

Fighting the Fire

Fire broke out for consecutive days—first at a sulphur factory then at a foam factory—bringing the oft-forgotten issue to the fore.

The problem of fire, however, still has two distinct natures—first, when it is not deliberately caused to settle a score on the enemy and the second, when a nefarious motive is at work behind such an incident.

But panic is not a remedy for the problem. Apart from a high degree of caution—which we regrettably lack—the need for some preventive physical measures have to be identified for immediate action.

No less important is the question of fire fighting facilities, which—even with an insufficient force—sometimes become a helpless spectator of the devastation only because either they find no source of water nearby or because the vehicles would not simply go near to the place of fire.

In case of industrial fire of serious nature involving chemical or poisonous substance, as happened at a sulphur factory on Tuesday, the fire-fighting mechanism often proves too inadequate for the purpose.

A fire in such installation can spell a doomsday disaster for a wide area. We just had had such a fright at Ghorasal Fertilizer Factory. Therefore, the need for extra measures in such factories must be made mandatory.

Welcome to a Prince

A ceremonial visit, with its largely symbolic meaning, often overshadows its underlying political significance. This may well be the case with the six-day visit of the Crown Prince of Thailand.

The symbolic though the visit may be, it is certain to strengthen the close ties which already exist between Bangkok and Dhaka. After Thailand became one of the first South East Asian countries to recognise Bangladesh after the War of Liberation, both the countries have done their best, with considerable success, to set up their links in many fields, ranging from air communication and trade to educational exchanges and cultural relations.

It cannot be claimed that the fullest potential of Bangladesh-Thai co-operation has been explored. Nor can it be said that our bilateral relations are entirely free from some misunderstandings. The visit of the Crown Prince is not designed to look into these areas.

As it enters its second year of publication, my heartfelt felicitations goes to you and to the other members of your esteemed newspaper whose painstaking joint endeavour has brought the newspaper to its present position of one of the leading English daily of the country.

I hope your newspaper will continue to play the pivotal role in upholding objective views and news.

THE new year in Pakistan brought with it prospects for a better working relationship between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition on the domestic front, and a move towards confidence building measures across the border with India.

FOCUS ON PAKISTAN

New Year begins with Prospects and Setbacks in Relations

Mariana Baabar writes from Islamabad

of an agreement so that at least a working relationship could get off the ground. As things stand today not only do Ms. Bhutto and Mr. Sharif not speak to each other but for that matter never get together to discuss issues of national importance.

Father of the Prime Minister Mohammad Mian Sharif was still not forgiving the former PPP government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto...

Years of groundwork between Pakistan and India which resulted in an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear facilities, came into effect in the new year...

had been done, a date and venue set in Pakistan's southern port city, Karachi. Each would meet with two trusted aides.

Both sides were also expected to give finishing touches to proposals that the other had demanded. On the part of the leader of the opposition, the Pakistan People's Party was ready to ensure a vote to amend the constitution. Which would

guarantee that the Prime Minister would without any interruption, get four more years as chief executive. This of course would negate the powers of the President.

Two key figures who have great influence over the Prime Minister were not privy to this secret meeting. Shahbaz Sharif, member of the lower house and brother of the

Father of the Prime Minister Mohammad Mian Sharif, was still not forgiving the former PPP government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto which while nationalising the country's industries, also took over the Sharif's enterprises, the Litchfaq. Till this day the influence of the elder Mian

has been so strong that several such attempts to mend ways with the PPP have failed. On the external front, years of ground work between Pakistan and India which resulted in an agreement not to attack each other's nuclear installations and facilities came into effect in the new year, when both countries exchanged lists of their nuclear facilities and installations. This document

exchanged at New Delhi and Islamabad simultaneously was not made public and the expected accusations that the other had not given a 'complete' list were made. But this uneasy relationship took an unexpected nose dive when hours after the exchange of lists the Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, accused Pakistan of a 'proxy' war both in occupied Kashmir and in the Punjab. These accusations came after several attempts by Pakistan to bring India to the table and hold talks on making South Asia a nuclear free zone. In the past Indians have even rejected Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's proposal of a five nation conference on the issue, as one "in which there was nothing new".

But there is room for optimism. Efforts are on once again for Ms Bhutto and Mr. Sharif to meet while the foreign secretaries of both India and Pakistan are also expected to meet in Washington by the end of this month.

But it remains an open question whether any progress will be made on either issue this year.

Mariana Baabar is a feature writer on the staff of leading Pakistan daily, The Muslim, published from Islamabad. Ms Baabar will be writing for us regularly on the current developments in Pakistan.

Zambians Give their New Ministers a Hard Time

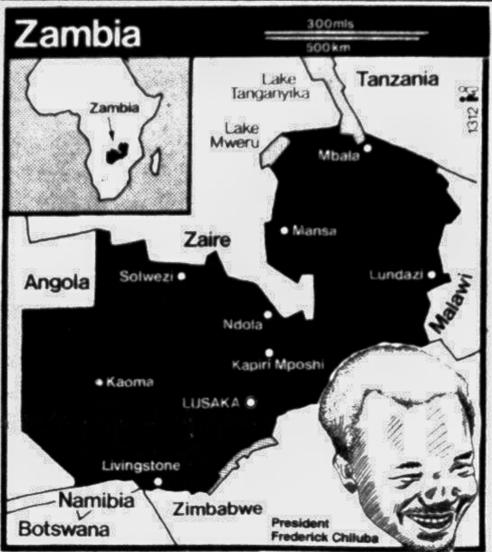
Fred Chela writes from Lusaka

Less than three months after his stunning defeat at the polls Kenneth Kaunda is resigning as leader of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) of Zambia, which he led for 31 years. Meantime, people are marking the rebirth of democracy by watching every action of their new government. Gemini News Service reports on ministers in the firing line.

Communications Andrew Kashita got similar rap for appointing Peter Kaoma, a marketing executive, as managing director of Zambia Airways. Ben Mwinga, MP for Mazabuka and an official of the national executive of the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy (MMD), said: "The MMD government was elected on the ticket of accountability and if we can't honour this pledge, we should resign or the President fires those guilty."

MMD backbencher Ntondu Chindoloma charged: "Ministers and any other leaders must have the morality to resign on their own as soon as their misdeeds are exposed and not wait to be fired." Fumed former Zambia Airways boss Luke Mbwewe: "The Minister pressurised me to resign. Two drug traffickers—air hostesses—were reinstated on Kashita's instructions."

But Kashita's deputy Gilbert Mululu countered: "The two ladies have not been reinstated and what Mr Kashita said in a letter to Mr Mbwewe was simply that there was no evidence to



President Frederick Chiluba

Minister Ronald Penza stands accused for appointing his brother-in-law Stanhus Kasuba as managing director of the state-owned Consumer Buying Corporation of Zambia (ZCBC). Penza said:

"If my brother-in-law is qualified why shouldn't I appoint him? Even the late US President John F. Kennedy appointed his brother Robert as federal attorney because he merited it."

Penza's remarks brought harsh reaction from chairman of the Law Association of Zambia (LAZ), Willa Mung'omba: "Why should a minister involve himself in the appointment of a shopkeeper?" So soon after taking office the public have detected in the government what they call "grave symptoms" that if left unchecked could prove disastrous. Some people have asked whether collective cabinet responsibility has ever existed or been practised.

Dr Guy Scott, one of the most widely respected MMD ministers, also got bruised. He was heavily censured in parliament for appointing an unnamed election agent as a per-

sonnel manager in the state-run Lima Bank. Scott is standing firm.

The latest to be publicly rebuked is Minister of Works and Supply Ephraim Chibwe. He is accused of awarding himself a contract worth \$5 million to rehabilitate the plundered State House.

Chibwe, questioned about a trip to South Africa, said: "My trip was intended to look for contractors to come and rehabilitate roads and other infrastructure in the country."

He said the government needed 100 million kwacha to refurbish and renovate housing for top government officials.

Information Minister Stan Kristofor got the worst rebuke from the people and the Muslim country in particular for banning an Islamic radio programme and clips of exotic dances by Paris-based Zairean cabaret artist Tshala Muana on Television Zambia. When people called on him to resign he lifted the ban.

People are venting their anger on government officials and democracy seems to be working. Chiluba has said: "Government ministers found wanting will be dismissed. The scourge of corruption and bribery has been rampant, but I don't want to see it nor witness it in my administration."

FRED CHELA is a freelance journalist recently retired as syndication editor of The Zambia News Agency (ZANA).

A Second Japanese Conquest

Japan's overwhelming economic presence is making its war victims seem willing to accept its growing political and military influence in the region. Ramon Isberto of IPS reports from Manila.

lion dollars to US\$40 billion. While US and European investments in the region are on low gear, Japanese investments are expected to keep growing at a blistering pace through the 1990s.

Japan's postwar economic conquest of Asia is a kinder, gentler version of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere that Tokyo tried vainly to impose by force. But the degree of influence it gives Japan is perhaps no less thorough. Japan is the region's biggest foreign investor, largest source of development aid and the dynamo that powers the region's burgeoning trade.

Japanese direct investment in nine key East-Asia countries (Indonesia, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, China, Taiwan and the Philippines) increased 10 times from 1975 to 1989—from about four bil-

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To the Editor...

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

Felicitations

Sir, It is heartening to see that The Daily Star has successfully completed its first year as an independent daily of Bangladesh.

As it enters its second year of publication, my heartfelt felicitations goes to you and to the other members of your esteemed newspaper whose painstaking joint endeavour has brought the newspaper to its present position of one of the leading English daily of the country.

I hope your newspaper will continue to play the pivotal role in upholding objective views and news.

With my best regards.

Mohammad Ebraheem Al-Najran Ambassador of Kuwait Dhaka

II

Sir, We offer congratulations and wishes of Happy Birthday to The Daily Star. Many returns to the already strong and mature baby.

From the Director of the WFP Country Office and his colleagues

III

Sir, I am a regular subscriber of your esteemed independent daily and very pleased to read the first anniversary supplement of one year of publication.

I have no doubt in mind that under your able guidance and experiences of more than three-decade-long working in foreign newspapers and media in Asia The Daily Star will achieve a greater success in the days to come.

Heartiest felicitations and seasonal greetings and a very happy and successful New Year to your officials and all The Daily Star goodfellow and staff.

With kindest regards, K K Das GEC Bangladesh Ltd

THANK YOU

Due to reasons of space, we have not been able to publish all the messages received by us

congratulating The Daily Star on its first anniversary. We are touched by the kind words and goodwishes conveyed in these messages. I look forward to replying to them individually in due course. Meanwhile, on behalf of all of us in The Daily Star as well as in the Medaworld Ltd, we offer our thanks to all our patrons who have written to us.

Editor

Coaching Centre

Sir, Just few years ago, the term "Coaching Centre" was a little known to our general students. Only the offspring of affluent sections of the people were found rushing for coaching. But now-a-days, it seems that going to a "coaching centre" has become a fashion. To cool the mind of the "coaching centre" going boys and girls, the affluent community took this opportunity.

Today there are so many "coaching centres" sprawling all over Dhaka alone. This indicates rapid decrease of the teaching standard in our schools and colleges on one hand and turning this noble profession into something commercial.

These centres in most cases fixed their own fee which is between Tk 600 and Tk 1000 for each subject. This unhealthy competition of high fees among the "centres" compelled the middle and low class to keep their wards away from "coaching centres" in spite of their desire to have a seat in them. I like to request concerned authorities to formulate new laws and stop this unhealthy competition of high charge among the coaching centres.

Md. Heyazuddin Mohamadpur, Dhaka.

Launchghat needed

Sir, In greater Sylhet one launchghat is situated at Sherpur, on one side of the river. Absence of another launchghat on the other side remains a matter of great hardship and misery for the passengers coming down from the hilly upper side of the bridge. Desperate passengers may even die in their bid during the rainy season. So one launchghat is very essential at the other side of the river for the safety and convenience of the passengers.

If the present authority after examining the aforesaid facts setup a launchghat at the other side of the river as early as possible, the entire community of passengers would be relieved of their agonies.

Dabirul Islam Choudhury PO Kadirganj, Greater-Sylhet.