cricket matches or serieses often take place which their television 'Dur Darshan' telecasts live. We are deprived of it. Because BTV remains silent about this kind of matter. But India is our closest neighbour and BTV can telecast the important matches very easily at a low cost to the great pleasure of cricket fans.

So, for the sake of their popularity too, BTV can consider our request, we hope. Mirza Mamun Sadat

Ashfaqur Rahman

Peace conference and Israel

Sir, As we expected peace conference initiated by USA and USSR in Madrid with support of some Arab countries has failed to deliver any solution to the Mid-East problems especially the Palestinian is-

It is a matter of great puzzle that still some of our leaders, thinkers and intellectuals believe that the Palestinian problem can be solved through negotiation, direct talks etc. Indeed, no one can deny or ignore the importance of a dialogue, but Isreal with full support of America from the very beginning of its existence is an exception. The history of her terrorism, violation of human rights and important of all, its tendency to establish Zionist ideology, are clear evidences that with Isreal compromise or dialogue is meaningless. I don't understand why

Such status would weaken

Ladakh's dependence on the

Muslim-dominated state of

which it is now a part by pro-

viding the region with direct

Ladakhi Buddhists have also

demanded inclusion among

India's constitutionally-pro-

tected list of tribes, a move

that would guarantee them a

certain number of public ser-

New Delhi has accepted and

implemented the demand for

Buddhists inclusion on the

tribal list, but not the demand

for outright secession from

The Ladakh Buddhists associ-

ation, which spearheaded the

"UT" status" movement in

1989, suspended its demands

on June 10, 1990, following an

agreement it struck with the

The agreement provided for

the formation of an

"Autonomous District Council,"

an administrative unit within

the state, rather than outright

secession from the state and

direct financing from the cen-

federal and Kashmir govern-

Jammu and Kashmir.

vice jobs.

ments.

financing from New Delhi.

Muslims become so forgetful about those who played the key role in creating the Jewish state which rendered thousands of Palestinians homeless and vagrant. They were very effectively America and Britain So a peace move by them should be examined under microscope.

In this context I would like

to draw the attention to all Muslim brothers and sisters that a lasting peace only can be achieved only by unique unification of all of them all over the world. Muslims are not only Arabs, the order includes non-Arabs too. Islam is based on brotherhood and equality for all and not on any nationalism such as the one - Arab nationalism -conceptualized by late President Nasser of Egypt also toward seeking a solution to this problem. And as once late Imam Khomeini (R) said, "If all Muslims pour a glass of water each, it will be flood and destroy Isreal," this is a fact we should discover the great strength.

Syed Rahim Ashnakhah BUET, Dhaka.