

Let this Solidarity be for Democracy and Development

The first week of November 1975 was one of coups and counter coups, of chaos and confusion, of rumours of executions and of fear of impending anarchy. It started with a coup by Brigadier Khaled Mosharraf against the government of President Khandakar Mushtaq, which was put into place by the killers of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The eventful week ended with an uprising of the soldiers and the common people on November 7. The fateful day itself was full of drama and changing balance of power between those who triggered the chain of events and those who ultimately enjoyed its fruits. There are many messages that one can read in the day's events that took place 17 years ago. There was the obvious message of building an exploitation-free society in Bangladesh. The utopian idea of a classless society was very much in the minds of people like Col. Taher who organised, behind the scene, much of the early morning's happenings of that day. The soldiers who marched out from their barracks and joined hands with the slogan-chanting multitude, talked of a people's army where the existing differences between the officers and common soldiers would disappear. These and other messages permeated the air of that November morning nearly two decades ago. But they were vague messages, and clouding them all was a more ominous message of chaos and lawlessness. Fear of impending anarchy began to grip the nation as soldiers went on a rampage to avenge their private grievances in the name of establishing an egalitarian army.

It was the emergence of General Ziaur Rahman in the helm of affairs at this stage that restored some semblance of law and order into the country. Realising the anarchy towards which the early of the so-called 'Stipah Bipro' was dragging the country, Gen. Zia took effective control and used his popularity with the soldiers to turn them round from a populist, but anarchic, slogan to a more disciplined alternative. Much to the credit of Gen. Zia, he was instrumental in restoring multiparty political system in the country and giving freedom back to the vibrant national press that existed before the country was unexpectedly, and totally unnecessarily, transformed into a one party State. It was these initial measures of Ziaur Rahman that endeared him to the people during his early days in the reigns of power and helped him to establish his subsequent stay in authority. On this day as we observe this day, we must recall the public fervour and nationalistic zeal of the day itself. As we talk about national solidarity, can we not redefine the context and express our new solidarity to democracy and to development? After all, what better tribute can there be for former President Zia than a pledge to fight poverty and backwardness in our country? There is no denying the fact that he gave a fresh momentum to nation building work, and through his personal attachment to field level projects, brought in a new dynamism to the process of development. His now famous 'walks' through hundreds of villages in Bangladesh, gave him a first hand knowledge of the needs of the people and a very realistic and down-to-earth dimension to his policies. As we observe this important day in our nation's life, let us devote our energies to the work of development with the same fervour and zeal, as the people did on 7th November 1975.

A Dastardly Attack

On the face of it the Wednesday's armed attack on a jatra (country opera) party at the Shilpakala Academy precinct is like any other terrorist acts carried, almost with disdain, by organised groups across the country. But a close look into the dastardly, daring act reveals that the incident is surely going to have implications more far-reaching than usually thought. That the armed gang decamped with a booty amounting to Tk 1,25,000 - Tk 55,000 in cash and valuables worth the rest of the amount - will not be able to do as much harm to this particular form of entertainment as the whole incident's psychic effects by way of a moral shock.

The shock is especially unnerving because the month-long jatra festival is being held, with patronage from the Shilpakala Academy. Notably, a similar jatra festival only a couple of months ago had to incur a sizable amount of financial loss. Alamgir Hossain, organiser of the festival and owner of a jatra party, took up the challenge to make the current festival a success with special emphasis on its financial side. The attack seemed to have brought all his hopes to a premature end. Reportedly, he has lost his right eye in the attack.

Now the most troubling question is: if the festival will at all go ahead as scheduled. Not only was Alamgir Hossain the lone target of attack, but at least eight other artistes sustained injuries, two of them seriously. Already in the doldrums, this traditional performing folk art has been gasping for breath because of a most discriminatory policy adopted by the previous autocratic regime. The Shilpakala Academy, our premier public institution to patronise and revive our dying art and culture, understandably extended its helping hand to the organisers of jatra facing overwhelming odds. But it has miserably failed not only on this score but also in providing them with the necessary security. And all this is because of the widespread lawlessness and also despite the passage of the anti-terrorist bill in the parliament.

The problem therefore boils down to a simple but inevitable point which concerns the social stability and the rule of law. It has now amply been proved that the strongest of laws fails to act as a deterrent when the range and scope of the existing ones have not been fully explored and tried. By making laws harsher without the supporting mechanism or the necessary will for their implementation an administration rather ends up eroding the strength of the legal system. That this is the case has been proved by the fact that until now the wrong side is winning - and winning by a wide margin. It is because of this helplessness of the academy is the helplessness of the government and all good things in society are on a diminishing trail.

INDIA and Pakistan continue to play games. This time it was New Delhi's turn. It made the new Pakistani envoy, Riaz Hussain Khokhar, present his credentials and avow peace and friendship on the day when some of his nationals tried to violate the line of control in Kashmir. It was the brainwave of someone in India's foreign office to put Pakistan on the spot.

Islamabad, on its part, played politics by allowing all the fanfare and publicity to the march, which was doomed from the beginning. It knew all along that it would have to stop the marchers. Still it led them up to the garden path. When its spokesman said one week before the proposed march that the government had yet to 'take a final decision' on the crossing, it was already in touch with New Delhi, assuring it that Pakistan would do its best to discourage the violators. (India had also approached the US and Britain to put pressure on Pakistan to stop the march.)

The ceasefire line effected after the 1971 war between the two countries is the line of control. It has come to acquire sanctity. Even otherwise, it cannot be unilaterally altered or amended, as agreed upon at Shimla in 1972 between Mrs Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, then prime ministers of India and Pakistan, respectively.

Whatever their feelings, the two countries have respected the line. The world has seen them vacating the areas they had snatched from each other in Kashmir, first in 1965 and then in 1971. Both times New Delhi was keen on retaining Haji Pir Tithwal, the two posts overlooking the Indian troops, but they had to be returned since they are part of Kashmir under Pakistan.

True, violations of the line

Kashmir Issue Reveals the Ugly Face of Indo-Pak Relations

Ultimately, New Delhi and Islamabad will have to sit across the table to sort out their problems, particularly Kashmir. If this is what Pakistan has been wanting to achieve, it is going the wrong way. The more Islamabad raises dust or involves outsiders, the more rigid will be New Delhi's stand.

of control have propaganda value. They focus attention on the Kashmir problem. But their utility is decreasing. World media interest this time was less than before. All expected the march to be called off. And it happened that way.

However, by allowing the situation to reach the brink - it has happened twice in the last 10 months - and then deescalating it, Pakistan is playing with fire. Things can get out of hand. If nothing else, the domestic situation can be accentuated. The aborted march has already given a new edge to the criticism of Nawaz Sharif, the Pakistan prime minister.

Also, it is unthinkable that Islamabad does not realise that the marches, even abandoned, have given legitimacy to the demand for the third option, an independent Kashmir. Unless that is Pakistan's preference to the status quo, the effort may boomerang one day. The Kashmiris may lose faith in Islamabad.

From all accounts, it is evident that the Pakistanis want Kashmir to be part of their country. The idea of independent Kashmir is not to their liking. They are willing to let the Hindu-majority Jammu and the Buddhist-majority Ladakh be parts of India but not the valley of Kashmir. New developments are, however, telling. The way some people tried to march from Srinagar to the line of control to welcome the

violators indicates that the concept of independence has taken roots in Kashmir. Is Pakistan ready for it?

No doubt, Islamabad can have the satisfaction that every march highlights uncertainty in Kashmir. But it has been undertaking similar exercise in one form or the other for a long time. There is no international forum, whether the UN general assembly, the Organisation of Islamic Countries or the Non-aligned Movement,

When Bhutto signed the Shimla agreement some 20 years ago after Pakistan's defeat at the hands of India, he had reached two conclusions. One, he realised that it was no use knocking at the door of foreign countries. He told me before the Shimla conference that he was sick of going around the world chancing for seeking support. That is the reason why the Shimla agreement enjoined upon the two countries to go into 'the

unaware of the consequences if the present situation of hostility continues to prevail. Both sides are spending best part of their budgets on armaments and will increasingly do so at the expense of development. It is a sad future for the sub-continent.

Ultimately, New Delhi and Islamabad will have to sit across the table to sort out their problems, particularly Kashmir. If this is what Pakistan has been wanting to achieve, it is going the wrong way. The more Islamabad raises dust or involves outsiders, the more rigid will be New Delhi's stand. Were Pakistan to accept that it cannot force talks upon India, things may become easier. Why doesn't Islamabad accept a dialogue under the Shimla agreement to which New Delhi is committed? There is no preconditions to the talks. The agreement itself says that no discussions will prejudice the recognised position of either side.

Islamabad has also failed to perceive a change in the Indian opinion. The intelligentsia is veering round to the viewpoint that New Delhi should hold talks with Islamabad on Kashmir. Not only that, there is a demand to associate the people of Kashmir with the talks.

The argument that Kashmir should go to Pakistan because it has an over-whelming popu-

lation of Muslims does not cut much ice in India, which is against mixing politics with religion. This may also expose the 110 million Indian Muslims to the taunt that even after 45 years the Muslims continue to look towards Pakistan. The entire fabric of the Indian polity will be endangered.

At a time when a political party is doing its best to cater to Hindu sentiments and trying to divide the country on the basis of religion, the simplistic logic of Muslim Kashmir going to Muslim Pakistan can defeat India's ethos. The Muslim population in India is already under pressure. Any division on communal lines may add to its problems.

The Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which organised the march to highlight its demand for autonomy, has given me a proposal for the solution of Kashmir. It advocates the division of the valley along the river Chenab, keeping out the non-Muslim areas of Jammu and Ladakh. This proposal is contrary to the stand taken by Amanullah, the JKLF chief, who wants the entire state of J and K to be autonomous, emphasising its secular character.

Enough has happened in the valley to support the case of autonomy. Narasimha Rao, India's prime minister, has offered a status between independence and autonomy in domestic matters that article 370 of the Indian constitution ensures. Whether this will be acceptable to the Kashmiris, who have gone further from India because of the administration's highhandedness, is the question that remains unanswered. Softening of the valley's border may enhance the value of Rao's offer, both in the eyes of Kashmir and Pakistan.

BETWEEN THE LINES

Kuldip Nayar writes from New Delhi

where Pakistan has not raised Kashmir. It has made little difference in the status of the state.

As Islamabad would have known from its experience, foreign powers have no fixed stand; they have only fixed interest. They go on changing according to what suits them at a particular time. America, the UK and China, once completely on the side of Pakistan, have moved to the middle. They now exhort both New Delhi and Islamabad to settle their differences between themselves through peaceful means. The world situation has changed so much that influential countries do not give a damn to what happens to India or Pakistan.

basic issues and causes of conflicts which have bedeviled the relations between the two.

The second conclusion was that Pakistan could not forcibly wrest Kashmir from India. The Shimla agreement reflects both. On the one hand, Bhutto agreed to a bilateral approach to the settlement of disputes between India and Pakistan; on the other, he accepted the reality of settling the differences by 'peaceful means.'

Unfortunately, no lessons seem to have been learnt from the past. The Shimla agreement remains a pious hope. And there is no real effort to put an end to the conflict and confrontation that have hitherto marred relations between the two. They seem to be

INITIATING A DIALOGUE ON BANGLADESH'S ECONOMIC MALAISE—II

Are the Diagnosis and the Prescription Not Appropriate?

WHAT we have argued and continue to argue is that there are obviously many failures of implementation, now and in the past, by successive regimes in power since 1975. But over 10 years of 'king' has not meant that the areas which are still remaining sick, are we at last willing to also discuss the possibility that both the diagnosis and the prescription may not be entirely appropriate for the diseases wasting the economic system of Bangladesh? In the medical profession and indeed most other professions, when sickness lingers on for more than 10 years you would consider firing the physician or least going back to the pathology labs to re-diagnose the disease and to then search for new remedies. It is our misfortune that even after 10 years we are still adhering to the same medicines. To take refuge in counter-factuals as a substitute for fact based argument and

say that things might have been worse under other policy regimes is no answer to the present reality that we are and have for sometime been very sick.

If the economic situation were to support the health of other countries under a similar policy regime prescribed by the World Bank then the can visit the Philippines in Asia, travel to the next meeting of the Finance Ministers of the Organisation for African Unity or indeed of a gathering of his Latin American counterparts to enquire whether the same remedies being tried in Bangladesh have restored them to good health. If he wants to look to the bright side he can discuss with the South Korea or Taiwanese Finance Ministers the reality of what their governments actually did to build up the good health of their economies since the 1960s and not be mesmerised by the fantasies spun by the World Bank about

what they thought was done by the East Asian success stories.

I would like to prescribe as compulsory reading for both the GOB policymakers, the various chambers of business, the donors and indeed all our economists, two outstanding books on the Korean experience, one by Lerol Jones, a Professor at Boston University and Sakong II, a former Finance Minister of South Korea, *Government, Business and Entrepreneurship in Economic Development: The Korean Case*; another by Alice H. Amsden a professor at MIT and the New School for Research in New York, *Asia's Next Giant: South Korea and Late Industrialisation*; and a book on Taiwan by Robert Wade of the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex and then with the World Bank, *on Government the Market*.

Whatever we may learn from other developing countries, our problems however remain our own. The GOB or the business community or the economists have any ready-made medicines for our problems. What we can do is to collectively discuss these issues, free of party or partisan polemics, without taking up fixed public postures, indulging in mindless rhetoric as a substitute for looking at facts or pursuing reasoned argument. Above all we need to move away from our traditional habit of looking outside to the donors whether to both diagnose and resolve our many problems or to, as blindly, blame them for all our ills.

The Four Issues As part of a process for initiating such a sober, non-partisan policy dialogue, I propose to use the future columns of this paper to initiate discussion on four issues which are arousing public controversy: i) The role of the public and private sector. ii) Import liberalisation and export promotion. iii) Desubsidisation. iv) Problems of the labour market. There are many other issues facing the economy and policy prescription's which also need to be addressed in this and other fora in the next few months. I have picked only four such issues which are central to the agenda of policy reforms being promoted by the World Bank which may be impacting most severely on our economic health. It is not expected that all readers will agree with my analysis but it is hoped that the points raised in my presentation will stimulate responses from all sides of the table both in your columns and in other fora so that an intense dialogue on economic issues can get underway at various levels throughout Bangladesh. It is only by intensively debating issues that we can hope to come up with workable solutions to our many problems or at least identify where there are clearly defined differences of opinion to be resolved by submission to the will of the electorate. (Concluded)

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OPINION

Pale of Corruption

Salim Ahmed

PROPOS the serialised article by Mr Shahed Latif (Window on Asia) under the caption 'The changing perception on corruption' published in your daily on the 21st September where Mr Latif has cogently analysed the reasons for corruption in the bureaucracy, I feel it deserves serious attention. He has rightly highlighted the aspect that the salary level has no relationship with the wild price rise and he has also pointed out that the honesty is the best policy, otherwise in spite of hundreds of crores in the secret bank account the inevitable end is the Dhaka Central Jail.

The man who pushed the sliding door of the country to the unfathomable abyss of corruption and degenerated the bureaucracy both in efficiency and morality and facilitated plunder by a known circle plunging the entire country into a culture of corruption though not named in the article, is understood.

However, it is refreshing that the man and some of his cronies have been taken to book already but the major plank of the beneficiaries of the corruption culture has already built an immunity against any detection and assault and it is painful to observe that the government has not yet taken any comprehensive programme to root out corruption from the administration nay from the society. It is not yet understood whether the government or, for the matter, the kitchen cabinet has taken this crime seriously which has dug deep into our society and into economy and has eaten the vitals of the national including generous foreign aid and loan, sometimes obtained at the cost of our national interest.

Mr Latif has candidly stated that graft emanated from need but it will be perhaps over simplification to say that it is need based; rather it travels in the path of least resistance and in the prices it becomes greed-based, and if such things go unabated the society loses its resistance against corruption or corrupt practice. It has been the case with us perhaps. Ironically speaking even people did not fail to vote for a

smuggler or his patron nor refused to accept the booty of a thug in form of grant and to have an institution named after the thug or his kids.

The government servants have got a code of conduct to follow the breach of which under the law is punishable but now it appears that there happens to be no such code either.

Our Prime Minister, it is heartening to observe, is unflinchingly eloquent against corruption and she does not forget to dig against the days of Awami League and Jatiya Party rule. But to live in the past only surely does not pay long. It is high time for a crack-down on corruption built-in within the administration and perpetrated under its patronage.

Our leader of the opposition has already made a mark in sermonizing on all national issues but it appears, spokesmen of her party showed extreme anxiety in the name of democracy in consequence of the arrest of one MP involved in a big financial swindle but she kept a studied silence about the affair. The fundamentalists who preach pristine purity also do not care to remind the people of the precept of Islam to hate corruption and to excommunicate corrupt people at the minimum. The leftists these days however, are not taken seriously owing to gap in their profession and practice as evidenced from collapse of communism in Soviet Union and Eastern European countries.

Recently, a Dhaka daily carried a news item that a petty trade make official still in service is said to have undertaken a business venture in the name of a private limited company of which his wife is the managing director and his children living under the same roof are the other directors and the company, according to the report, has an authorised capital of one crore Takal. And the same company is reported to have negotiated a sizeable bank loan under the very nose of our tough Finance Minister. This is just an example about a petty official. However, if such is the affair of a small fry then what about the big guys, barring of course the exceptional few.

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.

Postal designations

Sir, It is an established order that every official/officer must write correctly the designation of the post he actually holds. But in the Post Office Department we find a glaring deviation in this regard. It is funny to note that the BCS (Postal) officers posted as Postmaster of a Head Post Office and Senior Postmaster of a GPO are writing their designations as Assistant Postmaster-General-cum-Postmaster and Deputy Postmaster-General-cum Senior Postmaster, respectively.

There is no sanction of the Government through gazette notification for such a change of designation. An Assistant Postmaster-General is generally posted at the office of the Postmaster-General and the Deputy Postmaster-General holds charge of a Postal Division. A Deputy PMG may be posted in the office of the PMG with the same designation. The Head of a Post Office is Postmaster and when he will head the GPO he will be Senior Postmaster. By writing his designation as Asstt. Postmaster-General-cum Postmaster or Dy. Postmaster-General-cum Senior Postmaster he is violating all norms and traditions of service discipline.

Sultan Ahmed Balubari, Dnrajpur

House rent and medical allowance of non-govt teachers

Sir, I have observed with much pain that the non-government teachers are getting house rent and medical allowance per month at the rate

Idle thought

Sir, your reference to a sightless young couple (My World 30.10.92) of Singapore threw me into severe pensive mood for a while, but, quickly recovered from the pangs of sorrow for the sightless persons after knowing about the great Ved Mehta. My optimism was again tormented when I found a news item on the backpage of the same issue that there are 2.75 lepers in the country. My eyes turned to a photograph above showing the Prime Minister addressing a public meeting in Chittagong. By now such photographs have become stereotyped! Suddenly an idle thought came to my mind. Her husband late Ziaur Rahman has gone into history by canal-digging which helped this unfortunate country to achieve tremendous progress towards self-sufficiency in foodgrains. A big hospital for the sightless or lepers through her initiative would certainly make her immortal like Dr Ibrahim who built the country's most active and disciplined hospital for the diabetic

Taka 100 each since the time of autocratic government. The non-government teachers have been considered under the new national pay scale since July, '92 but the house rent and medical allowance did not change as in the case of government teachers.

I would like to draw the attention of the authority concerned to reconsider the case of non-govt teachers under the new national scale.

Md Fazul Haque Head Master Moyeenpur ML High School, Sunamganj

Open alternatives

Sir, Asian Development Bank is helping Bangladesh Open University with over 24 million SDR loan. The soft loan has one percent annual service charge over a payment period of 40 years.

The projected Open University has been structured to fulfill increasing needs for basic, secondary, post secondary, and vocational education particularly covering rural areas where overwhelming majority of people live without modern education facilities. The curricula of this extended teaching system will include both formal and non-formal programmes.

As of now, Bangladesh is rich with nine major universities, hundreds of colleges and vocational institutes, thousands of secondary, primary, and elementary schools available to 110 million Bangladeshis as well as to the rest of the world. But the nation's knowledge sector is experiencing uphill battles in providing quality education as expected by everybody on account of 'war courses' in progress on campus.

Some of the discredit naturally cover the inefficiency of administration in containing violence of a student activities, which is often criticized as authority's designs to cover up professional deficiencies. Besides, the trend of pre-ferring engineering and medical professions by the majority of the best students leaves the most work fields out to the

relatively lower caliber graduates.

If the present condition of the country's academic sector does not improve in a short period, both employers and employees will encounter disappointments as poorly qualified workforce contributes more to downgrading the output standard, so do underemployed and wrong-employed.

With over three-fourths population illiterate and surplus applicants against available job vacancies year around, the prospects of an Open University in LDC Bangladesh depend on a time test.

By and large, this added educational facility can possibly meet most of the skill demands in rural areas with programme size proportional to employment requirements. The best outcome will, however, be controlled by the course characteristics that should facilitate teacher-student communications with flexibility to exchange knowledge.

M Rahman Zila School Road, Mymensingh

Power failure in Narayanganj

Sir, Frequent power cut is a common phenomenon in the vast populous town Narayanganj. In this regard, the most affected ones are the inhabitants of Masdar where hundreds of students, businessmen, serviceholders live and a lot of commercial establishments are situated.

Every day and night at least several times electricity is cut off. Low voltage of electricity is another problem. Consequently, students are experiencing much difficulties and their misery mounts and the annual examination is approaching.

We strongly urge the concerned authority to look into the matter at the earliest. Fayezur Rahman Zila Masdar, Narayanganj.