

Economist of London says Complacency main danger for Dhaka

By Staff Correspondent

A leading internationally-known British journal has warned that political "complacency" poses a major danger to the future of Bangladesh.

In this context, the journal, the Economist of London, has also suggested that democracy would be a "lot more secure with a healthy economy."

The despatch by the journal's special correspondent, who recently visited Dhaka, says "that means recognising Bangladesh's problems, one of which is that its labour costs are higher than Sri Lanka's (where GDP per person is 2.5 times higher) and another is that it will soon face competition for investment and for markets from Vietnam."

The report also bluntly declares "it then means accepting the medicine of free markets and economic reform. Unhappily, neither Mrs Zia nor Sheikh Hasina inspires confidence as a doctor."

The over 1000-word despatch headlined "Begum Zia's Burden" carried on the April 4-10 issue of the journal as the lead piece of its Asia section deals exhaustively with various aspects of the issues and problems facing Bangladesh ranging from restoration of democracy to the role of the private sector in an economy which is "kept floating only by injection of foreign aid."

In interviews with the political leaders the correspondent describes the manner of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia as "impressive" but makes the point that she spends "hardly any time in parliament," while "the more educated Sheikh Hasina relishes parliamentary debate."

However, the article went on to criticize the Awami League leader for concentrating "on the obsessive pursuit of her father's killers."

Furthermore, the reporter suggested that the momentum

that overthrew President Ershad is being lost. It then quoted a Dhaka businessman as saying "the Bangladesh Nationalist Party came to power with the strongest mandate possible, and is behaving as though it was the weakest."

Continuing with his assessment of the economic scene he criticized the administration's decision to give government workers pay rises averaging 50 per cent and its "capitulations" to the jute workers and to road and rail workers.

However, he endorses the policies of the Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman on a number of economic issues. But he quotes Rahman as saying that his cabinet colleagues do not understand free market: "The Prime Minister is my only supporter."

Another minister quoted by the Economist is the BNP Secretary General and LORD Minister Abdus Salam Talukder, who inter alia says, "I do not anticipate anything peaceful in this country." The correspondent points out that the minister's pessimism could be self-fulfilling and goes on to compare the situation in Bangladesh today with the situation in the Philippines six years ago.

The correspondent compares the "competent but corrupt" President Ershad with Ferdinand Marcos and Begum Zia with Corazon Aquino—also a housewife turned politician by the assassination of her husband and wonders whether the parallel will become still more complete.

Then he goes on to ask the questions: "Will Mrs Zia, like Mrs Aquino, squander international sympathy for her country's democracy? Will foreign aid be wasted in corruption and bureaucracy? Will natural catastrophes emphasise government incompetence?"



Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia visiting different stalls of the US trade show at Hotel Sheraton yesterday. —PID photo

US trade show

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government for creating a free market economy and the incentives given to foreign investors. "We also want to help forge a close linkage between our traders and entrepreneurs," she added.

Referring to the re-establishment of democracy in the country, Prime Minister said, "economic advancement and prosperity are the sine-qua-non for consolidating democracy."

Begum Zia stressed the need for capital and technology for achieving rapid national autonomy and sought cooperation of the developed countries especially of the United States. Milam described the trade show as the testimony of strong economic bondage between the two countries and said this is also a demonstration of cooperation between the public and private sectors.

The US envoy expressed the hope that the show would be an annual event and that the commercial dimension in the US-Bangladeshi relationship would grow in importance.

Corruption

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Factory, Bangladesh Biman, Bangladesh Water Development Board, Bangladesh Handloom Board, Bangladesh Power Development Board, Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, Jessore, Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation, and Civil Aviation Authority.

The committee in its findings observed that most of these organizations violated the recommendations of Enam Committee and directives from the Ministry of Establishment while recruiting manpower.

According to the report, these organizations have been turned into family affair. Besides the workers and employees union unitedly interfere in running of the organizations.

The other findings include corruption, payment of bonuses on the basis of assumed profits, long overdue bank loans, and amount of liabilities crossing the limits of assets. The committee observed that serious allegations of corruption were against some senior employees of some organizations.

According to the report, these employees have accumulated wealth beyond their known income and are leading affluent lives. Incidentally, one of the objectives of the committee is to suggest ways and means to clean different government offices of corruption.

After identifying the corruptions practiced by different government and public sector employees the committee has suggested punitive measures against them.

Samad Azad

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also blamed the government for violating all the decisions taken earlier by various parliamentary committees on the Golam Azam issue.

Samad Azad alleged that the government's conduct was hindering the way to make the Parliament effective. Regarding the Rohingya issue, Samad Azad said, "We raised the matter in Parliament when the Treasury Benchers opposed it."

Labour Law Commission formed

The government has constituted a Labour Law Commission for total industrialisation and to increase productivity, improve the worker-management relation and make the labour laws suited to the time and more democratic, reports BSS.

Justice Abdul Kuddus Chowdhury has been appointed Chairman of the Commission. The Commission will submit its report to the government within six months.

AL, allies walkout

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to people's court were declared closed by the Speaker at 6.11 pm.

Deputy Leader of the House, Prof Badruddoza Chowdhury was the last person to speak on the subject and taking advantage of his privilege replied to criticisms made by the AL and its supporters.

As the Speaker closed the discussion, Deputy Leader of the Opposition Samad Azad stood up and wanted to say something.

In his reply and following the parliamentary practices, the Speaker declared his inability to allow Samad Azad to talk. This apparently angered them as most of the AL members stood up. The Speaker then adjourned the House for Magreb prayer.

After the Magreb recess the Opposition members raised the issue again and said that no other discussions were acceptable to them without a decision on the issue of Golam Azam.

The Speaker stuck to his decision and asked Shajahan Chowdhury of the BNP to start discussion on the Rohingya issue.

As Chowdhury started his deliberations most of the AL members stood up and started thumping their desks with file covers making him inaudible.

Before Chowdhury could finish, the Leader of the Opposition and AL chief Sheikh Hasina repeatedly tried to draw the attention of the Speaker. As she started saying something her voice was drowned in the thumping by members of the BNP.

Total pandemonium prevailed in the House for nearly ten minutes. The Opposition members throwing their files

staged the walkout at 8.10 pm. Later taking the floor, Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury wanted to know under which clause of the Rules of the Procedure the Opposition wanted to stop any discussion on the Rohingya issue. He commented that the walkout proved that the JP had an understanding with the AL beforehand.

Terminating the incident, Salahuddin Kader Chowdhury said that when everyone was trying to keep the parliamentary system going such an incident was unfortunate. He appealed to the Speaker to stop recurrence of such incidents.

After the walkout, the session continued with discussions on the Rohingya issue. Shajahan Chowdhury, Ashraf Hossain and Oli Ahmed, all of the BNP and Enamul Huq of the Jamaat participated in the discussion.

The House was adjourned at 9 pm to meet on 4 pm tomorrow.

Trial body rally Sunday

By Staff Correspondent

The Muktijuddher Chetona Bastobayan Committee reactivated its campaign against Jamaat and its controversial chief, Golam Azam, and announced its next course of programme on Thursday.

The Committee for Realisation of the Spirit of Liberation War said at a press conference at the National Press Club Thursday that it would bring out a torch procession on Saturday and hold a rally in front of the Baitul Mokarram Mosque on the following day.

It has also planned to hold a 'grand rally' on June 26 at Matik Mia Avenue.

Hasina: Tribunal

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ficers and jawans?" She, however, said that the Bangabandhu government did not pardon the actual war criminals who were involved in killing, rape, looting and arson.

The opposition leader quoted different orders of the Awami League government cancelling citizenship of collaborators, including Golam Azam and banning religion-based politics.

But she said, the Collaborators Act was repealed by the government of Ziaur Rahman which also allowed politics based on religion leading to revival of Jamaat politics.

Defending the formation of the people's court, Hasina rebuked the government leaders who are questioning the locus standi of the people's court and its constitutional provision. She also criticised those who are putting arguments to settle the matter in the court of law.

The Leader of the Opposition said BNP was raising the same question as raised by the ministers of the Ershad government about the constitutional legality of the neutral caretaker government and the joint declaration of the three alliances.

In this context, she asked under which provisions of the Constitution Martial Law was declared, and under which constitutional provision Ershad was compelled to hand over power to a neutral caretaker government as prescribed by herself.

Hasina further questioned as to why Begum Zia had asked the people at a rally at Gulistan to try Ershad as a killer of her husband without going to the court and why the BNP government filed a case in the court against Ershad for usurping power from President Sattar.

The opposition leader said people are the source of all power and quoted Article 7 of the Constitution which says, "All powers in the republic belong to the people."

Hasina said the denial of the people's court verdict tantamounts to denial of the people's will.

People's court organisers are evil forces, says Nizami

Jamaat-e-Islami leader in Parliament Maulana Matiuur Rahman Nizami yesterday held that the issue of Golam Azam was "subjudice" and the discussions on him might influence the decision of the Court, report UNB.

Registering a note of protest Nizami said, "this may embarrass the Court and create obstacle in fair justice."

Taking part in the lengthy debate on controversial Jamaat chief Prof Golam Azam, Nizami quoted relevant rules of procedure of the House which restricted discussion on matters pending in the Court.

He pointed to a rule nisi issued on the government upon a writ filed by the Jamaat chief as to why his detention will not be held illegal.

On Awami League demand for trial of Prof Azam for war crimes, Nizami said he (Azam) was already tried by them (Awami League) by taking away his citizenship. They had no scope of trying him further, his name could not even be included in the list they prepared of 195 war criminals.

"We are ready to obey the verdict of the highest seat of justice," he added referring to the Writ of Golam Azam pending in the High Court.

The Jamaat leader refuted the Awami League charge that while in London Prof Azam had formed a committee for restoration of "East Pakistan". He had no association nor contact with the organisers of so-called East Pakistan Restoration Committee, Nizami said.

Referring to the organisers of so-called people's court, Nizami said they are neither Awami Leaguers nor BNP men. They are an evil force trying to divert the attention of the nation from the burning issues like staggering unemployment and the Farakka that deserted northern part of the country.

Pointing to the questionable activities of organisers of the people's court during the holy month of Ramadan the Jamaat leader cautioned the ruling party against taking responsibility of such activities.

"In the interest of the nation you must not acknowledge anything which may disgrace the rule of law," he said pointing to the treasury benches.

Frequently jeered by Awami League members, Maulana Nizami said the discussion on an individual amply demonstrates that they (Awami League) were a afraid of facing him (prof Azam) politically.

3 burnt to death in Bogra

BOGRA, Apr 16: Three people, including a woman, were burnt to death and 12 injured in an arson at a house at Shajapur Chakpara during a video show Wednesday night, reports UNB.

The dead were identified as Zabeeda (25), Yusuf Ali (25) and Mohsin Ali (10).

The Midnight File

US, Germany for suspension of Y'slav seat at CSCE

BONN, Apr 16: Germany and the United States want Yugoslavia's seat at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to be suspended to punish Serbia for the bloodshed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the German Foreign Ministry said today. It said US Secretary of state James Baker and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of Germany had agreed on the move in a telephone conversation Wednesday that declared the need for "joint and decisive action," reports AFP.

Cong-1 holds first internal elections

TIRUPATI (India), Apr 16: India's ruling Congress party held its first internal elections in 21 years today after Prime Minister Narasimha Rao broke with tradition and refused to appoint a top party committee. Human Resources minister Arjun Singh, long considered a candidate for Prime Minister, won the most votes in the elections to the party's Working Committee at the end of a three-day convention the southern Hindu temple town of Tirupati. Singh's chief rival, Defence Minister Sharad Pawar, also won election to the 21-seat committee, the party's main policy-making organ, reports Reuter.

Seen from the Gallery

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This shows how we are getting used to practices of parliamentary democracy, especially regards for rights to differ.

The issue of Golam Azam was generating enough heat for the last four days and by the time the discussions on the subject came to a close a decision was expected.

But the Speaker regretted that he was not in a position to give a decision immediately and needed some time. Explaining the reasons to independent member Nurul Islam Mond he said "Mr Mond you have elected a blunt-headed speaker who can't take immediate decisions."

Tofael Ahmed of the Awami League humorously added "If

BNP proposal

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the present parliament on thirty occasions. Moreover, he said, the Jamaat and AL unitedly went for parliamentary polls under autocratic Ershad regime in 1986 while BNP rejected the offer.

In a bid to refute Shajahan Straj's accusation that the BNP was defending Golam Azam Professor Chowdhury said that in fact the BNP was defending the Constitution and rule of law.

Refuting Jamaat leader Maulana Nizami's claim that the government and Awami League was pressing for steps against Golam Azam because they did not have courage to combat both Golam Azam's politics and personality through ideological struggle, Professor Badruddoza Chowdhury said, "BNP and the people of the independent Bangladesh could not have any reason to be afraid of people like Golam Azam who was a recognised collaborator of the Pakistan occupation forces during the country's War of Independence."

Emotion had a different expression when Hamidullah Khan of the BNP was allowed to take the floor to discuss the issue of Golam Azam. He narrated the history of his personal valour as a freedom fighter to be recorded in the proceedings of Parliament. Hamidullah was so much agitated that he said "We want the trial of Golam Azam and on this question those of our party who did not put valid words we are not with them."

That undisciplined outbursts of emotion can lead to unwelcome events was once again proved.

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Published by S. M. Ali on behalf of Mediaworld Ltd., 52 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 and printed by him at Offset Printing Dialogue Publications Ltd., 19 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka-1215. Editorial, News & Commercial Offices: 28/1, Toynbee Circular Road, Dhaka-1000. Tel: PABX- 246023-4, 245061-2. Advertisement: 245063 & Ext. 20. Fax No. 88-02-863035. GPO Box No. 3257. GRAM: DAILY STAR, DHAKA.