

The Short-term Industrial Investment Plan

Apply the Law

The Dhaka University governing body, the Syndicate, and the teachers' association jointly stated on Sunday that they would extend all help to the police in rounding up "terrorists" on the campus. The same day, leading opposition members of parliament cast serious doubts over the government's sincerity in solving the problem through cross-floor deliberations in the form of the special committee set up in the Jatiya Sangsad. The university's statement does not, we believe, suggest that such a willingness to cooperate had not existed before, merely that circumstances required a formal announcement of such an intention in order to leave no one in any doubt as to the university's position on the matter.

The current state of affairs is that, although more than a month has elapsed since four people were shot dead on October 27, things have not moved forward an inch in the quest to bring back peace and normalcy to Dhaka University. Despite the participation of over two dozen armed men in the October 27 battle, only one has so far been arrested in that connection; hardly any weapons have been recovered and only three halls of residence, out of eight suspected of harbouring "terrorists," have been searched by police; the two student organisations involved in most terror incidents at Dhaka have kept up their war of words and nerves, keeping the situation as tense, volatile and uncertain as ever; political leaders, both in government and in opposition, have failed to generate any level of confidence among students or teachers; finally, despite the existence of laws relating to the usage and carrying of firearms, the Ministry of Home Affairs has been unable to uphold those laws by its failure to apprehend the perpetrators of the October 27 shoot-out.

We were hoping for an all-party solution to the problem on the basis of discussions in parliament, and the setting up of the special parliamentary committee last September to deal with the prevailing sense of terror, indicated that such a course of action had finally been charted by the government and the opposition. Unfortunately, Awami League members of that committee complained Sunday that government ministers were failing to take their task seriously enough, leading to an impasse in the discussions.

Such is the scenario at present which, in a curious way, clearly points to the only road open to the government. With all political parties, including the ruling one, finding it well nigh impossible to shoulder any responsibility for any act of violence on the campus, the matter can now be solved only on the basis of law and order. In other words, people against whom there are specific complaints of terrorism or related crimes, as well as those suspected of being involved in armed activities on campuses across the country (and not just Dhaka, since terrorism is not exclusive to the capital), have to be rounded up, charged according to existing laws of the land and put on trial without any further prevarication.

But one thing has to be borne in mind by the Home Ministry and the police force under its command: that arrests have to be made on the basis of complaints and suspicion, and not party affiliations. Not so long ago, Dr Bardruddoza Chowdhury, the Deputy Leader of the House, informed parliament that four or five political parties had armed cadre forces, some strong in Dhaka, others in Chittagong, while others still were a leading force in Rajshahi. Consequently, the police's anti-terrorist drive has to cover the entire country, and must not spare any political group.

The government needs also to make sure that no known "terrorist" is sent overseas, to be brought back once the dust settles, because crime must not be seen to pay. The opposition in and out of parliament should play its part by living up to its often-stated promise of cooperation and back the government to the hilt during the drive. Either we do this and purge our colleges and universities of the scourge of terror, or we shall have nothing to look forward to other than greater turmoil and destruction in the months ahead.

Thank You, Bhutan

Today is the third of December, the day Bangladesh was first recognised as a sovereign nation. By only one nation. And we feel as warmly friendly as gratefully indebted as we remember that act of supremely weighty help by our neighbour Bhutan. It set the chain of recognitions that were soon to snowball into a near-universal acceptance of Bangladesh's independent national entity.

Pakistan's deliberate genocide — decidedly one of the worst in history — and the Bengalee people's resolute resistance had dragged on for months and finally came to a head with Pakistan attacking India, strangely enough, in the western sector. And that war had gone on now for just a month. All around the then East Pakistan allied Bangladesh and Indian troops had been gaining ground mile after mile. Bhutan's recognition right at this point robbed Pakistan much of whatever hold it was left with on its colony. The reality of an independent Bangladesh was a foregone conclusion from the black night of March 25, 1971. But geopolitics is the last thing to respond to dictates of justice and conscience. Where everyone dithered and waited for others to go ahead and do the job of accepting what must be accepted in a matter of months, little Bhutan went out to extend the friendliest hand Bangladesh has known after the model of good Samaritans wonderfully fashioned by the countries that supported our liberation war.

It is then quite in the fitness of things that the relations between our two nations should grow to ever new heights of friendship and cooperation. It makes us feel so good to see Bhutanese fruit products bedecking our market stalls. And we have no doubt that Dhaka toiletries would also be quite a feature in the Thimpu shopping arcades as much as Bangladesh tourists in the mall of that Himalayan capital. We are already very good partners in the SAARC. But our friendship — specially our feelings for that little kingdom perched up in the clouds — are deeper and move abiding than that — because of that mighty good turn on December 3, 1970.

Thank you, Bhutan.

Since industry is the sector which possesses maximum vigour to invigorate the national economy, industrialisation strategy in the short-term is of critical importance. It must generate the activities for a massive upsurge in business confidence. Along with the launching of privatisation and in the process, closing down loss-ridden, unprofitable enterprises which are beyond any redemption and no one is also willing to pick them up even by the longest barge-pool, government should within the 100-day plan firm up large-scale, private, direct foreign investment proposals in several manufacturing areas which are vital for sustaining the process of economic growth and development. The short-term industrial investment plan is therefore the subject of the column this week.

Fertilizer: India
Bangladesh has the unique competitive advantage in several manufacturing lines, foremost among which is urea fertilizer. Not only the existence of natural gas which many other countries possess, but the existence of huge export market next door in India is the source of the unique advantage. From fertilizer factories located in Bangladesh nitrogenous fertilizer can be supplied directly to the wholesalers all over eastern India covering eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam and other north-eastern states. It should be possible for Bangladesh to supply such fertilizer to India at the most competitive price by road and riverways primarily because of the location factor. At the same time, India is going to remain one of the largest buyers of fertilizers in the world market for the foreseeable future. Within the next 100 days, a plan to export eventually one million tons of fertilizer to India should therefore be feasible and what

is necessary for this purpose is to plan for a giant fertilizer factory geared to Indian specifications and conveniently located for dispatch of fertilizer by road and riverways to India (e.g. Chandpur or near around). In order to sustain the stability of very large quantities of exports of fertilizer to India, it is necessary to import other commodities from India which not only help in maintaining the balance of trade but promote economic growth. In exchange of fertilizer, Bangladesh can import limestone for manufacture of cement just across the border in Sylhet and north Mymensingh. These areas of limestone mines north of Sylhet and Mymensingh are much more easily accessible from Bangladesh side. In the late 1980s, we imported around one and a half million tons of cement per year. At least four plants each of half a million ton capacity should be made operational by early 1993 to be followed by additional capacities with the increase in demand. It may also be feasible to export cement to north-east India and the Arakan province of Burma more conveniently from Bangladesh than the alternative domestic sources due again to locational factor.

Apart from fertilizer for export and cement primarily for domestic use, the third industry to be immediately promoted is a sponge iron plant based on imported iron ores of India both for domestic use and exports. Natural gas could be the basic material to convert Indian iron ores into sponge iron which will be in high demand by the domestic construction steel industry as well as by the Electric Arc furnace industry all over eastern India.

Gas Plants
Intensification of the use of natural gas by the brick fields first and then the road, river and road transport sector can save a great deal of imported

fuel, reduce cost of transport and provide for a cleaner environment. Immediately, private sector investors should be encouraged in the setting up of compressed natural gas plants and its distribution all over the country for use by the transport sector, brick fields and all over Khulna and Rajshahi divisions for all sorts of purposes since there is no piped gas supply west of Jamuna river.

Plans should be prepared and private sector assisted in all possible manners to develop peat coal mining in the districts of Madaripur and Gopalganj as well as the coal, clay and glass sand recently discovered in Barapukuria region of Dinajpur district. Fuelwood for domestic cooking has become a matter of immediate concern. The poorest are

From LDC to NIC by Shahed Latif

being hard hit since unlike the fortunate Dhaka middle class, they do not benefit from the distribution of Titas gas. Exploration of coal and peat would remove the fuel shortage for cooking, reduce cost of brick manufacture, firing of boilers or thermal power generation in fuel short areas west of river Jamuna. Exploration of glass sand and China clay would lead to the setting up of hundreds of small to medium scale glass and ceramic industries.

Immediate Impact
The immediate impact of the key industries as suggested above would be rapid enhancement of foreign exchange earnings from export of fertilizer to India in particular and reduced cost of domestic steel, cement and brick — the three basic ingredients for construction of buildings. In addition, prefabricated building components could further reduce costs by as much as 30 to 40 per cent. The construction industry would be boosted, more in

next 2 to 3 years. Promotion of small to medium scale foundries and metal working industries therefore deserves immediate attention of the government. Mention has already been made of domestic ceramic and glass industries where the demand involving a population of 145 million in the year 2000 cannot but be large.

Automobiles
In 1987, Bangladesh imported 112 million US dollars worth of transport equipment. It is surprising that we have not encouraged assembly of CKD cars followed up with progressive manufacturing of components within the country. I think time has come to encourage Toyota and Honda as well as others to initiate the promotion of domestic automobile industry. About 10 to 15 thousand vehicles are imported annually which constitute a small but a good beginning for the car assembly industry. With the expansion of demand for automobile and the metal working industry, component manufacturing could be a possibility within the next 2 to 3 years.

Textile Industry
The most important and the highly visible impact would however be the expansion of textile industry that is possible now. Domestic demand as well as the requirements of the garment industries together constitute a billion dollar scope for expansion of spinning, weaving and finishing of textiles. The potential is so vast that even local manufacturing of spinning frames and weaving looms could be justified but the lack of industrialisation is such that even the chimneys for the boiler exhausts get imported into Bangladesh. Clearly, a separate plan exclusively for development of textile industries is called for; structured in such a manner that the industry can effectively exploit all the latent competitive advantages that

exist in view of at least ten centuries of textile weaving traditions of the country. The short term industrial investment plan as outlined above consists of a limited number of key industries which could be promoted in a vigorous manner within the next 100 days. Direct foreign investments for the purpose should be aggressively sought from all over the world. Whatever incentives and physical facilities are required must be provided and there has to be a global search for investors and entrepreneurs. Nationality of the investor or the source of funding should be of little concern. We have so long missed the forest because of the trees. The frustrating incremental approach is the biggest enemy. The initiative must be for a big quantum leap without which we will fail to overcome the deepening crisis in development.

A True Story
In this connection, I wish to refer to the true story of the Pohang Steel Mill of Korea. It was opposed by the World Bank/IMF. All leading donor countries were against it. It was not justified by the Korean demand for steel at that time. The huge investments required had very many competing claims. Yet the Korean government decided to go ahead with the steel mill to lay the foundation for industrialization of Korea. All the iron ore and the energy required are imported, expertise were lacking, yet the investment was made, and look what happened to Korea? Its relentless growth is simply staggering. Korea today is now a world renowned producer of steel, automobile and ships. Very soon it would be rated as a developed country.

Why must we stay behind? The industrial investment plan within the next 100 days should trigger the run from LDC to NIC.

Chiluba Takes his Axe to Bank and Mining Chiefs

Fred Chela writes from Lusaka

THE new President of Zambia, Frederick Chiluba, has lost no time in sweeping away executives from key state-owned banking and mining companies.

Within four days of the news that is party had won 125 seats in parliament, leaving only 25 in the hands of ex-president Kenneth Kaunda's United National Independence Party, he fired the chairman and chief executive of Zambia Consolidated Cooper Mines, Francis Kaunda, and the managing director of Mulungushi Investments, Brian Moyo. Then he got rid of the managing director of the Zambia National Commercial Bank, Friday Ndhlovu, the London-based Zambia Appointments Managing Director, Joe Banda, and the Director-General of the Zambia Industrial and Mining Corporation, Evans Willima.

The Chiluba government regards the ousted officials as corrupt, radical supporters of Kaunda and accuses them of having lavishly financed Kaunda's election campaign and the outlandish contributions to unworthy projects at the expense of vital social services like drugs and provision of water to the needy.

As countrywide jubilation continues over the ousting of Kaunda, Chiluba faces daunting economic tasks. Public expectations are high. Deteriorating



FREDERICK CHILUBA, New President of Zambia

social services and the advent of a cholera epidemic contributed greatly to the victory of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD). Chiluba now has to emerge with a pragmatic blueprint that will bring quick results. He has vowed to introduce a rigorous market economy, pledging that "black marketeering will

be fought tooth and nail." At his swearing-in, he said: "my administration has inherited a bankrupt and empty Treasury. My cabinet will be small but effective."

Five days later he announced an 18-person cabinet with businessman Emmanuel Kasonde in the key post of Finance Minister and Humphrey Mulemba, a onetime Kaunda stalwart, as Minister for Mines. Minister of Agriculture is Dr Guy Scott, who comes from one of the old European liberal families prominent when Zambia was northern Rhodesia.

The Foreign Minister is the colourful Vernon Mwaanga, who held the same post in the early days of Kaunda's rule and was ambassador at the UN and in Moscow before going into business. Newstead Zimba, longtime trade union ally of Chiluba, is home minister and Arthur Wina, a senior minister in the early Kaunda days and founder of the MMD, gets education. The Defence Minister

is businessman Ben Mwila. Chiluba immediately urged his ministers to scale down on privileges such as cars and other fringe benefits enjoyed by the Kaunda government. He cautioned them against putting personal interests above national issues.

He said: "We face a tremendous challenge to rebuild the ravaged economy. The people are looking to us to do the good job by delivering the goods. This government will keep its word and in the same vein the people must reciprocate by working hard in every facet of the Zambian environment."

The MMD chairman for economy and finance, Akashambata Mbitukusita-Lewanika, stressed: "Investments both local and foreign will be mobilised. We all know that investments generate employment which had been completely ignored by the UNIP government for 27 years."

Zambia, still a big earner of foreign exchange from copper

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.

Let's speak the truth
Sir, For the last couple of years we have seen that there is a habitual tendency to portray Sheikh Mujib or Ziaur Rahman a great job by their respective admirers. Strangely enough both these leaders are evaluated in a partisan spirit. One school is very much prone to establish Zia as the proclaimer of independence, while the other disagrees with it, and vice versa. There is no denying the fact that both played a great role in freeing this nation. But the fact is, declaration of independence by Zia was not a sudden event, it had a long history behind.

Who had motivated and organized the people to fight for independence? Historically speaking, leaders like Sher-e-Bangla, Suhrawardy, Moulana Bhasani successively carried the movement forward, and finally people demanded charisma of Bangabandhu to lead. Can we forget the movement for autonomy? The six point programme? The historic 7th March speech and the nine-month War of Liberation? The loss of life, the brutal torture, the dark nights, the indur-

proaches we will be hearing speeches and statements highlighting the gallantry and sacrifice of our men during the Liberation War. But, the speakers will evaluate the liberation struggle, as was in the past, according to their political leaning and give credit to the leader who they admire. Even the state mass media (TV, Radio) do not project the truth. If we continue doing so we would project nothing but political narrowness. Let us widen our political vision, accept the truth and give due respect to those for whom we are free. We should also discuss their successes and failures so as to have wisdom for the future. Failing to do so would keep us divided and weaken us as a nation. Let us minimize our differences and unite to work for our dear homeland.

Ulfat Hussain
Tejgaon, Dhaka.

MLO-9/82 victims
Sir, By an order dated 12.10.91, the government formed "Review Forum" in each ministry to deal cases of dismissed or otherwise victimised Govt employees under MLO-9/82 with the "Terms of Reference" as under, in short: "That the Forum will review the cases of those officers/employees dismissed or victimised under MLO-9/82 only who did submit review petition to the then CMLA before 10.11.86, the date of lifting of Martial Law," indeed, a

large number of dismissed or victimised employees will get benefit from this order who could submit review petition up to 9.11.86, but unfortunately many will be deprived of getting justice under the limited scope of this order also. Because many Govt officers/employees were dismissed or otherwise victimised under coverage of heinous MLO-9/82 even after withdrawal of Martial Law on 10.11.86, when legal effectivity of MLO-9 should and did not exist. In this respect instances are there that at least eight officers and employees received their dismissal order suddenly on 1.12.86 all at a time vide Health Ministry order dt. 30.11.86 on the authority of dismissal order signed (back dated?) by the then CMLA on 9.11.86. As such it was not in reality for those affected victims to submit review petition seeking reinstatement in service on 9.11.86 when they were actively on duty in their own responsibility upto 30.11.86 and not aware of being dismissed by CMLA on 9.11.86. However, as stated all of them submitted prayer to the then CMLA on 7.12.86 for reinstatement.

All such MLO-9 victims who were dismissed after the lifting of Martial Law on 10.11.86, such as in this case on 1.12.86, and others also who could not submit review petition before 10.11.86 or have died before submission of any petition — they and their families are barred from getting any benefit

from the Review Forum as the "Terms of Reference" outlined in the Govt order does not cover or include their cases. Simply because of their being dismissed by misusing of the same MLO-9 after lifting of Martial Law or unaware of last date of submitting any petition etc.

It is therefore expedient that the benevolent Govt will kindly enlarge and widen the scope of the Terms of Reference of Review Forum to include and accommodate such genuine cases of MLO-9 victims particularly those who were dismissed after 10.11.86, to redress their sufferings and sorrowful plight.

Chowdhury Ashraf Alam
Jahangir Nagar University,
Dhaka.

Reader's comment
Sir, It is awe, admiration and jubilation I feel when I find the Daily Star, with dexterity and efficiency, adding this or, that new column in this less-than-one year old newspaper. These new columns are gradually making the paper all the more impressive and a subject of joy reading. It needs a very few words of emphasis. The liberal and resourceful personalities can never be contented or, keep idle with the hitherto convenient ideas and notions only; they, surely, will seek out for newer horizons, of course, embracing the better part of the tradition. It is a truth one can reach without much

wrestling with logic or, intuition; the constellation of bright chaps working behind the curtain along with the journalists for your paper, have proved this truth. Focussing on the day-to-day occurrences a strong searchlight, the related journalists have dug out many unpleasant but hard facts and have earned a good name for courage and credibility. Those interesting and idea-inspiring columns — "Dhaka Day by Day", "Write to Earth", "Off the Record", "Down to Earth", — besides, the Weekly Magazine have made your readers irresistibly glancing through this ten-month-old brain child of the think-tanks working for you. Your editorials and articles demand serious reading and are quite brainstorming. The provision of a more-than-expected good space for sports news is highly commendable. Without increasing the volume of details, one can justly conclude that these presentations on your side are adding to our knowledge, awareness and enlightenment. My sincerest congratulations to you and your colleagues. The press will hopefully nurture our new born democracy to get strong foothold for meeting the reality squarely, if your concept of liberal, outspoken and informative journalism is allowed to burgeon in our part of the world.

Hubert Francis Sarkar
Singhola, Dhaka.