

Uncertainties in Manila

Fidel Ramos may be breathing more comfortably than before as all the signs point towards his victory in what has been the most confused and unpredictable presidential election in the post-Second World War history in the Philippines.

The immediate concern in Manila centres on possible game plans of the two rivals of Ramos to challenge the final outcome of the polls, which won't be known for a few more weeks.

The strategy that Cojuangco may follow to destabilise the situation causes much greater concern to Filipinos than the somewhat naive moves by Santiago.

Last but not the least, it seems that whoever emerges as the final victor — let us assume, it is Ramos — would win the race with only a maximum of 30 per cent popular votes.

The Philippines thus faces a difficult time in moving along the road to stability and progress. It is proved once again that the key to a democratic future in a developing country, especially one which had been under authoritarianism for a decade, does not lie merely in holding free and fair elections.

Crime under Cover

At the end of the football season, a round of congratulations or two is due to the victorious team. Abahani Krira Chakra deserve commendation for a splendid triumph against arch-rivals Mohammedan Sporting at Mirpur.

According to reports in the press, one person was stabbed to death and nearly 50 were slashed with cut-throat razors and knives.

Two facts emerged from this orgy of slashing and pick-pocketing. One was the total lack of police protection for the thousands of football lovers who had gone to Mirpur for no other reason than to cheer their team in their quest for the league title.

It is no secret that matches between Abahani and Mohammedans always attract huge crowd, presenting a tempting target for criminals, who often mingle with spectators disguised as fans.

Given these known facts, it is baffling as to why the police did not take any pre-emptive measures, such as deployment of extra men inside and outside the ground, particularly at the exits.

Table with 2 columns: Category and Value. Includes Engineering Contingency, Special Bridge Length, Contingency, and Total.

THE river Jamuna upto its confluence with the Ganges at Goalunda divides Bangladesh into East and West regions. Jamuna Bridge is a long cherished dream of the people of Bangladesh specially those living in the West region.

Under continued UNDP funding Phase-II study was also given to the same joint venture of RPT-NEDECO-BCI in May 1987.

The total financial cost estimate is US\$ 443.4 million or Tk. 1,640 crores (\$1=Tk. 37) with breakup as follows:

Table with 3 columns: Category, US\$ M, Tk Cr. Includes Road and Rail Bridge, Approach Viaduct, River Training works, Road Approaches, and Rail Approaches.

UTILISING WATER RESOURCES

Barrage Component — a Lapse in Jamuna Bridge Study

By M R Choudhury

graphical setting. Flood is an annual feature and sometimes catastrophic. Agriculture is dependent on the vagary of nature. Monsoon crops are very vulnerable to flood.

LAPSE IN STUDY: But nowhere in Phase-I or Phase-II of the study consideration was given to construction of a bridge-cum-barrage.

The total low water flow of the Ganges is diverted by the Farakka Barrage in West Bengal and the condition of the Ganges river downstream of the barrage is deteriorating very fast.

Advantage of Barrage

The inclusion of the Barrage Component with the Jamuna Bridge will accrue the following additional benefits:

This will help resuscitate moribund tributaries and distributaries like Dharia, Dudkamar, Teesta, Old Bahmaputra. This will make irrigation water available to about five million hectares of land on both banks in north western, north central and north eastern regions comprising the districts of Rangpur, Bogra, Rajshahi, Pabna, Dinajpur, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur and Sylhet.

The on-going Teesta Project is only for supplemental irrigation. A barrage on the Jamuna will make it possible partly to supply irrigation water during dry season also.

stream withdrawal uniformly. Mr Abbas AT said Bangladesh must take effective steps to offset the increasing damage by constructing barrage on the major rivers within the country.

Conclusion

Bangladesh is a country with only one problem — lack of management. Those who preach that the main reason for our present condition is non-existence of natural resources, are not very correct.

The pool of water above the barrage will improve the environment, protect the natural vegetation, help the development of agriculture and fisheries ultimately leading to improvement of overall socio-economic condition of the people.

Low water flow of the Ganges has come down to as low as 13,500 cusecs. If Bangladesh is to survive and to save the existing Ganges Kobadak Project, it must go for inter basin water-transfer within the country.

EXPERTS VIEW: Mr B M Abbas AT an eminent water resources expert of Bangladesh, in a speech at a rotary club meet on May 12 last has stressed the need for storage of water in the monsoon for utilisation in the dry season.

The author is a water resources engineer with over 35 years of experience in Bangladesh and abroad.

The Real Losers in the Peru Crisis: the Poor

Luis Tricot writes from Santiago

PRESIDENT Alberto Fujimori's self-staged coup d'etat in Peru has surprised the world. Not only because of the unexpected way he decided to solve his country's deep social crisis, but because it demonstrates the enormous fragility of Latin American democracy.

After decades of right-wing dictatorial rule, the countries of South America have begun to move slowly towards building a democratic system. The process of transition from military to civilian rule is peculiar, however, for the armed forces have generally been left untouched and still command substantial power.



ALBERTO FUJIMORI Close links with Southern Asia

They used it last year in Haiti, ousting Jean Bertrand Aristide from his position as the first democratically elected president after the collapse of the Duvalier dynasty.

Some analysts suggest that because the army was merely following orders, without wanting to take over power, a return to the past is unlikely, but this is the same move made in 1973 by president Jose Maria Bordaberry of Uruguay.

Fujimori's discourse is remarkably similar to that of the military: a mixture of nationalist and moralistic rhetoric that seeks to identify his "crusade"

with the historic aims of the nation.

He has said that chaos and corruption permeates the whole of society: "The actions of parliament and the judiciary go against the interests of the nation and impede national reconstruction and development."

He closed down Parliament, fired 13 of the 23 supreme court judges and all members of the Constitutional Tribunal and the National Judiciary Council.

But in order to understand the true essence of the crisis, one must go beyond the obvious and immediate conflict between government and Congress. This is only a mani-

festation of the crisis and not — as most observers seem to believe — the root cause of the problem.

Peru's crisis is a structural one. It has to do with the successive governments' incapacity to solve the country's socio-economic and political problems. There is an endemic dependency on foreign capital, a huge external debt, and an annual inflation rate that reached the 7,000 per cent mark only two years ago.

Extreme poverty means millions of Peruvians — especially the indigenous population — are excluded from domestic production and consumption markets.

The crisis is also linked to the bureaucratic and corrupt institutional system, with growing state violence as well as the political violence of Sendero Luminoso and other revolutionary organisations.

It is in this context that Alberto Fujimori tried to implement his government's neo-liberal economic model, which is no different from the model proposed by the defeated right-wing presidential candidate Mario Vargas Llosa.

None of the main political parties — including former president Alan Garcia's APRA party — question the neo-liberal pro-

ject. Rather, they differ on the methods to be used to implement it.

Another crucial factor has to be considered: the international dimension. The coup in Peru takes place in a totally different context from the Sixties and Seventies, when military coups swept through Latin America. Then, the ideological and political justification was the fight against Communism and Soviet Expansion. It was part of the East-West confrontation.

With the collapse of socialism and the almost unchallenged rule of capitalism around the world, Peru's case now acquires a distinct meaning.

After the Gulf War, the United States emerged as the world's most important military power. However, in the economic sphere, both the European Community and Japan and its allies are challenging the US supremacy.

From the beginning of his mandate Fujimori, who is of Japanese descent, established close links with Japan, Singapore, South Korea and other Association of South East Asian (ASEAN) nations which, he stated, were "models of development to be imitated."

which at first condemned the coup, quickly changed its mind and recognised "the legitimacy of the constitutional president." This was sheer pragmatism because, after all, Japan had already recognised Fujimori and, vital for his survival, it had not stopped its economic aid or investment projects.

The International Monetary Fund adopted the same position and continued supporting the Peruvian President's economic policies.

So long as Fujimori manages to convince foreign investors that Peru is a safe country with an open economy and a huge potential market, he will not worry about his Latin American neighbours. Argentina condemned the coup, Brazil suspended all economic aid, and Venezuela cut off diplomatic relations.

Yet the Organisation of American States (OAS) only "deplored the coup," not condemning it or calling for economic or diplomatic sanctions. It was influenced, presumably, by the failure of the economic blockade imposed on Haiti. At a conference in Santiago last year, the OAS pledged itself to the defence of democracy, but it has done little so far. It is,

however, trying to play a mediating role in the Peruvian crisis.

Fujimori has already announced the political itinerary that would eventually lead to the restoration of democracy in Peru: it begins on July 5 with the holding of a plebiscite and finishes on April 5 next year with the re-opening of Parliament.

Political analysts are sceptical of the feasibility of such a plan. In only 12 months, Fujimori will have to eradicate poverty and modernise the economy, transform the bureaucratic state into a modern and technocratic one, put an end to political violence, and finish off the massive, growing drug trafficking problem.

This is clearly an impossible task for any government, let alone one that faces increasing political opposition and diminishing (though still substantial) popular support.

Maximo San Roman, first vice-president of the republic, was sworn in as the country's constitutional president by the now "illegal" parliament. He is the legal president, but Fujimori is still the real one, because Fujimori has the support of the army.

Whatever happens, one thing is certain: the armed forces will be the real winners of Fujimori's political gamble. And the losers will be Peru's poor, because little has changed in Latin America. — GEMINI NEWS

LUIS TRICOT is a Chilean journalist who writes and broadcasts on Latin American affairs.

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.

Gano Adalat and politics around it

Sir, Apparently, the Gano Adalat or public court has upset those who had been gloating over harvests from the gradual rehabilitation of the unholly ideals of the defeated forces of 1971 Liberation War.

never be champions of noble causes like democracy.

The AL leaders are giving wolfish cries against the BNP government as if they have no knowledge that it had been rather AL government who gave a generous amnesty to the mastermind of mass-killing right after being put to power, forgetting their own words to punish war criminals at any cost.

It seems that time started to tell us truths about anti-liberation forces only after the Gano Adalat people succeeded to vocally put forth their campaign. There remains no mystery as regards the cause of the unwillingness of the AL and BNP governments to take action against people like Golam Azam. People do not harbour any doubt that AL and BNP leaders served their own in-

terests and dashed off the justifiable causes of the martyrs' families and the raped womanhood. Both the AL and BNP must place humble apology to these aggrieved people before they participate in any debate regarding Gano Adalat. They must admit the gravity of what has been done by them against the humanity by denying the obligation of punishing the war criminals.

It is clear that if the national leadership fail to deliver justice they will also be paid in their own coin. Whether they like it or not, they must get prepared to face in future 'dastardly attacks' from criminal characters they are even if unknowingly, 'idolizing'.

A M Sayed Khan Farashganj, Dhaka.

Corruption

Sir, There is no way to deny that corruption is a familiar case in every walk of our life. There is no sector where it is not prevalent. But the truth is that no nation can prosper if it

is corrupted. So, we could not change our pitiable condition even after more than two decades of achieving freedom. In fact this vice has proliferated after liberation. Though at present it is 'less' than what it had been during the former regime, can we deny its existence anywhere in Bangladesh? Who does not know and feel the disgrace that links the recent BCCI, BCI, NCL or medical written test affairs?

If we are not made corruption-free even now, Rabindranath's 'Sonar Bangla' will only remain a dream.

Aktar Uzaman West Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

Contents of letters

Sir, We have now formed a letter-writers' forum with the objective to get the words of our letters translated into reality by the concerned authorities. Since our authorities are less attentive towards the letters published in various national dailies and weeklies, we

would make repeated and joint appeals to draw their attention and even approach them directly to help them take necessary actions on the contents of our letters. Meanwhile, I would like to request the relevant authorities to take appropriate actions on the contents of the letters so far written by the under mentioned letter-writers:

- 1) Mr O H Kabir has been writing on the valuable minerals of Cox's Bazar, 'the black gold'. 2) Mr S Sikander Ahmed since long has been urging the government to frame and implement appropriate laws for the development of agro-forestry in Bangladesh. 3) Mr Md Anwarul Aizal's suggestions pertaining to Railway track on Jamuna Bridge are very timely.

4) Mr M A Jalli's concern for the protection of environment against the pollution caused by the abuse and misuse of pesticides, must be paid heed to.

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